



Mind and Matter

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Holiday Issue 2012

Keeping it Simple for the Holidays

by Pilar Tamburrino, M.S., LMHC, CEAP

It seems like every year the holiday celebrations become more expensive and more of a production. The decorations go up earlier, gifts get bigger, and the traffic gets busier. Do you notice how uptight everyone seems during the holiday season? It's supposed to be a season in which we spend time with family and friends, accentuating the important things in life. While this sounds great in theory, in reality, most of us spend the holidays being enormously stressed. This hectic time of the year can be made merrier by simplifying. It is possible to enjoy the holidays, as long as you make a commitment to keep it simple.

Here are a few tips:

1. Pick and choose which holiday get-togethers and parties you really want to attend.

Decide which parties you actually want to go to. It is OK to say that you have other commitments or to simply say, "No thank you." Not everyone wants or likes going to holiday parties for many good reasons including: social anxiety, maintaining sobriety, they don't have money to buy a new outfit that they think they will need or weight issues to name a few. Be OK with not going and if you are having a party, be OK when some of your invited guests can't be there.

2. Don't feel obliged to give gifts to everyone.

Perhaps the largest contributing factor to stress during the holidays is the amount of shopping that everyone feels compelled to do. Fighting the crowds at your local mall and spending/charging for gifts that won't likely be remembered or that you cannot afford is never any fun. All that time, money, and energy spent can leave you feeling drained. Instead of buying gifts for everyone you know, buy gifts for the closest people in your life. Once you cut down your gift list, you'll immediately feel a sense of calm and serenity.

3. Don't try to take on everything yourself – Delegate!

Even if you cut down on shopping and you learn to balance your holiday events schedule, there's still a lot to tackle during the holidays. Most of us feel an urgent need to do everything ourselves, but allowing others to help you out will certainly simplify the process. For every task on your to-do list, try to request help for at least half of those items. In fact, guests prefer to take on some small tasks, instead of standing around while you attempt to do everything yourself.

4. Take time for yourself.

It's easy to get caught up in too many tasks, so remember to make time to relax a little. During your time off try to unwind and decompress by going to the spa, taking a long walk, or spending a night or two reading an enjoyable book or watching a fun movie.

5. Focus on the reason for the season – gratitude and love.

This time of year is about realizing what is important in your life. Somewhere along the way, the holidays started revolving around spending money. If you consciously stop yourself, take a step back, and express gratitude for all the wonderful people in your life, you'll reclaim the holiday's rightful place—a space in which we can pause our hectic lives and renew our commitment to love.

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Affordable and Practical Holiday Gift Ideas

by Rosario Zavala, MSW, LCSW

If you are wondering whether frugality and gift giving can co-exist during the holidays you may want to read the list of tips below. Follow these suggestions for budget-savvy gift ideas.

1. **Try making the gifts yourself.** Almost anyone can appreciate a batch of homemade holiday baked goods. Or, make a basket of your loved one's favorite items. Be creative!
2. **Give of yourself.** Create gift certificates of services for anyone on your list. These can range from babysitting, running a couple of hours of errands, a car wash and wax, a homemade meal, a girl's night out, an airport pick-up, etc. Your imagination is your limit on these!
3. **Buy magazine subscriptions.** They are often inexpensive and few people buy them for themselves.
4. **Buy in bulk.** Buy a box of wine, books, and gourmet candy for gifts for people like teachers, co-workers, hair dresser, landscaper, or trusted professional in your life.
5. **Buy online.** On-line retailers often have good deals.
6. **Use coupons.** Whether you clip them from the Sunday paper or get them from Facebook or Twitter. Coupons can save you considerable amounts.
7. **Cash in your reward points.** Do you have a ton of points saved up? Cash them in to help you with your holiday gift giving!

Holiday Recipe (*Recipe from Taste of Home.com 2012*)

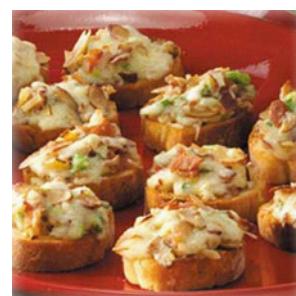
Almond-Bacon Cheese Crostini

For a change from the usual toasted tomato appetizer, try these baked bites. If you like, slice the baguette at an angle instead of making a straight cut.

36 Servings Prep: 30 min. Bake: 15 min.

Ingredients

- 1 French bread baguette (1 pound), cut into 36 slices
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 2/3 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted
- 6 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
- 1 green onion, chopped
- Dash salt
- Additional toasted almonds, optional



Directions

1. Place bread slices on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 400° for 8-9 minutes or until lightly browned.
2. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine the cheese, mayonnaise, almonds, bacon, onion and salt. Spread over bread. Bake for 7-8 minutes or until cheese is melted. Sprinkle with additional almonds if desired.
3. Serve warm. Yield: 3 dozen.

Nutrition Facts: 1 serving (calculated without additional almonds) equals 120 calories, 8 g fat (2 g saturated fat), 8 mg cholesterol, 160 mg sodium, 10 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 3 g protein.



⇒ Inspirational Quote

"Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love."

- Hamilton Wright Mabie

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Mind and Matter is a quarterly publication from the UM Faculty and Staff Assistance Program that provides helpful tips and articles regarding work-life balance, health and well-being. If you would like to receive this newsletter directly in your inbox each quarter, as well as receive announcements of upcoming FSAP seminars, please send an email to cbootle@miami.edu.

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