



# The Gull

*Holiday Edition*

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Holidays &  
Traditions





# YULE

By Isabella DeCunzo

When most people hear the word Yule, they think of a few things: the line in that one song that goes “Yuletide carols, many times...”, the yule log dessert, or a fancy word for Christmas. But what a lot of people don't know is that Yule is the name of a Pagan holiday celebrated in December.

Yule is a festival to mark the return of the light. It is celebrated on the Winter Solstice or December 21st (June 21st for the southern hemisphere), which is the longest night of the year. So, they celebrate that the light will be returning as the days get longer from there. Yule can most notably be traced back to the Norse people and the Romans. It created a time for celebration, merrymaking and feasting, and is usually celebrated with the tradition of lighting a yule log.

Yule and Christmas are very similar and they have adopted a few traditions from each other. During Yule, many families decorated trees with metal ornaments, fruits or other plants that represented a god. Christmas adopted this tradition to use the tree to worship the birth of Jesus, and to give Santa a place to leave presents. Christmas caroling was another tradition adopted from Yule. Wassailers went from door to door singing and drinking to the health of their neighbors. Sounds familiar, right? Nowadays, we just sing silly Christmas songs to entertain our friends, family and neighbors. We also share the ritual of kissing under the mistletoe. Mistletoe is considered a magical plant. Ancient societies like the Romans completed fertility rituals under it to appease the gods. In current culture, we kiss under the mistletoe, which makes for a lot of cute Christmas Rom-Com moments.

Over the years, Yule and Christmas have become almost identical. They share a lot of the same traditions just for different reasons. They are also celebrated on different days, but those days aren't that far apart from each other. Yule is a beautiful holiday, so whenever you go Christmas caroling, set up a tree or kiss a partner under the mistletoe, think of where these traditions we love so much came from.



# STARTING AND KEEPING TRADITION THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

by Kirsten Carman

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Regardless of where you are, what you celebrate, or how old you are, tradition is a big factor of the Holidays. Whether big or small, traditions create unity and comfort during the holiday season between families, friends, and communities, and are important to keep alive each year that passes. Baking Christmas cookies and drinking hot chocolate may seem simple and second-nature this time of year, but classic traditions such as these, to most people, have a much more genuine and deeper meaning.

Holiday traditions are ritualistic behaviors that allow us to nurture our relationships. They create a sense of belonging, strengthen bonds between loved ones, and emphasize what you value most. As traditions are passed down from generations of family or communities, you become connected to history and those who have come before you, and have the power to keep their memories alive.

If you don't have a long-running tradition in your family, with your friends, or in your community, this is your year to create one! Find something that brings you joy, peace, and comfort during this time of year, and something you can share with those you love. **Here are some traditions that YOU can start this Holiday season:**


- Bake cookies and share them with your friends
- Watch a Holiday movie at least once a week throughout the season (*Elf* and *Home Alone* are my personal favorites)
- Donate toys and winter coats to organizations in your community
- Learn to (or help!) cook a family recipe
- Create a Holiday playlist with all of your favorite songs to share with your friends and family
- Drive or walk around your neighborhood and look at Holiday lights and decorations
- Play a new game with your family
- Wear your favorite Holiday pajamas to school the day before Christmas Break (I've done this every single year since Kindergarten, start break cozy!)
- If you're feeling competitive, have a Gingerbread House decorating contest
- Spend time with your family going through old pictures
- Create a New Year's Resolution that you *truly* want to accomplish
- Write letters to loved ones wishing them a Happy Holidays




# festivus for the rest of us



by Isabella DeCunzo





One of the greatest holidays ever created is the holiday known as Festivus, or as others call it "The Festival of Fights". Festivus ain't no holiday for the light of heart. This day surrounds airing your grievances and sharing how everyone else disappointed you this year. Sounds like fun!





Festivus originated from the show *Seinfeld* in an episode called "The Strike". George Costanza's father created it after an unfortunate fight over a doll in a department store. The holiday takes place on December 23 and has its fair share of traditions that take place. Here is how to celebrate:


Instead of a tree you need to get an aluminum pole. But don't decorate it because it's distracting. Leave the pole to its natural beauty. Attach it to a wooden cross or stand at the bottom so it stands up like a tree. Next you need to prepare a traditional feast. This typically consists of meatloaf on top of a bed of lettuce but you can eat what you want. I don't care and they don't care.



Now for the main event, the airing of grievances. Now before you begin your feast you must air out your grievances with everyone at the table. Go around and share how everyone else has disappointed you this year. You also get to listen to how you disappointed others. And to finish off the night we have the feats of strength. The host of the night will test their strength and wrestle one of the guests. Guests may decline only if they have something more important to do such as work. Festivus is not considered over until the host is pinned to the floor.



Festivus is one of the healthiest of holidays as you work out your body and you work out your problems with your folks. Some grievances may end in full fledged fights but at least you start the new year on a clean slate. Happy Festivus, and I hope you have a fun time celebrating the holiday this year.





