

KNOW YOUR “Reason for ^{THE} Season”

Keep Your Cool & Enjoy the Holidays

By Rowena List

In our world of over-consuming and over-indulgence, taking the time to get clear about your “reason for the season” gives you the clarity to prioritize what matters most. It is this clarity that will ensure your holiday season is filled with all that makes you happy and brings you joy.

What is your reason for the season? Is it about the spiritual celebration? Is it about family traditions? Or is it about indulging in special foods, gathering with friends and family, or simply about rest and relaxation?

Some of you may answer “all of the above,” however prioritizing what matters most is the key to a stress-free and enjoyable holiday season. So, the first step is to make a plan and prioritize:

- Sit down with your family and discuss what each person wishes for the season — what does everyone want to do (activities and traditions), the foods, who to see, and more.
- Make a “wish list” based on the above, then prioritize the items (A=top priority, B=would really like to, C=would like to). “A” should only contain the items the family is not willing to forfeit.

Not every wish can be granted, but now you can begin plotting the wishes into your master family calendar. This can be the month of December, and it can also start in November and go into January (the spirit of the season knows no boundaries).

- Plot as many “As” into the calendar as you can, keeping in mind your “reason for the season” and what matters most. Always leave room in the calendar for unforeseen things that are sure to pop up.

Now that you have your overall plan, plan your menus and gift lists, if giving:

- Do you like to create a theme for your menus or do you have traditional foods you make each year? Using ingredients that flow from one recipe to the next streamlines grocery shopping as well as food preparation.
- Pot lucks are a great way to get variety, experience a food theme and keep your efforts to a minimum.
- A baked-goods exchange with friends is a fun way to spend way to spend an afternoon.
- Consider the gift of time. Set up dates with loved ones





to go for lunch, a manicure or special holiday production. This cuts down on pressure to buy gifts and the time spent wrapping them, and is more meaningful.

If you want to buy gifts, start early. Create a master shopping list, so you can get items when they're on sale. Gift cards are an easy way to give someone the flexibility to get what they want, and the money spent will likely go farther as prices go down after the holidays. Keep it simple and you'll have more fun, more time, more money and less stress.

Now you're ready to make your Master To-Do List:

- Divide your list into subjects such as gift and grocery shopping, cleaning, sending invitations, decorating and food prep.
- Now break your To-Do List down into small manageable tasks and assign who

will do what. What are the items that really need your full attention and what can you delegate? What can you let fall from your list (for example: do the carpets really need to get cleaned before "the day")?

The need for perfectionism can be extremely stressful and take away from your "reason for the season." Keeping in mind and releasing the need for control, now is the time to involve others and ask for help. After all, is it more important that it's done exactly how you think it should be or simply that it's done?

We can inadvertently shut people out of our lives when they offer to help, but we insist on trying to do it all because we're attached to how it gets done. Being open to the possibility that ours is not the only way something can be done includes others and shows them they are important and trusted.

You now have what it takes to execute your plan, with your "reason for the season" driving your daily priorities.

We all have so much to be grateful for. It is my wish that with these tips, you'll be more relaxed, at peace and experience the true essence of what the holidays are about for you. ■



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