

2022

# UNITY FOR EQUALITY



**HOW TO STAY HEALTHY DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

**KWANZAA: A HOLIDAY OF VALUES**

**6 DELECTABLE HOLIDAY TREATS YOU HAVE TO MAKE**

**HANUKKAH**



**EXCLUSIVE!**  
**CHAIRMAN'S YEAR-END-GREETINGS**

# UNITY FOR EQUALITY

# CONTENTS



03  
CHAIRMAN'S YEAR-END-GREETINGS



07  
HANUKKAH



04  
HOW TO STAY  
HEALTHY OVER THE  
HOLIDAYS

- 3 CHAIRMAN'S YEAR-END-GREETINGS
- 4 HOW TO STAY HEALTHY FOR THE HOLIDAYS
- 7 HANUKKAH
- 10 6 DELECTABLE HOLIDAY TREATS YOU HAVE TO MAKE
- 13 INCLUSIVE FESTIVITY
- 15 SUSTAINABLE AND ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS
- 17 BEST CHRISTMAS-TIME SONGS
- 20 KWANZAA: A HOLIDAY OF VALUES
- 22 CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLDES
- 25 RESOLUTIONS & REALIZATIONS: HOW TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH YOUR NEW YEAR PROMISE
- 27 CONTACT US!



KWANZAA



Happy New Year

ELITE CEDAR LAKE WEST  
305-774-202  
CONTACT@ELITERUNNER.COM





# Chairman's Year-End-Greetings



---

## UNITY FOR EQUALITY MAGAZINE

---

Happy Holidays!

With the holidays comes a time of reflection and joy as we end the 2022 year and begin the next. Unity for Equality has made great strides in the past year in working towards our core missions and values to ensure everyone receives the support they deserve. We hope to continue to serve the community throughout the holidays and onwards into the next year.

As we conclude the year with festivities and remembrance, it is important to note the significance of a healthy and happy community for all. I am grateful for all that we have collectively done for a safer world. This year, we have been able to host many events, hand out COVID test kits, and fundraise for important causes. Still, with all the progress and achievements we made, we must remain passionate and vigilant in progressing our goals for the future.

I am excited for all that is to come next, and I hope you all will continue to join me in keeping the organization successful and our legacy alive. The organization would not be here without your support and dedication, so once again, thank you. Here's to 2023!

Best wishes,

*Neil Trivedi*

Neil Trivedi  
Chairman of Unity for Equality

2023

How to

# Stay Healthy

Over the Holidays

By :  
Jason Lee

Normally, this time of year is a cause for celebration and cheer as we all get to relax and end the year off with parties and reunions. Still, these joyous festivities are also a cause for concern for many people who struggle to make it through the holiday season for a multitude of reasons. Whether you are worrying over physical or mental health, there are a variety of ways to celebrate the holidays in a healthy way.

## Celebrating Healthy

For those who plan on celebrating with large groups of family or friends, it is important to consider

the health of yourself and others when being in close proximity to them. With the fall and winter seasons seeing an uptick in viral diseases, it's always good to practice healthy habits when at a reunion or party. Make sure to wash your hands often when handling food or touching your face and limit contact with those around you within reason. While traveling, it might be best to wear a mask especially in airports or train stations. People often travel from all over to celebrate the holidays with their loved ones, and close contact is often unavoidable. So instead of trying to completely remove yourself from those you may only get to see once a year, it should just

be encouraged to be careful while celebrating. This way, you ensure that you have the best odds of keeping yourself safe as well as the ones you love around you safe.





## Good Food

You may be stressed at staying in line with your physical health and fitness goals around this time of year as well. The holidays are full of delicious, though sometimes caloric, foods, and your family will often encourage everyone to feast on the large spread. The most important tip in staying healthy here is to simply enjoy the food. Rather than trying to avoid the food and excluding yourself from the festivities, you can view it as celebrating a once-a-year holiday with your loved ones. One day won't affect your long-term goals as long as you put in effort throughout the rest of the year. Thus, eat to your heart and stomach's content this time of year with the intent of focusing on your fitness goals after the holidays.

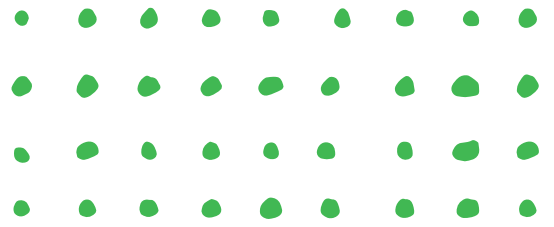
One additional aspect of physical health to look out for is sleep. With all the festivities and holiday chaos, it is important to ensure you are getting enough sleep each day. Despite how hectic the end of the year can be, it is meant to be a time to relax and recuperate with time off from work. Those who have a busier schedule with the holidays may chime in here and say they won't have time to relax because of their workload. However, that proves just how crucial getting a good night's rest is to ensure that, no matter what your holiday looks like, you are able to approach it with the required energy you need to get through it. Thus, people should generally aim for 7-9 hours of sleep every night to maintain proper health.



## Mental Check

Being healthy does not only mean being physically healthy either; mental health is just as important when celebrating the holidays. The holidays can be mentally taxing on those who aren't usually accustomed to spending their time around people. Constant social gatherings and reminders of other people's joys can be difficult to deal with when you are not in a stable state, be it emotionally or financially. Thus, it is okay to take time for yourself over the holidays.





Everyone deserves to be happy and content in however way possible around this time of year. If there are too many stressors, don't be afraid to excuse yourself from the situation and take a breath. Sometimes, conversations and gatherings can feel unavoidable, but remember that you deserve space and relaxation just as much as everyone else. Of course, you should try to enjoy the time you have with the people around you, but always prioritize self-care and rest for the holidays.

