



THE BIG
CHRISTMAS
LIST 

Written By Jan Ferrante
Queen of KAOS



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Getting ready for Christmas?

I had originally planned to make that a statement, but since I'm starting to feel the crunch, because I have been procrastinating, I thought it might be more of a question for you too.

I woke up this morning, earlier than usual (3 am to be exact), because I am starting to get anxious.

The day is fast approaching and it's already starting to happen.

My calender is starting to fill up.

Social engagements that I can't get out of are starting to appear like bugs on my windshield.

Obligations that I made weeks or months ago thinking I would 'make time' are showing up... when I am trying to get ready for Christmas. I find myself thinking, what was I thinking??

Time is dwindling.

And we are having the family Christmas at our house this year.

I've been spoiled with Christmas at my in laws house every year, so I am like a babe in the woods when it comes to Christmas planning – and execution (why does that sound fitting :o).

Actually, I'm kind of excited. I always thought I was missing out on some good memories at our house.

Then I started running through a list in my head of things that need to be done.

It kept growing.

I couldn't sleep so I decided to get up and write it down.

So here it goes.

There might be a few things here that you would like to take care of as well.



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I've also made a list of things that could have been done last month.

NOVEMBER

Freezer cooking or make ahead for the days when the going gets tough in December. For me this will be as simple as making extra at meals to put ahead. The main difference will be the planning, and recording on a pad on the freezer what I have, so that I will USE IT.

House repairs that you would like finished. - We have been working on this. I will have more on that later. It's been slow going, but I am hoping to have a new counter top before Christmas day. Wish me luck!

Decluttering and clearing for the new items your family will receive. Pretty much done, but I would like to do a little more, especially with the kids.

DECEMBER

Send out your cards. If you have lots, a certain number per day until they are ready is a good way to do it without much interruption in your daily routine.

New dish cloths and tea towels for the occasion. Either seasonal to go entirely festive, or a new set without stains and dinginess. It could be a yearly tradition to help brighten your kitchen.

Speaking of dishes, also be sure to have **plenty of dish soap, both for the sink and for your dishwasher** if you have one. Christmas isn't the day you want to run out of soap!

Meal planning. What do you want to make for dinner and what do you want to make for dessert? And what goodies would you like to have around the house?

Start Christmas baking. I don't like to do this too early because it leaves a great big window of pre Christmas sneaking to the freezer. And we know where that leads. But the earlier the better. A nice strategy is to do the baking and then keep it in someone else's freezer if you can, until the big day.

I am going to start planning it out, but I am planning to spend a day with my sister doing baking.

What crafts would you like to make? Are you doing any homemade Christmas decorations? For yourself or for Christmas gifts? Homemade



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Christmas items are some of the best things about Christmas. Now is the time to get going if you haven't already.

Christmas tablecloth. Do you have a special festive tablecloth for your table? If you are making one, now is a good time to get out the sewing machine and get your material. And then make the tablecloth! (I say this as I have a rumpled bunch of cloth that is going to make a beautiful tablecloth for us this year. I did wash it, it just needs to be ironed and stitched. Kicking self into gear.) Nothing makes a kitchen say Christmas like a nice tablecloth and it can be a pretty easy fix.

Windows. Have any windows that would make a much better impression cleaned up? I do! The window ledges and inside the window tracks need a good vacuuming and wipe. It's something we don't always notice but could really spruce things up, especially in the kitchen, dining, family and/or livingroom. Anywhere you will be spending time with your guests. If you have blinds, you may want to check them to see what kind of shape their in.

While we are on the subject, if your **drapes or curtains** could use a spruce up, either a quick wash or maybe even a revamp, now is the time to do it.

The fridge. If you have been cleaning it regularly, it probably is in pretty good shape. If not you are going to want to have this in good condition. Plan an hour or two to do it in one lump, or do it 10 – 15 minutes a day starting today. A good time to clean the fridge is while you're waiting for the kettle to boil for coffee or tea. It amazing how much you can get done.

Ditto the stove. If it needs it, be sure to set aside some time to do the inside of the oven and the stove top. Magic erasers that you can buy at the store put out by Mr. Clean really are magic on the stove top and on the window of the oven.

Ditto the microwave. You can clean this quite easily by placing a wet dishcloth inside of it and turning it on for about a minute. The cloth will be extremely hot at first. Leave the door shut and let it cool for a minute or so. This will give more time for the steam to work and then you can use the cloth without burning yourself. Some people like to use a cup of water instead. A cloth works for me, I make sure that it is very wet, but depending on your microwave, use what suits.

Then give the outside a wipe, and tada! If you have an inside tray, be sure to give it a good wash in the sink. It take mine out before I put the cloth in for steaming.