# Holiday Traditions

Bring Global Customs Into Your Home This December!

by Clare Acuti

There is no better season than the holiday season. The holidays offer a reprieve from everyday troubles and classic family or cultural traditions make it a time of happiness and introspection. During my 17 years of life, I have become stuck in a cycle of the same customs each year, and while I love caroling, decorating the house with mistletoe, and watching *The Grinch*, I thought it would be beneficial to dig into some other holiday traditions. So, if you're like me and you would like to add a little bit of spice to your holiday plans, keep on reading to learn more about traditions all around the world! DISCLAIMER- I will be trying to stay away from religious traditions so that everyone can feel comfortable trying them and incorporating other cultural aspects into their holiday season.

## The Night of the Radishes, Mexico

Sure, radishes are not the first healthy snack that comes to mind when you think of the month of December, but for the people of Oaxaca, Mexico, they can bring much comfort and happiness during the holiday season. Taking place on the 23rd of December each year, The Night of the Radishes (Noche de Rabanos) is a celebration of artistic ability and Mexican culture through intricately carved radishes. This tradition started as a way to advertise radishes for shop owners but has subsequently morphed into town-wide festivals of radishes chiseled to create people, musicians, and even buildings. This tradition stood out to me because of its humble origin in 1897, and the fact that the carved radishes also served as offerings to be gifted for people's tables during the holiday season. I think that putting effort into designing something as ordinary as a radish and turning it into a gift used to cheer up others is extremely endearing and represents the kindness that we should be treating others with every day. So, I urge you to make radishes the new holiday Jack-O-Lanterns and gift your loved ones a carved radish to show them just how much they mean to you!





### Mari Lwyd (Gray Mare), Wales

Caroling has always been one of my favorite holiday pastimes, but I have to admit, the same old renditions of *Frosty the Snowman*, *Silent Night*, and *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* can get a little repetitive year after year. In Wales, however, caroling is taken to a whole new level. There is a tradition



called Mari Lwyd, or Gray Mare, in which a singing group will march down the streets going from door to door while accompanied by a horse skull carried on a stick by people covered in white cloth. The carolers, otherwise known as Wassailers, sing Welsh holiday songs that petition the house residents to let the Gray Mare in. It is custom for the Mari Lwyd to be welcomed in so that the house will have good luck for the next year. This tradition, which is said to be thousands of years old, is another one of my favorites because it is a fun way to encourage hospitality and overall holiday spirit through the use of music. It definitely makes the typical caroling seem boring and I love the idea that “carolers” can bring luck to the homes they visit. I think that this whole tradition encapsulates the meaning of hospitality and holiday cheer, so I implore all of you carolers to bring along a horse skull if that's something you have lying around. If not, make caroling more fun with outfits, gifts for the houses you visit, or even songs from other cultures!



### Toji (Winter Solstice), Japan-

In my opinion, the winter solstice can be one of the worst days of the year because of the lack of sunlight. I tend to be most productive when it's light out and when it gets dark early, I get less and less in the mindset to complete the tasks I need to complete. That is why I think Japanese people who celebrate Toji have the right idea. On the winter solstice (normally December 21st) it is common to take a relaxing bath to celebrate. This bath, called a Yuzuyu because it incorporates the winter citrus fruit Yuzu, is said to prevent you from catching a cold and can grant you good luck for the new year/longer days. If you have access to one, it is also custom to visit hot springs (called an onsen) during this time of year so that you can engage in self-care and have a chance to focus on staying calm and healthy. Finally, eating hearty meals is also a part of the solstice tradition. In my opinion, the best way to take inspiration from these traditions is to view the Winter Solstice or the holiday in general as a time to take care of your mental and physical health through relaxing baths, good meals, and introspection. I know I will definitely be taking time to care for myself in the wake of sometimes stressful holiday events.



## Giant Lantern Festival, Philippines

I love holiday lights and I think they are always what make the holiday season feel complete. It turns out that, in the Philippines, they value lights as well and have turned lights into the centerpiece of their celebrations. During the Giant Lantern Festival, held in San Fernando, Philippines, hundreds of huge (normally 20ft tall) and glittering lanterns are designed to show various patterns and colors. This beautiful display normally takes place from December 17th to January 1st and serves to symbolize the importance of light, optimism, and faith. Not only is this display extremely inspiring for locals and tourists, but it is also a chance for local artists to showcase their talents and bring happiness to people from all walks of life. To add some extra spice, there is also a competition for the best lantern. It is my goal to step up my lights game this year and make my house a piece of art that rivals these lanterns. I recommend taking inspiration from this tradition and using decorative lights to bring happiness and light to your community.



It is safe to say that every culture brings its own unique and enjoyable traditions to the table every holiday season and it is great to take inspiration from them when decorating and celebrating. Working to inform yourself about traditions all over the globe can be very rewarding and open your eyes to some beautiful and fantastic customs you might not have known about otherwise. Try to fit some of these cool new traditions into your holiday season to make it even more exciting and enjoyable! Happy Holidays!

