



Countdown to the
Holidays

WORKBOOK

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Thank you for downloading this ebook. Our goal is for you to make the holidays look easy. We'll break down your to-do lists into manageable tasks with the goal of being done with the majority of your holiday prep by December 1st.

What happens after December 1st? You watch Hallmark movies, drink hot chocolate and bask in the glow of your hard work. In reality you'll probably need some of that time to catch up on a few things you've missed, but you'll be so far ahead of the game at that point it will feel like no big deal!

-Megan & Wendy

Week by Week Checklist

Week 1

- Order stamps for your holiday cards
- Halloween - will you dress up? Start looking at costumes and order early!
- Start making a list of gift recipients with a budget for each (see gift giving planner in this book)
- Do you need a new artificial tree? Start looking now. The good ones will sell out!
- Schedule photographer for holiday card photos
- Congratulate yourself for getting started early!

Week 2

- Buy Halloween candy and HIDE IT WELL!
- Choose outfits for family holiday cards
- If you're ordering from Etsy or another handmade seller, order NOW to allow for production and shipping times.
- Will you be traveling for the holidays? Book your flight or plan your driving route
- Get out your fall decor. Bring on the mums!

Week 3

- Organize your holiday card address list. Reach out for new addresses from anyone who might have moved.
- If you don't have a list of addresses created, consider a site like Postable for collecting addresses easily
- Buy tickets for holiday events you plan to attend (Zoo lights, Christmas trains, Nutcracker showings.)
- Take inventory of your current baking supplies and make a list of what you'll need. Start stocking up during your weekly grocery runs.

Week 4

- Halloween is early next week! Do you need more candy?
- What's for dinner Halloween night? Many pizza places take pre-orders.
- Finalize all holiday travel plans (hotels, cars, flights)
- Hocus Pocus is streaming on Disney+. The Great Pumpkin will be on TV Halloween night.
- Have you ordered/purchased any gifts yet? Make this the week you start!
- Advent Calendars - Do you need to order one? How about supplies to fill your calendar. Now's the time.

Week 5

- Order your holiday cards. Consider an upgrade to pre-printed addresses on your envelopes, saving you an extra step. Sites like Minted offer this service.
- Order your Thanksgiving turkey
- Check in with your December calendar. Have you added parties, family events, days for baking and family visits?
- Decide what, if any, parties you will host and create a guest list
- Buy teacher gifts now (we always recommend gift cards) and have your kids make cards.
- Trick or Treat!

Week 6

- Take inventory of wrapping paper supplies. Do you need ribbon, tape, scissors, paper or bags? Make a list!
- Make a Thanksgiving grocery list. If you're not hosting Thanksgiving, buy a host gift to bring along.
- Shop for holiday outfits if you plan to dress up.
- Send invitations for holiday parties
- Make a list of treats to bake and add any speciality ingredients to your shopping list.

Week 7

- Schedule a Thanksgiving grocery pickup or delivery window.
- Address your holiday cards
- Check your serving dishes against what you plan to serve next week. Do you have enough?
- Plan Thanksgiving decor if that's your thing.
- Do you have enough forks? Dessert plates? How about containers for storing leftovers? Purchase accordingly.

Week 8

- It's Thanksgiving week - start defrosting the turkey early!
- Make a plan for Black Friday in-person and online shopping. Check in with your gift giving planner to see if the sales match up with the gifts on on your list.
- Spread Thanksgiving cooking out over several days. Cranberry sauce and pies are easy to make ahead of time. Vegetables can be chopped and tables can be set early.
- Decorate! After Thanksgiving is over, it's time to trim the tree, hang the lights, light a Balsam candle, and wrap yourself in a plaid scarf. Unless you're Megan and this has been done since Veterans' Day.

Week 9

- Start wrapping. Maybe finish wrapping, too?
- Deliver teacher gifts. Time FLIES in December and you'll be glad to have this done.
- Mail your holiday cards and wait for the texts that yours were the first to arrive.
- If you have gifts that need to be shipped, this is the week to do it.
- Get out the advent calendars!
- Finalize the menu for your holiday meals. Consider catering from your favorite restaurant so that you can enjoy the day yourself. Even many grocery stores offer full holiday meals prepped ahead of time.

Week 10

- Catch up on any unfinished tasks. Do you have wrapping to finish? Stocking stuffers to purchase? Do you feel like you haven't seen enough Hallmark movies this season? Now is the time. This is the one lull you'll get before the big day. Use it wisely.
- Happy Hannukah!

Week 11

- Create a grocery list for any holiday meals you'll be hosting. Schedule a pickup or delivery order.
- Make a plan for Christmas morning breakfast, even if that plan is cinnamon rolls from a can.
- Have easy meals on hand for the next week when you'll be busy. Anything that can go directly from the freezer to the oven is a winner. Whether that's something you make or take the help from Trader Joe's, we'll never tell.
- Do a last minute gift inventory. Check your list twice.

Week 12

- Prep as much as you can for your holiday meals ahead of time, so you can enjoy the day.
- This is the week where we start to feel like we haven't done enough. It doesn't take a big production to make holiday magic. Make hot chocolate and go for a drive to look at holiday lights. Watch a movie by a fire. Read a cozy holiday book.
- Merry Christmas! You did it!

Thanksgiving Prep Checklist

Hosting Checklist

- Create guest list
- Decide on a menu
 - Will guests bring items?
 - Do you have dietary restrictions among your guests?
- Create a shopping list
- Shop for grocery items or order online
- Check supplies: serving dishes, plates, utensils, containers for leftovers.