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Any piles laying around that have become part of the scenery? I especially like this one because your family, and yourself will see benefit from this for the whole year if you keep it this way. Give your house the once over and see what stands out to you. Put aside a regular 10 minute time to tackle the piles. Despite working diligently for most of the past year, I still have some problem areas that seem to fill themselves up. Time to get to them.

General decluttering and clean up. Anything laying around that can go? Anything need a good wipe down or wash off?

What are you going to wear? I was in the mall doing some shopping and saw a cute red sweater. I've been collecting a few this year because I almost always wear a sweater or light jacket and they can really spruce up your look. So I picked it up and will be wearing it on Christmas. I can wear some pants and a shirt that I already have. Don't need to go too fancy, but now I will feel more Christmassy too. Try to hold off wearing it until Christmas if you can. It will feel more special.

What are your kids going to wear? Get that organized and put away as well.

If you have something already that you would like to wear, get it out and try it on. Get anything together that you will need to accessorize it. Wash it or take it to the cleaners if it needs some sprucing up.

What about your hair? If you need a cut, colour or something new, get it a few weeks before Christmas if you prefer. It will be one more thing taken care of and you will feel much better throughout the holidays. If you want to go closer to Christmas, be sure to book your appointment well ahead.

Gifts. Who do you need to get a gift for? Make your plan if you haven't done it already and get to it. I like to buy at craft sales or online from home or small businesses. This is an important time for them and I love the uniqueness that you can't get at the mall. And I love to make what ever I can. This year I'm making my MIL, sister in law and my sister soap and skin care stuff. They will LOVE it and it's quite easy, especially the skin care stuff if you aren't into making soap.

It's easy to get overwhelmed with gift giving, but it can be not so bad if you put the time aside for it. Choosing names for adults really helps a lot if you have a bigger family. Sometimes you can give donations in there name for part of the gift. Donate a tree. Buy a goat. That kind of thing. Personally, I love to receive these things.



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Budget. This can save you a lot of stress later. Take the time to budget your gift and Christmas entertaining costs and stick to it, even if it means cutting a few corners and doing without a few extras. Chances are no one will notice, but you will come January when your credit card comes rolling in.

Donate to the food banks if you can. Make it a point when you are out shopping to put something into the donation box at your grocery store. Our school has a box right now too. Many department stores have donation boxes for gift type items as well. Women's shelters are a great place to donate this time of year. I took a car load of new toys over a few years ago. It was one of my best Christmas's.

GETTING CLOSER

How are your floors? You may want to clean along the edges of the wall and under the cupboard edges, around the fridge/stove etc. At the least, give it a quick go over if it hasn't been done in awhile.

Wipe down the cupboards. Unless it's a major job, this won't take too long but will spruce things up. If you need a major wipe down, plan some time for it early.

If you're carpets need a good cleaning, try to give yourself lots of time ahead.

Dishes and cupboards. You don't need to knock yourself out to have things tip top inside of your cupboards IMHO, but you do want to be able to find things.

You could set up a holiday area where you can start putting your Christmas items now. Anything that you will need so there is no searching through all of your cupboards on Christmas. Especially if you have some you would rather keep closed!

Do you have a bread machine? Now is your chance to try out those fancy recipes that you never make. I have some amazing recipes in my bread machine cookbooks that I am going to make and put in the freezer. Some are even suitable to cut small and use on the snacking tray. And you can even make them good for you. A nice alternative to over sugared sweets, not that some of those aren't good too!



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How about the bathroom? Give it a good go over if it needs it. There is some great toilet bowl cleaner out there that is environmentally friendly. It's gentle too. I used it on my sink. It's plastic and very hard to get clean. It came out sparkling. (note: be sure that you have the kind you can use on sinks etc. It may not say so you need to be careful, some are so caustic that they will ruin your sink if it is plastic. Another great reason to switch brands) Now is a good time to get rid of old shampoo bottles etc too.

Speaking of bathrooms, how are your **hand towels, and bath towels** if you are having guests? Another thing that can be overlooked and not so nice if all you have is a threadbare, dingy looking towel to hand them. Get a few new ones if you need them and keep them for Christmas.

Speaking of overnight guests. **How is your bedding?** If you need new sheets or blankets for them, now is the time to pick them up.

Activities for Christmas day. If you have anything in particular in mind that may need some prep, be sure to put it on the list.

Plates and dishes to feed everyone. If you don't have enough, arrange to have someone bring some of theirs. And make sure they don't forget!

TIPS TO GETTING YOUR LIST FINISHED

Enlist your kid's to help. Even if you have to pay them. Most of the time they'll work pretty cheap. They need Christmas money too around this time so they may be willing. \$5 for me to get another thing off the list is well worth it, and my youngest daughter in particular, is developing her entrepreneurial skills :o) I call her Christina Trumpette. And she's learning the value of working for money rather than watching TV for nothing.

