

IN THIS NEWS LETTER, WE WILL DISCUSS...

- Here Come the Holidays!
- Organizing Your Recipes
- Organizing Your Freezer



Here Come the Holidays!



Christmas and Chanukah are right around the corner which means it's time to get all prepped and ready. The holidays are a perfect opportunity to get your home in order!

SHOPPING

Shopping list – Make a shopping list including each family member and preferred “gift type” so that when you go to the stores you can shop in an organized manner. For example, your nieces and nephew and your kids might all warrant a shopping trip to the local toy store, while you might find your mom’s and sister’s presents at a department store. Try planning your shopping around gift types and you won’t have to make constant return trips. And remember: ALWAYS ask for a gift receipt.

Easy gift ideas – Do you find yourself braving the malls over and over to buy gifts you’re not sure your friends and family need or want? Why not purchase gift cards, or small stockings to stuff money in? There is also the option of what I like to call “classic standbys”, such as the following:

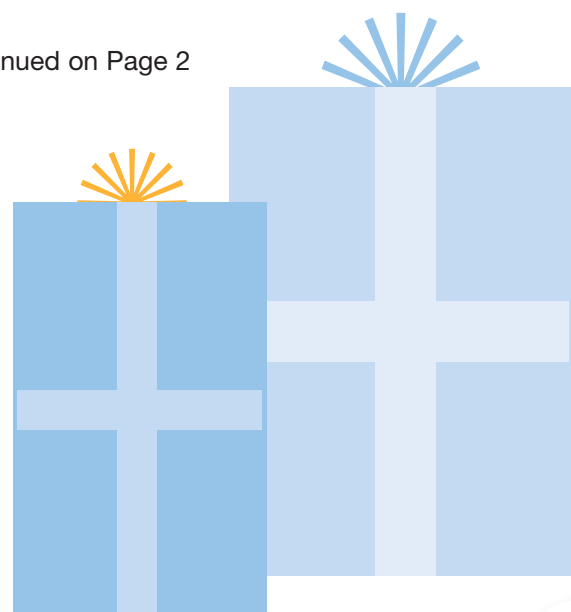
- A bottle of wine – You can find great bottles of wine for \$20.00 or less, just ask the sommelier at the store.
- An array of nuts from <http://tinyurl.com/yfo5c74>.
- A set of fancy soaps

Home made gifts are also nice. For example:

- Framed photos – Pick your favorite family photos and get them printed. Then go to the store and pick up some cute frames. This gift is always a winner.

- Cookies-in-a-jar – For a twist on giving the usual baked goods, take a jar and put the ingredients for your fave cookie recipe in a jar. Place the recipe on the lid. This is a perfect gift for someone who loves sweets, has little time, but loves to bake.
- Handmade soap – This is fun to do and shows that you took the time to make something creative and special for someone you love. Keep in mind that you will have to purchase quite a few supplies to undertake this process. So if you decide to do it, plan on making soap every year www.teachsoap.com/
- Photo books from www.shutterfly.com or another photo printing service online – Just pick your favorite snaps and follow the online instructions. Or if you’re a Mac user, try iPhoto to design and manufacture your photo book. All of your family members will love it, even kids!

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TRAVEL PREPARATION

If you are traveling to visit loved ones, time is quickly running out to purchase plane tickets. My favorite place to shop for travel deals is www.kayak.com. In all the preparation chaos, **don't forget to rent a car!**

Are you staying with relatives? If so, do you have kids under 2 years old? It'll be very helpful if you arrange in advance for baby gear such as the following:



- Pack-n-play <http://tinyurl.com/yc63wcw> or better yet, if you are on the go a lot purchase one or two (or three) of these: <http://tinyurl.com/ycy8gza>. High chairs – Hopefully a relative will have one for you, if not, here is a great light weight travel high chair that you can use in restaurants: <http://tinyurl.com/yc5mcvf>



Regardless of what presents you buy for your loved ones or if you are traveling or not, the holidays are about spending time together!!

Organizing Your Recipes

Get prepared for your meals ahead of time by organizing your cookbooks and recipes. Below are ways to tackle this job.

Surrounded by Cookbooks? Try organizing your books by type: For example, put all of your dessert books together, while corralling all of your meal books in a group. You can also have a miscellaneous or “general interest” section for books like “the Joy of Cooking”. You could also organize your books by the type of food. For example, we have one book with recipes using tomatoes, and another volume devoted to rice. You could also organize them by meal type, for example, appetizers, main course, dessert, etc. Another idea is putting the ones you use the most on your main shelf so that you can access them easily. If you have favorite recipes in particular books, use a post-it to mark the pages to save time.

Buried in loose recipes? If you have a bunch of loose recipes an easy way to organize them is to sort them into simple categories such as desserts, appetizers, main courses, soups, and salads. If you only use recipe cards and no longer use your cookbooks...make the leap and get rid of them. Copy down any favorite recipes and enjoy using the extra space.

Looking for a paperless solution? The Internet Strikes Again. There is a vast World Wide Web where you can do your recipe hunting and retrieval. A favorite recipe website of mine is www.epicurious.com. So many wonderful recipes, so little fuss and muss.

However you decide to organize your recipes just make sure you only keep what you use and like.

Organizing Your Freezer

The other day I was working with a client and her self-proclaimed “disaster of a freezer.” She owns a freezer-on-the-bottom refrigerator – and the freezer is equipped with a wire drawer. As handy as this may seem, unfortunately, this means things fall through and that there is not much room in the freezer at all. The result is that everything gets shoved into it and you have to take everything out to find what you are looking for. Because she has kids they buy in bulk from

Costco -things like large bags of organic peas, which tend to break open and leak out the bottom of the drawer. The other night I was thinking about how to solve the cluttered freezer and I had an epiphany:

- **containers** <http://tinyurl.com/y9lssky>
- **erasable labels** <http://tinyurl.com/y9kos4m>

We also got rid of the boxes and put the food items, such as soy sausages and veggie burgers, in containers. Leftovers went into containers as well, because as you'll see, I was sure that we purchased containers that were BPA-free, and could be put into the microwave to defrost or reheat.

Here's the ticket when you're looking for the perfect freezer, fridge and dry goods containers for flour, ice creams, buns, sugar, lettuce, and tomatoes: <http://tinyurl.com/yktsqkq>. And for cans of soda that tend to roll around in the fridge: this is a perfect solution: <http://www.organize.com/24canbeho.html> – you can even put some containers on top of it. Using these fantastic tools you can create a freezer (and fridge) that is organized and easy to keep up.

