

## **Holiday Count-Down**

**I am a self-professed Christmas Queen. I love everything about the holiday and seriously start planning for the season at the beginning of November. I understand not everyone shares my enthusiasm. Instead of getting excited, people tend to stress out over everything that needs to be done (shopping, baking, cards, wrapping, entertaining, cooking, decorating, etc, etc.) and end up not having any fun.**

**Follow my steps to a happier, less stressed holiday season.**

### **1. Set your priorities**

- **This is the most important step. Do this early. Write down what you need or want to accomplish and (more importantly) write down the things you know you don't have time or energy or even want to do.**

### **2. Decorating**

- **No one said you have to do it all yourself or the same every year. Devote a weekend or a couple of days to get it all done at once. Do it early. You can enjoy your decorations longer and its one thing to cross off the list.**
- **Enlist the family to help or invite friends for a tree trimming party. Think of the people who don't decorate in a big way. They can get their decorating fix at your house.**
- **Answer this question: If I don't have time to do all my usual decorating, what can I forget about this year? Maybe it's the outside lights or the 50 piece village set up under the tree. Maybe this is the year to do a minimalist tree. White lights and a single color ornament. Less work and you will have a hip and trendy tree.**

### **3. Shopping**

- **Write out your list early. (See the trend here? Earlier = less stress!) Plan your shopping so you make fewer trips and use your time wisely. Make one trip to the mall, one trip to the electronic store, etc.**
- **Shop throughout the year for generic little gifts. When you get invited to a party, you have a hostess gift on hand.**
- **Set up a wrapping station. Have paper, tape, ribbons, gift tags all in one place, closet or room. That way you can wrap as you bring presents home.**

#### **4. Entertaining**

- **Take turns with family or friends hosting the annual party. You do not have to be the hostess every year.**
- **If it is your turn:**
  - a) **Plan a date early.**
  - b) **Make out your guest list.**
  - c) **Plan the menu. Don't try to make everything yourself. Have guests bring food or order ready-made appetizers from the deli. I make the same hors d'oeuvres every year. I just look at my list from last year and know what and how much to make and buy.**
  - d) **Invitations should go out 3 weeks in advance, so guests can get the date on their calendar.**
  - e) **Decorations for Christmas parties are easy. You have already done the work!**

#### **5. Cards and Baking**

- **I love to eat, but I don't enjoy baking. So it is off my list. I haven't made a Christmas cookie in years and I have no regrets. My waistline is happier too. My family doesn't suffer, since the word got out that I don't bake, some dear friend is always ready to share her treats.**
- **Sending Christmas cards is a tradition that fewer and fewer people participate in. It's costly and time consuming. Family and friends who live far away still like to get a personal, hand-written note in the mail. This is a no-brainer in the not enough time category to eliminate.**
- **Since I don't bake, I make my own Christmas cards (it's the artist in me). Because I have a big party, my card becomes my invitation. I get to be creative and cards are faster than cookies. I'm finished by early November and can cross it off my list.**

#### **6. Time for family and friends**

- **After an evening of power shopping, meet friends for a late supper or cocktails to catch up.**
- **Take the family to a holiday play or concert.**
- **Add a new tradition or bring back an old one. Cut down your Christmas tree, go caroling, take a drive to see the neighbor's light display (easier than doing your own), gather the family for Christmas movie night.**

- **Charity. So many agencies are in need of money and time. Volunteer or make donations to favorite organizations. It's amazing how stress melts away when you are helping someone else.**

**Enjoy the season!**

**Merry Christmas**

**and have a**

**Wonderful New Year!**