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# It's Not Just Christmas

## OTHER DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

BY RIKKI CARACCILO

As we are just approaching the beginning of the holiday season, many default to Christmas or Hanukkah, but there are many more holidays that are celebrated that people don't know about that have been around just as long as all the others. December is titled as the holiday season because it is jam-packed with a whole bunch of other Holidays.

### **Hanukkah: December 10th-18th**

Hanukkah's origins came from one of the stories of Jerusalem. A Menorah (the seven-branched candelabrum) in the Second Temple of Jerusalem burned for 8 consecutive days although only having oil to last one day. This temple had just ensued in the Maccabean Revolt- in which the Jews rose to revolt against their suppression against a Greek-Syrian Army. This consecutive 8-day burning candle was viewed as a miracle and thus Hanukkah was born. Hanukkah is celebrated for 8 days to represent the burning length of the original Menorah. Every Menorah has 9 candles. The four on each side are to be lit every day to symbolize the 8 days, the 9th candle is the one placed in the middle and is there to light all the other candles. A recitation of traditional hymns and songs are repeated to honor the holiday, and traditional foods like latkes (potato pancakes), and sufganiyot (jelly-filled donuts) are passed around and eaten. Many Jewish families exchange 1 gift per night for 8 nights, and they're traditionally wrapped with silver and blue paper. A traditional game people play with their families is with a dreidel. Dreidels are four-sided spinning tops that have Hebrew names engraved on them: nun, gimel, hey, and shin, which is an acronym for a miracle. To play, a person will claim a side and bet on something like traditional chocolate coins, money, candy, or something else. The winner is the person who picked the corrected side on which the dreidel will land.







### Las Posadas: December 16th-24th

Las Posadas (Spanish for "The Inn") is traditionally celebrated in Mexico and other parts of Central America. This honors Mary and Joseph on their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to find Jesus' birth site. Each night, one child, dressed up as an angel, will lead a procession throughout the towns and cities. Children traditionally wear gold robes and carry candles along with photos of Mary and Joseph. Adults follow as many play music. Adults stop at houses and ask for lodging,

but when denied as in the original story, they keep on walking, singing Christmas carols, and reading bible passages. Every night, a Mass is held, and at the end of this Mass, a piñata is broken. The piñata is in the shape of a star to represent the star that led the three wise men to Jesus' birth site.

### Winter Solstice/Yule/Christmastide: December 21st

This Pagan holiday was originally celebrated on one of the darkest days of the year, Yule, and is also one of the oldest winter holidays in history. This is to celebrate the "welcoming back" periods of the longer days of sunlight of the year. Historically Yule (or Christmastide, Yuletide) will be celebrated by cutting down a large oak tree and placing it into a fireplace and slowly placing more in for 12 days to celebrate the 12 days of Christmas.



This was the start of the Yuletide Log. Celebrating more modern, people will either meditate, craft an evergreen wreath, exchange nature-themed gifts, have candlelight celebrations, and will celebrate outside to honor nature's many gifts.

### Soyal: December 22nd

Soyal is celebrated by Zuni and Hopi Native American tribes in the southern US to honor the Winter Solstice with a ceremony to lure back the sun god, which is believed they travel away from them in the winter. This also marks a new cycle of their "Wheel Of The Year" (a symbol of 8 sabbats {religious festivals} of Neo-Paganism and the Wicca movements which includes four solar festivals {summer solstice, fall solstice, spring solstice, winter solstice}). This is a festival that lasts 16 days and includes prayers, supplications, passing down elder stories from the tribe, and then a feast. The feast occurs on December 22nd, tribe members dress up in masks and costumes to represent their Kachina spirits (spirits who are believed to support the community). Children are gifted dolls that represent these Kachina spirits as a gift.





### **Christmas: December 25th**

On December 25th, Christian families celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ. However, over the years, many non-Christian families began to celebrate as well, and use the day to shower their loved ones with gifts. It's the number 1, most celebrated holiday in the world. People put up trees, stockings, and other decorations. Department stores fill up on Christmas items before Halloween. Holiday sales begin even before Thanksgiving! On average, households will spend \$1.5k per year on holiday gifts.



### **Kwanzaa: December 26th**

Kwanzaa is one of the more recent holidays. It started in 1966 and is a celebration that starts on December 6th and ends on January 1st. Black Americans celebrate their heritage and bond as a community. Families gather together to light a kinara (similar to a menorah, a seven-branched candleholder). This holds one black, three green and three red candles. These candles are lit once a night and symbolize the seven principles of Kwanzaa:

- Umoja (unity),
- Kujichagulia (self-determination),
- Ujima (collective work and responsibility),
- Ujamaa (cooperative economics),
- Nia (purpose),
- Kuumba (creativity), and
- Imani (faith)



After lighting a candle, families will recite poems from well-known people inside their communities, or sing and dance, and then they will have a feast. The name Kwanzaa comes from, "matunda ya kwanza" which means "fruit harvest". The feast on Kwanzaa will normally include fruits, vegetables and nuts. The food will be placed on a special mat called a mkeka. An ear of corn will also be placed for any child celebrating Kwanzaa. On the 6th night, many will drink from the same cup to remember their ancestors, and this also represents unity and remembrance. Every night has a different feast but the biggest takes place on the last night, January 1st, called Karamu. At the end of the night, the family will exchange gifts, which traditionally are handmade and represent art, culture, or heritage.