## A New You

Another way to end the year with mindfulness is to reflect on the year and look forward to the next. New Year's resolutions are

a common tradition for the beginning of the year. This has some merit as it encourages people to think about their actions and feelings throughout the past year. Then, they create new resolutions based on where they might want to improve and aim for in the next year. Being human is progressing yourself, changing and refining yourself for the better. The end of the year is the perfect way for us as humans to reflect and vow to be better as we move into the next. So while you are celebrating with those you love around you, take some time to reflect and be grateful for what has happened and what is yet to come!





# HANUKKAH

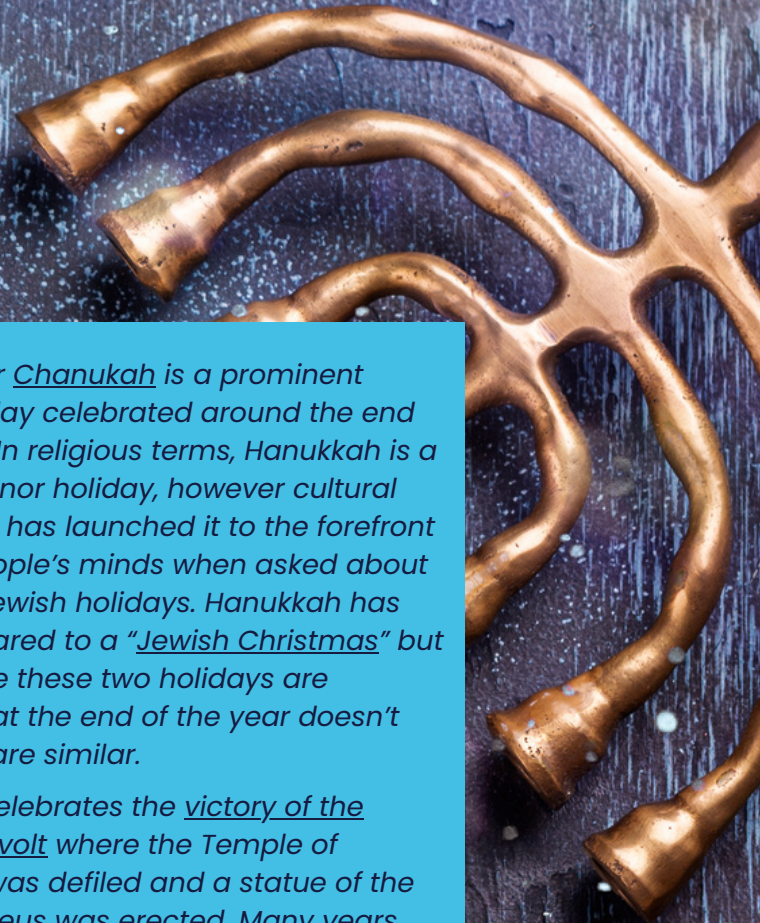
Article By Dana Roller

Hanukkah or Chanukah is a prominent Jewish holiday celebrated around the end of the year. In religious terms, Hanukkah is a relatively minor holiday, however cultural significance has launched it to the forefront of many people's minds when asked about the major Jewish holidays. Hanukkah has been compared to a "Jewish Christmas" but just because these two holidays are celebrated at the end of the year doesn't mean they are similar.

Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Macabee revolt where the Temple of Jerusalem was defiled and a statue of the Greek god Zeus was erected. Many years later an additional story was added about what is now known as the miracle of the oil. Known as the "festival of lights", Hanukkah celebrates the miracle of a day's worth of olive oil in a lamp surviving for eight days.

Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of Kislev, the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. Because the Hebrew calendar is a lunar one, the dates of Hanukkah vary from year to year. This year, the eight days of Hanukkah fall from sunset on December 18th to sunset on December 26th. According to a 2019 study, 5% of the American population celebrates Hanukkah, however, the way people celebrate varies from family to family.

This holiday is steeped in traditions that bring the community together to celebrate the reclaiming of the temple and the





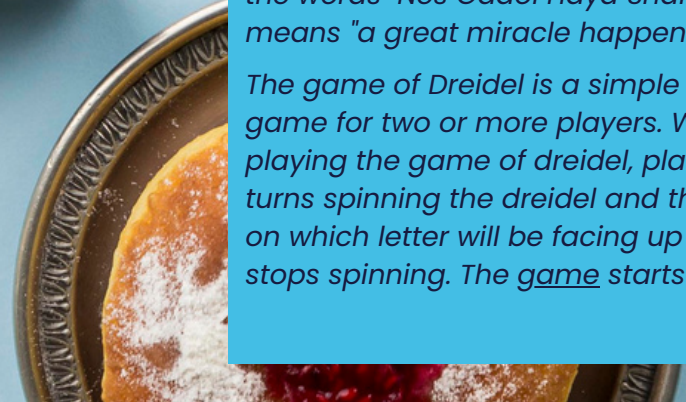
miracle of the oil. There are no rigid rules on how the holiday should be celebrated, and every family creates their own Hanukkah traditions. However, there are some standard practices. The most important of the traditions is the lighting of the menorah. The menorah is a candelabra with eight branches and a center holder for the shamash or servant candle, used to light the other eight. On the first night of Hanukkah, the first candle on the left is lit and every night after, the others are incrementally lit until the menorah is fully lit on the last night.

Hanukkah is also a time to eat delicious food! Most traditional foods are fried, an ode to the oil miracle, and include dishes such as latkes, potato pancakes, and sufganiyot, jelly doughnuts. There are also some who consider dairy products, specifically cheese, to be crucial to the Hanukkah celebration in recognition and appreciation of Judith. Judith is a figure from the Book of Judith who saved her people from an attacking army by luring the general to his demise with cheese. Several dishes such as rugelach and blintzes are to honor her.

The dreidel is another popular element of contemporary Hanukkah. A dreidel is a spinning top that is played with during the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. It has four sides, each side bearing a letter of the Hebrew alphabet— נ (nun), ג (gimel), ה (he), and ש (shin). The letters represent the words "Nes Gadol Haya Sham" which means "a great miracle happened there."

