



CLOVER CHRONICLE

News and features written by Pennsylvania 4-H Members.

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State Council Reflects on Christmas Traditions

Happy holidays! State Council is rolling into the season of giving.

As things begin to slow down and we turn our focus toward family and friends, the communications committee wants to ensure we mirrored that idea in this month's article.

Ultimately, we decided it would be appropriate to bring back an old idea, started by a council before us. With stories, photos and recipes galore, we hope you'll enjoy hearing how we have celebrated.

GRACE ZEIGMONT

Communications Committee

Growing up, my family, like most others, had a fairly typical Christmas dinner. There was always ham, green beans, mashed potatoes and the chocolate cherry cheesecake we somehow managed to forget in the oven every year.

In 2021, my mom, sister and I spent the week leading up to Christmas out of town. Everything was fine until, on the 8-hour drive home on Christmas Eve, my sister and I were deep in debate about the origins of the George Washington Memorial. Out of nowhere, my mom glanced over at me and said, "Grace, we forgot dinner!"

Still caught up in our debate about the nation's capital, I held up the leftover pizza from earlier in the night and said, "I've got it covered." And just like that, a new tradition was born.

Since then, every Christmas Eve, my mom sends my sister and me to the local pizza shop to pick out a pizza for Christmas dinner, usually ending in some questionable combination of meat and pineapple. It may not be a traditional holiday meal, but it has freed up the time most families spend cooking and cleaning, leaving us more time for what really matters: good conversation, laughter, and the occasional spirited debate that started it all.

ALYSSA BERGENSTOCK

Secretary

When I was younger, in protest, I would stack all my presents before

I even opened them. My dad always made me wait for him to make breakfast till I could open gifts.

PATRICIA SHIVELY

Communications Committee

In the midst of the chaotic season, my family always had a staple that held everything together — the haphazard event of decorating the tree.

The first obstacle is always getting the tree itself, which always seems to increasingly vary in time and difficulty. As long as it's up by the 25th, though, it counts!

The second charade, usually overshadowed by the first and only realized when you reach your property, is "Will it fit through the front door?" Miraculously, it usually does.

Nevertheless, the decorating is much more serene. The tree is lined with specific bubble lights that are no longer sold anywhere but eBay. Purchased by my mother years ago, they're a necessary part. Though they're rather heavy compared to conventional string lights, a blue spruce will hold them.

The ornaments vary every year, usually tailored to whether or not we have a young pet in the house. My dog and cat are both old enough to behave around small, fragile glass objects, so we opt to deck the halls with the best we've got.

These include a tree topper my father purchased as a child from the long-defunct O. R. Laney's in Mifflinburg, a few odds and ends my parents bought from College Gardens in State College, and my great grandmother's ornaments, which are kept in the original shipment box, wrapped in the original pink cloth.

Some of them are most likely over 100 years old by now. Over the years I've added many as well, usually an Old World Christmas piece that strikes my fancy. It all manages to whip itself into shape by the time it's needed, and so long as I can keep the cat from drinking the water out of the stand, things work out wonderfully. Here's to seeing how it'll look this year!



Submitted photos

Kaylee and her grandpa with his woodworking project for the season.

KAYLEE BAKER

Outreach Committee

One family tradition that has been around for my whole life is from my grandpa, George Baker. Every year, he makes different woodworking projects for our whole family. He also makes one for every family in my whole church!

ARIANA COOK

Communications Committee

My family goes to Christmas Eve Service at our church every year, and my sister and I each get our new annual pajama sets when we come home. When Christmas [morning] rolls around, we all have to wait for my dad to come in from chores and for his parents to get to our house before we can open most of the presents — we can only open the stockings before they get here. When we're finished, we go to my grandparents home to celebrate with extended family — sharing gifts, enjoying dinner, and decorating sugar cookies.

GIUSEPPE SCHIANO DI COLA

President

Christmas is my favorite time of year; I love the joy, songs and time spent with the people most important to you. My family has many traditions, but I have two that are my favorite.

The first one is my collection of Hess Trucks! Every year I eagerly await the newest Hess Truck that comes out and get any collector's edition I can. The one I've been always dreaming of getting is the 1966 ship, the Hess Voyager. It is the only time other than a 2023 collector's edition that came out as a boat.

My favorite of my collection is the 2014 50th year collector's edition that not only recreated the original 1964 Hess Truck, but created a larger one for it to go into and display it at the same time. My aunt Shelley and uncle Chal always get one for me, and it just reminds me of my childhood and Christmas time.

My family's other tradition is that

of an Italian game called Tombola. Tombola is a game where you buy a card (in our house we just do \$1/card). Then like bingo these cards have numbers and those numbers are called out.

On the card we work our way up. You start with Ambo, 2 numbers on a single horizontal row, then Terno, 3 numbers on a single horizontal row, then Quaterna, 4 numbers on a single horizontal row, then Cinquina, 5 numbers on a single horizontal row, and finally, Tombola the whole card has been filled.

We play this all night, and unfortunately, I have bad luck and often lose a decent chunk of change. Overall, however, this game and the Hess Trucks just symbolize one thing to me. Family.

Family is always the most important thing. Whether it is biological or your best friend, you should always put family first, and I think that Christmas is a great reminder for that when you get together with family. It's never about the gifts; it's about the people. May God bless you and your family this Christmas and enjoy each other's company.

Finally, here are a few favorite holiday recipes from State Council.

Pennsylvania Dutch Pot Pie

PATRICIA SHIVELY

Communications Committee

3 cups flour
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 beaten eggs
1 cup milk

Mix dry ingredients, then add in eggs and milk. Mix again until combined and sprinkle in a little more flour if too sticky. Roll dough on floured counter until your desired thickness, then cut into squares.

Strain broth and bring it to a boil before adding in dough squares. Keep it boiling for 20 minutes. Add in your meat (pre-cooked in the broth you just strained) when you have 10



Patricia's tree, decked with bubble lights and ornaments.

or so minutes left. This recipe works with any cooked meat — beef, pork, chicken, turkey, etc.

Mashed Potatoes

HELAYNA HOLLOBAUGH

Events Committee

4 cups sweet potatoes (skinned, boiled)

1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup butter

1 teaspoon vanilla
Mash in potatoes with sugar, eggs, milk, salt, butter and vanilla. Put in sprayed casserole dish.

Topping:
1 cup pecans
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup flour
1/3 cup melted butter
Crumble pecans, brown sugar, flour, melted butter.

Sprinkle on top of mashed potatoes and bake for 35-40 minutes.

As you can see, our council members cherish traditions both old and new — whether it's pizza on Christmas Eve, heirloom ornaments, handmade wooden gifts or games that bring generations together. These stories remind us that the holidays aren't defined by perfect meals or polished decorations, but by the laughter, faith, and family.

From our State Council family to yours, may your holidays be filled with joy, connection, and the simple moments that become the traditions you'll treasure for years to come.



Giuseppe's favorite Christmas-time game, Tombola.



Alyssa stacking presents on Christmas morning.

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