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Frugal and Creative : Last minute, easy Ideas for Christmas

By Patty Getz

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Nothing says I care like a homemade gift, if you think you don't have time think again. There are tons of Ideas you can use, that take little time, and are easy and inexpensive.

Making treat plates, is an old standby in my house, but family and friends need a surprise from time too.

Dollar stores are great places to buy extra's to go with your gifts. Baskets, silk flowers, ribbons, and containers. You can also purchase art supplies, for an inexpensive art kit, and they are always a great place for stocking stuffers.

Here are some great ideas, for a mix of both ideas, for a quick easy, and frugal Christmas. Follow the links for the Recipes.

Spice Mixes ---Save your spice bottles thru the year, or raid the second hand store, for small spice bottles. Find your own spice mixes or look here mix them up and put them in bottles. Make them as a collection or as part of a themed basket. You can also use this idea with flavored vinegars too. For cheap plastic bottles, glue a bit of wrapping paper, or decorative foil, add a label and you have quick Gifts.

Hot cocoa mix--- mix up a cocoa mix, add a couple of spoons dipped in chocolate, and rolled in crushed peppermint. Stuff into a dollar store coffee mug. Make a cloth gift bag, and you have an elegant gift.

Coffee Tray ---- Purchase a cheap wicker tray from the dollar store, and a couple of coffee cups. Add coffee mixes and chocolate spoons, and you have an elegant coffee tray.

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Movies ---Tape someones favorite Tv shows, give them a collection of tapes for Christmas, this works especially well for the kids in your family, as they will watch them over and over again.

Busy Cooks Basket - search for mixes for Brownies Cookies, sauces, Hot drinks, and more. Gift for the busy friend on your gift list.

Give of your Yourself Coupons---- Backrubs, and Candle lit dinners, for your hunny. Chores, Babysitting, and a trip to the mall for a friend. Game time, Movie nights, park trips for the kids.

Calendars, and greeting cards ----- have a digital Calendar and printer? How about Calendars for the Grandparents, filled with pics of their Grandkids .

Custom T-shirts---For all ages, how about some computer iron on transfer paper, and tshirts. You can find this paper in the dollars often for reduced, and buy a 3\$ tshirt, and you have a super cheap and custom gift. Find graphics off the internet, or make your own.

Freebie Gifts, and Recycling too!! ---Subscribe to your local freecycle group, they are always giving things away, and you might find the perfect gift there. Find your local Freecycle group at

<http://www.freecycle.org>

Memory book---Buy a cheap photo album at the dollar store, decorate it, and add pictures and stories, specific to the person you are giving it to. For kids, happy memories of their childhood. For parents, things your remember and love best about them, or a yearly log of their Grandkids growth and development. Great for long distance relatives.

Busy Moms Pamper Basket---Make some bubble bath, bath salts,a smelly candle, record some soft music on Cd. Add Some oils and lotions (freebies or trials work great for this. Tuck them in a basket, along with a babysitting coupon.

Pinecone firestarters---collect pine cones, dip them in wax from old melted candles. helps fires get off to a quick start.

Stationary sets---Find Stationary on the internet to print off, or create stationary on your computer and print off, add some envelopes and pretty pen.

Homemade Christmas Ornaments---Christmas ornaments made from salt or cinnamon dough, and painted make beautiful gifts, and are something kids can help with. Make them freehand, or use cookie cutters. The cinnamon dough is fragrant.

Cooks Basket---Find cook books at the second hand stores, add some ingredients, and make a cooking basket

Custom Cookbook---Make a cook book if you know what a person likes to eat, or what their cooking style is, why not print off recipes off the internet, and make a cookbook, tailored to that person. This works really great for young kids just out on their own. Give them their favorite mom recipes, and a few

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easy to cooks, as well as a couple of how to's.

this can be a simple and basic, or as elegant as you want to make it.

Jams and Jellies—Whip up a batch of homemade jam, add a piece of Christmas fabric, cut with decorative scissors

Create your own chicken soup book—Find stories,quotes, poems and other snippets of wisdom, tailor it to your recipient. Add a nice photo album or note book.

Christmas Garland— Make a unique Christmas Garland, of pinecones strung together. Have your kids help you decorate them with Glitter, and different pretties.