The game of Dreidel is a simple gambling game for two or more players. When playing the game of dreidel, players take turns spinning the dreidel and then betting on which letter will be facing up when it stops spinning. The game starts with each

מנוחה  
החודש  
החודש







player putting one penny in the pot and spinning the dreidel. If you spin an H on your turn you get to take half of the pot. If you spin an N you put one penny into the pot but don't get to take anything from it. If you spin a G then everyone puts one more penny into the pot and play continues until someone spins an H or they run out of pennies in their pile.

Hanukkah is not only a holiday that celebrates the victory of the Jews over the Greeks, but it is also a time for family, friends, and food. There are many differences in how people celebrate this holiday, but one thing that remains consistent is that Hanukkah is celebrated by family members, friends, and loved ones.



# 6 DELECTABLE HOLIDAY TREATS YOU HAVE TO MAKE

by Charmaine Swasey

Why not stray from the occasional tradition of cookie baking and partake in these unforgettably delectable candy recipes, some made with pre-baked cookies to make your Christmas just as sugary and inviting!

## No-Bake Oreo Truffles

From the inspirational mind of Food Network's The Pioneer Woman, this effortless recipe embraces white and semisweet chocolate, cream cheese, the classic Oreo cookies, and sprinkles as a decorative element, with no baking required!

To add your own personal touch, you can use green or red chocolate melts, and you could substitute the original chocolate flavored Oreos for flavors such as Chocolate Hazelnut, Mint, Java Chip, and so much more! As for cream cheese it doesn't really matter which brand you choose, but you could mix this rich spread with crushed candy canes to bring out an aromatic spice of peppermint with a crunchy texture.

You could also rule out the semi-sweet chocolate entirely and just use white chocolate. Then, the finished dessert could be stacked on popsicle sticks and decorated like snowmen.



No-Bake Oreo Truffles

For an individualized touch, you can drizzle green and red candy-coloring oil to the melted white chocolate to incorporate a swirl of contrasting colors like a flashy candy cane! And if you're not a fan of pretzel bits, you can use other crunchy elements such as, chopped nuts, chopped candy canes, pumpkin seeds, etc.

If you celebrate Hanukkah, you could create this same swirling effect with blue color oil, use blue M&M's instead of red and green and the original Oreos with white filling instead of red.

To make this dessert a statement piece, you can stack them up one on top of the other to imitate a Christmas tree or lay them around in a circular fashion to imitate a wreath. Not enough? Just add a bow!

## Christmas Candy Cookie Bark

Thanks to Belle of the Kitchen blogger Ashlyn Edwards, this toothsome confection replaces the old peppermint mocha taste of the conventional peppermint bark candy. Instead of dark chocolate, this new recipe calls for Winter Oreos, a limited-edition cookie in the Oreo franchise with red filling, red and green M&M'S, chopped pretzels, and white chocolate to hold this flavorful mess together!



Christmas Candy Cookie Bark

## Easy Ginger Candy

Sommer Collier's crystallized ginger recipe on the website, *A Spicy Perspective*, is not just sweet, but joyously crackly and crispy to the tastebuds! Although it takes up to 3 hours to make, it doesn't require many ingredients. All you need are fresh ginger roots, granulated sugar, water, and salt.

To boost this treat's spicy flavor, use orange or vanilla extract. For storage purposes, any container is fine since refrigeration is not necessary.

If you wish to provide some embellishment to this dessert, assemble some unwrapped Hershey's Assorted Nuggets in small rings of four or more (depending upon how much guests you'll have) to replicate tiny logs. Then, bunch up a handful of crystallized ginger candies in a (standing) position to replicate fire. Voila! You've made yourself mini fireplaces!



Easy Ginger Candy

## Eggnog Creams

Taste of Home's eggnog cream truffle recipe takes about 45 minutes to make and incorporates butter, vanilla extract, shortening, softened cream cheese, dark rum, white chocolate. Ground nutmeg, cinnamon, or ginger spice are also optional to uplift the boozy tang of the rum.

Alternative rums such as white, coconut, or premium aged rums could work. Even dark or milk chocolate could substitute white chocolate. And if you want to apply an even spicier boost, add a dash of ancho chili powder, cayenne pepper, or hot curry



Creamy Orange Caramels

## Creamy Orange Caramels

Also by Taste of Home are creamy orange caramels which require butter, sugar, light corn syrup, sweetened condensed milk, and vanilla and/or orange extract.

Once the caramels have cooled, you could dip each in chocolate or even make salted caramels with a few pinches of Kosher or Himalayan salt! The light corn syrup can be bought from Target or Walmart, and the orange and vanilla extracts could be purchased on Amazon, Instacart, or in the baking section of your nearest grocery store.



Eggnog Creams

## Cranberry Pistachio Fudge

Developed by Sweet Spicy Kitchen, this luscious fruit cake appearing treat only takes about 15 minutes to make with no baking required and contains white chocolate, sweet, condensed milk, vanilla extract, unsalted butter, chopped dried cranberries, and chopped pistachios.

You can also apply orange zest to match the taste of the cranberries, or you could replace the cranberries with other berries such as blueberries, strawberries, or even cherries. If you don't have pistachios, you could use other types of nuts. Walnuts are an excellent substitute because the taste is pleasantly mild with just a hint of tang.

Lastly, a translucent display jar would make the color of the cranberry bits and the bronzed color of the nuts stand out appealingly.



Cranberry Pistachio Fudge

---

AmeriColorCorp, AmeriColor. "2 Oz Oil Candy Color." AmeriColor Corp. - The World's Finest Food Color, 2022, <https://www.americolorcorp.com/product/2oz-oil-candy-color/>.

Collier, Sommer. "Easy Ginger Candy Recipe (Crystalized Ginger)." A Spicy Perspective, 18 Oct. 2021, <https://www.aspicyperspective.com/easy-ginger-candy-recipe/>.

Dragana. "This Quick and Easy Cranberry Pistachio Fudge Just Perfect for Holidays." Sweet Spicy Kitchen, 6 Oct. 2022, <https://www.sweetspicykitchen.com/christmas-recipes/cranberry-pistachio-fudge/>.

