

# Christmas gifts needn't be expensive this year

As the holiday season approaches, many people experience mixed emotions. The media pictures happy scenes of beautifully dressed families enjoying heartwarming homecomings and fine meals together. How does that image fit with our own nagging doubts about the "joys" of Thanksgiving or Christmas?

The reality of holiday celebrations seldom matches our hopes. Children argue, parties disappoint, family gatherings are tense, fruitcakes fatten and the homemade decorations droop. And in feeling our disappointment we blame ourselves and promise to do better next year.

Perhaps we simply need to think more carefully about what a holiday like Christmas means. What

part of Christmas pleases us the most? Carol Bly, a writer in Minnesota, suggests that we see Christmas as a sum of many parts. If we treat Christmas as a whole, a "sacred cow," we will be unable to admit that parts of Christmas are rubbish and other parts okay, maybe even wonderful.

If we weed out the unpleasant parts of Christmas, we may rediscover the real joy in the good parts. This weeding process starts with careful thought. Careful thought can only happen during quiet time. During the rainy days ahead, curl up with a blanket, a pencil and some quiet time. Think carefully about the traditions and activities that truly have importance to you and your family.

One part of Christmas that many

find unpleasant, frustrating and painfully expensive is gift giving. In our consumer-oriented society there is no end to the beautiful things to give and receive. We confuse need with want and price with quality. How many of us have too many things and too little time and money? Is it possible to find gifts that convey our message of love without cluttering our homes and depleting our savings?

Consider gifts that are consumable and/or very low cost. Christmas ornaments are storable, inexpensive, usable year after year and can be very personal for adults and children. Other useful, economical gifts are books and puzzles for young children; crazy socks or fancy shampoos for teenagers; stationary and stamps for the elderly.

Food and/or kitchen items are practical and seldom wasted if chosen with knowledge of the receiver's taste and interests. Specialty jams, extra-virgin olive oils,

nut butters, canned salmon, flavored salad vinegars, special coffees or teas, nuts and cheese are a few examples of food gifts. Samples of new, nutritious convenience foods would please the too-busy-to-cook working parent.

Even non-cooks could appreciate new dish cloths or hot pads to replace the old and tattered ones. Acrylic cutting boards and refrigerator thermometers are gifts encouraging food safety. Put yourself in the gift receiver's shoes. What consumable gift would you find appealing?

The secret to making changes in holiday traditions that no longer meet your needs is to involve all the participants. Let parents and children know about your need to change some activities. Ask for their ideas. If everyone is part of the process, there will be less resistance to the change.

May your holidays be what you want them to be.



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## Stockman's seminar Dec. 1

The beef cattle production is undergoing dramatic changes as they meet the demands of the retailers and consumers. To meet these challenges the cow/calf producer is being asked to produce cattle to certain industry standards.

Over the past two years the Central Oregon Stockman's Seminar has focused on what type of calves the industry was looking for and

what type of heifers would produce the calves to industry standards. As the Stockman's Seminar continues for its third year the focus will be on selecting sires.

Stockman Seminar III will take place at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds in Madras on Saturday, December 1.

The 1990 event is "Beef Production 90's Style" and will again feature Dr. Bob Long from Texas Technical University. This year Dr. Long will describe how to select bulls that will sire calves to meet the trends in the 90's. A part of his presentation will include using live bulls to demonstrate his concepts.

Joining us this year will be Dr. Larry Cundiff, U.S. Meat Animal Research, from Clay Center, Nebraska. Dr. Cundiff will present selection of cattle breeds for the Western arid grasslands and using EPDs.

To introduce the seminar and tie us into the concepts learned in the previous two seminars will be Dr. Bill Zollinger, Oregon State University Extension Beef Specialist.

Even if a producer doesn't sell to the large packers, producers will likely be affected as industry standards move certain directions.

On site registration is \$25. Checks should be made payable to Tri County Cattlemen.

The seminar is sponsored by the Cattlemen's Association and Oregon State University Extension Offices in Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson Counties and on the Warm Springs Reservation.

