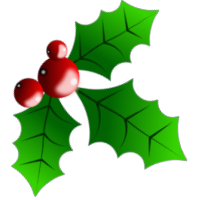




Christmas Ornaments & Traditions List



1. Christmas Tree

THE TRADITION: O Christmas Tree! This one is pretty straightforward – put up your Christmas tree! I'll be practicing this tradition with my family on the first of December, as we always do. Go pick out a fresh tree, or haul your artificial one out of the attic, and put her up for all the family to see. We don't decorate the tree the same day as we pick it out and get it up in the stand. Usually, to be honest, that is enough work for one day and we spend some time the following day decorating our tree (hint: watch out later this week for that tradition ornament!). So this ornament's tradition is to simply put up the tree!

2. Old Fashioned Ball

THE TRADITION: I bet you guessed this one – decorate your tree! With our first ornament and tradition, we picked out our Christmas tree and put it up in its stand. Now it's time for some Bing Crosby playing in the background and decorating! (And a bit of mulled wine if you're at my house) Decorate your tree, mantle, banister, anything! Pull out all those boxes of cherished ornaments and decorations for you home and spend the evening getting in the spirit of the season together.

3. Gingerbread House

THE TRADITION: Build a gingerbread house! This is one of my most cherished holiday traditions, and HAD to be on the list for this CAL. Plus doesn't it make a stinking cute ornament? You can get as elaborate with this as you want (and channel my Dad's gingerbread enthusiasm) or keep it simple and make a tiny gingerbread house out of canned frosting and graham crackers. Or get a gingerbread house kit from the craft store, only assembly and decorating required. I know I'll be spending a whole day on this tradition, because for us it is one of the most special events of the season!

4. Hot Chocolate

THE TRADITION: You guessed it, ya'll – share a cup of cocoa with someone you love! It can be the instant stuff, the pioneer woman ~~legal-addictive-substance~~ cocoa, or your own family recipe! Whip up a big batch and share a mug-full with your kids, friends, spouse, or your favorite Grey's Anatomy character (am I right?). If you don't like cocoa I guess you could drink coffee or tea or juice or something, but that's not

very Christmas-y now is it? Also if you don't like hot chocolate, you probably haven't had Pioneer Woman's hot chocolate. Seriously. (You'd think she paid me to say this but I just really love her, okay) Drink up & have fun!

5. Snowman

THE TRADITION: This ornament's corresponding tradition is to build a snowman! (If you are so lucky to live somewhere where it snows) OR to have a family movie night featuring Frosty the Snowman! This beloved children's classic is one that puts everyone in the holiday spirit at my house. Whichever way you celebrate snowmen, by building your own or staying in for a fun movie – let this little ornament remind you to have a jolly time with loved ones!

6. Pancake

THE TRADITION: Have a **meaningful** breakfast with your family. By meaningful I mean put away the cell phones and iPads, turn off the TV and have a pancake together (even if it's the microwavable kind). Get up an hour earlier and start your day together. Or if that really doesn't work for you, have breakfast for dinner (one of my family's favorite things)! Then hang this ornament on your tree and remember to always try to start your day with those you love, even if it's a kiss on the cheek on your way out the door!

7. Angel

THE TRADITION: This one is one of my favorites, and is SO Grandmother Betty – a random act of kindness. Whether you spend the evening making a scarf for that teacher always standing out in the cold at car rider pickup, help a pregnant woman with her groceries, or bake something sweet for the grumpy person in the cubicle next to you, there is always someone in your life who could use an angel. You never know how much a simple act of kindness can change a person's day, week, or life. I encourage you to radiate positivity and love, as Grandmother Betty did for all of her 86 years, then hang your angel on your tree and think of all those who could use a little extra love.

8. Star of Bethlehem

THE TRADITION: Talk with your loved ones about what makes this holiday so special to you! Sit down for an hour or two and tell the kids the story of the birth of Christ, talk about how this time of year is about love and togetherness, open hearts and minds – not open checkbooks. Talk about gratitude and appreciation, talk about the Christmas Star as it guided the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem and how we can

be stars in each other's lives, guiding one another toward positivity. This ornament and its tradition don't have to have any religious affiliation for you, it can simply be a night time star, shining brightly in the darkness. I still urge you to spend this ornament's tradition time to talk about being a light in the darkness for each other!

