18 ideas for making holiday memories

**Metro Creative**

Counting down to Christmas Day means many different things to people across the globe. Although people likely have several different traditions they anticipate each year, it can be fun to incorporate some new merrymakers into the festivities. Here are some festive ideas to include in the days up until Christmas — a special family calendar of fun finds.

1. **Annual memento:** Have the kids or adults make one new handmade ornament each year. This way the tree is always evolving and everyone can track milestones.

2. **Cookie day:** Devote one day to making Christmas cookies. Invite friends or family members over. Distribute some cookies to elderly neighbors.

3. **Holiday classic:** Spend a night in and watch a classic Christmas flick you’ve never seen before. Streaming movie services often put classics and obscure titles into rotation during the holiday season.

4. **Christmas concert:** Host a gathering of children where they can sing or perform their favorite tunes for an audience. Take it on the road to a nearby nursing home.

5. **Dine out:** Take a break from cooking, shopping and hosting and stop into a restaurant you’ve been meaning to try. Keep it local to support nearby businesses.

6. **Adopt a child/family:** Volunteer with a charitable organization that provides for less fortunate families. Answer the Christmas desires of a needy child or family by purchasing an item on their wish lists.

7. **See the sights:** Pack the children into the family car to tour nearby areas and look at Christmas lights displays. Bring along cookies and hot chocolate.

8. **Trim a tree:** Get together with adult friends at a tree-trimming party. Rotate the hosting house each year.

9. **Play dress-up:** A gentleman can dress up as the man in red and pop into a friend’s holiday gathering.

10. **Wilderness walk:** Enjoy the crisp air and
How to Turn Volunteering Into a Family Affair

NewsUSA

Want to volunteer to make things better, but think you lack the time? You’re not alone.

A new survey conducted by State Farm found that busy lifestyles is one of the biggest barriers keeping people from getting as involved as they’d like. And since 77 percent say they prefer volunteering with those they know, school vacations — with kids off from school — offer parents the ideal opportunity to perform their good deeds with the entire family.

Two of the best suggestions that take maybe an hour each? Drawing pictures to send to veterans, and cleaning up a local beach or park.

Festive tree-trimming tips and techniques

Metro Creative

People have visited forests to select their Christmas trees for centuries. While tree sellers conveniently stationed in store parking lots and artificial trees displayed in various retailers have led fewer people to venture into the wilderness, the Christmas tree is still an important component of holiday celebrations.

Long before the spread of Christianity, evergreen plants and trees held special meaning for people during the winter. Bogus and garlands were hung in homes and over doors and windows to repel evil spirits and illnesses. On the winter solstice, the greenery would represent that spring would once again arrive and banish winter’s dreariness.

Germans who decorated trees inside of their homes are credited with starting Christian Christmas tree traditions during the 16th century. Early Americans were late to adopt Christmas trees because early Puritan settlers thought the tradition — as well as carols and other concepts — were Pagan influences. It took the popularity of England’s Queen Victoria and her German Prince Albert appearing around a decorated Christmas tree to eventually win over much of Europe, Canada and the United States.

Trees are very popular today. According to StatisticsBrain, 10 million artificial trees are sold in the United States each year, while 34.5 million real trees are sold annually. Such trees require decorating, and the following secrets and tips can help celebrants do just that.

Prune the tree first. Be sure to shape the tree as desired, since natural trees will have branches sticking out. Wear gardening gloves to avoid being covered in sap.

Position trees away from heat sources, such as fireplaces, vents or radiators, which can cause the tree to dry out prematurely and become a fire risk.

For added safety, anchor a tree to a wall or ceiling, so it will not tumble over onto children or curious pets.

In homage of the first German Christmas trees, decorate with natural ingredients, such as berries and pinecones. Also, use apples, nuts and marzipan candies.

To free up more space for presents, place a narrow tree stand inside of a waterproof planting container.

Place the tree inside. This will provide a more streamlined look that’s neater than a tree skirt.

The more lights the better, especially on dense trees. For a whimsical approach, match the tree decor to home decor and the color of furniture.

