

a simpler
season

Ring in the New Year

Ways to Celebrate New Year's

Celebrating

New Year's with Children

True confessions: I never celebrated one of those fancy New Year's Eves in a ball gown and high heels. I always thought that sounded fun. But, chances are it would be drafty, my feet would be sore, and I'd be disappointed that the big night out of the town didn't live up to my expectations.

I've also never known anyone who celebrated the last night of the year in this fashion. I'm wondering if it's just the stuff of movies and lifestyles of the rich and famous.

But either way, I've found that celebrating the new year with my husband and children is a wonderful way to mark the passing of time. After all, my family is the most important interest I have in this world, so why not count down the hours with them?

We don't stay up all night, spend a lot of money, or do anything too wild and crazy, but we do mark the last and first days of the year with some wonderful family fun. Here's how:

Create a **MEMORY PAGE** for the Old Year



People spend hundreds, thousands of dollars every year on entertainment and on ways to improve themselves and their family relationships. While some of that money is very well spent, often we can find less expensive ways of having fun and learning to appreciate our families.

One way that you can have fun and fall in love with your family all over again is to create a memory page of the past year. Back in my scrapbooking days, I did this every New Year's Eve.

I created a page or two of the year in review. I culled our favorite photos and most fun memories and put them all together in one spread. Then I journaled about each of those things.

Recently as I unloaded our scrapbooks onto the shelves of our office closet, I was reminded of the benefits of those yearly walks down Memory Lane.

- I was endeared to my family by reminiscing over good times spent

together.

- I was reminded that the time is passing too quickly.
- I was using scrapbooking supplies that I had paid a pretty penny for instead of letting them sit in a closet, gathering dust.

I was [doing something with our photos](#).

Walk down Memory Lane together this New Year's Eve. Print out your favorite photos of the year. Create a poster to hang on the wall or a scrapbook page to add to the family album. Or put all the photos together into a video to watch as a family.

It won't cost a lot, but the benefits are endless.

Record Your **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**



If photographs and glue sound too complicated this year, take a simpler approach by simply recording accomplishments of the past year on paper. Print out the following page, either one copy for the whole family or one for each person. Brainstorm together all the things that you've done together over the past year and write these down.

Use the following questions to get your creative juices flowing:

- Where did you go? Vacations, museums, amusement parks, attractions
- What did you see? Monuments, lakes, canyons, rivers
- What books did you enjoy?
- What movies did you see?
- What things did you learn how to do this year?
- What new foods did you try?



2011

Create New **TRADITIONS**



Over the years we've created traditions to celebrate with our kids. Here are some of our favorites:

Going to the Beach

Since we've moved back to California after five years living in the Mid-West, we've enjoyed the freedom of [going to the beach](#) during New Year's week. Some years have been a little chilly, others have been warm and sunny.

Often when one of the kids ask why we're going to the beach, the answer is, "Because we can." We don't want to take the beautiful ocean for granted.

Baking a New Year's Cake

Every year for as long as I can remember, we've [had a cake at New Year's](#) and we put number candles on top to represent the new year. It's a wonderfully fun and delicious way to say hello to the New Year. Kind of like a birthday cake for the days yet to come.

A Fun Breakfast and Watching the Parade on TV

I try to make some kind of fun breakfast on New Year's Day. Then we [watch the Rose Parade for awhile](#). OK, maybe the kids aren't all as interested in it as I am. But, I loved watching it when I was a child. While friends often drove to Pasadena to watch it in person, we just glued ourselves to the Tube. I still think it's fun.

Watching Football

Some of us are football fans around here, so if we are home on New Year's Day, there will be a football game going. I like football because there's cool food to eat.

Catching a Good Movie Together

Some may think of watching movies as a passive activity. And it is. But at the same time, we're sharing an experience together and it's something that our entire family enjoys doing.

Some of the movies we've enjoyed together:

[Despicable Me](#)

[Kung Fu Panda 1 & 2](#)

[Megamind](#)

[Rango](#)

[Star Wars 1 through 6](#)

[Tangled](#)

[Toy Story 3.](#)

Creating a family video

Making a slideshow set to music really is not difficult and it provides an easy, fun way to walk down Memory Lane. Most of us already have plenty of digital photos at our disposal. And the last two computers I've owned both came preloaded with software to make a video and burn it to a DVD. If I can do it, you can. Promise.