9. Christmas Lights

THE TRADITION: Go out after dark and look at all the lights! Grab a cup full of something warm, grab your loved ones and let yourself be enchanted by a bunch of shiny bulbs – you won't be sorry ya did! You could also put up your own Christmas lights outside, but at my house that is less of a family tradition and more of a chore for the hubby – am I right ladies?

10. Christmas Cookies

THE TRADITION: {big surprise here} Bake something sweet with your sweet family! At my house the holidays are all about baking and sharing in that time together. We all wind up with flour on our noses, yummys in the oven, and sprinkles in every nook and cranny. And I'm fine with it! This tradition is SO worth the extra vacuuming I'll do later.

11. Bing Crosby

THE TRADITION: Put a record on! My family loves to sit around the family room, drinking mulled wine, and singing Christmas carols. {The wine helps convince me to dust off the ole pipes!} We don't inflict our off-key bellows to the neighbors or anyone in town, but it's just as fun as going out caroling – promise. So gather around for an evening of music and laughter, you won't be sorry you did!

12. Storybook

THE TRADITION: Read a Christmas story with your little ones! Now this tradition could take many forms. You could have a nice evening around the fire with a stack of Christmas story books. You could read one quick bedtime story. You could volunteer to read a story to the kids at your local children's hospital. Or you could read a great adult's holiday book (John Grisham's *Skipping Christmas* is my favorite!) Just spend an evening with a good book that puts you in the spirit!

13. Little White Pumpkin

THE TRADITION: Dedicate the day to your pumpkin. Mine is my fiance but yours can be your child, your cat, your sister, your spouse, or yourself! Try to think of

something your pumpkin would enjoy and make the day about them unexpectedly – here are some ideas:

- surprise them at work with cubicle picnic
- make them their favorite dessert
- give them a little Christmas gift early
- bring out some wine and cheese for a romantic date night in after the kids are in bed! (Can you tell my love language is food??)

Whatever you do, have your pumpkin in mind and have fun together!

14. Letter to Santa

THE TRADITION: Write a letter to Santa! If you have kiddos in the house, take this tradition literally. Take a moment to talk about gratefulness and how fortunate we are to be visited by the big guy from the North Pole. Our letters to him always included a big ole thank you! If you don't have munchkins running around, or your munchkins are too big and too cool to write to Santa, think about who has been a "Santa" in your life. Who has been unendingly generous and warm to you? Write them a letter and thank them! You'd be surprised how cherished a simple card can be.

15. Southern at HEART

THE TRADITION: With an open heart, I urge you to donate something this holiday season. It can be something extravagant or a simple crochet hat. Whatever you choose to give openly and without strings attached, give it with love. I also encourage you to involve your kids, if you have any! The holidays are about giving, not receiving and I see so many children that aren't involved at all in the giving part of the holiday. They are only on the receiving end of things and what a shame that is! Go to the yarn store, and let the little one pick out what color yarn you'll work with for a donated crochet hat, scarf, or mittens after you talk together about how this project will help someone who we don't know. It doesn't have to be complicated to be important!

16. The Grinch

THE TRADITION: This tradition is twofold (or it will be at my house!). Devote the day to finding the Grinch in your life and brighten their day. That person can be someone with a particularly Grinch-y attitude while out shopping, or the fella in the office next door who always looks like a grump. Whomever your Grinch is, take a moment to show them some Christmas cheer. Pick up an extra sandwich on your lunch break for them, or let them skip ahead of you in the long checkout line. Just try to make them smile! In addition to finding a Grinch and trying to un-Grinch them, we will be watching Jim Carrey's movie version of the Grinch as well as reading the

story! Because at my house it's not Christmastime without a little bit of green, grouchy Jim Carrey.

17. Let it SNOWflake

THE TRADITION: Enjoy the snow with your families! If you live somewhere where you're fortunate enough to go sledding, skating, or have a snowball fight – go to town! I, however, will be staying in to watch one of my favorite Christmastime classics, *White Christmas*! Nothing says snow in Florida like hot chocolate on the couch with *White Christmas* on the screen! You could also have a “snowball” fight with white yarn pom poms! Oh, what fun!