If you're married, now is the time to **make your honey do list.** I have found myself frustrated at my husband asking over and over what I want him to do. I tell him. He doesn't do it. Then asks me again a week later. By that time I've forgotten myself until he is gone, then I remember! I started using a small white board. I write things as I think of them. I am surprised that he actually seems to like it. It gives him more control and makes it easier for him to plan, just like us. And I suspect he has fun rubbing the items off too. Just like us.

The best part. He is actually doing 'most' of them without me even saying anything to him now. He just rehung the bathroom closet doors that came off the track yesterday. I had written it on his board last week when he was gone and forgotten. He just looked at it and did it when he felt like it.



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One word of caution. While it's is tempting, don't over do. We all know how overwhelm feels. Write a few of the most important things at a time on the board. If you need a bigger master list to help you remember, make a separate one of your own to refer to. Maybe make a switch up date for once per week, maybe Saturdays. That builds in some boundaries and time lines. And it doesn't turn out to be a never ending revolving door. That isn't a good feeling either.

Pay someone outside of the home. Need a few things done that no one has time or expertise to do? Don't be afraid to shop around for some help. You may know someone who would love a few extra jobs around this time of year. Or there are more handy man type services and cleaning services etc out there. Don't procrastinate on this. Book early.

Buddy up. If you have a good friend or relative, plan a day or two or more to go to each others houses and help each other out. Do some bulk baking together, go shopping together. Anything to get you moving and even have some fun. Or share your tasks. You can bulk bake a few things, so can she and you can trade off.

Make yourself a Christmas calender. Make a plan for exactly when you will do your Christmas tasks. And be sure to do them as planned or it will just spell STRESS later down the road. Remember, a little pain now will be a big gain down the road.

This could be your most important key to a Merry and stress free Christmas.

Buckle up, Christmas is coming fast, no matter what day it is.

I hope that this Big Christmas List helps you to make it a Christmas to remember and special time shared with your family.

Wishing You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from my heart to yours.

Make It Your Day!

Jan Ferrante



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QUICK SHOPPING LIST

Christmas cards.

Stocking stuffers and gifts that you are not buying online, handmade or handmade, by your self or someone else.

Towels and face cloths for the bathroom.

Dishcloths for the kitchen.

Dish soap etc.

Bedding if you need it.

Christmas tablecloth – either material to make one or a new one.

Christmas plants.

'Green' toilet bowl cleaner and cleaning products.

Christmas craft items.

Baking ingredients.

Get your turkey if you're having one.

QUICK LIST

Freezer cooking for the days when the going gets tough in December

House repairs that you would like finished.

Decluttering and clearing for the new items your family will recieve.

Meal planning. Christmas dinner and the time leading up.

Christmas cards.

Crafts.

Baking.



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Christmas table.

Decorations for house.

Windows. Curtains etc.

Fridge.

Stove/oven.

Microwave. (you may want to do this the day before too :o)

Cupboards – organize for Christmas.

Wipe down cupboard doors.

Clean the bathroom.

Declutter piles.

General decluttering and wiping up.

Get your clothes ready.

Get your children's clothes ready.

Hair.

Budget.

Gifts.

Donations. Food bank, toy drives, women's shelters etc.

Floors. Bare and carpets.

Make ahead bread machine items.

Arrange for plates and dishes if you don't have enough.

Hey, it doesn't look that hard. I am going to go get started!



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A FEW RESOURCES

Here are a few things that you may find helpful over the season, or over the next year.

Get Ready to Shine in 2009!

MAKE IT SPECIAL eGuide Collection

I created for a do it yourself Christmas, featuring easy homemade skin care gifts, along with many more Christmas ideas to make it special this year.

<http://i-shine.org/eguides/homemade-christmas-gifts/easy-make-it-yourself/>

MAKE YOUR OWN 100% NATURAL BODY BUTTER

If you like homemade skincare, you might like my How to Make Your Own Body Butter. These make fantastic, unique gifts and are a really fun project over the holidays.

Easy to make and fantastic for dry skin.

<http://skincarenaturals.com/natural-skin-care-blog/how-to-make-your-own-homemade-body-butter/>

BOOST HOUSEWORK CIRCUIT

And of course, my BOOST Circuit housework schedule guide. It works for me!

<http://queenofkaos.com/home/boost-circuit/>

MOM ACADEMY

A growing collection of ebooks to help you get and stay organized around the house in all areas.

<http://queenofkaos.com/home/mom-ebooks/>



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CHRISTMAS FORUM AT iSHINE – browse our other forums and resources while your there! Everyone is welcome.

<http://www.itsyourdaytoshine.com/forum/topics/christmas-1>

FREE COURSES BY EMAIL

I will be adding to these often, so you can always get updates at this page.

Time Management for Mom

Organization for Mom

Frugal Living

Meal Time On Time

Family Routines

and More Energy for Mom are some of the selections that will be available.

<http://queenofkaos.com/home/free-stuff/>



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