Ever year I try to make a video compilation of our year's photographs, set to music. I used [Microsoft Live Movie Maker](#) which is free to download. I didn't read the directions — because I don't read directions — much to my husband's chagrin, and I figured it out pretty easily. So, you can, too.

This is one of the highlights of our new year's eve, to watch a video together.

Eat Great **FOOD**



As you consider how you will celebrate the passage of time this week, think about how to include your children. One way is to prepare a fun feast or two.

New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve lends itself to the cocktail party format. We enjoy what we call a "snacky dinner." We do this every December 31st, and part of the fun of it is that we are establishing a tradition in the process.

Hors d'oeuvres are great kid food. Kids love to eat with their fingers! And since cocktail foods usually don't involve flatware, washing up is a snap. The perfect family-friendly feast!

Prepare whatever snacks your family likes on New Year's Eve.

Here are some of our favorites:

Potsticker Dipping

Sauce

- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tablespoon fresh minced ginger
- 2 Tablespoons sesame oil
- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- Storebought frozen potstickers

Combine all ingredients in glass dish and microwave until warm. Alternatively, heat over low heat in a small sauce pot. Serve with potstickers, prepared according to package directions.



Garlic Brie Bread

This appetizer is just fantastic! It is very “make-ahead” and only contains a few ingredients. One great aspect of it is that you get to eat the bowl!

1 large sourdough bread round (or two small rounds)
1 large loaf sourdough bread
4 Tablespoons olive oil, divided usage
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 small wheel Brie cheese, rind removed, cut into cubes



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut off top of bread round and place on cookie sheet. Remove interior of bread round, leaving a one-inch shell. Place shell on cookie sheet. Slice the part you removed and place on cookie sheet as well. Slice remaining sourdough loaf and lay out slices on cookie sheet(s).

Combine 2 tablespoons olive oil with garlic and brush on interior of bread bowl. Brush remainder of oil on all bread slices. Fill bread bowl with Brie cheese cubes. Place all cookie sheets into oven and bake until cheese is melted completely and bread is toasted. Serve Brie bowl with toasted bread. When most of cheese is consumed, slice bread bowl into sections and eat those, too!

Cheese & Fruit Plate

Create your own cheese & fruit plate with a selection of your family's favorite breads, cheeses and fruit.



- **breads** – serve a French baguette and whole grain artisan breads, sliced on the diagonal. You can [bake your own](#) or buy some at a bakery, like Panera.
- **cheeses** – choose three cheeses with different textures and strengths, like Brie, gruyere, and something like Boursin. Experiment with different varieties and see which ones you like best. Grocers with a cheese counter, like Whole Foods, will sell you just a small bit.
- **fruit** – select fruits that are easy to eat and serve and that compliment cheese well, such as apples, strawberries, or grapes. Clementines are a nice addition as they are so easy to peel.

Super Easy Veggie Tray & Ranch Dip

Carrots

Cucumbers

Wash veggies with vinegar and water. Peel the carrots completely and the cucumbers intermittently.

Leaving a little of the green skin



makes them prettier as well as helps them hold their texture longer.

Slice both on an angle. If your carrots are thin, you'll need to slice at an extreme angle to get enough surface area to make a good sized dipper. Arrange on a pretty plate or platter. Divide the different colored vegetables into sections, surrounding your dish of ranch dressing. Chill until serving.

Ranch Dip

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1/2 cup buttermilk

1 tbsp. dried parsley

1 tsp. onion powder

1 tsp. garlic powder

A pinch of cayenne pepper

Combine all ingredients in a small mixing bowl until smooth. Cover and refrigerate for several hours to allow flavors to blend.

Apple Dippers with Maple Whipped Cream

apples

one cup heavy whipping cream

1-2 Tablespoons maple syrup



Core and slice apples. Arrange on a platter. Whip cream and syrup together until soft peaks form. Serve immediately. Store leftover cream in an airtight container for a day or two.

Apple Sparkly (Serves 4-6)

Purchase plastic goblets and treat them to this sparkly juice that they can easily prepare with you. Encourage them to prepare their own toasts to one another.