# ERHS Holiday Traditions

"I love getting gifts! I am a gifter and I love seeing people happy."

-Ms. Bernberg, English

"My favorite holiday memory is going to The Polar Express train!"

-Stephanie DeCunzo, 8th Grade

"My favorite holiday movie is the original *Home Alone*,"

-Mrs. Pietrantonio, Science

"I really enjoy hanging up Christmas decorations,"

-Zain Tariq, 11th Grade

"My favorite part of the holidays is spending time with family, watching Christmas movies, baking, and of course, gift shopping!"

-Ms. Horvath, Business

"My favorite holiday movie is A Christmas Story - every Christmas Eve I watch it with my family,"

-Adrianna Becker, 9th Grade

"My favorite holiday traditions are visiting the NYC Christmas tree, baking cookies, shopping for loved ones and spending time with friends and family."

-Mrs. Parasmu, Social Studies

"I enjoy spending time with my family and friends and opening presents with my siblings."

- Elyssa Maffetone, 10th Grade

"My favorite holiday tradition is when we get together with family on Christmas Eve to exchange presents and then when we return home we change into matching holiday pajamas and spend all Christmas Day in our pajamas. "

-Dr. Krauz



# ENTERTAINMENT



# A TOY TIME MACHINE:

## LOOKING BACK ON THE TOYS THAT MADE CHILDHOODS

By Erin Lynch

When you think back to your childhood, is there a specific toy that comes to mind? A doll, stuffed animal, or action figure you wouldn't dare travel without? Well, depending on age, this will most likely vary for everyone. In fact, most toy fads come and go while others are still found in toy stores today. Flashing back to 1955, let's look at the must have toys of each decade.

### 1955-1959

1955: **Betsy Wetsy** - The popular baby doll that can "drink-and-wet"

1956: **Playdoh** - The bright dough used for molding millions of possibilities

1957: **Silly Putty** - The timeless stress relieving putty

1958: **Colorforms** - The colorful vinyl shapes used to make illustrations

1959: **Barbie** - America's favorite doll



### 1960-1969

1960: **Legos** - The iconic colorful bricks that are fun to play but not so fun to step on

1961: **Etch-A-Sketch** - The first ever mechanical sketch pad, controlled by two white knobs

1962: **Lincoln Logs** - Small plastic logs that could be assembled into structures of your wildest imagination

1963: **Duncan Yo-Yos** - The classic mesmerizing toy

1964: **Easy Bake Oven** - This toy made anyone feel like a master baker

1965: **G.I Joe** - The iconic military themed action soldier

1966: **Twister** - Its colorful dots will twist you into a pretzel

1967: **Lite Brite** - Simply a pegboard that allowed you to create colorful illuminated images

1968: **Hot Wheels** - The timeless mini race cars with over 11,000 variations

1969: **Snoopy Astronaut** - Snoopy in his NASA uniform.



### 1970- 1979

1970: **Nerf Ball** - The foam ball made to be played with indoors

1971: **Weebles** - The wobbly dolls that mesmerized kids all over America

1972: **Uno** - A card game that just never gets old

1973: **Skateboards** - These boards had kids doing ollies and kickflips everywhere

1974: **Dungeons and Dragons** - A war-simulation, role playing board game

1975: **Pet Rock** - Known as the perfect minimal effort pet, a smooth rock

1976: **Cher Doll** - The best selling celebrity doll in 1976

1977: **Star Wars Action Figures** - The movie along with its merchandise was a huge success

1978: **Simon** - The electronic color memorization game

1979: **Atari 2600 or the Strawberry Shortcake Doll** - This home video game console was at the top of every wish list along with the sweet scented strawberry themed doll



## 1980-1989

- 1980: **Rubik's Cube** - This popular puzzle had people all over the world trying to match the colorful squares
- 1981: **He-Man toys** - The extremely successful superhero action figure
- 1982: **My Little Pony** - The timeless plastic colorful ponies
- 1983: **Cabbage Patch Kids** - These popular soft dolls had Americans searching far and wide to purchase one of their own
- 1984: **Transformers** - These iconic figures can transform from vehicles into robots
- 1985: **Care Bears** - The colorful fluffy plush bears
- 1986: **Teddy Ruxpin** - The first animatronic bear that could blink and read
- 1987: **Jenga** - The game of wooden blocks that requires balance and skill
- 1988: **Nintendo Entertainment System** - An innovative video game system with a variety of games
- 1989: **Game Boy** - A handheld video game that could be played anywhere



