

CELEBRATING THE SEASON WITH FAMILY DINNER



Food

Team member Bri shares a family holiday recipe:
A Swedish dessert “soup” that’s good on ice cream,
yogurt or just on its own!



Fun

‘Tis the season for gift-giving!



Conversation

This month, brainstorm ways to give to others by
asking “What’s one thing that could make ____
happier today?”



Shopping. Wrapping. Decorating. School performances. Parties.

December is full of seasonal obligations for families, and even if you've vowed to "stress less" and "simplify," it's likely that at some point in the next month, you'll be wishing you could just slow down and focus on the things that matter to you. For many families we know, making and eating dinner together is one of the first things to fall by the wayside in favor of cramming in as much fun and togetherness as possible during the holiday season. But isn't family dinner itself supposed to be about keeping fun and togetherness in our daily routines?

Rather than always feeling we must do more in December, what if we could use family dinner as a way to combine our urges to celebrate and make the season special with the daily routines that we know are best for our families? We've compiled a list of Top 10 ways to focus on fun and family at your dinner table this season, so you can keep your mealtimes on track AND enjoy some extra special moments together.

- Make dinner a pajama party, complete with favorite snacks!
- Bring old photos or a family tree to the table and share family stories and holiday memories.
- Teach someone how to make a special family recipe. Tell them why it's special to you.
- Turn dinnertime into a holiday singalong. Bonus points for making up silly new words!
- Take turns reading from a favorite holiday storybook during dinner.
- Make a screen time exception and enjoy dinner and a movie in front of a favorite holiday film.
- Enjoy a wintertime walking dessert together (holiday cookies or hot cocoa in thermal cups are good choices) and take in the night sky and holiday lights in your neighborhood.
- Brainstorm random acts of kindness and challenge one another to complete them the next day.
- Talk about favorite holiday traditions and make up a new one to try this year!

Try these ideas at your dinner table, and share your own ways to make family dinner special during the holiday season on our Facebook page!

GO DEVICE FREE AT DINNER WITH COMMON SENSE MEDIA

While we believe that technology can have a place in your family dinner routine (see #6 above!), sometimes it can be a struggle to figure out how much, when and whether to allow screens and devices to share your table. Our friends at Common Sense Media are inviting families to take the #DeviceFreeDinner challenge to help prioritize face-to-face communication, and we're sharing their efforts along with additional tips and resources in our Technology at the Table section.

thefamilydinnerproject.org/technology-at-the-table

FAMILY OF THE MONTH

How do you feed a family of seven? With patience, humor and a lot of smart tips! Meet the Swanson family, our December Family of the Month.

Real Family Dinner Projects: The Swanson Family

thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/family-blog/real-family-dinner-projects-swanson-family



SWEDISH FRUIT SOUP



Team member Bri shares this recipe, handed down from her Swedish great-grandmother. “I don’t know if originally it was a holiday recipe,” she says, “but it became known as a Christmastime dish in our family because my great-grandmother used to make it for the Christmas Eve smorgasbord party she hosted each year.” With a combination of dried fruits and cinnamon, this stewed fruit dish is traditionally served cold as a dessert “soup,” but Bri says her family also enjoys it as a topping for yogurt or ice cream.salad!



Instructions:

1. Combine the dried fruits, tapioca and 6 cups of water in a heavy-bottomed pot and let soak overnight.
2. Add the apple and cinnamon stick to the soaked fruit and place over high heat. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, until the tapioca is clear and the fruit is very tender (about 20-30 minutes).
3. Heat the frozen berries with the remaining 1/2 cup of water until the berries are soft.
4. Press the berries and their liquid through a sieve, mashing with a spoon to extract as much juice and pulp as you can. Discard any pulp and seeds left in the sieve, reserving the juice you’ve strained.
5. Remove the stewed fruit mixture from the heat. Stir in the sugar, raspberry juice, and lemon juice.
6. Chill before serving.

Ingredients

- 16 dried apricots
- 16 dried plums
- 1 cup golden raisins
- 5 tablespoons tapioca
- 6 1/2 cups water, divided
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 cup peeled, diced apple
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 cups frozen raspberries
- 1 squeeze of fresh lemon juice



HAVE KIDS MAKE PRESENTS



When it comes to making gifts, kids can bake cookies, decorate wooden spoons, sew pillows, make candles or picture frames or burn CDs. Dr. Anne Fishel says making gifts helps kids learn to value the act of gift-giving. Brainstorm possible gift ideas at dinner!



GIVING AT HOME



As the old saying goes, “Charity begins at home.” If you want to begin a habit of giving to others, it’s easiest to start by paying attention to how you interact with family members and close friends. When we regularly offer a helping hand to those closest to us, we’re

strengthening our “giving muscles,” making it more likely that we’ll expand on those efforts to do more good works outside of our homes. After all, kindness makes everyone feel good – whether you’re on the receiving end or the giving end.

To help every member of your family practice flexing their giving muscles at home, try the “Happiness Challenge”: Each morning for a week, have every person in your household think of another family member or close friend and ask themselves, “What’s one thing I could do to make that person happier today?” Remind family members that there are many ways to give to others, and everyone – regardless of their age – can do something to make someone else’s day a little brighter.

You may want to begin your “Happiness Challenge” by brainstorming some sample ideas to help everyone get into the right spirit. Try breaking things down into three categories: Helping Acts, Caring Acts, and Sharing Acts. For younger family members, working on a few simple ideas in any one of the categories might be a good goal, while older kids and adults can challenge themselves by aiming to complete acts of giving from each of the three areas throughout the week. The chart below may help you start your brainstorming session off in the right direction!

Don’t forget: If you complete a dinner-oriented act of giving (like cooking a meal for a family member), take a photo and post it to Twitter or Instagram between December 2 and 16 with the hashtag #familydinnerforward to be eligible to win a fantastic prize package from Lenox!

thefamilydinnerproject.org/blog/family-blog/giving-home

Scan the QR Code to Sign up for our Email Newsletter