Make handcrafted ornaments with the whole family.

Hang the most delicate pieces toward the top where they won’t be disturbed.

Step back and enjoy your hard work, which will also give you a chance to find any blank spots that need filling in.

Tree trimming is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the holiday season, and there are no rules other than safety guidelines when it comes to decorating.
Peppermint Dipped Brookies

Brookiees are cookie shaped, but the texture is more like a brownie. Brookies on their own are delicious cookie and easy to make. Brookies are often quick to disappear at an office party. Santa will love these, as will any other holiday guests. Kids will love help to making them.

**Ingredients:**

- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 1 tsp unsalted butter
- 2 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 large eggs
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup all purpose flour
- ¼ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt

**Chocolate for dipping:**

- 1 cup white chocolate melting wafers
- 1 tsp peppermint extract
- 10 peppermint candies or candy canes (crushed to a coarse grain)

**Directions:**

1. Heat oven to 350°F.
2. Stir the flour, baking powder and salt together in a small bowl.
3. Place 1 cup of the semisweet chocolate in a small bowl with oil and butter. Heat in the microwave for 1 minute 50% power. Stir and place back in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds until melted. Set aside. (You can also do this over a double boiler.)
4. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk eggs, brown sugar and vanilla until combined. Gently fold the cooled chocolate mixture into the egg mixture.
5. Add the flour mixture to the chocolate mixture.
6. Fold in the remaining 1 cup of chocolate chunks.
7. Freeze the batter in a shallow pan (such as a pie plate) 10-15 minutes until it sets and hardens slightly.
8. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Using a tablespoon measure, measure out 1 tbsp sized rounds and spread them out equally on the baking sheet.
9. Bake 11-12 minutes, until the tops look dry and cracked. Allow to cool on the baking sheet before transferring to cooling racks.
10. Once the cookies are fully cooled. Melt white chocolate for dipping in a medium bowl. Heat in the microwave for 1 minute 50% power. Stir and place back in the microwave, stirring every 30 seconds. Once fully melted, mix in the peppermint extract. Put the melted chocolate in a small container for easier dunking. Dunk half the cookie in the white chocolate. Let the chocolate drip off. Place dunked cookies on parchment paper.
11. Every few cookies sprinkle the peppermint candies onto the white chocolate while still wet. Allow the cookies to fully cool before handling.
12. Eat or store the Brookies.
Bereavement and the Holidays, Part 1

By Maura Murphy
Special to the Sun Journal

Josie H. was shocked to get a call from her friend one morning saying that she had volunteered Josie to work at their church’s Thanksgiving dinner for those in need. “What?!” Josie’s husband of 45 years had just passed away, and she had been contemplating canceling the holidays altogether, unable to imagine doing anything without him by her side. “I just didn’t want any part of it at all!” said Josie.

Even when all is right with the world, the holiday season is charged with heightened expectations, memories, elaborate plans and many other investments of energy. For those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, holidays — and even just anticipating them — can be an extra source of anxiety and dread: “How can I possibly celebrate without him by her side? “I just didn’t want any part of it at all!”

Amy Dulac, Bereavement Coordinator for Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice, says that waves of grief can be triggered anytime, but holidays and milestone days, especially during the first year following a loved one’s death, are typically extra challenging. “The unknown is the scariest for people,” says Dulac, “not knowing how or even whether you can get through the holidays can be overwhelming for many people. And while it’s true that no day will ever be the same without your loved one, there are things you can do to make the holidays easier and maybe even, at some point, just fine.”

Following the intense period of comfort and support that people typically receive after the death of a loved one, a gradual lessening of contact with others sometimes happens as those close to the grieving person go back to their “regular” lives and responsibilities. Says Dulac, “Grief can be one of the most isolating of human experiences. People very often don’t know what to say to a grieving person because they are afraid that they are going to upset them, and then the person who is grieving might be afraid to talk about the loved one for fear of making others uncomfortable or sad.” It can become a catch-22 that leads to silence, isolation and avoidance of joyful events. Dulac points out that it requires much more energy to avoid talking about a loved one, and that acknowledging their absence and remembering them in conversation is one of the most healing gifts grieving people can give each other. “Losing the loved one was the worst thing that could happen, and talking about the loved one can’t make the worst thing any worse. In fact, it’s just the opposite.”

