

XCentric Ideas

A vertical thorny branch with three yellow roses is the central focus. The roses are in various stages of bloom, with delicate petals and visible yellow centers. The branch is dark and covered in sharp thorns. The background is a soft, white, textured fabric, possibly lace or gauze, which adds a delicate and ethereal quality to the composition.

Recipes from the Internet
All photos my own

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Advent Calendar

Although Advent Calendars can be bought, I found these lovely homemade ideas.

And why not include some family activities?

Write a list of your ideas and then pick your favourites.

Things your family love to do, but don't always have time to do it together.

You can either choose 24 – one for each day.

Or maybe one activity for every 2nd or 3rd day.

Check your calendar for December and work out how each of the activities will fit in with your schedule.

Plan the more complex activities for weekend afternoons or other big blocks of time and save the simple ones for evenings.

Keep an extra special family activity for Christmas Eve.

Here are a few activity suggestions:

- Paint everyone's toenails
- Have hot chocolate/milkshakes with all the fixings
- Rent a DVD and watch it all together with popcorn
- Give everyone crazy hairstyles
- Backyard cricket
- Swimming pool games
- Have an indoor picnic
- Have breakfast for dinner (pancakes?)
- Pack a picnic dinner and have it at a park
- Fancy dress for dinner time
- Everyone play a game together on the computer
- Make handmade gift tags for relatives
- Fish and Chips for dinner around pool
- Dance like crazy to music
- Go out for ice cream
- Make paper snowflakes and decorate the windows
- Make a paper chain for the tree
- Make Christmas cards for family and friends
- Go ice skating / ten pin bowling / putt putt
- Bake a batch of Christmas cookies
- Make a list of ten things you are thankful for. Hang it where you can see it every day
- Breakfast in bed!
- Choose an e-card for friends & family to send
- Let the kids decide what meat they want for a barbecue
- Let them each choose their favourite sweet and have it together one night

Paper Cup Advent Calendar



Take a piece of styrofoam / polystyrene and mount 24 paper cups on it with pins through the cups' bottoms.

Use either cotton wool or tissue paper (I used silver), tear off small squares, scrunch it up and press just inside the cup. Add sweets and of course, the activity for that day.

Envelope Advent Calendar

Take 24 envelopes, write the day on the front and add the activity inside.

Or you can use typing paper folded in squares.



Table Decorating



(Above) Layer your table with your favourite tablecloth & overlay. Place any mirror (even with a frame) flat on the table. Tie your guests' favourite magazines with a ribbon as a gift.

(Below) Cherry tomatoes & fresh fennel transform an ordinary white plate. Tie the napkins with green raffia and add roses in whisky glasses.





Ribbon ceiling

Transform your dining table.

Decide on the lengths and amount of organza ribbon you want to hang from the ceiling.

Paste with craft glue little flowers, hearts, balls, butterflies, etc on it. (You'll find them at scrapbook shops.)

When the glue is dry, attach the ribbons to the ceiling with double-sided tape.

Your dining table will be a delight.

Watch how the ribbons sway in the breeze.

Pet Festive Treats

They give you unconditional love throughout the year.

Treat them with something special.



Canary Paste

- 1/4 cup almonds, ground fine in blender
- 2 tbsp butter, softened
- 1/4 cup cornmeal
- 2 tbsp honey

Cream butter & honey together in a bowl & gradually add the remaining ingredients, working into a stiff paste. Pack the paste into a feeding tray or press into a small paper cup, freeze for 15 minutes and peel away the cup.



Dog Biscuits

- 3 small jars second stage baby meat
- 9 tablespoons powdered milk
- 13 tablespoons wheat germ

Form into small balls. Bake at 180 oC / 350F degrees for 12 minutes. Store in refrigerator.

Pet Festive Treats (2)



Kitty Treats

1-1/2 cups rolled oats
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup flour
1/2 cup tuna oil, chicken broth
or beef broth

Preheat oven to 180 oC / 350F.

Mix all ingredients into a dough. Dust hands with flour and form small, 1/2-inch thick, round biscuits. Set on greased cookie sheet. Bake 30 minutes or until biscuits are slightly browned. Cool 30 minutes before serving



Horse Treat

2 sliced apples
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup oats
2 tablespoons margarine
Directions

Melt the 2 tablespoons of margarine at a medium temperature in a sauce pan. Add brown sugar and stir until it starts to boil then bring to a simmer.

Dip apple slices in the sugar mixture, then roll them in the oats.

Let cool.

Festive Ice Cream



Toasted Coconut and Peach Ice Cream

820 g cans peaches/apricots
1 litre vanilla ice cream, softened
125 ml desiccated coconut, toasted

Drain 1 can of peaches and chop in a food processor until chunky. Add to softened ice cream with coconut and mix well. Pour into a small loaf pan or serving dish and freeze until firm.

Serve the ice cream with the rest of the peaches.

Recipe – Fair Lady Photo – my own.

Festive Ice Cream (2)



Coffee Ice Cream

2 litre Vanilla Ice Cream, softened a bit
1 – 1 ½ cups very strong, black coffee

Mix well together, spoon into a lovely glass dish or serving dish and freeze till ready. Serve with melted chocolate.

Decorate with coffee beans.

Recipe – my own Photo – my own.

Rich Fruitcake Tart



Fruitcake Fridge Tart

1 ½ packet Marie biscuits

250 g margarine

1 cup almonds, chopped

2 cups mixed glacé fruit (*I used pitted dates, sultanas, cherries and citrus peel*)

1 cup white sugar

2 eggs, beaten well

2 tsp vanilla essence

Melt the butter & sugar together over low heat. Add the fruit & cook slowly for 3 min. Add the beaten eggs a teaspoon at a time while you stir (you don't want scrambled eggs). Cook for 2 min. Add the vanilla essence & stir. Break the biscuits roughly & add together with the almonds to the fruit mixture. Stir well and press firmly into pie dish. (Not round one.) Refrigerate, cut & serve. Keep in fridge.

Recipe – my mom Photo – my own.

Kindness is the language
which the deaf can hear and
the blind can see.

~Mark Twain

Today, give a stranger one of your
smiles. It might be the only sunshine
he sees all day.

~Quoted in *P.S. I Love You*, compiled by H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Too often we underestimate the
power of a touch, a smile, a kind
word, a listening ear, an honest
compliment or the smallest act of
caring, all of which have the potential
to turn a life around.

~ Leo Buscaglia