Drummond, Ree. "Oreo Truffles Are the Easiest No-Bake Treat." The Pioneer Woman, The Pioneer Woman, 9 Dec. 2022, <https://www.thepioneerwoman.com/food-cooking/recipes/a37826209/oreo-truffles-recipe/>.

In-Store & Online, Michaels. "Results for: Chocolate Melts." Michaels, 2022, <https://www.michaels.com/search?q=chocolate+melts>.

International, Mondelez. "Oreo Flavors." OREO Cookies, 2022, <https://www.oreo.com/oreo-cookies/oreo-flavors>.

Manning, Carla. "Eggnog Creams." Taste of Home, 30 Nov. 2022, <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/eggnog-creams/>.

Pharmacy, CVS. "\n \n Menu \n." Hershey's Extra Creamy Milk Chocolate Toffee & Almonds | Pick Up In Store TODAY at CVS, 2022, <https://www.cvs.com/shop/hershey-s-extra-creamy-milk-chocolate-toffee-almonds-prodid-493281>.

Target.com. "Karo Light Corn Syrup with Real Vanilla - 16 Fl Oz." Target, 2022, [https://www.target.com/p/karo-light-corn-syrup-with-real-vanilla-16-fl-oz/-/A-14778285?ref=tgt\\_adv\\_XS000000&AFID=google\\_pla\\_df\\_free\\_online&CPNG=Grocery&adgroup=261-6](https://www.target.com/p/karo-light-corn-syrup-with-real-vanilla-16-fl-oz/-/A-14778285?ref=tgt_adv_XS000000&AFID=google_pla_df_free_online&CPNG=Grocery&adgroup=261-6).

Taste of Home. "Creamy Orange Caramels." Taste of Home, 22 Sept. 2022, <https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/creamy-orange-caramels/>.

Walmart.com. "Karo Light Corn Syrup with Real Vanilla, 16 Fl Oz." Walmart.com, 2022, <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Karo-Light-Corn-Syrup-with-Real-Vanilla-16-Fl-Oz/10294409?wmlspartner=wlp&selectedSellerId=0>.



# INCLUSIVE FESTIVITY

By Ruht Lovos

The holidays are all about transforming the mundane into a magical wonderland and bringing people together. Around the holidays you can expect to hear Christmas carols in stores, smell cinnamon in the air, see bright and flashing lights. However, what we may think of as joy-inducing moments can actually be too much for some children. Inclusivity is not always easy to achieve, and some groups such as autistic children can often be forgotten about. Though some may not see the point in trying to cater certain experiences towards a smaller group of people, Christmas is a time that should be festive for everyone. Just trying to be mindful of some aspects of the holidays which others might be sensitive to can make the holidays much more special for everyone.

According to the CDC in 2021, approximately 1 in every 44 children in the US are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Children diagnosed with autism can be more aware towards changes in the atmosphere around the holidays. The busier and noisier attitude of the season can cause sensory overload problems and trigger breakdowns

Although this isn't something which can be controlled in public, private settings can be adapted for everyone's comforts while maintaining holiday cheer. This can be done through keeping in mind someone's sensitivity. Yet, because of how complex autism can be, the possibilities for sensitivity can be endless. Although asking about someone's sensitivities may be a bit awkward, it is something that will display thoughtfulness if you are trying to ensure everyone can celebrate the holidays comfortably.



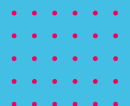
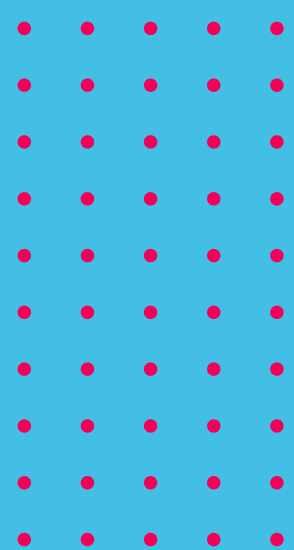


Another possible trigger can be the anticipation or waiting for presents to come. For many children, seeing the presents under the tree all month long can be exciting and gives them something to look forward to. On the other hand, children with autism disorder may experience irritability towards being unable to communicate or act on impulsive behaviors making it difficult for them to participate in waiting to open gifts. Children with autism do best with routine and predictability. Of course, during the holidays, routines can be disrupted more easily. Thus,

planning in advance to prepare and to expect visits is something which could help prepare a child for what's to come. One way to do this is to use an advent calendar which counts down the days until the 25th. This way, children with autism can prepare for Christmas with a small gift each day. These gifts can be small and/or related to the autistic child's interest and are a great way for you to provide support and cheer during the holiday season.

The holidays are some of the most joyous parts of the year. Sharing that joy with every single child including those on the spectrum is something that should be strived for. Demonstrating thoughtfulness through keeping others' triggers in mind will result in everyone enjoying the festivities. Although adapting might not always be easy, including everyone is what the holiday spirit is all about.

**“ The busier and noisier attitude of the season can cause sensory overload problems and trigger breakdowns ”**



# SUSTAINABLE AND ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS



by Viscette Villalobos

"Using gift baskets to showcase a multitude of mini presents for someone is a great alternative, and the recipient can continue using the basket as storage or even use it to regift to someone else."

**W**hat is the perfect appliance for your mother's kitchen? Do the kids need new phones? How many of my friends can I afford

to get gifts for? This string of thoughts may be a common occurrence around this time of year. These questions tumble around our brains making what should be a joyous time of the year extremely stressful. The holidays force us to become these mega consumers, but we may not have the brain capacity or the pockets to keep up with the chaos of it all. It's time to make the holidays happy again. 'Tis the season of giving, sustainably! Some would say Christmas starts the day after Thanksgiving, others say December 1st is the first day of Christmas. Whichever day you choose to start getting into the festive mood, decorations are the merriest way to introduce the spirit of Christmas into your home. Lightbulbs, for one, look shiny and bright but also pose incredible fire hazards. They are responsible for 770 house fires each year according to the National Fire Protection Association.

