

## How can we make the Holidays less stressful?

Every year during the Christmas holiday season many people feel high stresses, so much so that they find it hard to enjoy the season. The difference between what do we really need to do verse what we think we need to do can add to your stress level. I thought it would help if I listed some of the things I have done over the years to make the holidays a good time. Let's go back and have an old fashioned Christmas without all the fuss. Also remember the real meaning of Christmas, the celebration to remind us of the birth of Jesus Christ our savior. He came to save us. So we need to make sure we hear his message and ask for forgiveness. If we reflect on this then maybe we will have a better Christmas season.

1. **Planning:** Having a plan of what needs to be done is the most important thing to do if you want to have less stress and plans help to make sure you do not miss anything. Remember when making your plan that you take the time to go over it and cross off the things you really do to need to do. Then as you get closer to the big day you cross of the things you have done.
2. **Home Made Gifts:** It should be a time for us to share our love with each other as well. So this year instead of store bought gifts I have decided to give some of my vegan foods to those I love. What better way to show them how good this healthy food so they can try it themselves!

For the children in my life I will make them some of my raw cookies made from seeds, fruit and coconut. For the older ones I will make a holiday favorite minced meat tarts and pumpkin treats. These will all be wrapped up in some new Rubbermaid containers so they will have the container to use again for their own purposes.

Other suggested homemade gifts of food could be: the Perfect Pickler with a jar of my wonderful dill pickles, or pickled carrots and beets; or some of my dehydrated veggie burgers which are small versions of the pecan loaf we will have with our supper on Christmas day. Most of the foods I have suggested can be pickled or dehydrated ahead and stored until ready to give as a gift on that special day. I started making the food in early November so I will be able to relax when the Christmas week arrives.

3. **Open House:** Another entertaining suggestion would be to hold an open house one Sunday in December when you can have most of your friends over at the same time so you will be free to do other things later and not be so rushed with many entertaining dates. For this I always serve a vegan buffet of an assortment of my favorite and easy recipes such as a salad that can be made the day before; a big bowl of seed cheese and hummus (again both can be made 1-2 days ahead and actually taste better when they are pre-made). These spreads will be served with some spicy flax-seed crackers that have been dehydrated weeks before then frozen and brought out the day of the event. As well I serve some mini pecan loafs served with a raw cranberry sauce; and to delight everyone's sweet tooth a raw squash and pumpkin pudding parfait that will rival any store bought pie and is so easy it is made in less than 30 minutes but taste like you took hours. What Christmas Open House doesn't serve egnog but ours will be dairy-free and can be served warm or cold. **See my recipes for a great holiday menu attached!**
4. **Get some REST:** You will enjoy your time with family and friends better if you get to bed early each day and if you include some exercise in your daily routine. **So plan ahead and then relax, enjoy and think about the true meaning of Christmas.**