AHCH Volunteer Barb S.’s experience mirrors what Dulac says. Describing the period following her father’s death, Barb says, “We decided from the beginning to talk freely about him every day. It reduced our sense of loss to tell stories about him and share experiences and kept him alive in our hearts. We never shied away from talking about him, and I believe that made a world of difference. It didn’t matter that I could hardly get a sentence out without breaking down, but the more I talked about him the easier it became and the better I felt.”

Grieving is one of the most painful and unpredictable transitions in life that every person will eventually experience, and as Dulac often reminds members of the Bereavement Support Groups she facilitates at AHCH, it is important to be kind to yourself through this process. As far as handling the holidays, says Dulac, “It is most important that you do what you want to do (or not), rather than what other people want you to do or might expect from you based on the past.” Some people take comfort in maintaining their traditions, while others want to do something completely different, like go on a trip, or volunteer to serve a meal at a church or a shelter, or do something else they are interested in. Others might find drawn to completely new ideas or open to unexpected opportunities.

Josie H., thanks to the nudge from her friend, says that the Thanksgiving she wanted to cancel “turned out to be the best medicine ever!” She felt gratitude for being able to take part in serving others who had nowhere to go on the holiday, and for the many blessings in her own life. And, says Josie, “I found myself remembering how Ronny and I used to help out, how we both loved serving others. While preparing the food, I found myself sharing fond memories and laughing. While cutting the onions I could cry, blaming it on “those damn onions!” It did my soul good.”

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Tips for tackling picky eaters

**Metro Creative**

Many a parent understands the problems posed by picky eaters. Dinner table confrontations over vegetables can try parents’ patience, and kids busy refusing to eat their broccoli may not be getting all the vitamins and minerals they need to grow up healthy and strong. Recognizing that parents sometimes face an uphill battle when confronted with picky eaters, the American Heart Association offers the following tips for dealing with picky eaters.

Let kids pitch in on prep. The AHA recommends allowing picky eaters to help shop for groceries and prepare meals. Youngsters who pitch in may be more invested in their meals and therefore more likely to eat them.

Steer clear of unhealthy foods. Kids imitate their parents’ behaviors, and that extends to the foods mom and dad eat. Parents who set bad examples by eating unhealthy meals and snacks may find it especially difficult to convince youngsters to forgo pizza and potato chips in favor of healthy fare. In addition, kids can’t sneak unhealthy snacks if such snacks are nowhere to be found. Avoid sugary drinks, such as soda, in favor of water or 100 percent juice as well.

Stick to a snack schedule. The AHA advises that many kids like routine and will grow accustomed to eating at certain times.

Curtailing consumption

Hosts who intend to serve alcohol at their parties can curtail consumption in various ways. Choose to host a party in early afternoon, ending it by late in the afternoon or early in the evening. Adults are unlikely to consume substantial amounts of alcohol during the day, and many may avoid alcohol altogether.

Another way to reduce imbibing is to avoid buying too much alcohol. Overstocking a bar or refrigerator may encourage guests to overindulge or give them the mistaken impression that the alcohol will be free-flowing throughout the party. When purchasing alcohol for the party, hosts should keep in mind that some guests will likely bring alcohol as a gift, and that should affect how much alcohol hosts buy in advance of the party.

Preparation or ordering more food than might be necessary also can curtail alcohol consumption. Guests who have plenty to eat might spend more time eating than drinking, and eating one’s fill may discourage alcohol consumption because of feeling too full.

Transportation

Hosts can make transportation arrangements for guests to reduce the risk of alcohol-related incidents after their parties. When spreading news of the party, hosts can ask for guests to volunteer as designated drivers while also informing their guests they intend to serve as designated drivers as well. Make sure each group of people who arrives together has at least one designated driver among them. Hosts who want to go the extra mile can reward their designated drivers with a small gift to serve as a token of their appreciation for abstaining from alcohol during the party.