A safer way to celebrate may be replacing string lights for battery operated lights in various vessels such as jars or ceramics. Fake candles have become a popular alternative to string lights as well. Placing some of them behind windows or along your entryway adds a whimsical and festive touch to any home. Wreaths full of plastic foliage can be replaced with natural foliage, dried fruit and berries, and spice sticks and pinecones. Not only will it look more elegant, but the whole home will smell amazing. Additionally, plastic tinsel can be replaced by fruit, popcorn, or paper garlands. According to ancient yule tradition, orange slice garlands are known to invite peace, love, and prosperity into the home.

When shopping for Christmas gifts, shopping small and keeping it local is the way to go. Visiting small businesses not only helps them stay in business but also provides unique gifts for your loved ones that they can cherish for years. Usually around the holidays, vendors will have the perfect gifts as well as gift wrapping options. When buying gifts, it can be thoughtful to use sustainable





According to Brightly, approximately 2.3 million pounds of holiday wrapping paper enters landfills each year. Using gift baskets to showcase a multitude of mini presents for someone is a great alternative, and the recipient can continue using the basket as storage or even use it to regift to someone else. Fabric tote bags or cute reusable grocery bags can be used and reused for years to come. Blankets are also a great alternative as gift wrap; it's two gifts in one!

Finally, giving back to your community is a great way to get into the holiday spirit. Participating in local food drives or gift drives for your municipality not only raises spirits but emulates the true meaning of the holidays. It is an activity for not only yourself but the entire family. If you financially are able to, be sure to donate whenever you can, tip your

servers a little extra, and give more to those who need it most around this time of year.

The holidays don't need to be filled with mindless shopping in preparation for a holiday that has been monopolized by corporations to get us to consume more. The holidays do not need to be just expensive gifts and environmental damage. Becoming more mindful and choosing gratitude above all makes the season that much more special. This year, take a look around at areas in your life that can benefit from you celebrating the holidays in alternative and more sustainable ways.

**“If you financially are able to, be sure to donate whenever you can, tip your servers a little extra, and give more to those who need it most around this time of year.”**



# Best Christmas-time Songs



One of the most consistently popular Christmas songs today is Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You". Every year there's always someone who blasts this song the second midnight hits on November 1st. Although this is undeniably a great song, there are so many other great options out there that can add a different energy to the holiday. Here are a few other great songs to add to the perfect Christmas playlist.

## TOP POP HITS

**Last Christmas - Wham!**

**Underneath the Tree - Kelly Clarkson**

**Santa Tell Me - Ariana Grande**

**Santa Baby - Gwen Stefani**

**Mistletoe - Justin Bieber**

**Wonderful Christmastime - Paul McCartney**

This next category includes songs from a few decades ago, but songs like these will never go out of style. Playing these songs on the speaker this season is almost guaranteed to get everyone excited for the season.