Get organized notebook—the internet is full of printable, print up some calendars, some to do lists, inventory lists etc. Add them into a notebook, and give them to your favorite "Mom"

For kids

Coloring books— Print off coloring pages,and worksheets off the internet, punch holes, make into a book or put in a cheap folder. Decorate the folder, add a package of crayons or felt markers from the dollar store.

Word finds and Mazes -- For older kids, word finds, and mazes can be found or you can find places to generate ones you make.

Playdough Basket—Make play dough in different colors, find some cookie cutters and rolling pins in the second hand store, for a great playdough kit.

Kids Coupons—Print off coupons for special priveledges that they can redeem. Movie nights, ice cream parties, trips to the park.

Book Basket—Go to the second hand book store, and buy books, put them in a basket along with some hot cocoa mix, and a promise to read stories with them every night.

Homemade Music Cds—Record kids songs on a cd for the music lover in your family

Doll Accessories ---If you know how to sew or crochet, use your talents and your scraps to make doll furniture, rugs, and curtains, for your childs doll house. Clothes, sleeping bags, mini tents, also are popular.

Hair ties—Purchase a 1\$ package of elastic, and use fabric scraps to make hair ties for your little princess. If you have any spare silk flowers, you can sew these on for a really elegant look.

Fancy Socks—Sew ruffles or beads on plain socks for pretties, they wont be able to resist.

Soft blocks -For Babies can be made from scrap Fabrics and fiber fill.

Art kit -- Go to the dollar store, purchase an tackle box and fill with pens, crayons, pencils, glue, for a great art set, and a small price.

Creative packaging

Tin Can Treat Containers — Take tin cans, wash and make sure there are no sharp edges. Paint, sprinkle with glitter, where ever your creativity takes you. Stuff them with mixes, or homemade goodies. Add a bow, and you have an elegant gift.

Paper Mache "Baskets"—Make and decorate bowls from paper mache... use these to package your gift basket items, instead of wicker baskets.

Fabric Wrapping paper and bags—Use scrap Fabric for wrapping paper , ribbon and bows, sew fabric into bags.

Paint your own wrapping paper ——Decorate butcher paper with sponges and paint.

Your own paper gift bags ——Paint paper bags, decorate with sponges, and make handles from twine, paper or ribbons.

Patty Getz is Is a Sahmom with a mission to educate families, on the alternatives, to high debt, fast food, and fast living. She is the Owner of

<http://www.totallyfrugal.com>

and the author of several articles on Frugal living, cooking, and Simple Living.

Book Review: "Frugal Living for Dummies"

By Deborah Shelton

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deborah@fiveminuteparent.com Word wrap to 60, (220 words)

Book Review: "Frugal Living for Dummies"

Reviewed by Deborah Shelton

"Frugal Living for Dummies"

by Deborah Taylor-Hough

Publisher: Wiley Publishing, Inc.

ISBN: 0-7645-5403-4

Price: \$16.99 US

Whatever your reason for wanting to save money (job loss, suddenly single-income, another child on the way, rising college tuition costs), arm yourself with Frugal Living for Dummies for super saving success.

This book details so much more than coupon-clipping. Some of the chapter topics include ideas for frugal family fun, thrifty cooking tips, ways to cut utility bills, setting a budget and lots of inexpensive gift ideas. And that's just the beginning! Frugal Living also provides icons in the margins that alert readers to important reminders, tips, super savers, special warnings, great ideas and handy checklists.

Each section is jam-packed with cost-cutting ideas for baby showers, back-to-school needs, dinner parties, gift giving, auto maintenance, home cleaning, dining out, laundry, family trips.... Basically, Deborah Taylor-Hough offers money-saving solutions for every aspect of your life.

Frugal Living for Dummies is an essential reference for your family collection. This book will make a practical and thoughtful gift for young couples just starting their lives together, college students on their own for the first time, single-income families, new parents, and anyone who needs

proven ways for cutting costs while keeping their sanity.

A must-have guidebook for the novice penny pincher as well as the seasoned dollar stretcher.

About the Reviewer: Deborah Shelton is a mother, freelance writer, and author of the brand new book, "The Five Minute Parent: Fun & Fast Activities for You and Your Little Ones." Visit Deborah's website for more family-friendly ideas: <http://www.fiveminuteparent.com>



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