

Treasured Traditions

One of my favorite Christmas traditions used to be making a festive Yule Log for my family's enjoyment.

Every Christmas Eve from 1981-1999, I spent four hours preparing a Yule Log for my family to enjoy after church that evening. It was a complicated affair, involving the making of the cake, rolling it into a log shape, making the filling, unrolling the log to fill it, rolling it back up, making the icing, icing the log and then decorating it to look like a real log (as if real logs were covered with icing holly and gum drops), presenting it on a silver platter and nestling it right in the center of a spread of other holiday goodies.

Four hours on the busiest day of the year.

Finally on Christmas Eve night, 1999, I noticed something. Not one member of my family had eaten one bite of my Famous Yule Log.

Slightly offended, I asked my husband why even he hadn't sampled my delectable work of art. "Dear," he replied sheepishly, "I hate to tell you this. No one really cares for the Yule Log."

The following Christmas Eve, one item was intentionally missing from my Yuletide spread.

Still smarting (since 1999) from that last untouched masterpiece, I've come to realize that families have to pick and choose when it comes to honoring traditions.

Most young adults have been handed down traditions from their own families of origin. Failing to follow those traditions may feel disloyal, even traitorous. But when you consider that two clans' traditions have been thrust on this one little family, the pressure may be overwhelming.

I would hope that young parents would carefully choose those traditions which mean the most to their own families. Bringing a few traditions from each family of origin while developing some new ones of their own honors families' past and future. Parents can select the traditions which convey the most significance without overburdening them.

As for me, I can use that extra four hours on Christmas Eve to call a few loved ones and to work at a slower pace, saving some energy for the important evening ahead.

My husband's contribution to Christmas Eve has always been a rather dramatic reading of "The Night Before Christmas." This activity takes about ten minutes

and is of High Importance in our household. Though our children are now adults (and have had the story memorized for years), each Christmas Eve they cuddle together, pajama-clad, and listen to each word with childlike wonderment....a tradition that our family will enjoy for many years to come.

I hope this season finds you full of peace and joy, savoring traditions that are right for your family. In the words of Clement C. Moore, "*Merry Christmas to All, and to All a Good Night!*"