## THE UPBEAT CLASSICS

**Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree - Brenda Lee**

**Jingle Bell Rock - Bobby Helms**

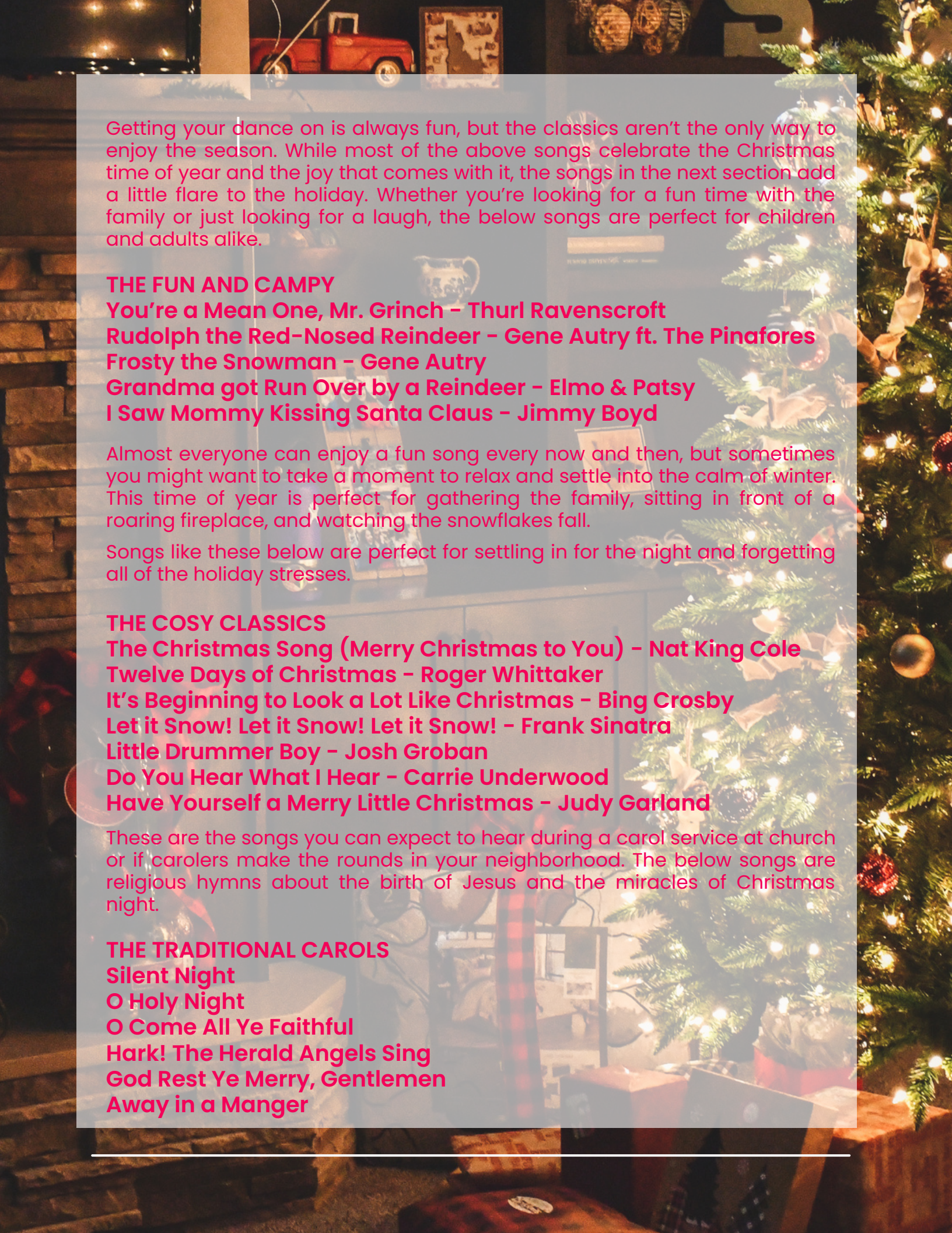
**Run Rudolph Run - Chuck Berry**

**Santa Claus is Comin' to Town - Bruce Springsteen**

**Deck the Halls - Nat King Cole**

**It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year - Andy Williams**

**Here Comes Santa Claus (Right Down Santa Claus Lane) - Gene Autry**



Getting your dance on is always fun, but the classics aren't the only way to enjoy the season. While most of the above songs celebrate the Christmas time of year and the joy that comes with it, the songs in the next section add a little flare to the holiday. Whether you're looking for a fun time with the family or just looking for a laugh, the below songs are perfect for children and adults alike.

### **THE FUN AND CAMPY**

**You're a Mean One, Mr. Grinch - Thurl Ravenscroft**

**Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer - Gene Autry ft. The Pinafores**

**Frosty the Snowman - Gene Autry**

**Grandma got Run Over by a Reindeer - Elmo & Patsy**

**I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus - Jimmy Boyd**

Almost everyone can enjoy a fun song every now and then, but sometimes you might want to take a moment to relax and settle into the calm of winter. This time of year is perfect for gathering the family, sitting in front of a roaring fireplace, and watching the snowflakes fall.

Songs like these below are perfect for settling in for the night and forgetting all of the holiday stresses.

### **THE COSY CLASSICS**

**The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas to You) - Nat King Cole**

**Twelve Days of Christmas - Roger Whittaker**

**It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas - Bing Crosby**

**Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow! - Frank Sinatra**

**Little Drummer Boy - Josh Groban**

**Do You Hear What I Hear - Carrie Underwood**

**Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas - Judy Garland**

These are the songs you can expect to hear during a carol service at church or if carolers make the rounds in your neighborhood. The below songs are religious hymns about the birth of Jesus and the miracles of Christmas night.

### **THE TRADITIONAL CAROLS**

**Silent Night**

**O Holy Night**


**O Come All Ye Faithful**

**Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

**God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen**

**Away in a Manger**

---



When looking at Christmas songs, there are two prominent figures that come to mind: Santa Claus and Jesus. With Christmas celebrations both commercial and religious, there are plenty of songs to get people in the holiday mood. Regardless of what you're looking for, there are hundreds and thousands of different Christmas songs and with every new cover, the originals and classics are remade into a completely different experience. However, you celebrate the holiday, it's always helpful to have the perfect playlist on hand.

---



# KWANZAA: A HOLIDAY OF VALUES

Spanning the week of December 26 to January 1, Kwanzaa is mainly celebrated in the US by many African Americans. Though, the holiday has increasingly seen celebration in non-US countries like those in the Caribbean as well.

It may come as a surprise to some that the holiday is actually a recent invention as the celebration was coined by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966. Kwanzaa was created not as a contender to Christmas, but as a secular holiday that could be celebrated by those in the African American community. Though “Kwanzaa” itself is not a Swahili word, it borrows from *matunda ya kwanza*, a Swahili phrase meaning “first fruits.” Thus, Kwanzaa was born, drawing upon African harvest celebrations as its influence. But, how is Kwanzaa celebrated specifically?

Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa has a specific principle that celebrants focus on and reflect upon with various activities throughout the day. They celebrate unity (*umoya*) within their family and community, self-determination (*kujichagulia*) in acting for themselves, collective responsibility (*ujima*) in solving communal problems together, cooperative economics (*ujamaa*) in sharing wealth and work, purpose (*nia*) in preserving culture, creativity (*kuumba*) in enriching culture, and faith (*imani*) in communal struggles and victories. Combined, these principles create a guide on how the holiday should be celebrated, with each day dedicated to honoring the specific value.



However, Kwanzaa is more than just the seven principles. The holiday also consists of important symbols that celebrants lay out and use during the celebration. These are crops (*mazao*) that symbolize the harvest celebrations and celebrate collective work, a placemat (*mkeka*) that symbolize African American tradition, a candle holder (*kinara*) that symbolizes the roots of African people, corn (*muhindi*) which symbolize the children and the future, the UnityCup (*kikombe cha umoja*) which symbolizes the importance of unity, seven candles (*mishumaa saba*) that are placed and lit each day, and gifts (*zawadi*) that symbolize growth and commitment. The seven candles that are lit consist of one black, three red, and three green candles. These colors are significant to African American

culture. Black symbolizes the people, while red denotes the cultural struggle and green denotes the future that arises from their perseverance. All of these symbols are placed together and serve to symbolize the principles of Kwanzaa for all to reflect upon.

On December 31, a great feast takes place right before the new year begins. This feast, called the Karamu, is eaten with family and friends as everyone again celebrates the principles of Kwanzaa. Tables are adorned and overflowing with food that are often traditional or culturally significant. This is a joyous occasion as celebrants remember and embody the various principles while enjoying the communal feast.

Overall, Kwanzaa is a holiday that does not try to be religious or play into common commercialism of other holidays. However, it does not try to reject other holidays either. Instead, Kwanzaa is a week of remembrance and honoring African American culture, while beginning the new year. It is most importantly a holiday that celebrates the necessity of unity and keeps the faith in the future of African American culture.



