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**A GREAT TIME FOR A HOLIDAY**

**By Arleen M. Kaptur**

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Holidays are a blessing to some and others dread their arrival. Why do we have Holidays? Surely celebrating a big event like the Fourth of July or Christmas is definitely time to bring out the decorations and prepare meals fit for a king or queen. But does everyone feel the same – are there always smiles and anticipation?

Holidays were created as a respite from our day to day workabout world. Even our founding fathers realized that pioneers and settlers needed that "time out". All through the generations, holidays have served as a means of bringing family, friends, neighbors, and assorted critters together to share a meal, watch a parade, listen to a band, and have fun. But not all holidays are met with the same amount of enthusiasm. Many people do not relish the idea of gathering with friends or family and would prefer to just keep on working or doing whatever it is they do. This is fine for them, but for others this would eliminate a very vital part of our lives.

People celebrate for a lot of different reasons. Patriotism, religious belief, civil remembrances, and ethnic backgrounds are just a few aspects in our lives that denote a special date as a holiday. But there are personal or family holidays as well. We have birthdays, anniversaries and we take the time to denote a particular day as "special".

All holidays do not have to be big, expensive and include a hundred or more people.

They can be on a scale from a grand event that includes entire cities, towns, or even countries, but they can be between two people, a family, or just a few select relatives or friends.

We can celebrate and mark a holiday for whatever we choose. Of course, it is always fun to plan and anticipate the major ones (Christmas, Easter, New Year's, etc.) There are food holidays that will brighten our menu plans and give us a chance to try out different foods and styles of eating. (Chinese New Year, Snail Week, Taco Day, etc.) We have remembrance days (Memorial Day, Labor Day, etc.). Its always nice to pay respect to those who have given more than their share to preserve the lifestyle we maintain and the freedom we enjoy.

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If you dread holidays, maybe you are just looking at them through "past" glasses. If there were unpleasant moments when family or friends gathered, a specific holiday that triggers a personal loss, or tragic event, then feel free to reflect on whatever the memory is, but also give yourself the right to pay your respects and then move on to the day. What happened with the "cousins" on the last family reunion may never happen again or it may surface each time they get together. Don't let these unfortunate incidents mar any future celebrations. If need be, if the loss or memory is perhaps too painful, celebrate in your own way or in a simplified way. Of course, remembering our family, or friends is a definite tribute to them, but a far greater one would be to go on and move ahead. Tuck away their accomplishments, your attachment, or feelings into your heart, and know that they are safe and forever. Then enjoy whatever celebration is at hand, and participate. At first, you may want to take it slowly, test the water, and find your own niche in whatever is going on. As time passes, be braver and attempt a step further and a little more involvement. Before you know it, life will again become a time of enjoyment and holidays will not be a dreaded affair.

Holidays are not only a break from our work world, but an insurance policy for the future. We have the past to look upon and learn from, and the present gives us the time to slow down, reflect or remember, plan, and move on into the future.

Many people shy away from holidays because they are expensive and they usually end up paying for gifts two to three years down the line. Don't fall into this trap of outdoing and outbuying. Nothing is more appreciated than something you have made or created. Store bought gifts and decorations are fine in their own right, but the joy of making your own with family or friends is chalked down to creativity, imagination and care. Bake your own celebration goodies, or prepare a meal that everyone contributes to and you have the makings of a great time. Let kids make their own musical instruments or party favors and the day will be grander yet. As for gifts, give from the heart, not the pocketbook. Have a coffee lover, then buy a great coffee mug and fill it with "goodies". Simple, personal, and definitely from the heart. Have a quilter, artist, writer, secretary, doctor, bus driver, teacher, or any other interest or occupation on your list? Devise a fanciful way to celebrate who they are. If you knit or are creative, then by all means – be! Use your skills and talent to make gifts that are hand-made. If you lack in the "craft or skill" category, then imagination is free and abundant. Think of a gift that takes into account who this person is and what fine point in them that you find special. A simple gift box or basket with items related to their hobby or interest is always a heartfelt gift. A picture or book that they may have admired, or create a collage of their favorite items, laminate, and they have a coffee table tray or dresser tray to spark a smile or laugh for a long time.

Decorations should also be personal and do not have to be perfect. Let children help, as well as everyone in the household or office. Not only will you get great decorations, but a wonderful time of laughter, conversation, and downright fun.

Holidays are definitely a time of celebration. Make your own up for your private personal events, and make note of the major ones. Write them on your calendar, plan, and make way for great moments, memories and heartwarming times. Don't let the past press into the future. It has its place but so does today. The future will be better for everyone if you lend a hand, make a gift, string some homemade garland, and enjoy yourself. Your smile, your laugh, and your effort will go a long way – don't be selfish and let the world do without. Without you, there will always be something missing. Let's have complete,

wonderful holidays to look forward to.

ENJOY!

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Arleen Kaptur has written numerous articles, cookbooks, motivational booklets, and the novel:

Searching for Austin James Websites: <http://www.arleenssite.com>

<http://www.Arleens-RusticLiving.com> <http://www.webspawner.com/users/rusticliving>

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## **Holiday Party Planning**

**By Mrs. Party Gail Leino**

**Holiday Party Planning by**

**... Gail Leino**

## **Holiday Party Planning**

'Tis the season to have a party and invite all your family and friends to celebrate the holidays with you. Have a family day and decorate the entire house with

. Your family will enjoy how festive the home is before and after the holiday

party.

When decorating, make sure you have all the party supplies that you will need before the actual party day. Plan out the food and drinks you will be serving. Make a list of everything you need to purchase to help get you ready. If you are preparing any new dishes or appetizers, try them out in advance on your family and neighbors. You want to have all the quirks of any new recipes worked out before your party. It is a nice idea to give each of your guests

as a token of your appreciation

for them attending your party. Choosing the perfect favors for your party can be a way to cleverly tie in the

with your own individual touch.

Bring a festive holiday party atmosphere to your party with

and lights. For the

music, select a few of your favorite holiday albums to play so you can have some variety. It is fun to gather your guests together to sing old favorites. For the lighting, you can string lights on both the

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inside and outside of your home. You can also cluster some holiday scented candles together for a dramatic lighting effect.

Have the smell of holiday cheer in the air. Simmer cinnamon sticks on the stove to provide the holiday scent. These provide a pleasant holiday aroma to your home. Plan some

that will excite and engage all of your guests. You can have fun holiday party

prizes for the winners of the games.

Mrs. Party... Gail Leino is the internet's leading authority on giving the best possible

, using proper

etiquette and manners while also teaching organizational skills and fun facts.

Holiday Party Planning

Try A Static Caravan Holiday

Holiday Candy Canes Are Festive and Fun

How To Develop A Holiday Cookie Assembly Line

Boat Charters

Palmistry

The Big Book Of Cookie Recipes

The Classified List

Brew Your Own Beer

Recipes from the Heartland

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