18. Pickle

The story goes like this: When Santa visits he always leaves behind a pickle (yes, like a dill pickle) hidden among the branches of the Christmas tree for the kids to find on Christmas morning. There is a special pickle present from the big guy himself for the pickle-finder, usually in the form of candy or cookies. It is also said that whoever finds the pickle has good luck for the year ahead!

THE TRADITION: Find the pickle! Santa will be placing my pickle ornament on the tree on Christmas Eve after he leaves all the presents around for the family. And there will be freshly baked cookies for the child who finds the pickle first!

19. Present

THE TRADITION: Wrap up gifts with *meaning* this holiday season. Don't worry about how much to spend, or spending too much. Think about what would bring those people joy. For instance, last time my Grandma was at my house she saw THIS crochet bookmark I made and loved it. She asked me to make her one. I'm sure she's forgotten all about that by now and will find a special bookmark just for her under the tree! And she will remember seeing it before and love that I remembered. That simple gift will mean more to her than anything I could buy from a store – *it creates a memory*. So rework your Christmas lists and really think about the gifts you plan to give, create memories, and overall give to others with openness and love!

20. Stockings

THE TRADITION: Set a stocking budget and stick to it! Whether you shop with kids for the whole family, or shop for a friend (or just your kitty!) – set a small budget and think outside the box about what that person may like. This is a really fun

tradition with kids, I know I loved it and still remember it decades later. It's the simple things, people!

21. Candy Cane Cover

THE TRADITION: Make up a batch of candy cane covers and give them out to any group of people! (Or just give candy canes if you don't crochet!) You could make them for neighbors and hang on their doorknobs, make one for all your kids' classmates at school, your coworkers at the office, or attach them to your Christmas cards. The possibilities are endless! They are the perfect little inexpensive, handmade gift for a crowd. Just don't forget to make an extra for your tree! (Just remove the candy cane and replace each year)

22. Nutcracker

THE TRADITION: Watch the Nutcracker Ballet! Whether you see it on stage or on your television, watch the ballet with family. There is really some magic in those pointe shoes. If you think the kids will be bored by the ballet, think again! This one is full of whimsical story, action, and energy – especially if you take them to the theater!

23. Elf

THE TRADITION: 'Elf' your friends or family! Elfing is the act of anonymously giving a basket of goodies to an unsuspecting friend or family member! Leave it on their front porch, on their desk while they're at lunch, or anywhere else. I'll be Elfing my sister and her kids with a basket full of candy, stickers, a cute toy polar bear, and other goodies. I'll leave it on their porch, ring the bell, and run away! Surprising people with an unexpected treat is my favorite thing to do year round. Remind those around you that you're thinking of them and that you love them! And of course, that evening we will be watching Elf with big bowls of popcorn!

24. Rudolf the Rednosed Reindeer

THE TRADITION: Be the Santa of your story. Seek out the Rudolf in your family, office, classroom, or group of friends. Include them and celebrate them! This one can take many shapes, and can be as simple as starting up a conversation with someone who is always the quiet one of the group. Is there a woman in the corner cubicle who nobody ever invites to lunch? Ask if she would like to tag along! If she declines (shy ones often do, I was always the shy girl) bring her a cookie from the cafe and say you missed her and you hope that she'll join you tomorrow. Some of my best friendships were awkward co-worker relationships at first. I even floated in the

same circles as my fiance for months before we ever talked – you never know who you’ll get along great with! Whomever you deem your Rudolf, make an honest effort to put your preconceived notions aside and open up to them. They may just surprise you. Oh, and watch the Rudolf movie too!

25. Santa Claus

THE TRADITION: Vow to carry the Santa spirit all through the year! I will be celebrating the Santa spirit by talking with my family about how I plan to exude kindness, love, acceptance, and generosity for all of the year. And of course we will watch my all-time favorite Christmas movie – *The Year Without a Santa Claus*! This old movie really highlights everything that I feel about the holidays: love over hate, friendliness, and kindness all being so much more important than Santa’s gifts. Celebrate each other and put your Santa hat on!