In addition to arranging for designated drivers, hosts can reserve taxis or ridesharing services to pick up guests after the party. Inform guests about this in advance so they do not drive to the party.

Many people enjoy hosting parties for friends, family and colleagues at their homes. But hosts must make concerted efforts to ensure their guests do not overindulge in alcohol.
Metro Creative

Emotions run deep come the holiday season. Holiday planning can be hectic, especially for blended families.

Today’s families are increasingly blended, meaning they’re a combination of families due to divorce or death. Even though the holidays are meant to be joyous, navigating traditions and accommodating the unique needs of all involved — including cultural traditions, visitation schedules, rituals, and religious beliefs — can be challenging. But blended families need not fret as they attempt to negotiate Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or New Years.

Logistics

The first step to holiday planning is to keep in mind predetermined custody or visitation agreements. Although there can be hope for holiday flexibility and generosity, try to stick as close to existing arrangements as possible. Some families choose to divvy up particular holidays throughout the year in advance. Others may do it as plans get arranged. As long as the arrangement is fair to everyone, the choice is up to the families. The plans should be made known to all involved.

Discuss expectations

The Stepfamily Association of America says that communication during the holiday season is vital, especially for children so they know what to expect. Writing down specific itineraries can help alleviate the stress of not knowing where they will be at a given time.

All members of the family should vocalize how they feel about particular aspects of the holidays so that no one is disgruntled. Do not expect others to be mind readers. Perhaps one person is focusing a significant amount of energy on trimming the tree when that isn’t as important to others. Discussing expectations can make planning that much easier.

Create new traditions

The holidays without everyone under the same roof enjoying traditions that have been part of celebrations for years can contribute to feelings of anxiety for people accustomed to these annual traditions. Draw the focus away from how things used to be done and create new traditions that all can anticipate. Host a holiday movie night if this isn’t the year to have the kids for Christmas. An annual outing to see a concert or show might be a new tradition the entire blended family can enjoy.

Don’t expect perfection

Putting too much emphasis on trying to make the holidays perfect can backfire. Blended families must recognize that holiday celebrations will change. It can take time to find a new celebratory rhythm, and comparisons always will be made. It’s acceptable to have mixed feelings about new traditions, but each member should go into the season with a positive attitude.

Blended families may face additional challenges during the holidays. Working together, such families can restore joy to the season and create new traditions.

Memories

from page 2

snow to see a local park from a winter perspective.

11. Acts of kindness: Choose any act of kindness and make it happen this Christmas. It can include feeding the hungry or helping a disabled person shop for the season.

12. Kids’ Secret Santa: Spread the joy of giving by having the kids choose a sibling or friend’s name from a hat and purchasing/making a gift for that person.

13. Hand out hot chocolate: Make a big thermos of hot chocolate and give it out to shoppers or workers who have been out in the cold.

14. Read religious stories: Understand the true meaning of the season by reading Biblical passages.

15. Camp-in: The first night the tree is decorated, allow the kids to sleep beside it under the glow of Christmas lights.


17. Surprise box: Put a gender and age non-specific gift into a box. On Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, the person who finds a hidden gift tag under their chair at dinner gets to open the box.

18. Family portrait: Wear your holiday finery and pose for a portrait that actually will be printed and framed.
9 ways to maximize entertaining space

Metro Creative

People who live in compact homes or apartments may find space is at a premium during regular times of the year. When the holidays arrive, decorations, trees and presents can make homes seem even more cluttered. This can make it especially challenging for holiday hosts who want to open up their homes for festive gatherings.

Even if space is at a premium, all it takes is a little ingenuity to entertain successfully.

Put nonessential furniture and other decor away

It’s impossible for would-be holiday hosts to move all of their belongings out of their homes to create entertaining space. But hosts can certainly cut down on clutter. Check out the flow of a room and then move pieces around as needed to open up floor space. Push tables or large pieces of furniture up against walls. Swap out armchairs for folding chairs. Stow knickknacks in bedrooms or in closets.