**HAPPY  
KWANZAA!**



by Charmaine Swasey

When one living in the U.S. thinks of Christmas tradition, they may expect to hear and sing along to classic jovial holiday music sung by all-time favorites such as Frank Sinatra and Mariah Carey; adorn numerous LED lights and ornaments on real or artificial pine trees, vehicles, offices, etc.; or admire the classical mystical characters of elves, flying reindeer, and Santa Claus. One living outside of the U.S. may deem these American traditions as odd, but how about the peculiar Christmas traditions celebrated by countries outside of the U.S.?

In the South American continent, Venezuela has held an annual mini festival which centers around roller skating until mass at dawn. Though there is no certainty as to how this celebratory tradition started, many claim that it is a substitute for sledding since temperatures in Venezuela are typically warm all year round. Additionally, the roads are closed off to lessen casualties as skaters travel to church. In relation to religious tradition, one source stated that December

16th is the official start of Christmas in Venezuela, “with the first of nine special early morning masses called Misa de Aguinaldo” (also known as the novena mass prior to Christmas day) which occur until December 24th. Like how Christmas Eve mass is attended by many U.S. Catholics, Venezuelans and those from other former Spanish territories, attend what they call “Misa de Gallo,” or “Rooster Mass” in English, to memorialize the birth of Jesus. One belief behind this mass’s name is that when baby Jesus was born, a rooster was one animal which declared his birth by crowing.

Another unusual tradition is the celebration of Christmas from September to December. Known as the “ber” months, the people of the Philippines maintain great Christmas cheer as influenced from the West. This also means earlier commercialization of holiday merchandise as soon as July, consecutive parties, and parades such as the

Giant Lantern Festival which runs from Dec.18th to Jan.1st in Pampanga, Philippines. Many Filipinos even go caroling house by house, though much differently than the U.S. Recycled materials like cans or bottle caps are used as musical instruments as carolers sing their country's original Christmas songs such as "Kumukutikutitap," translated as "Twinkle Twinkle," and "Pasko Na, Sinta Ko," translated as "It's Christmas Already, My Love." Lastly, the religious tradition celebrated by Filipino Catholics is the Simbang Gabi mass, which is the same as the Rooster Mass regarded by Venezuelans.

Moving on to the European hemisphere, the country of Norway has dated the period from Christmas Eve to New Year's as "Jul." It was coined by Scandinavians and exists in eight parts: Julebord, Advent, Little Christmas, Julaften, Romjul, Julebuk, New Year's Eve, and the end of Christmas. Furthermore, belief of the Norwegian Santa Claus, otherwise known as, "Nisse," derived from Scandinavian fables and refers to a petite being bearing a red hat and a long white beard, very comparable to a gnome. In addition, one of the most popular Christmas songs in Norway is "A Star Shines in the Night," or "En stjerne skinner I Natt" in Norwegian.

Religiously, many Norwegians are Lutheran Christian and normally attend Christmas mass like many Catholics, Christians, etc. in the U.S.

Ukraine is another European country which celebrates two Christmases, one being Catholic Christmas on Dec. 25th and the other being Orthodox Christmas on Jan. 7th. One Christmas custom upheld by Ukrainians is Koliada, or Christmas caroling in which children sing traditional songs like "Alle-Alelujah!" and "Heaven and Earth Today Rejoice" to their neighbors, family, and friends. Another custom is Malanka, celebrated on Jan. 13th incorporating

Christian and pagan customs. This folk holiday, usually held in a village called Krasnoilsk near the Romanian border, is upbeat with zany costumes, music, and dramatic art. Beyond this, the upscaled invasion of Ukraine by Russia had caused many of Ukraine's Orthodox churches to allow the celebration of Christmas on Dec. 25th rather than on Jan.7th, due to the enlarging clash between the Russian Orthodox Church and other Orthodox worshippers.

Next is France. St. Nicholas is defined by many French people as "Père Noël" and is celebrated in two separate holidays. One is the First Day of St. Nicholas which occurs every Dec. 6th and focuses more on the traditional attributes to Santa Claus than the costume he portrays such as the dispersal of treats to children. One thing that differs this version of Santa from the one typically known in the U.S. is that the French one also has an anti-Santa called Father Whipper, or "le Père Fouettard". Moreover, L'Advent (countdown to Christmas) calendars have since been admired by many French residents because they present a holy message for each day until Christmas Day. The most well-liked ones include chocolate.



Another admired tradition is Marchés de Noël, meaning “Christmas Markets,” which are in Strausbourg, France, ornamented with assorted Christmas fundamentals including a 30-meter-high Christmas tree in the city square. Other cities in France that spread the Christmas spirit through grand holiday marketplaces include Colmar and Lille.