## Keep track of spending

November and December are months of special dinners with family and friends, parties and exchanging of gifts. These are good times and often mean higher than usual family expenses.

Unplanned or over-enthusiastic holiday spending can create financial troubles, especially in January when the bills arrive. Morrow offers some ideas on how to control your holiday spending, keep financial stress to a minimum, and enjoy the holiday season.

Estimate holiday expenses. Put it all on paper—estimated costs of travel, special meals, parties, charitable donations, greeting cards, phone calls and gifts. As you estimate the cost of gifts, list the people for whom you usually buy gifts, this year's gift ideas and the approximate cost.

Estimate the amount of money you can afford for holiday spending. How much is available from November and December incomes? How much, if any, are you willing to withdraw from savings? How much, if any, can you afford to put on credit cards and charge accounts?

Set limits for spending that you

think are realistic and fit within the money available. Discuss this as a family. You need the cooperation of the entire family. If your holiday spending estimates are greater than the income available, you can either increase income or decrease expenses. Before deciding to cut expenses, think about the parts of your holiday celebration that are most special. As the family discusses this, you may find ways to maintain and even expand the most meaningful events and eliminate those with less meaning or those which have become a burden.

One way to hold costs down is to shop early and take advantage of sales. Planning and shopping early helps you to avoid last minute pressures that result in impulse buying.

As you spend for the holiday, keep track of the costs. Total holiday expenses paid for with cash, check, or credit card. Know what you have spent and what bills will be arriving. This will help control your splurge urge. If you find some expenses are higher than your original expenses, make adjustments in your plan.

## Raising good readers takes time

Unfortunately, there are a lot of hucksters around who try to take advantage of eager parents by selling expensive and complicated systems for teaching reading. At best, most of these are a waste of money; at worst, they may actually discourage a child because they are so boring. Raising good readers takes time, not money. Here are some tips from educators and parents:

1. Start reading to children at a very early age—basically, as soon as they are able to sit in your lap. A six-month-old may not understand the words to Dr. Seuss but he will, in time, think of reading as a pleasurable activity and associate it with your love and warmth. He will also learn the basics of books: that they tell a story, that each page contains a discrete piece of information, that the funny symbols (otherwise known as letters) have distinct meanings. When reading to young children, it's important to be flexible, you may want to proceed from beginning to end in an orderly fashion, he may want to stay on one page and study it intently. Don't think of this as stubbornness. Consider it an early form of art appreciation; he's probably just pondering the mysteries of the illustration.
2. Take advantage of story hours at

children's bookshops or your local library. Again, the point is to reinforce the feeling that reading is fun, not drudgery. Bookstore owners and librarians are also valuable resources for suggesting age-appropriate books. Both stores and libraries also often have reading clubs that reward children for the number of books they have completed. Reading should be its own reward, but sometimes a little outside recognition helps.

3. While there's certainly nothing wrong with buying lots of good books for your kids, don't think that unless you shell out big bucks you will forever stunt their intellectual growth. Many fine children's books are available in paperback versions at reasonable prices. Look for used-book sales and visit the library often. You'll teach valuable lessons about responsibility. She has to keep the books in good condition and get them back in time—or pay a fine.
4. Establish quiet times and places at home for reading. Again, this doesn't require spending a lot of money. A comfortable chair and good light is all that's necessary.
5. Teach by example. If you a couch potato in front of the TV, your child probably will be one, too. On the other hand, if your kids

see you happily curled up with a good book, they'll get the idea that you not only preach reading, you practice it as well.

6. Don't stop with books. There are wonderful children's magazines available on such specialized topics as sports, nature, science and history. A year's subscription is usually quite reasonable—and makes a great present as well as giving further encouragement to read.
7. Give them a reason to read. If your child is a budding baseball fan, look for sports books. If she likes animals, try nature stories. Youngsters have a much greater incentive when they are engaged in the subject matter.
8. Remember that not all children will take to reading in the same way. One daughter may be the type who reads the classics under the covers at night with a flashlight; the other may limit her recreational reading to Sunday comics and the kiddies version of junk novels. It's virtually impossible to enforce taste standards as children get older. Just be glad they're reading something and make sure they have plenty of opportunities to move up to a higher level when and if they are ready.
9. Finally, even after your children are proficient and eager readers, keep reading to them. Try books that may be a little beyond their reach at the moment—for example traditional favorites like "Treasure Island" or "Little Women." After a while reading together gets to be a habit that no one wants to give up.

