



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

A "Homemade" Christmas

Objectives:

This lesson will show how family traditions at Christmas can enhance the holidays and create memories for the entire family.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Each year our county has a luncheon for our members at the beginning of the Christmas season. We usually pick a special project to showcase at this event. In years past, it has been handcrafted ornaments, candles, hats, and lots of other creative ideas. Last year, I asked if the project could be a "homemade" Christmas. I explained that this didn't necessarily mean a homemade decoration but rather a family tradition such as a special recipe handed down through the family or a simple Christmas pleasure, things that mean the most to you.

After asking members, friends and family to think of their traditional or not so traditional Christmas activities, I've found that people do amazing things to make the holidays special.

Lesson:

The suggestions for these traditions are divided into ones that could be used for gatherings with friends or club meetings, those that are wonderful for family, and some that will help you give back to the community. Use these suggestions and your imagination to come up with some new traditions of your own.

For holiday club meetings or parties with friends;

There is always the traditional cookie exchange. Everybody loves these, each person leaves with lots of cookies and usually the recipes for them, sometimes in cute gift boxes or jars. Instead of cookies, you might want to try an ornament exchange. The ornaments could be hand decorated, vintage or even beautiful new ones. Use an ornament stand or small Christmas tree to display them.

Save old jars over the year (mayonnaise, pickles, canning), and have a craft party to decorate them with paint, stickers, ribbon and glitter. Fill with candy, cookies or small gifts and keep them for unexpected visitors.

Have a Christmas scavenger hunt. Participants can find clues to hunt for Christmas decorations (red glass balls, silver stars, holly boughs).

Arrange a luminary walk in your neighborhood, each house contributes the luminaries

and a few might serve hot chocolate and cookies.

For the family;

Have a Christmas bingo game on Christmas Eve or maybe the weekend before. Buy small useful gifts or even gag gifts throughout the year to use for prizes.

Have fun with stockings. Fill each stocking with 6 to 8 small wrapped gifts (useful ones, things from the flea market, gag gifts) and have each family member try to guess what 's in them before opening.

Have a Stuffer Scramble. Each family member picks another member to fill their stocking. The catch is, they must all go to a large store (Walmart, K-mart, Target) and each will have just 15 minutes to find enough unique and funny gifts to fill the stocking.

Make a large tree skirt and each year have family members write something about themselves on it.

On Christmas Eve or morning have family members tell a story about someone else in the family. Or have them tell a special Christmas memory.

Write a Christmas newsletter, but have each family member write about their activities during the previous year. Add a family picture that was made earlier in the year, (maybe at the beach or lake or on a family trip), This saves time during the holidays and everyone is more relaxed in the picture!

Plan a special holiday breakfast and use small personal gifts as placecards.

Have a special family giftwrap making session. Use things you might not ordinarily think of as giftwrap. Use pretty scrapbook papers and stickers, seasonal or metallic fabrics, dish towels, socks, small quilts or blown up pictures of children, grandchildren or pets.

Open gag presents on Christmas Eve. Things like Snowman Poop (styrofoam pellets), tacky Christmas socks, badly embellished mittens and mufflers, and Christmas underwear.

Help younger members of your family or local 4-H'ers to connect with more senior family members by investigating Family Food Traditions. For instance, they might collect 10 favorite recipes used for Christmas getting recipes from different families and different generations. If possible, they could include pictures of the food or the people who made them.

Sharing the spirit with others in the community;

Gather friends or family to make handmade Christmas cards. Recycle old cards, use scrapbooking materials, giftwrap, pictures from magazines, whatever is at hand. Then distribute them at local nursing homes. Remember to visit with the residents while you're there.

Make a tree for birds and wildlife. Ask to place it at your child or grandchild's school. Get the child's class involved with making the ornaments (pinecones covered in peanut butter, apple and orange slices and suet cakes). Make sure they are safe for the wildlife.

Write thank you notes to 6 people in your community who have been inspirations to you this year. Look for those who have quietly done things for others during the year.

After a night of shopping for last minute gifts or looking at the Christmas lights, choose a restaurant like Waffle House, where you pay for your meal after you have eaten. Pick out a person, couple or family in the restaurant. Quietly pay for their meal as you leave, then sit in your car and watch their reaction.

Set up a "You've Been Elfed" in your neighborhood. Fill a basket with Christmas goodies, small gifts, ornaments and cards and leave it at a neighbor's door. Include instructions for them to "pass it on" to another neighbor. Add a sign that says they've been "Elfed" and another to add to the next basket they make. Soon the neighborhood will be covered with Christmas wishes.

Adopt a person or family to buy gifts for. Include gift certificates for food or other services that could be used throughout the year. Include them in your Christmas prayers.

Oldies but goodies;

Buy new pajamas for each family member. This will be the one gift they are allowed to open on Christmas Eve. Then on Christmas morning take the first picture of everybody in their new pj's holding their stockings.

If you quilt, make small quilts for each family member during the year. These could be Christmas themed or in their favorite colors.

Plan a special meal. This could be a brunch for friends on Christmas Eve morning, a large family breakfast on Christmas morning or a Christmas day feast. Ask family members and friends for beloved family recipes (you might print them to share) and include family holiday favorites. Get the whole crew involved in decorating the table. Kids could make placemats or place cards. Old ornaments and decorations that might have been retired from use on the tree can be used for the centerpiece and will inspire the sharing of Christmas memories. Make it about fun, food and love.

Make snowglobes for family and friends but instead of the usual Christmas themes, use objects inside that reflect their interests. You could use chickens for someone who just began raising them. A motorcycle for the guy who was finally able to afford that Harley. Princesses or Super Heroes are great for the kids. Use their favorite things and they will keep them out long after the holidays.

Lesson Summary:

No matter what your traditions may be – gifts on Christmas Eve or Morning, stockings first or last, dinner at Grandma’s or a quiet meal at home – traditions at holidays are important to families and create wonderful life long memories.

Suggested Activities:

Present this lesson in October or November to give members time to work on their own traditions. Allow time for members to share their cherished “homemade Christmas traditions.”

Suggested Materials:

Paper, pencils, pens for members to make notes on suggestions they want to incorporate into their Christmas traditions.

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Sources/References:

Family, Friends and SCFCL Club Members

Downloadable documents (pdf’s) from the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service,

- Family Food Ways, a 4-H FolkPatterns Project.
(http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/resources/foodways_folkpatterns_proj).
- Family Folklore, a 4-H FolkPatterns Project.
(http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/resources/family_folklore)
- 4-H FolkPatterns Leaders Guide
(http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/resources/folkpatterns_leader_guide)