Guest Checklist

- Shop for and wrap a hostess gift
- If you're bringing a dish, find your recipe & shop for ingredients

Holiday Card Prep Checklist

- Schedule Photographer
- Order stamps
- Choose photos
- Update addressess
- Order cards
- Address envelopes
- Deliver cards to post office

Holiday Card Tips

- Choose your holiday card layout first, then request photos that fit (portrait or landscape)
- Create your card on the site of your choice and save the design. Wait for a sale or coupon code to order!
- No professional photos? No problem! Make a collage of photos from throughout the year. Friends and family will love seeing daily snaps of your life.

Holiday Hosting

What events will you be hosting?

Who will be invited?

Will you serve food? What will your menu be? Will guests bring items to share?

- Check supplies: serving dishes, plates, utensils, containers for leftovers.
- Create a grocery list
- Schedule a grocery shopping day or reserve grocery pickup or delivery time.
- Will you be decorating? Give yourself plenty of time to have decorations up before your event.
- Do you/your family need party attire? Shop early!

Holiday Baking Checklist

Questions to ask yourself: Will you be baking? For what events? Are there any requirements for quantities or ingredients to avoid?

- Choose recipes
- Make a shopping list
- Schedule a day and time on the calendar for baking
- Check supplies: containers for storing finished products, containers for gifting. Purchase additional supplies as necessary.
- Bake & enjoy!

Tip: Check out the recipes contained within this ebook for some of our favorite holiday treats that are perfect for sharing and gifting!

Notes:

Holiday Menu

Appetizers

Entree

Side Dishes

Dessert

Drinks

Holiday Planning Apps and Resources

Rakuten/eBates

If you do any online holiday shopping (or any online shopping at all, really) and you're not using Rakuten, (formerly known as eBates) you're leaving money on the table. Sign up for a free account at Rakuten.com and be sure to check Rakuten before you shop. Many online retailers offer a percentage of your purchase in cash back. You can shop via the app or add a Chrome extension to your browser so that you're always reminded when there's cash back. Your shopping experience won't change, but the nice check you'll get after the holidays will make your day.

Santa's Bag Gift Planning App

Track the gifts you've bought and those that need purchasing, keep yourself on a budget, and mark which ones have been wrapped and which ones are in need of a bow.

eMeals

Even though there are many celebratory meals during the holiday season, your family will likely still expect dinner nightly. Rude, right? We love eMeals because it makes menu planning and grocery ordering a one-stop experience.

Wendy's Famous Fudge

Ingredients

3 cups sugar
3/4 cup butter or margarine
1 (5 ounce) can of evaporated milk (about 2/3 cup, if you can't find the 5 oz. can)
12 ounces Baker's Semi-Sweet Chocolate, chopped
1 (7 ounce) jar Jet-Puffed Marshmallow Creme
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 teaspoon vanilla

Wendy's Modifications

Choose margarine over butter. I've had the most success making fudge with margarine. It has never failed me and though I wouldn't normally opt for margarine, I always use it for this recipe.

Omit the nuts. Why? Because my husband thinks nuts in a dessert are a crime. You do you.

I recommend a high quality vanilla extract like Nielsen Massey.

Tips for Success

*Line a 9-inch square pan with foil with end extending over the sides of the pan.

*Chop the chocolate bar before you begin cooking anything. You want to make sure you've got everything prepped because you're likely to burn your ingredients in the next step if you don't.

*Bring sugar, margarine and evaporated milk to a full rolling boil in a 3-quart saucepan on medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook 4 minutes or until your candy thermometer reaches 234°F – continue to stir.

*Remove saucepan from heat.

*Add chopped chocolate bar and marshmallow creme; stir until melted. Add nuts (if you want them, do it now) and vanilla. Mix well.

*Pour mixture into prepared pan; spread to cover bottom and let cool.

*Use excess foil to lift fudge from pan and cut into squares.

*If the chocolate isn't fully melting, I will put saucepan back on the burner at an extremely low or simmer heat for about one minute while constantly stirring.

*Use non-stick foil

*Don't make this without a candy thermometer. I watch both the clock and temperature at the same time.

Completely cool and then store in refrigerator overnight. Fudge is so much easier to cut when it is cold.

Cinnamon Sugar Pecans

Ingredients

1 egg white
2 teaspoons water
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 lb bag pecan halves

Instructions

Preheat oven to 250 degrees.

Add dry ingredients to a Ziploc bag and shake to combine. Set aside.

Combine wet ingredients and whisk until frothy.

Add pecans to wet ingredients and toss to coat.

Add coated pecans to the bag with dry ingredients and shake until evenly coated with cinnamon sugar mixture.

Spread pecans in a single layer on a cookie and bake for one hour. Enjoy!

Peppermint Oreo Truffles

Ingredients

32 Peppermint Oreo Cookies (can sub Candy Cane Joe Joe's)
8 oz. Philadelphia Cream Cheese (softened)
2 cups chocolate chips or melting chocolate
1/2 tsp. Peppermint Extract
1 cup crushed candy canes (optional)

Instructions

Crush the Oreos in a food processor or place them in a Ziploc bag and smash them until they're crumbly.

Mix Oreo crumbs with softened cream cheese until combined. Scoop dough and roll into one inch balls

Freeze Oreo balls for ten minutes to help them hold their shape.

While the truffle centers are in the freezer, slowly melt your chocolate. You can use a double boiler or melt in the microwave. If you melt in the microwave, cook in 30-second increments, stirring in between to avoid burning the chocolate. Stir in peppermint extract.

Remove the truffle centers from the freezer and dip into melted chocolate. Place the truffles on wax paper to dry.

Sprinkle with crushed candy canes (or the topping of your choice) while chocolate is still melty.

Store truffles in an air-tight container in the refrigerator.

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