



Simplifying Christmas Guide

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Simplifying Christmas Series

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SIMPLIFYING CHRISTMAS

CREATING MORE HYGGE AND LESS STRESS

Welcome to your guide to simplifying Christmas! When I think about Christmas, I see memories of being with family, warm candlelight, Christmas music, laughter and family games. This wasn't always the case.

I often had stress, unrealistic expectations for myself, visions of perfections and a packed calendar filled with events. As Christmas arrived, I was stressed and exhausted. My patience was very thin with the extremely excited kids and threats of coal in stockings were crossing my mind regularly.

If this has been you, this guide might just help you. I've simplified our Christmas traditions over the years and while we don't do everything every year, we do what we can and then improvise or accept it as is. Our focus is about spending time together and trying our best to slow life down to enjoy time with each other.

WHAT IS HYGGE?

If you aren't familiar with Hygge, then I'll try to summarize it into a few words although I talk more about it in the following articles:

[How Do I Simplify Life? | Defining it for a Seeking Simple Life Journey](#)

[How to Slow Life Down | Creating a Lifestyle That You Will Love](#)

Hygge is a Dutch word that means comfort and connection. The Dutch use this to describe creating actions that help break up the busy lifestyle that is about work and the normal routines to slow life down enough to take care of yourself or spending time with family and friends.

Hygge reminds me to make time for what's important: relationships, health, and happiness. This is what we focused on when we simplified Christmas years ago. We just didn't have the work Hygge to describe it.

SIMPLIFY THE CALENDAR

It can be hard to say no to events and get together over the holidays but if you don't plan to make time for family fun then your weekends can quickly fill up with events that add stress and extra expenses to your budget.

We use a family scheduling app for our phones that help share the family scheduling role. The [Cozi Family Organizer](#) (affiliate link) is a free app that we've used for years to simplify our family schedule and help plan our to-do lists for the holidays.

Whether you use Cozi as your family calendar or another calendar, I recommend sitting down to plan your month in advance. Plan for the following:

1. Events you can't say no to
2. Fun Activities you want to do with the family
3. No plan days – to slow life down (blackout days that you don't fill with anything)

Don't forget about the school recitals, dance recitals, company Christmas parties and other events that fall into the "events you can't say no to".

If the calendar is too full then start simplifying the schedule so you have more "no plan days". Having no plans frees up the mind to clear feelings of overwhelm and allows for more spontaneity in life.

SIMPLIFY THE BUDGET

We started paying for Christmas gifts with a budget that we set early in the year. We would put a small amount of money aside every pay cheque to use at Christmas for gifts and events. Some years this budget was smaller than others due to unexpected expenses.

In the end we simplified the Christmas budget, so we didn't use credit and overextend our finances. We've made the focus for the kids and us around spending time together instead of what gifts they were getting on Christmas day.

Santa gifts weren't the big gifts for many reasons and I wrote about them in this post: [Why Santa Never Brings The Big Gift | Simplify Christmas Gift Giving](#). You might need to get creative if you are just starting out now for your Christmas budget, but you can do it. Then as part of your New Year, sit down to figure out how to [break up your biweekly savings and automatically transfer the money into another account](#).

SIMPLIFY CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS

Traveling for Christmas was originally part of our traditions. I had visions of cousins waking up on Christmas together and having so much fun together. This dream was changed when it got too hard to travel the 14 hours by car every Christmas. The uncertain road conditions forced us to simplify Christmas to be just us at home.

If we could have continued with traveling to be with extended family, then I would have done it for the cousin memories. Some of my favorite memories growing up are with my cousins at Christmas. This wasn't the case for us, so we simplified our Christmas to create our own traditions.

I used to feel compelled to make the perfect Christmas for everyone. I'd feel the pressure of doing the Christmas letters, cards, family photos, baking, decorations, parties, and so much more. After all the perfect Moms make their own DIY everything, plan these big parties for everyone and do it all with a huge smile on their face.

That wasn't me. I was usually overwhelmed with work and all the events I was trying to crush into the schedule. Then I'd lose track of time and forget to make the cards I had purchased the supplies for and didn't get the pictures printed in time to put in the mail.

I had these huge expectations of what Christmas was and I was failing, overwhelmed, exhausted and so very unhappy. Then my husband stepped in and started suggesting simple solutions. He would often say, "if it stresses you out why do it? In the end if we are spending time together that is all that matters."

If I didn't have time to make the cards, then I bought them. Or if I didn't have time to do any cards or letters, then they never got done and I had to be okay with that. Did my kids miss those cards getting done? No, but they got to spend time playing games, or going on a Christmas light tour, or go ice skating for some fun.

Did you know that local bakeries make many of the Christmas desserts that are great in a pinch when life gets too busy to bake your traditional Christmas baking? They do, and it's okay.

SIMPLIFY CHRISTMAS EVE

Christmas Eve tradition for us is one of our favorites. Dinner that night is usually fun food that we pick at while spending time as a family. There is a family gift that is opened on this night and we try to have it split into 3 gifts (one for each kid to open).

The family gift is usually themed around a movie night or a game night. Then we gather around to enjoy the gift as we check in with [Norad's Santa Tracker](#) to see where Santa is in the world.

That's it. Family time. Simple meal. Games or Movies. Time to create memories.

When the kids go to bed, we do the stockings and prep the breakfast in the slow cooker (our favorite recipe can be found at the end of this guide).


SIMPLIFY CHRISTMAS DAY

Christmas day is very low key for events. We simplify meals by having a slow cooker breakfast and usually have snacks mid-day. Then the turkey dinner will be planned for midafternoon, so we can sit and enjoy some more games in the evening before the kids crash for the night.

The gifts are opened usually before breakfast because the youngest kids (and me) can't wait for everyone to get up, let alone eat something first.

You probably have noticed that we aren't fancy in our festive celebrations. We keep it simple and focus on spending time together. It's my hope for you that you will give yourself permission to simplify Christmas, so you can spend more time with your family.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



A Little About Jacquie

Jacquie Ellis is an Industrial Engineer, writer and owner of Seeking Simple Life. When she isn't working she is sorting through her own chaos that comes with being a wife and mom of three kids. She loves family time, camping, her Kindle, the odd adult beverage, their PVR and Netflix. As an Industrial Engineer she spent her career feeding her passion of helping people sort through their chaos and improve their productivity.

Breakfast Casserole

Unknown Original

prep time

25 min

cook time

6-8 hours

serves

4-6

things you need

1 – 26 oz bag

Frozen Hashbrowns

12

Eggs

1 cup

Milk

1 tbsp

Ground Mustard

1 – 16 oz pkg

Sausage rolls (Maple, Sage or Regular)

16 oz

Shredded Cheddar Cheese

here's how

- 1 Spray the slow cooker with cooking spray and evenly spread hashbrowns on the bottom
- 2 Cook the sausage on high heat, drain and set aside.
- 3 Crack 12 eggs into a large bowl, mix well (slowly) using a whisk
- 4 Add milk and ground mustard and mix into the eggs
- 5 Add sausage on top the hashbrowns.
- 6 Add the cheese on top the sausage and mix hashbrowns, sausage and cheese together.
- 7 Pour egg mixture evenly over everything in the slow cooker. Smooth out the mixture with a wooden spoon.
- 8 Cook on low for 6-8 hours