## 1990- 1999

- 1990: **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Action Figures** - After the extremely successful animated series the ninja turtle figures flew off shelves
- 1991: **Super Soakers** - These water guns were serious must-haves of kids everywhere
- 1992: **The Super Nintendo Entertainment System** - The new and improved gaming system was a step up from the first
- 1993: **The Talkboy** - Promoted in "Home Alone 2: Lost In New York", the release of the portable cassette player became an instantaneous success
- 1994: **Mighty Morphin Power Rangers** - After the release of the action series these figures were a hit
- 1995: **Beanie Babies** - The stuffed animals that had people in a craze to collect every single one
- 1996: **Tickle Me Elmo** - From the popular show "Sesame Street", the plush Elmo could even laugh!
- 1997: **Tamagotchi** - The small device where users would take care, feed, and play with their virtual pet
- 1998: **Furby** - The furry, colorful, robotic toys that sold out but were definitely a little creepy
- 1999: **Pokemon Cards** - The cards that had millions of kids trading and competing with one another

## 2000-2009

- 2000: **Razor Scooter** - The collapsible trick scooters
- 2001: **Bratz Dolls** - The famous fashion forward dolls
- 2002: **Beyblade** - Spinning tops that had kids holding competitions in their plastic stadiums
- 2003: **Robosapien** - A robotic toy that could talk, throw, and move
- 2004: **Nintendo DS** - This handheld game system had dual screens, one being touch screen
- 2005: **Xbox 360** - The improved Xbox gaming system
- 2006: **Nintendo Wii or Sony PlayStation 3** - These two new and innovative gaming systems skyrocketed in 2006
- 2007: **iPod Touch** - This small device could do everything an iPhone could besides call or text
- 2008: **Elmo Live** - The animatronic Elmo was a must have for the "Sesame Street" fans
- 2009: **Zhu Zhu Pets** - The extremely popular plush robotic hamsters.





## 2010- 2022

2010: **iPad** - Apple's first touchscreen tablet

2011: **LeapPad Explorer** - A learning tablet made just for kids

2012: **Wii U** - Nintendo's high definition game console with the innovative motion controller

2013: **Rainbow Loom** - These small rubber bands put a popular spin on classic friendship bracelets

2014: **Frozen Dolls** - The extremely popular Disney movie had kids in a craze for anything "Frozen"

2015: **Pie-Face** - This game had kids suspensefully spinning the game's wheel hoping they won't get whipped cream to the face

2016: **Hatchimals** - A colorful egg that hatches into a furry friend with love and care

2017: **L.O.L. Surprise** - The extremely popular miniature dolls that come with a variety of accessories

2018: **Fingerlings** - The adorable colorful robotic monkeys that react by blinking and blowing kisses

2019: **Paw Patrol Lookout Tower** - The popular kids TV show help skyrocket the sales of the toy inspired by the show

2020: **Star Wars Baby Yoda** - The adorable character introduced by the franchise sold out instantaneously

2021: **Magic Mixies Magical Misting Cauldron** - This magical cauldron that fizzes and bubbles

2022: **Squishmallows Mystery Box** - The trendy soft plushies with over 1,000 different characters are at the top of every wishlist

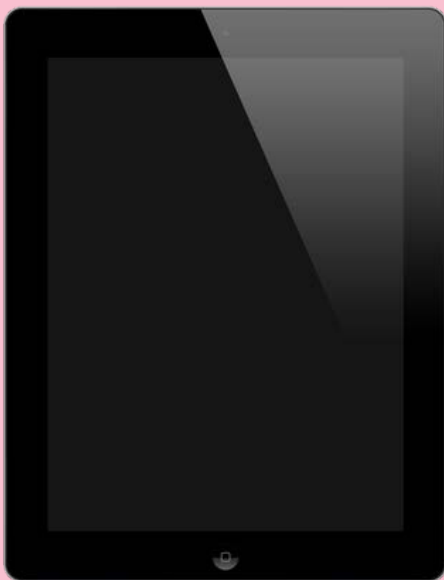
Whether it comes to the price or style, the toy aisle looks much more different today than it did back in 1960. While some of these toys may have been discontinued, remodeled, or still remain the same today, toys have evolved immensely over the past 62 years. As the list goes on, most toys mentioned are electronic unlike the simple action figures popular near the top of the list. But despite this, toys as simple as the Rubik's Cube continue to entertain children year after year.