Create conversation areas

Encourage guests to spread out by setting up intimate spots in various rooms. This way guests won’t feel the need to congregate in the same space. Bistro tables in a den, a few floor pillows in front of the fireplace and stools by a kitchen island will create conversation areas.

Put benches and wide ledges to use

Narrow benches, such as those common to picnic tables, can seat three or four comfortably. Do not discount deep window ledges as potential seats, as these areas can be made more comfortable with pillows or cushions.

Collapse tables after meals

If a sit-down dinner is the goal, set up tables accordingly. Then break down the tables afterward to free up more space. Serve small desserts that can be easily transported from room to room.

Expand outside, if possible

Rent a tent that can be warmed with a space heater. If your home has a closed-in porch or patio space, cover screens with insulating plastic to create a comfortable added room.

Spread out refreshments

Avoid bottlenecks in common areas by putting food, beverages and other items in various locations. Fill up the kitchen sink with ice and make it an oversized beverage cooler.

Use all available surfaces

Invest in some sturdy serving trays that can be placed on television stands, upright speakers, ottomans, or even wooden crates. This will increase the amount of room you have to serve and store items.

Use islands and countertops

Tables can take up valuable space. When entertaining a lot of guests, set up an all-purpose counter island and add barstools. This can be an area for food prep, eating and entertaining.

Skip a sit-down meal

Large tables take up a lot of space, so serve a buffet, tapas or passed hors d’oeuvres so guests mix and mingle rather than sit down at one large table.

Holiday entertaining requires some creativity when hosting in compact spaces.
A Nightmare Before Christmas:
Victorian Séance

Join us at the Weld Street Inn in Dixfield on Saturday, Dec. 9, from 7 to 10 p.m. for an intimate Victorian Séance. A light meal and refreshments will be provided while we gather in the library and Victorian style psychic’s lounge for an evening of divination. Formal spirit box sessions with EMF detection will be conducted throughout the evening and spirit boards, divining rods, pendulums and much more will be made available to you. Get a live Tarot Card reading, spend some time with a real psychic (additional fee will apply for psychic readings), and browse our metaphysical shop for spiritual protections, crystals, stones, and jewelry along with ritual boxes and much more. Cash and all major credit and debit cards are accepted. Three rooms (double occupancy) are available for overnight stays at a discounted rate. Contact the Inn directly for room reservations. Contact us at weldstreetinn@gmail.com or call 207-562-2060 for more information. Tickets available at Eventbrite.com or at the Inn.

Holiday stress-busting

Metro Creative

Many people find the holiday season can be stressful. Holiday hosts may bear the brunt of seasonal stress, but the season also may be challenging for those who have lost loved ones or do not have close families to celebrate with. When holiday hustle leads to frayed nerves, there are some things people can do to reduce their stress.

Hit the gym. The American Society for Exercise Physiologists says exercise has been shown to increase one’s sense of well-being, mood, self-esteem, and stress responsibility. Stress can rev up adrenaline, and exercise can help relieve any pent-up energy and frustration.

Eat the right foods. Stay hydrated and eat plenty of fiber, fruits and vegetables. This can help stabilize blood sugar levels and decrease cravings for comfort foods. Do not turn to caffeine, sugary sweets and alcohol to reduce stress, as such foods and beverages may only compound the problem.

Get ample rest. Go to bed and rise at the same time each day. Many adults function best when they get between seven and eight hours of sleep per night, and a good night’s rest can help in the fight against stress.

Engage in activities you enjoy.

Make time for activities that you like to do, such as crafts, hobbies and listening to music. Take time away from holiday tasks to give yourself a break.

Skip the need to be perfect. Christmas movies and holiday ideals portrayed in advertisements can put undue pressure on the average person. Ignore any perceived pressure to have a perfect holiday season, instead resolving to enjoy the time with family and friends.

Stress can impact the ability to enjoy oneself during the holidays. But stress can be overcome, even during this busy time of year.

