

# Make Christmas Eve just as special for the kids

Christmas Eve is viewed differently by different people, even those who live under the same Santa-ready roof. Adults may see Christmas Eve as crunch time when they must prepare food for the next day or set up presents for their children to open in the morning. Children, on the other hand, are focused on Santa’s visit and little else.

Parents naturally want to make Christmastime as special as possible for their children, and that may involve ensuring that Christmas Eve is just as memorable as Christmas Day. The following are some ways to impart more magic into Christmas Eve celebrations.

## Attend a Christmas Eve Mass or Song Service

Practicing Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas. On Christmas Eve, churches often

hold celebrations that may include late-evening or midnight masses that celebrate the birth of Christ when the calendar switches over to December 25. While it does make for a late night, it can be thought-provoking for kids and a unique experience unlike any other.

## Bake a batch or two of holiday cookies

Children like to leave out a plate of cookies and a glass of milk for Santa. That makes Christmas Eve a perfect time to whip up a fresh batch of cookies. Explore different recipes to come up with a unique offering each year.

## Read a Christmas story together

Watching television or looking at a tablet or mobile phone before bed can be too stimulating when it’s

time for children to wind down for bed. Choose a holiday tale or tales that can be read as a Christmas Eve bedtime story. Reciting the poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas (‘Twas the Night Before Christmas)” is a great way to set the Christmas Eve mood.

## Maker reindeer dust to help fuel Santa’s sleigh

Why should Santa’s reindeer be left out when it comes to receiving treats? Reindeer dust, made from a combination of oatmeal, rice cereal, dried fruits, and glitter (if desired), is purported to attract Santa’s reindeer and provide them a nibble at the same time. Plus, it’s generally safe for other animals in the yard to eat.



Singing Christmas Carols together at home or in the neighborhood is a great Christmas Eve activity for the entire family.

## Go caroling in the neighborhood or living room

Caroling may not be the norm, but some families may want to revive it. Close-knit communities can organize family-centric caroling opportunities and roam the cul-de-sacs and other pedestrian-friendly areas singing popular songs. Or, if getting out isn’t ideal, gather and sing as a family or let the kids sing carols for grandparents or next door neighbors.

Whether you try these ideas or come up with activities of your own, Christmas Eve is a great time to embrace various traditions that help to make the season even more special. Have fun with it and create new traditions.

### DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Makes 12 large cookies

**INGREDIENTS:**  
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened  
5 tablespoons granulated sugar  
5 tablespoons light brown sugar, sifted  
1 large egg, beaten  
1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla essence or chocolate extract (see note)  
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons self-rising flour  
3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2/3 cup (or more) dark and white (or milk) chocolate chips (or

roughly chopped chocolate)  
A heavy, nonstick baking sheet

**DIRECTIONS:**  
Heat the oven to 350 F. Using an electric mixer, cream the butter and sugars together until pale and fluffy. Beat in the egg and vanilla essence. Sift the flour with the cocoa and salt in a small bowl. Fold into the egg mixture with the chocolate chips. Place 4 heaping tablespoons of the mixture on the prepared baking sheet, spacing them well apart. Press down and spread out

to about 1/4-inch thick with the back of a wet spoon or with dampened fingers (you may like to scatter some more chocolate chips over the top). Bake for 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool on the baking sheet for 1 minute, then transfer to a wire rack. When cool, store in an airtight container. Repeat with the remaining mixture.

*Note: Chocolate extract is a fat-free flavoring ingredient made from a blend of roasted cacao beans, water and alcohol.*



# Bite-sized red velvet bites are a real crowd pleaser

This bite-size version of red velvet cake will allow your guests to sample all the desserts at your next holiday spread. You can count on these to be a crowd pleaser.

## RED VELVET BITES

Makes 40 bites

**INGREDIENTS:**  
3 cups sugar  
3 cups flour  
1/2 cup cornstarch  
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
1-1/2 teaspoons salt  
4 large eggs  
1-1/2 cups buttermilk  
1-1/4 cups warm water  
1/2 cup vegetable oil  
2 teaspoons vanilla extract  
1 teaspoon white vinegar  
2 tablespoons red food dye  
4.5 ounces cream cheese, room temperature  
1/2 cup butter, room temperature  
2 cups icing sugar  
28 ounces white chocolate  
1/4 cup red decorative sugar



**Directions:**  
Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 7 by 11 inch baking dish. Set aside.  
In a large bowl, use a whisk or hand beater to mix the sugar, flour, cornstarch, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt. Add the eggs, buttermilk, warm water, vegetable oil, 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract, vinegar and food dye. Blend until the mixture is uniform. Pour mixture into the baking dish, and bake for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool.  
In a large bowl, blend the cream cheese, butter and the rest of the vanilla. Slowly incorporate the icing sugar by blending at low speed until the mixture has a smooth, even texture. Set aside.  
Once the cake has completely cooled, place it in a large bowl and use your hands

to crumble it until it has the consistency of wet sand. Add about a 1/2 cup of the cream cheese icing to the cake at a time and mix well. The final texture should allow you to form balls that keep their shape.  
With your hands, form 40 cake balls and squish them slightly to create a disc shape. Place the balls on a baking sheet, and put them in the fridge for about 30 minutes. In the meantime, melt the white chocolate using a double boiler or water bath. Let the chocolate cool slightly while ensuring it remains a liquid. Using a fork, dip each cake ball into the chocolate so they’re completely coated. Place the balls on a baking sheet and immediately sprinkle the decorative sugar. Put the balls in the fridge for 30 minutes to allow the chocolate to harden.

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