## Nutrition workshop scheduled

Oregon State University nutrition specialist Margaret Lewis will present "Feeding with Love and Good Sense" Thursday, December 6, 1990 at the Community Center Social Hall. The two-hour workshop will begin at 6:30 p.m.

There is no cost for this workshop and babysitting will be provided. The workshop will offer practical tips and gift ideas for parents and caregivers, growth/weight variations and iron-rich foods.

To sign up call 553-3238.

**JOB OPENING**  
 Extension Intern  
 4-H and Youth Agent  
 (Half- or full-time depending on funding)  
 Contact the Extension office for information

## Use space heaters carefully

As winter approaches, many people are considering the use of supplemental heating appliances such as portable heaters in an effort to avoid high heating bills. These systems can help lower heating costs but can be very dangerous if installed or used improperly.

Supplemental home heating appliances are estimated to be associated with 105,800 residential fires, killing an estimated 600 people, in 1987. In addition, thousands of injuries from contact burns and about 100 deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning occur every year.

The U.S. Consumer Product

Safety Commission (CPSC) is anxious to alert consumers about the potential dangers posed by supplemental heating units. To that end, the Commission has a few tips for using these units safely.

Here are some general safety tips:

- Keep children and pets away from supplementary heating appliances.
- Never use a space heater overnight in the room where you are sleeping. It should never be left unattended.
- Maintain proper ventilation in the room where the fuel-fired heater is used.
- Place heaters at least three feet away from objects such as bedding, furniture, draperies and other combustibles.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions in installing, operating and maintaining your heating appliance.
- Keep a properly functioning smoke detector on each level of your home and close to sleeping areas.

## Be prepared for childrens' futures

Parents with estate plans know their children will be financially protected in the unlikely event both parents die.

Although most parents live to see their children's 18th birthdays, one or both parents could die in accidents or from illness. That's why it's important to plan how the children will be provided and cared for.

Estate Planning for Families with Minor Children, FS 313, offers ideas about planning for the children's future in the event of a parent's death. It is available without charge

from the Warm Springs Extension Office.

Written by Alice Mills Morrow, OSU Extension family economics specialist, the new publication uses a "case study" approach to the subject. Morrow describes estate planning issues for a first marriage, a family with a handicapped child and a family where there are children from prior marriages.

Each family is different, so each has a different estate planning situation. The most difficult part of the estate planning process is making complex family decisions relating

to lifestyle, values, goals and relationships.

Other questions to be answered include how to provide income for the children, how property will be distributed and how financial resources will be managed. In addition, parents should decide who to nominate as guardian for the children.

Estate planning attorneys can help parents understand the advantages and disadvantages of various estate planning tools and techniques and prepare necessary legal documents.

## Tasty recipes offered

- Pumpkin Bread**  
 3 1/2 cups flour, sifted  
 3 cups sugar  
 1 tsp. cinnamon  
 1 tsp. nutmeg  
 1 1/2 tsp. salt  
 2 tsp. baking soda  
 4 eggs  
 1 cup vegetable oil  
 2/3 cup water  
 2 cups mashed, cooked pumpkin  
 Grease one regular-size loaf pan or three mini-loaf pans. Set aside.
- In large bowl, stir flour, sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt and baking soda together. In another bowl combine eggs, oil, water and pumpkin. Stir into dry ingredients. Pour into greased pan(s). Bake at 350° F for one hour or until a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.
- Yield: One regular-size loaf or three mini-loaves.
- Autumn Applesauce**  
 (canning recipe)  
 6 lbs. Jonathan apples  
 2 cups water  
 1/2 cup sugar (more or less to taste)\*  
 1 Tbsp. bottled lemon juice  
 Put lemon juice and water in a

six- to eight-quart saucepan. Peel and core apples. Slice apples into the saucepan with water and lemon juice. Heat over medium-high heat until apples are softened, stirring constantly. Proceed to one of the variations below, if desired. Return mixture to saucepan and bring to a boil over medium heat. Stir in sugar.

