



Christmas Planning Guide

Planning for a Simpler Season

It's the most wonderful time of the year --

Well, it can be. Christmas, that magical time of the year filled with gifts, delicious tastes and smells, and reunions of family and friends, can, indeed, be delightful. Or it can be a total nightmare if you are overworked, overdrawn, and overdone.

Avoid that blah feeling at a time when you should be rejoicing. While you can't make the "perfect" holiday, you can prepare and try to stem the tide of too much.

Over the last three years, we've talked all things Christmas at LifeasMOM.com -- in the middle of summer! Christmas in July has been a regular feature as we think ahead a few months and try to give ourselves a head start.

Years ago, I was pregnant with my second child, due in early November. Since my budget required that my gifts be handmade, I went to extreme measures to get those gifts done by his birthdate. I knew that I didn't want to be stressed about Christmas -- I wanted to enjoy it with my new baby!

Since then I haven't been quite so industrious. But, I do like to review things a little bit in advance. I no longer make many gifts by hand, but I do try to find the good ideas early so that I can have enough time to put them in action. That's why Christmas in July can be so much fun.

In the following pages, I've culled links, recipes, and planning pages from Christmases Past to share with you. Whether you browse them in July or on December 15th, it doesn't really matter. Having a plan is always a good thing, no matter how early or late in the game that you strategize.

It's my hope that by nudging you in the right direction a little earlier than

normal, you can create a custom-made Christmas plan for your family that will help you breathe deeply and enjoy that season when Love came down to Earth.


May yours be a very merry Christmas this year!

Love,

FishMama

aka Jessica Fisher

LifeasMOM.com



*when love came down to earth
and made his home with man,
the hopeless found a hope,
the sinner found a friend
-- stuart townend*

Christmas Planning Ideas



You

- [Jesus is Why](#)
- [Preparing for Advent: Where Will I Look?](#)
- [How to Have a Restful, Memorable, & Meaningful Holiday Season](#)
- [Making Christmas Memories to Last a Lifetime](#)

Your Home

- [Christmas To Do -- Make a List and Check It Twice](#)
- [Thinking Ahead to a Holiday Wardrobe](#)
- [5 Ways to Save on Christmas Expenses](#)
- [Tailoring Our Holiday Gatherings for All Ages](#)
- [Tips for Make Ahead Holiday Meals](#)
- [Christmas Morning: Breakfast in a Stocking](#)

Your Family

- [7 Ways to Make Christmas Easier and More Fun with Toddlers & Babies](#)
- [Budgeting for Christmas](#)
- [Planning for a Holiday Baby](#)
- [12 Holiday Tips to Avoid Accidental Poisoning](#)
- [Fun December Activities to Do with Your Family](#)
- [Offering Holiday Support to Unemployed Loved Ones](#)
- [Balancing Family Commitments at the Holidays](#)

Check this board on Pinterest as well for a variety of Christmas ideas around the web: <http://pinterest.com/fishmama/christmas/>

Christmas Tree Scones

1 cup unbleached flour
1/2 cup whole-wheat flour
1/2 cup quick-cooking oats
1/4 cup brown sugar
1 Tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup butter, cut into pieces
3/4 cup buttermilk
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
green sprinkling sugar
M and M's or other candy for
decorating

1. Measure the flours, oats, brown sugar, baking powder and salt into the bowl of food processor fitted with metal blade. (Adults only should handle metal blade.)
2. Secure the lid and pulse briefly to mix.
3. Add the butter pieces and process until coarse crumbs are formed. Pour the crumb mixture into a large mixing bowl.

(If you do not have a food processor, the same effect can be achieved in a mixing bowl with a pastry blender, fork, or two table knives held together.)
4. In the processor bowl, combine the buttermilk, egg, and vanilla extract. Slowly pour the wet ingredients into the dry crumb mixture and stir quickly, just until dough forms. Overmixing will result in tough scones.
5. Empty the dough onto a lightly floured surface. Knead three or four



times with floury hands. Dough will be sticky.