1 can apple juice concentrate

1 2-liter bottle carbonated water or soda water

In large pitcher or punchbowl, pour juice concentrate. Add six cans carbonated water. Serve in plastic goblets.

New Year's Breakfast

Consider this make ahead breakfast for the first day of the year. Not only is it easy to prepare, but it doesn't require that every item be hot and ready at the same time. In fact, it is perfectly adaptable to a brunch or breakfast buffet, so that the early risers can eat when they wake while those who sleep in aren't missing out.

Simple Hard Cooked Eggs

These recommendations for boiling eggs come from the [American Egg Board](#).

Place eggs in saucepan large enough to hold them in a single layer. Add cold water to cover eggs by 1 inch. Heat over high heat just to boiling.

Remove from burner. Cover pan. Let eggs stand in hot water about 15 minutes for Large eggs (12 minutes for Medium eggs; 18 for Extra Large).

Cool completely under cold running water or in a bowl of ice water. Peel and eat, or store unpeeled in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Cheese & Meat Platter

Sliced deli meats like turkey, salami, and ham

Sliced cheeses like cheddar, swiss or jack

Roll the meat into thin tubes and lay out on the platter, clustering all of one kind of meat together. Fan out the cheese slices on the platter so that they are slightly overlapping.

Fresh Fruit Plate

strawberries

green and red grapes

cantaloupe

Rinse strawberries well and pat dry. Remove hulls, if desired.

Rinse grapes. Using kitchen scissors, cut the large bunches into smaller, serving size clusters.

Rinse the outside of the cantaloupe and pat dry. Slice off the stem and blossom ends. Turn cantaloupe onto one of the newly-cut flat ends. With a sharp knife, shave off cantaloupe's husk. Try not to cut off too much of the orange fruit. Continue until the melon's rind is gone. Discard. Now slice the melon in half lengthwise. Remove seeds with a large spoon and discard. Cut into wedges, about eight per half.

Arrange the strawberries in the center of a pretty plate. Arrange the slices of melon around strawberries like the spokes on a wheel. Place grape clusters in between the melon slices, alternating green and red.

Cranberry-Orange Muffins

3 cups unbleached flour

1/2 cup whole wheat flour

4 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 cup sugar, brown sugar, or sucanat

1/2 cup oil

1 cup milk

1/2 cup plain yogurt

2 eggs or 2 Tablespoons flax seed meal mixed with 6 Tablespoons water

1 teaspoon orange zest

2 cups fresh cranberries



Preheat oven to 350 °. Line muffin tin with papers or spray with nonstick cooking spray. In large mixing bowl, combine, flours, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and sugar. (If preparing as a mix, simply combine all these ingredients in a ziptop bag, label well, mark with the wet ingredients and baking instructions.)

In a separate bowl, combine oil, milk, yogurt, and eggs. Whisk to blend. Add wet ingredients to dry. Fold gently until mostly moistened, but still lumpy. Fold in mix-ins.

For 12 extra large muffins, fill muffin cups completely, even mounding past their tops. For 24 kid-size muffins, fill almost full. Bake 25 – 35 minutes, depending on how much you fill them.

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Plan for the **NEW YEAR**



New Year's is the perfect combination of events. New Year's Eve represents a chance to look back on the past and all that we have to be thankful for. We get to see all the ways in which we and our families have grown. New Year's Day is the opportunity to celebrate a fresh start. And since we all make mistakes, I think it's safe to say, we all like fresh starts.

New Year's Day is the beginning of something new and a time to anticipate how we will grow and change in the coming year.

Reflection and anticipation. Good food for thought and good practices to instill in our children. Print out the next page, perhaps copies for each person in the family and think about the new year.

- *Where do we want to go?*
- *What do we want to do?*
- *What do we want to make?*
- *What do we want to see?*
- *What do we want to read?*

Create some goals as individuals and as a family.

2012



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 freelance writer, blogger, and cookbook author.



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).

Jessica 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://FishMamasGuide.com).

For more information about Jessica, go to Fishmama.com or visit her at either of her two blogs, LifeasMOM.com and GoodCheapEats.com