Immediately fill hot pint jars with applesauce, leaving 1/2-inch headspace at the top. Carefully run a nonmetallic utensil down inside of jars to remove trapped air bubbles. Wipe jar tops and threads clean. Place hot lids on jars and screw bands on firmly. Process in boiling water canner for 20 minutes.

\* You can omit sugar, or use an artificial sweetener.

**Variations:**

1. Over low heat, mash apples to desired consistency for chunky applesauce.
2. Process apples in food processor to desired consistency for smooth applesauce.

Tips: For spiced applesauce, stir in 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice OR cinnamon after adding sugar.

Yield: 4 to 5 pints.

## "Recycle" new word for being resourceful

Recycling and conservation of resources are hot topics today. Both are popular with adults and possibly more so with children and the teenage population.

"Recycle" today may be just a more popular word for "frugal" in Grandma's or Great-Grandma's day when she recycled her flour sacks into dresses, shirts and dish towels. Mom was being "thrifty" when she reused the plastic margarine and cottage cheese tubs for refrigerator and freezer food containers. Today it's call recycling.

**State government conference set**

The 4-H "Know Your State Government" Conference will be held April 3-5, 1991 in Salem. During this conference youth learn first hand about how the state government works.

Youth in grades 10 through 12 can become involved in this conference by contacting the Extension office.

Some supermarket chains are encouraging the reusing of paper and plastic grocery bags by offering several cents each to customers who bring in and reuse their own grocery bags more than once.

Fresh citrus, bought in bulk, comes in a variety of bag types and sizes. Clear plastic or poly bags (with holes for ventilation) hold two to five pounds of lemons or oranges. Expandable net bags of different sizes can stretch to hold three to ten pounds of any variety of citrus. Large mesh bags with pull-string ties can hold up to ten pounds of grapefruit or oranges. Lots of bags with lots of potential for reuse are being brought home with the purchase of fresh citrus.

A survey of school-age children produced quite a list of practical and fun uses for all three types of bags:

**Plastic or Poly Bags** (with holes for ventilation):

- Use to store socks or a sweater
- Use as a car trash bag or to carry a damp bathing suit.
- Use as a fish creel to hold small fish and submerge in a river

or lake while fishing.

**Expandable Net Bags:**

- Use to carry snacks or lunches.
- Use to hold delicate items of clothing in the wash cycle.
- Use to air dry flowers and herbs.
- For travel-to hold road maps, travel games, pairs of shoes.
- Make a pot scrubber-remove end; tie in several loose knots.

**Extension offers tuition vouchers**

A new tuition voucher program is available to youth volunteers through the OSU Extension Service. Youth ages 16-19 years old may earn a \$25 voucher for every eight hours of service helping people in one-to-one activities. Vouchers may be used in paying tuition and fees at eligible colleges and vocational schools in Oregon. For more information contact the OSU Extension Office at 553-3238.

**Large Mesh Bags:**

- Use to carry library or school books.
- Use to carry swimwear to pool or beach. (Sand can be shaken from small beach equipment when carried home in mesh bags.)
- Use to carry a small travel pillow.
- Use as a Halloween trick-or-treat bag.
- Make a butterfly net using a wire coat hanger.
- Use to collect recyclable cans and bottles.

**Summer Week needs counselors**

Youth who have completed at least one year of college with strong leadership skills and who have an interest in older youth are needed as counselors for Summer Week. Counselors will need to be available for Summer Week June 17-21, 1991. Contact the OSU Extension office for an application. Deadline is January 6.

**TONIGHT!**  
 November 29  
 from 7 to 8 p.m.  
**How to help a grieving friend**  
 Presented by OSU Family Life Specialist Jan Hare  
 Community Center Social Hall  
 Refreshments/babysitting will be provided