#### ABibliography:

Africa Wanderlust. “African Christmas Traditions: How People Celebrate Christmas in Africa?” Africa Wanderlust, 21 Sept. 2022. <https://africanwanderlust.com/destinations/african-christmas/>.  
 Birtles, Katie. “6 Christmas Traditions You’ll Only Find in Africa.” Real Word, 2 Dec. 2020. <https://www.trafalgar.com/real-word/african-christmas-traditions/>.  
 Derrick, Florence. “Marchés De Noël: Exploring France’s Finest Christmas Markets.” France Today, 27 Nov. 2014. [https://francetoday.com/culture/art\\_and\\_design/marches\\_de\\_noel\\_exploring\\_france\\_s\\_finest\\_christmas\\_markets/](https://francetoday.com/culture/art_and_design/marches_de_noel_exploring_france_s_finest_christmas_markets/).  
 Edwards, Rosy. “Why Venezuelans Roller Skate to Mass on Christmas Eve.” Metro, Metro.co.uk, 13 Dec. 2021. <https://metro.co.uk/2017/12/20/christmas-around-the-world-why-venezuelans-roller-skate-to-mass-on-christmas-eve-7018407/>.  
 Guy, Jack, and Olga Voitovych. “Orthodox Church of Ukraine to Allow Christmas on December 25 as Rift with Moscow Deepens.” CNN, Cable News Network, 7 Nov. 2022. <https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/07/europe/orthodox-church-ukraine-christmas-scli-intl/index.html>.  
 Kerlynb. “10 Timeless Philippine Christmas Songs.” Holidappy, Holidappy, 22 Nov. 2011. <https://holidappy.com/holidays/10-Timeless-Philippine-Christmas-Songs>.  
 Nikel, David, et al. “Christmas Traditions in Norway.” Life in Norway, 1 Dec. 2021. <https://www.lifeinnorway.net/christmas-traditions-in-norway/>.  
 OSI, Emma I. “What is La Misa Del Gallo?” Our Spanish Life, 28 Feb. 2022. <https://www.spanishlife.com/what-is-la-misa-del-gallo/>.  
 Pitrelli, Monica. “The Country That Celebrates Christmas for More than 4 Months a Year.” CNBC, CNBC, 21 Dec. 2021. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/12/21/philippines-the-longest-christmas-celebrations-in-the-world.html>.  
 Saliu, Yunus S. “Janjambureh Kankurang Festival.” The Voice, The Voice Newspaper Gambia, 14 Jan. 2019. <https://www.voicegambia.com/2019/01/14/janjambureh-kankurang-festival/>.  
 Salzberg, Alys, and Kristopher Schmuland. “6 French Christmas Traditions That Might Surprise You.” French Together, 3 Dec. 2021. <https://frenchtogether.com/french-christmas-traditions/>.  
 Senterfeit, Skye. “This Winter Festival in the Philippines Lights up the Sky with Musical Lanterns.” Travel + Leisure, Travel + Leisure, 21 Jan. 2020. <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/festivals/philippines-giant-lantern-festival>.  
 Tagalog Lang. “Pasko Na Naman: Filipino Christmas Song Lyrics Translation.” TAGALOG LANG, 18 Sept. 2022. <https://www.tagaloglang.com/pasko-na-naman/>.  
 ©, Туроператор “Відадай”. “7 Most Important Ukrainian Holidays and Their Traditions + 3 ‘Weird’ Ukrainian Customs.” Blog about Tours to Ukraine, 14 July 2021. <https://vidaday.ua/blog/en/ukraine-traditions-holidays/>.

Africa is another country where many celebrate Christmas though many in the region are Muslim. Family is one aspect considered in Uganda, Nigeria, Madagascar, and South Africa. Because gift giving may be expensive during Christmas, these regions offer their services to their neighbors and friends to show their appreciation to them. Prayer is another aspect. Countries like Malawi receive church donations for performing Christmas carols, the Congo locals each place a gift on their church’s Communion table, and the churches in Zambia are customarily decorated with nativity plays as well as caroling. In the West African country of The Gambia, “The Fanal Parade” is a festivity parade held directly after Midnight Mass. The procession includes dancing whilst carrying “fanals” from house to house in return for church donations. Fanals are house-shaped and boat-shaped lanterns crafted from paper and bamboo. Another festivity celebrated in Gambia is the Janjambureh Kankurang Festival. The term “Kankurang” is believed to be a spiritual force that averts evil spirits and witchcraft in the community. Costumes are worn to express the cosmic “Jamba Kankurang” whose body consists of green mahogany leaves; the uncovered parts are coated in mud.

These exuberant celebrations conclude that no matter the continent, Christmas can be and is appreciated in diverse forms. Some may be solely religious, while others are more spectacle based. Moreover, multicultural traditions are especially dominant during the holidays because they foster the creation of individuality, meaning that they’re individually unique in the way joy is expressed. Thus, one can learn that Christmas is more than economic increase or finding the ideal gift for someone. The holiday calls for an internal understanding of congregation and reflection, and traditions are the best way of establishing both.



# RESOLUTIONS & REALIZATIONS: HOW TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH YOUR NEW YEAR PROMISE

By Eponine Seccafico

With the promise of the New Year coming closer to being fulfilled with each passing day, you may already have your New Year's resolution decided. It could range from dedicating a few more days to the gym or vowing to get that novella out of the mind and onto the page. And although these resolutions to be realized are wonderful and promising in their conception, resolutions to be realized they will likely stay. You promise to make them into reality with the changing of a clock, and yet, they are the same promise as you will hold yourself to in the year after. How does this happen time and time again? What can you do to make these resolutions into realized truths?

## Why These Resolutions Often Fail

Try as you may to follow through with what you promised, more often than not, it never goes past the planning stage. Do not think that this comes from laziness or from a lack of truly wanting to follow through. This, although possible in some cases, is not the common reason behind this outcome.

These promises often fall through due to the psychological makeup of our minds. Our minds cannot be changed with the flip of a dime and are designed to be distracted by procrastination. Ingrained into our DNA, our shifting attention can be both a relief and a setup for disappointment. Even if

only temporarily, it can be beneficial as a little break can go a long way in resting our minds before taking on what we had intended to accomplish.

However, this waiting to accomplish something often means you will not get as close as you would like to your goals. The anticipation only encourages the mind to put off more so that when



the time comes for you to start, you become swiftly overwhelmed with what you set out to do. Often, this results in disregarding your goals completely until the next year comes, and it's time for another round of unfulfilled resolutions.

Your mind is placed in a content cycle of repeated behavior. How can you go about breaking through?

## Take Little Steps

If you truly wish to make a change in your life, do not prioritize a date in time to get you there. Change takes time; it is not decided by it. Take little steps to accomplish your goals day by day. This can be done in a variety of ways, but the most balanced and organized of these methods is to make a list.

A list detailing what steps you will take day by day is not only a great tool to accomplish what you want but also to track your progress! Making note of what you have done, will only inspire you to see your promise through.

## Go Past The Deciding

If As tempting as waiting for the new year to focus on what you wish to change may be, it will not be a step towards accomplishing what you want. Why wait until the new year to get started on that ambition? Why not start today? Each day is precious and a blank canvas for shaping your future. To make resolutions into realities, you have to prioritize the present!



# Contact Us On Social Media



Let's Get Connected for Our Latest News & Updates



Unity For Equality



@unityforequality



@unityforequality



unityforequalit



Unity For Equality

[contact@unityforequality.org](mailto:contact@unityforequality.org)

202-878-0027

202-602-2594

[unityforequality.org](http://unityforequality.org)