The season for memories

Celebrate the holiday spirit with homemade traditions that friends and family will cherish—now and for years to come.

by Amber Wade and Joanna Linberg

photos Kim Cornelison | producer Janna Lufkin

idea of the year

To commemorate their first Christmas together, David Maddox and Cameron Sasser kept the bottom inch of their Christmas tree—removed for water absorption—as a memento. This spur-of-the-moment decoration, labeled in marker with “Cameron and David, Our First Christmas, 1992,” started a now 19-year-old tradition. “Seeing the display gives me a sense of accomplishment for the longevity of our relationship and hope for continued strength in it for years to come,” David says.
Finding a holiday ritual shouldn’t be a stressor. Just change up something your family already loves. Chances are you’ve got a tradition you can make even more special.

CHAIN REACTION
(Above) When a member of reader Cynthia Baran Stile's family completes a good deed, such as opening a door for a stranger, he or she writes it down on a red or green strip of paper and adds it to a chain around the tree. As Christmas nears, the chain gets bigger, and the family can actually see their contributions grow.

CHILD-FRIENDLY
(Left) Holiday traditions are memory-makers, and reader Katie Whaley has an ingenious one she shares with her kids. Every year, she gives each of them a small Christmas tree to decorate. Each child picks a theme and colors for his or her tree (no parental vetoes allowed). It’s a fun way to reflect their interests from the year and include them in the season’s festivities.
Whether you’re baking or making, creating something together makes a family tradition doubly special.

**Generous Helpings**
(Below) Many home bakers turn out a lot of cookies during the holidays, but 96,000? That’s how many recipe developer David Bonom and his food writer wife Marge Perry (asweetandsavorylife.com) helped make for the first Cookies for Kids Cancer bake sale in 2007. The nonprofit, started by friends whose son was battling cancer, has since raised around $4 million through bake sales and online (cookiesforkidscancer.org). Making the cookies was their way of sharing their friends’ burden and their passion to fund a cure for pediatric cancer. “It wasn’t about being sad with them or scared with them,” Marge says. “It was about someone having their back.”

**Sweet Union**
(Above) A marriage in the family always shakes up tradition. In cookbook author Judy Bart Kancigor’s case, it was her son’s marriage and their family’s Hanukkah observances. “My daughter-in-law, Shelly, isn’t Jewish, but she wanted to share our traditions,” Judy, author of Cooking Jewish, says. Shelly used her family’s favorite Christmas sandwich cookie recipe along with a Star of David cookie cutter, replacing the red and green filling with a blue one for Hanukkah.

**Buy the Cookie Cutters**
To purchase a set of Star of David cookie cutters, go to BHG.com/cutters or call the BHG Holiday Store at 888/556-2892.