How to make holiday travel more enjoyable and affordable

Metro Creative

For many people, no holiday season is complete without traveling. While traveling might not be as enjoyable a holiday tradition as decking the halls or exchanging gifts with loved ones, there are ways for travelers to make their Christmastime excursions more enjoyable and affordable.

Don’t go it alone. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 91 percent of holiday travel is done by personal vehicle, such as a car. College students driving home for semester breaks can invite fellow students heading to the same area to share a ride home. Traveling in pairs or groups can make long trips less monotonous and more affordable, as drivers and their passengers can split the cost of fuel and tolls. Men and women can offer to pick up relatives who live along the way to their destinations so no one has to drive unnecessarily.

Book early. Travelers taking to the air or railways for their holiday traveling should try to book their plans as early as possible. The earlier travelers try to book, the more likely they are to get a favorable itiner-
The origins of some beloved holiday traditions

Metro Creative

Christmas stockings

The Christmas stockings of today may be a byproduct of various traditions. One such tradition dates back to a Dutch custom in which children would leave shoes full of food to feed St. Nicholas’ donkeys, and then St. Nicholas would leave small gifts in return.

Another origin story of Christmas stockings can be traced to the twelfth century, when nuns would leave socks full of nuts, fruit and tangerines for the poor. This is why some people still put tangerines in Christmas stockings.

Christmas tree

Christmas Trees are everywhere this time of year. The use of evergreen trees predates Christmas and is associated with the pagan festival of Saturnalia, which celebrated the agricultural god Saturn with partying and gift-giving. During the winter solstice, green branches served as a reminder that spring would arrive anew. Germans are credited with first bringing evergreens into their homes and decorating them.

Santa Claus

Santa Claus’ origin story can be traced to St. Nicholas, a Christian bishop who lived during the fourth century. St. Nicholas was very generous and gave away his fortune to help the needy. He also did various other good deeds. St. Nicholas became infamous and began to be known by various names around the world. The Dutch called him Sinter Klaas, which was eventually transformed to Santa Claus. The jolly persona came later when 20th century advertisers — especially the artists responsible for Coca-Cola ads — portrayed Santa in a red suit with a big smile.

Mistletoe

Mistletoe is hung in doorways and couples who stand beneath are encouraged to share a kiss. The tradition of hanging it in the house goes back to the times of the ancient Druids. Mistletoe was thought to bring good luck to a household and ward off evil spirits. The custom of kissing under mistletoe can be traced to England. Originally, a berry was picked from the sprig of mistletoe before the person could be kissed. When all the berries had gone, there could be no more kissing.

Christmas bells

Church bells ring for many special services, including Christmas mass. During

Metro Creative

RSVP etiquette for any gathering

Punchbowl, holiday party invitations reach their peak in mid- to late-November, but continue to be sent through December. The first Monday in December is the day when the most online holiday party invitations are sent.

Hosting a party involves a lot of coordination. Party hosts rely on an accurate head count in order to plan accordingly. This is only achieved if invitations reach their intended recipients, and invited guests respond in a timely manner.

Anyone who has ever hosted a party understands the feeling of having to wait for everyone to RSVP. And in an era of immediate digital gratification, party host patience may be lacking. Failure to RSVP is a failure of party etiquette, and hosts may feel as though their efforts are not appreciated if guests fail to RSVP on time.

To avoid a manners mishap — and even worse, miss the party altogether — practice this RSVP etiquette for each and every event.

Avoid laziness

RSVP is an abbreviation for the French phrase “répondez s’il vous plaît.” This means to “please respond.” Until roughly 50 years ago, RSVP was not commonly included on invitations because it was implied that guests would do the right thing and respond of their own accord to the hospitality extended. Everyone is guilty from time to time of getting a little forgetful. But when hosts are counting on your response to plan their events, it pays to make responding a priority, and doing so within 24 hours is best.

Recognize the RSVP’s importance to the host

Put yourself in the place of the host. He or she is counting on receiving responses to invitations. Failure to respond in a timely manner adds additional work to the party host. This person has to track you down. Or he or she may misinterpret a lack of response as lack of interest.