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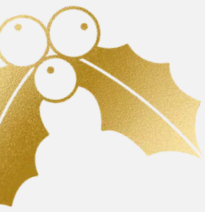






# MOVIE REVIEW

## Falling for Christmas


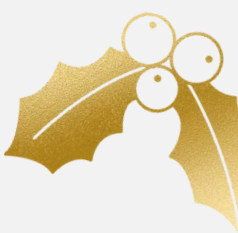
By Stephanie Lynch








When I first saw the cast for this *Falling for Christmas*, I was very optimistic about this being a decent romantic comedy. Lindsay Lohan has been in very popular movies from the 90s and early 2000s, including *Mean Girls* and *The Parent Trap*. Chord Overstreet is most known for his part as Sam in *Glee*. They definitely have the acting experience to create a cute movie. Lindsay Lohan and Chord Overstreet had great chemistry in the movie. The plot was decent and checks off all the basic Christmas romantic movie requirements. The requirements are accidentally bumping into each other, having a small child help them come together, a dress reveal, and of course a montage of some sort. The title of the movie doesn't make sense until watching the whole movie. While, this looks like every Hallmark Christmas movie ever made, I like that the movie didn't end with everyone saying, "Merry Christmas," five times in a row. Instead, the movie ended with a joke about it being a Christmas to never forget.



The movie definitely had its ups and downs, but I never cringed while watching. The best part of the movie was when Lohan sang a part of "Jingle Bell Rock", which brought back memories of *Mean Girls*. One of the worst things was the acting of the side characters and the unrealistic beauty in the movie. The first scene has her waking up with perfect hair and makeup, which is unrealistic.



Overall, the movie is definitely a cozy Christmas movie if you are looking for something on Netflix. The fact that they were falling in love after four days and he didn't even know her name for half the movie is a little concerning, but it's a cute movie for the holiday season.







# The Top 5 Most Overrated Christmas Songs

by Sarah O'Moore



## Number 5: "White Christmas" by Michael Bublé

To some, this might be an iconic Christmas song people listen to each holiday season, but you will never catch me voluntarily listening to it. I know others have called this a "calm" song, but to me it is just so bland and boring that I want to fall asleep thinking about it. I do have to say I would love to have a white Christmas this year, but I've hoped for one every year and it hasn't happened.



## Number 4: "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus" by Jimmy Boyd

When I think of Christmas and the holidays, I do not think of love, especially with Santa. It makes me rethink my whole childhood on how I viewed Santa and I'm scarred for life. I know it's supposed to be funny, and there is even a movie called this too, but it makes me too uncomfortable to laugh about. I want to think of Santa as the man who brings me gifts every year, not the man who kissed someone's mother.



### **Number 3: "Silent Night" by Frank Sinatra**

I do say it does hurt to put this song on the list. I know it is a classic and people are going to disagree, but it does deserve a spot on the list. This song is just too calm and slow that it makes me want to fall asleep and not get ready for Christmas. If this was a list for songs to fall asleep to it would be number 1, but when it comes to Christmas songs, one of the worse.



### **Number 2: "Santa Baby" by Eartha Kitt**

Every time this song is played I cringe. I don't know if it's from listening to it too much or it being an older song, but her voice is so breathy it makes me uncomfortable. Same with song number 4, "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus", I don't like how she talks to Santa. It is also too slow for me, I would rather have a more upbeat song to get me in the Christmas spirit.



### **Number 1: "All I Want For Christmas Is You" by Mariah Carey**

Although this might be controversial, many have agreed with me that this is the most overrated Christmas song. I do give credit to Mariah for having the most popular Christmas song and making boatloads of money every year, but it's still overrated. Every time on the radio or in stores it is the most played song and you hear it over and over again. If they didn't play it 100 million times a day it wouldn't be this overrated.





# HOLIDAY MOVIES WE NEED TO PUT TO REST

BY CONOR KELLY



I love the holiday season, and contrary to others, I love the cold. Everything looks nice and I get to snowboard and wear comfy clothes. But don't be fooled, I am not here to try and convince you to like the winter. Instead, I want to go over the holiday movies that we finally need to put to rest (in no particular order).

First, I want to discuss *The Polar Express*. This movie is *terrifying*. A very poorly animated child leaves his house in the middle of the night and gets on a train without a known destination. He encounters very creepy people along the way and gets in trouble numerous times. Can someone please explain the horrific man on top of the train to me? The two really loud guys and the caribou is just too much. Finally, at the end, he is gaslit by his parents because they can't hear Santa's bell.

Next up, I want to make everybody mad. Stop watching *The Santa Clause*. The movie used to be sweet, but now it's annoying. How many do they need to make before putting this series to rest? Geez. Also, the movie starts with somebody accidentally killing Santa Claus. What kind of children's movie is this!? Then, it just goes on and on for two more movies. Problem: shows murder in a positive light and rivals beloved fictional characters against each other. Solution: stop airing this movie and definitely don't show your little cousins at Christmas. This movie is also overplayed.

Speaking of overplayed, *The Grinch*. This movie is pretty traumatizing for children to watch. This angry green man sneaks into your house and bullies you, steals your gifts, and lives in a mountain. Not to mention he is furry and like 7 feet tall. He's like a scarier version on Bigfoot, or a Sasquatch. No thanks. I need to know who approved this movie to be made because I need to have a serious discussion with them. We need to teach children to be nice to their puppies, not like the Grinch to poor Max.