6. Shape the dough into a large, flat round.



7. Cut the round into eight wedges.
8. Sprinkle the dough heavily with green sprinkling sugar. As you separate the wedges, flatten the rounded side so that it forms the bottom of a Christmas tree.
9. Place the eight trees equally spaced on ungreased baking sheet.
10. Allow the children to decorate their trees with candies.
11. Bake for 15-20 minutes at 375 degrees. Cool on a wire rack before servings

Holiday Planning - To Do List

Action item	Date to do it	X
Create holiday budget Start saving in a special account or envelope		
Plan Advent/devotional activities with family		
Decide on Christmas cards Buy or make cards Address envelopes Sign, stamp, and mail		
Find decorations New ones to buy or make? Hang lights Buy or assemble tree Decorate house		
Review music collection New albums to buy? Locate CDs & load to iTunes Burn a new mix		
Inventory wardrobe Make list of items to add Shop for new items		
Assess calendar of events Say NO to enough that I stay sane Plan parties or events that we are hosting Post calendar where everyone can see it Set alerts in phones or online calendar systems		

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Action item	Date to do it	X
Consider holiday meal planning List the special meals you want to have Create a grocery list of staples to buy ahead of time Fill the freezer with make-ahead meals Bake cookies and freeze		
Inventory paper goods, wrappings, ribbons Make a list of needed items and look for sales Set up hostess station w/ paper goods Set up wrapping station		
Create list of gifts to make Purchase supplies Create calendar of progress Get crafting		
Create list of gifts to buy Determine what can be ordered online Go shopping		
Wrap gifts as completed/purchased		
Assemble shipping boxes and package gifts to mail Head to the PO or schedule a pick up		

Holiday Budget Worksheet

Category	Specific Details	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount Spent
Gifts for Family			
Gifts for Friends			
Gifts for Teachers, Co-workers, Etc			
Wrapping			
Cards and Postage			
Shipping			
Parties & Special Meals			
Transportation			
Holiday Clothing			
Giving			
Decorations			
	TOTAL Budgeted	\$	
	Divided by months to save	÷	
	Equals amount to save each month	\$	

Holiday Wardrobe Planning Sheet

Family Member	Shirts/Blouse	Pants/Skirts	Dresses	Shoes/Socks	Accessories

Holiday Dinner Plan

Name of Dish	Recipe Location	Prep Time	Cook Time	Ingredients Needed
Ex: Cheesy Potatoes	Family cookbook	10 min (Make-ahead)	2 hrs	Hashbrowns, 2 cans cream of chicken soup, grated cheese, minced onion, salt and pepper

Holiday Dinner Timeline

Recipe	Prep & Freeze	Night Before	In the AM	3 hours before	2 1/2 hours before	2 hours before	90 min before	1 hour before	30 min before	Serve!



About the Author

Jessica Fisher is a busy mom of six young children, aged toddler to teen. (Homeschool)mom by day, she moonlights as a writer.

Published in over 85 regional parenting publications, Jessica enjoys writing for periodicals as well as the web. She writes about ways to manage a home and family and still keep a smile on your face at

LifeasMOM.com and posts "delicious ways to act your wage" at [Good Cheap Eats](http://GoodCheapEats.com). She is a regular contributor on [Life Your Way](http://LifeYourWay.com) and [Simple Homeschool](http://SimpleHomeschool.com). Her writing has also been featured on [5 Dollar Dinners](http://5DollarDinners.com), [Money Saving Mom](http://MoneySavingMom.com), [Organizing Junkie](http://OrganizingJunkie.com), and [Simple Mom](http://SimpleMom.com).

She is the author of a forthcoming cookbook in the *Not Your Mother's* series, published by the Harvard Common Press. She has also authored a number of ebooks, including [Organizing Life as MOM](http://OrganizingLifeasMOM.com), [Summer Survival Guide](http://SummerSurvivalGuide.com), and [FishMama's Guide to Cooking with Children](http://FishMamasGuideToCookingWithChildren.com).

For more information about Jessica, visit <http://fishmama.com> or visit her at either of her two blogs, LifeasMOM.com and GoodCheapEats.com