

12 Days of Simple Holiday Traditions

Another year has spun itself around the earth and here we are with the holiday season upon us! Are you ready to make yours a truly meaningful and a memorable one?

We know that fitting all those “special” moments into a very busy schedule can turn fun into stress, so we’ve come up with a simplified list of 12 easy ideas that don’t come with too much preparation, organization, or dozens of random details to keep track of. The best thing about this list? It contains no glitter (admit it: it drives you *crazy*). So now you won’t have to clean between the cracks in your dining room floor with a toothbrush before your holiday party. Wasn’t that nice of us to consider?

12 Amazingly Simple Traditions that Will Make Your Season Shine (Without Using Glitter)

1. Cookies! Cookies! Cookies!

What’s the holiday season without cookie baking? Yes, you can get the pre-made sugar dough that comes in a tube, but why do that when we have the absolute best (and easiest) cookie recipe ever from Cobblestone’s Executive Chef, Jessica Livingston.

Chef Jess has shared her recipe for Chocolate Crackles—so you can add these to your holiday baking list. Wrap them up in pretty bags to give to friends and family. Trust us: no one is ever unhappy to receive cookies. And rarely are they re-gifted. In fact, they might be asking you for more of these next year.

Chocolate Crackles

8 ounces semi sweet chocolate chips, melted and cooled
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup cocoa powder
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
8 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature
1 1/3 cups light-brown sugar, firmly packed
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/3 cup milk
1 cup confectioners' sugar

Melt chocolate over medium heat in a heat-proof bowl on the top of a double boiler set over a pan of simmering water. Set aside to cool. Sift together flour, cocoa, baking powder, and salt. Beat butter and light-brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs and vanilla, and beat until well combined. Add melted chocolate. With mixer on low speed, add flour, cocoa, milk, salt, and baking powder until just combined. Wrap with plastic wrap, and chill in the refrigerator until firm, about 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350. Using a rounded tablespoon or small ice cream scoop, roll rounded cookie dough in powdered sugar and place on parchment/oil sprayed cookie sheet. Bake 12-15 minutes. Set on wire rack to cool.

2. Sleep Under the Stars

Have a Christmas tree sleepover for your kids or grandkids. Pull out the sleeping bags and blankets and sleep around the Christmas tree. Read some Christmas stories and listen to peaceful Christmas carols like “Silent Night” and “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” as you gaze at the lights. You can keep it simple as that, or step up the holiday tradition by buying the kids matching Christmas jammies and snapping a yearly picture of them in front of the tree.

3. See the Lights

All that’s required for this holiday tradition is hopping in the car on any given evening and taking in the bright spectacle of lights around town. Listen to Christmas music in the car and sip on some hot chocolate. Ask everyone what their favorite holiday memory is and enjoy some conversation while you drive. How much easier does it get?

4. Go Sledding

Yes, this requires snow but absolutely no glitter! In Ohio, snow can be hit or miss: Sometimes we have it, sometimes it’s just cold. So if we get a good snow cover during the holiday season, make it a point to get outside and enjoy it! Pull the sleds out of storage, get on the warm gear, and get your heartrate up for an hour or so while you play. The bonus? Getting out and exercising like this can be the best holiday stress-buster there is.

5. Game Night

Pull the board games out of the closet, order pizza, and Just. Play. Games. That’s it.

6. Write Letters to Santa

All you need is pencil and paper. Sit down with your kids or grandkids and let Santa know what your heart's desire is for this year. You can write one, too, and then share your letters with the kids.

7. Have a Christmas Movie Marathon

Who doesn't love to cuddle on the couch and watch a good holiday movie with a bowl of popcorn? Here are some favorites:

"It's a Wonderful Life"
Dr. Seuss' "How the Grinch Stole Christmas"
"A Christmas Story"
"The Santa Clause"
"Miracle on 34th Street"
"Elf"

8. Queue up the Quotes

Make your **s**pecial in a simple way by writing an inspirational quote in a visible place in your home. Use a chalkboard or memo board to display the quote for your family to read every day. Here are some [suggestions](#) to get your started!

9. Go Christmas Shopping

With online shopping making it so easy to order gifts, don't forget to take a day to do some Christmas shopping with your family and enjoy the buzz of holiday gift-giving spirit that surrounds you. We recommend this [really cute gift shop](#) right in downtown Waynesville for truly unique and exquisite gifts you won't find anywhere else. The bonus? There is [a café](#) attached with hot coffee and warm soup to nourish you (wink).

10. Help the Needy

Buy presents for a family in need. Organizations and opportunities to give to the needy during the holidays are ubiquitous. Make it a tradition to help in some way with your family, whether by shopping for some gifts to donate together or volunteering to serve meals to the hungry at a soup kitchen. Making charity a part of your holiday traditions brings real meaning in a simple way.

11. See "The Nutcracker"

The Dayton Ballet puts on a beautiful performance every year. You can buy tickets [here](#) online for this year's performances, Dec. 16-23. Click. Buy. Go. It's that simple. And you absolutely won't regret it.

12.Go Ice Skating

Nothing says holiday fun like gliding across the ice. Guaranteed to be a special holiday memory! Kettering Ice Arena even has a free "Introduction to Skating" lesson for the whole family on Saturday, Dec. 3. You can find more info on their rates and open skating times [here](#).

How is that for totally simple and glitter-free holiday ideas? We hope the season finds you rosy, toasty, and joyful. Happy Holidays!