There should be no reason to keep playing these movies every year. There is negativity, murder, and worst of all, bad animation. Let's give the gift of ignorance to our little brothers, sisters, and cousins this holiday season and not ruin their eyes showing these terrible Christmas movies. Do your duty to America's youth this year and stop the screening.



# Our Favorite Recipes








# Easy and Delicious Holiday Desserts



By: Johnna Rodriguez



## Christmas Tree Cupcakes



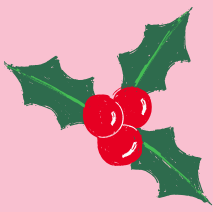
To make this cute dessert all you need are cupcake liners, a piping bag, box cupcake mix, green frosting, edible colorful pearls, and edible stars!

- 
- 1) Put the liners on a cupcake pan and preheat the oven to the box directions.
  - 2) Make the cake mix as said on the box mix
  - 3) After you bake the cupcakes, let them cool and then add the green frosting to the piping bag.
  - 4) Frost the cupcakes, add the pearls and stars, now you have cute Christmas tree cupcakes!
- 



## Peppermint Bark

Ingredients: Semi-sweet chocolate, white chocolate, peppermint extract, and candy canes.

- 
- 1) Melt the semisweet chocolate and put them in a flat pan and put it in the fridge till it sets.
  - 2) Melt the white chocolate, add the peppermint extract and pour it on top of the set chocolate.
  - 3) After your pour the white chocolate, add the crushed candy canes.
  - 4) Put it back in the fridge to cool and now you have easy tasty chocolate bark!

<https://www.dinneratthezoo.com/peppermint-bark-recipe/#recipe>

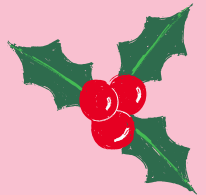
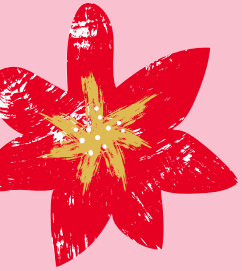




## Rice Krispie Snowballs

Ingredients: Rice krispies cereal, marshmallows, white chocolate, and red, green, or blue sprinkles.

- 1) In a pot, heat up the marshmallows and add in the rice krispies.
- 2) Line a pan sheet and add rice krispies to the pan.
- 3) Start rolling out balls and letting them sit on another pan.
- 4) Heat up your chocolate, dip them in, add the sprinkles, and finally allow them to cool down.



Now you have small and easy Holiday snacks!

<https://www.delish.com/holiday-recipes/christmas/a25562466/rice-krispie-snowballs-recipe/>



*And for the peanut butter lovers, here is an easy recipe:*

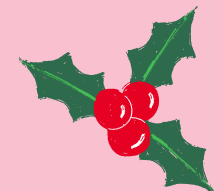
## Peanut Butter Fudge

Ingredients: Unsalted butter, creamy peanut butter, powdered sugar, vanilla extract and salt.

- 1) Get a pan, put butter and peanut butter in the microwave, and add vanilla and salt when completely melted.
- 2) Add in powdered sugar, pour mix into the pan and refrigerate for 2-3 hours.

(OPTIONAL) Take red or green chocolate melts, melt them and drizzle them over the bars.

<https://prettysimplesweet.com/peanut-butter-fudge/#wprm-recipe-container-11261>





## Mia's Top 4 Holiday Recipes

You won't be able to resist these simple but *delicious* recipes! Here are some of the top recipes from the Monteleone family which have been traditionally served on Christmas for years.

### #1: Mia's Holiday Sugar Cookies



#### Ingredients:

3 cups of flour  
¾ tablespoon of baking powder  
1 cup of softened butter  
¼ teaspoon of salt  
1 egg  
1 cup of sugar  
1 tablespoon of milk  
powdered sugar  
Green and red sprinkles (optional)

#### Instructions:

- Step 1. Mix together flour, baking powder, and salt in one bowl.
- Step 2. In a separate bowl place butter and sugar. Beat and mix until it is light-colored.
- Step 3. Slowly add eggs and milk and continue beating.
- Step 4. Add flour from other bowl and continue beating.
- Step 5. Split dough into two and place in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap, store in refrigerator for 2 hours.
- Preheat your oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Step 6. Prepare surface to roll out dough by sprinkling powdered sugar or flour on it.
- Step 7. Take out one dough ball, roll dough out to desired thickness.
- Step 8. Use Christmas cookie cutters, or cut cookies out to any desired shape.
- Step 9(optional). Add green and red sprinkles to your cookies.
- Step 10. Use butter or any grease on your pan to prevent your cookies from sticking to the pan.
- Step 11. Bake cookies 8-12 minutes, or at least until you see them turn light brown.

Keep reading for more recipes!