Avoid Regrets only? Only if the invitation states that

Some people think they don’t have to respond unless they’re not coming to the party. The fact is, unless the invitation specifically says to RSVP for “regrets only,” assume that you have to respond one way or another.

Rescinding your response

It is improper etiquette to agree to attend a party only to cancel at the last minute if a better invitation comes along. Unless it is an emergency situation or someone is sick, canceling an RSVP without a good reason is rude.

Etiquette for hosts

Send invites out several weeks in advance so people can check their schedules. As the date approaches, it is fine to reach out to guests who didn’t RSVP. Be polite and ask nicely if that person will be able to join you.
How to host a successful business dinner

Metro Creative

Throughout the history of commerce, many a deal has been made at the dinner table. Business dinners are a great opportunity to lay a foundation for long, potentially lucrative professional relationships.

Etiquette is important when hosting business dinners, as a breach of decorum can derail a relationship before it even begins. Professionals tasked with hosting business dinners can take the following tips to heart before sitting down to break bread with their colleagues.

- **Choose a restaurant that can cater to various diets.**
  
  Hosting a business dinner can be similar to hosting family during the holiday season, when hosts must cater to guests with various food allergies and dietary restrictions. Asking for such information in advance of a business dinner may seem intrusive to guests, so try to find a restaurant that offers a flexible menu capable of accommodating vegetarians, vegans and guests who might be gluten-free. Avoid restaurants that specialize in styles of cuisine that might be unhealthy or so extraordinary that guests might be hesitant to order anything from the menu.

- **Confirm the reservation.**
  
  Make the reservation well in advance of the date of the dinner, and don’t forget to confirm the reservation a week beforehand. Confirming a week beforehand gives hosts time to book another reservation should theirs have been canceled by mistake.

- **Arrive at the restaurant before your guests.**
  
  Hosts should arrive at the restaurant before their guests so they can address any potential issues in advance of the beginning of the dinner. Arriving early gives hosts time to ensure the table set aside for their party is not in a heavily trafficked area of the restaurant, such as adjacent to the kitchen or restroom. Hosts who arrive later than their guests may also give guests the mistaken impression that they are unimportant.

- **Let guests order first.**
  
  Once everyone has sat down at the table, hosts should allow guests to order first. Doing so saves guests who don’t want to eat that much the potential discomfort of sitting there while their hosts eat an appetizer and/or large entrée. If guests choose to abstain from alcohol, follow suit. If guests want to have a drink, hosts can limit their consumption to a single beverage.

- **Don’t eat too quickly or too slowly.**
  
  Hosts should try to keep pace with their guests in regard to how quickly or slowly they eat. Guests might feel uncomfortable if they finish first or feel pressured to eat quickly if their hosts finish first.

- **Pay in advance.**
  
  Business dinner guests do not expect to pay for their meals. While it’s widely accepted that hosts will pay, it can feel awkward to have the bill brought to the table. Upon arriving early, hosts can give their credit cards to the wait staff and ask that they be charged without having the bill brought to the table. If necessary, step away from the table during the meal to sign the bill and address any discrepancies.

### Picky

*from page 6*

When parents and kids stick to a snack schedule, the AHA suggests kids are likely to eat what they’re given. Choose healthy snacks, ideally incorporating two food groups.

Add healthy foods to dishes kids already like. Another way to get picky eaters to embrace healthy foods is to introduce such foods into dishes kids already like. For example, add antioxidant-rich blueberries to pancakes. Kids might like that extra burst of flavor, and parents can rest easy knowing kids are eating something healthy.

Don’t be afraid to serve the occasional bowl of ice cream or brownie. When eaten in moderation, foods that are not often associated with nutrition, such as ice cream and baked goods, don’t pose much of a threat. In addition, if kids’ diets never include such indulgences, the AHA notes that youngsters are more likely to overindulge when they do get their hands on forbidden foods, such as at birthday parties or other special events.
HOLIDAY SERIES

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