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Caroling or Tree Trimming Party

By Lois Mead

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After a night out caroling with friends and/or relatives, invite everyone back to your house to help trim your Christmas tree and serve up the following drinks and snacks.

Hot Mulled Wine

Ingredients:

1 bottle red wine
12 whole cloves
2 cinnamon sticks
Rind of 1 lemon
Rind of 1 orange
2 tablespoons sugar

Directions:
Add all ingredients to a pot and steep gently over a medium heat until hot. Avoid boiling the mixture. Serve in sturdy mugs.

NOTE: This is good to make in a crock pot, too. Makes the house smell nice, also.

Kahlua Nog

1 cup Kahlua
1 pint dark rum
1 quart egg nog
1 pint chocolate ice cream
1 pint coffee-flavored ice cream
Mix rum, Kahlua and egg nog in a large pitcher. Right before serving, pour 1/2 of the mixture into a chilled large punch bowl. Add scoops of the ice creams. Then add the remaining liquid mixture.

Peppermint Hot Chocolate

1 1/2 cups heavy cream

1 1/2 cups milk

1/4 cup sugar

6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped

3 drops peppermint oil

Sweetened whipped cream for garnish

Candy Canes In a saucepan, combine the cream, milk, sugar and chocolate and cook until the mixture just begins to steam. Add the peppermint oil. Divide the hot chocolate into mugs and top with sweetened whip cream. Add a candy cane to each cup.

NOTE: Kids love this yummy drink.

Get-togethers like this call for food that can be prepared ahead of time and put out on a buffet table when everyone arrives. Make ahead a crock pot of beef stew or chicken noodle soup. Prepare a tray of fresh vegetables with dips and another tray of sliced cheeses, sausages, and other cold cuts then put out different types of breads and buns so everyone can make their own sandwiches. And since it's the holidays, be sure to keep it simple.

Put out plates of home made sweet breads such as banana bread, pumpkin bread and brownies. Plates of homemade Christmas cookies added to this and you have your desserts. The point is to enjoy yourself with as little hassle as possible. And if anyone offers to bring something, suggest a colorful pasta salad, or a bread bowl full of dip with bread cubes around it.

Lois Mead is an Editor for The1001Recipes2Send.com Recipes Database. Become a member to receive the weekly newsletter alert:

Spend More Time With Your Family This Holiday Season: Host A Caroling Party

By Rondi Hillstrom Davis and Janell Sewall Oakes

Too often we forgo entertaining because of the mere thought of all of the preparation that is involved. And more is not better. Often we try to out do each other with lavish parties and expensive gifts. Stop and remember for a second what was important from your own childhood. Was it an outing? Baking cookies with your grandmother? Building a snowman with your dad? We need to connect. This doesn't require more time, just shifting the focus of the time we already have. Here, a casual party and a very simple activity were the catalyst that brought everyone together.

To get the entire neighborhood into the Christmas spirit we planned a caroling party.

The day before our guests arrived, my kids and I spent an afternoon making decorative candleholders to give to each caroler, to light the way for our caroling expedition.

Caroling or Tree Trimming Party

Dad, dressed as Santa, provided our very own photo opportunity. Little ones whispered their Christmas list in Santa's ear. Grown ups, as well as kids, had their pictures taken in Santa's lap.

Adults, kids, and even a few dogs then joined us on our merry way. Our numbers grew as we made our way caroling through the neighborhood.

As the carolers returned, we welcomed them with Mexican hot chocolate and ginger spice cookies. This party was a great way to engage everyone in an activity that the whole family could enjoy. And for a few short hours we were able to turn our attention away from the commercial marketing of the holidays to something much more personal.

Recipe: Mexican Hot Chocolate

Recipes are one of our most cherished traditions. Passed down from one generation to the next, they conjure up memories of holiday preparations or time spent with a favorite relative. Cooking provides a quiet time to pass on the wisdom of family lore.

Ingredients:

4 cups whole milk

4 ounces Mexican chocolate such as Ibarra

or

3 ½ ounces semi-sweet chocolate plus 1 teaspoon cinnamon

4 tablespoons sugar

Pinch of salt

1 teaspoon vanilla, preferably Mexican

2 eggs

1. In a medium sized saucepan, heat the milk over medium heat until scalding.
2. Break the chocolate into pieces. Add to the hot milk along with the sugar and salt. Stir until melted. Beat with a wire whisk until frothy.
3. Add the eggs and vanilla. Continue to whisk.
4. Pour into 4 mugs. Garnish with a cinnamon stick.

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Rondi Hillstrom Davis and Janell Sewall Oakes are the co-authors of the award-winning book *Together: Creating Family Traditions*. To check out their website that's jam packed with family ideas, visit

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