## #2: *Grandma's Sweet Potato Casserole*

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 pounds of peeled sweet potatoes cut into cubes
- ½ cup of brown sugar
- 2 cups of miniature marshmallows
- salt and pepper to taste
- ½ of softened butter
- ½ teaspoon of vanilla extract

### **Instructions:**

Preheat your oven to 375 degrees fahrenheit, grease a 9x13 pan

Step 1. Bring water to a boil.

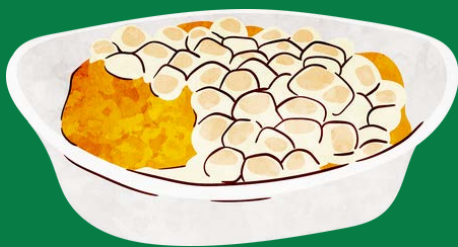
Step 2. Place sweet potatoes in boiling water and boil for 15 minutes or until the sweet potatoes are tender.

Step 3. In a separate large bowl, mash sweet potatoes with brown sugar, butter, cinnamon, vanilla, salt and pepper to liking.

Step 4. Place mashed sweet potatoes into the 9x13 pan.

Step 5. Spread marshmallows out on top of the sweet potatoes

Step 6. Bake for 25 minutes.





### #3: Grandma's Christmas Tree Shortbread Cookies



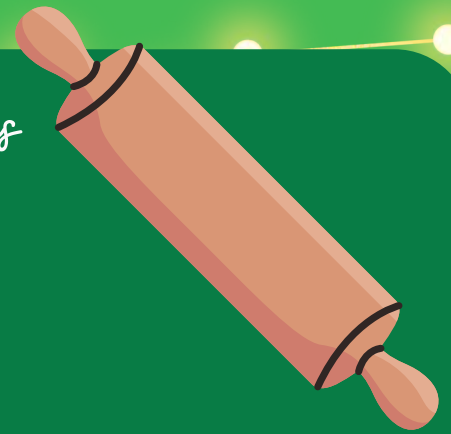
#### Ingredients:

1 cup of softened butter  
½ cup of powdered sugar  
2 teaspoons of shredded lime peel  
¼ teaspoon of salt  
2 ¼ cup of flour  
½ cup of powdered sugar  
milk  
green food coloring  
M&M's, nerds, or any small colored candy of choice  
tree cookie cutter

#### Instructions:

- Step 1. In a large bowl, beat the butter for a minute.
- Step 2. Add ½ cup of powdered sugar, lime peels, and salt, continue to beat.
- Step 3. Add the flour and beat it until dough comes together, divide the dough, put in bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
- Preheat your oven to 325 degrees fahrenheit
- Step 4. One by one take the different parts of dough and roll it out, cut out tree shape with cookie cutter and repeat until all dough had been used.
- Step 5. Bake the cookies for 15 minutes, cool for 10 minutes.
- Step 6. To make the icing, take a small bowl, put the powdered sugar, enough milk (1-2 teaspoons at a time) and mix until you have a icing consistency.
- Step 7. Spread the icing on the cookies.
- Step 8. Decorate the cookie with your colorful candy of choice.

## #4: Mom's Famous Empanadas



### Ingredients:

1 pound chopped beef  
½ teaspoon of salt  
½ teaspoon of paprika  
1 white onion  
3 eggs  
2 cups of flour  
another ½ teaspoon of salt  
½ teaspoon of sugar  
1 tablespoon of butter  
water

### Instructions:

Step 1. In a large bowl, mix the flour, salt (only ½ teaspoon), sugar, butter, egg.

Step 2. Slowly add small amounts of warm water.

Step 3. Beat and add water until you have a dough consistency.

Step 4. Split the dough into halves and put in bowl with plastic wrap on top. Refrigerate for 1 hour.

Step 5. Cut up your onion. Turn on a large saucepan, add vegetable oil. Add onions to saucepan.

Step 6. Add salt, paprika, and beef to the saucepan with the chopped onions and cook.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees fahrenheit. Once done, you will rise the temperature to 380 to bake the empanadas.

Step 7. Take out the dough, break the dough up into decently small round balls. Roll out each small ball to create the disk shaped empanada dough, make sure it is small enough for an empanada but not too big either.

Step 8. Once you have the empanada dough done, cut up a boiled egg and add a small piece on top of the dough, add the beef and onion mixture.

Step 9. Fold the dough with contents inside, add water on sides of dough to successfully close it, use a fork or hands to form the closing of the empanada

or

Step 10. Spread butter, grease, or sprinkle flour on pan to prevent empanadas from sticking. Place empanadas onto the pan. (You may have to use multiple pans depending on how many empanadas you make)

Step 11. Beat an egg in a bowl to create eggwash. Take a silicone cooking brush and brush the eggwash on top of the empanadas.

Step 12. Bake empanadas for 20-30 minutes at 380 degrees fahrenheit.





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From all of us at The Gull, we wish you a happy and healthy holiday and a wonderful new year!