

PUBLICATION

Baker's Dozen – Traditions

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As we look to celebrating the holidays in our own special ways, we asked our alumni about their favorite family tradition or a special gift they received as a child that they will always remember.

1. When my husband and I got married, we started a new tradition where we buy a personalized Christmas ornament for our family each year. It was especially fun picking the ornament this year because we welcomed our first child, our son Beckham. I hope to pass all the ornaments on to him one day.



– *Brontë Prins, Southern Land Company*

2. The holiday season in South Florida has taken some getting used to. Christmas lights on palm trees, beach days instead of snow days, Santa finding creative ways to get into our house with no chimney -- the peculiarities are numerous. However, one thing we very much enjoy as a family is going to see the holiday lights via boat. Many homes along the Intracoastal waterways go all out during the holiday season, and this is a fun family tradition.



– *Sharee Eriks, AlphaStaff*

3. One of my family's favorite holiday traditions is attending our local community theater's holiday production every year -- the Red Mountain Theatre's Holiday Spectacular. We've taken our youngest daughter, who loves musical theater, every year for the last six or seven years. This year the show is extra special for several reasons: The show was cancelled last year because of the pandemic so we haven't seen it since 2019; Red Mountain Theatre has a brand new, beautiful Arts Campus in downtown Birmingham and the show is larger and more extravagant than ever; and most importantly, our daughter was fortunate enough to join the cast this year and is now part of our favorite holiday tradition!



– *Julie Metheny, Regions Bank*

4. My favorite holiday tradition is getting together every year with my extended family during the week between Christmas and New Year. It's the one week in the whole year that everyone can be physically and mentally present with each other, and there's no external pressures tugging on us to be elsewhere -- whether we are in school or college, starting in our career or in a senior position in a high-pressure career. Some years we go on vacation together, and some years we stay at home, eat good food and hang out together. But it's the togetherness coupled with the falling away of our other duties that makes the holiday week so beloved and rejuvenating for all of us.



– *Kavita Goswamy Shelat, Shelby County (Tennessee) Schools*

5. When I was a little girl, I didn't like dolls! I liked the toy ovens! I had the Holly Hobbie oven until my aunt upgraded me to the Easy Bake Oven, which will go down as the beginning of my love of cooking and my favorite Christmas gift of all time! Those were simpler times, and I have a deeper appreciation for those times as the years go by.



– Ursula Holmes, Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare

6. My favorite holiday tradition is making Snickerdoodle cookies for my brother. Our mother made these cinnamon flavored cookies every year at Christmas time, and I continue the tradition. I bring a large tin of Snickerdoodles to my brother every Christmas day. I can't help but eat a few (or several) of them warm right out of the oven.



– Desi Franklin, First Horizon

7. I have five sisters and one brother. We do not have a set tradition for the holidays, but we all know how to cook, and really enjoy doing so. The holidays are a perfect time for us to get together and compare culinary skills and just have fun hanging out.



– Natalie Bolling, Vulcan Materials Company

8. As far as the holidays go, I absolutely love whipping up a good seafood dinner with some festive cocktails, coming up with a word (or intentional mantra) for the year and spending New Year's Eve with my husband because it's our anniversary.



– Daisy Karlson Fernández, DoorDash

9. My mom is one of nine siblings, so gatherings have always been massive! I love bunching up in my great grandmother's house with all of my cousins to exchange gifts, play games, and indulge in the best food and laughter!



– Victoria Young, QBE North America

10. When I was eight, my parents pulled off a holiday surprise on Christmas morning that was months in the making. Unbeknownst to me, my dad had been constructing for months a doll house for me in the garage. I had only been vaguely aware that my family had kept me well clear of the garage for several months, but I had not connected the dots. The doll house (pictured) included real windows, real shingles, and handmade furniture. The wooden bed for the house, in fact, had a comforter and pillows handmade by my grandmother. On Christmas morning, I was surprised and excited and asked, "How did you do this?" My dad shared that he had visited the local shop for the supplies he needed almost daily for months. The making of the house was a family affair, and the house continues to be special for my whole family. It now lives with me, and my nieces play with it when they stay with me. The magic continues.





– *Latisha Stubblefield, Pilot Flying J*

11. My favorite family Hanukkah tradition is the lighting of the Menorah. Each night of Hanukkah we light the Menorah. Each of us has our own, and they are all different. My eldest and youngest use Menorahs they received as gifts at their births. My middle child uses a Menorah she made in nursery school. My husband lights one we received as a wedding present. I still have a Menorah that I made in nursery school and use it every year. We call it my "rock menorah." In nursery school I went on a hike with my class to find the base for my Menorah. I found the biggest rock that I could carry. I then glued bolts to the rock to hold the candles. The bolts have been re-glued many times and the rock is now colored by dripping wax from years of use. Even when we are not in town for the holiday, we bring our Menorahs. It is our special tradition and one which I know my children will pass on to future generations.



– *Julie Kass, Walmart Public Health and Omnichannel Health*

12. My mother always used to say how smart my grandmother was because she graduated valedictorian of her high school. I later learned the graduating class was only three people. But my favorite gift that I received as a child was my grandmother's class ring. It did not look anything like the rings you get now, with big, colored stones. My grandmother's ring was just plain gold with her class insignia and year. And, when my oldest niece graduated from high school, I passed it on to her.



– *Nyka Scott, Entergy New Orleans*

13. I think I was about eight or nine years old, and my grandparents gave me a pair of Mexican onyx bookends one Christmas: I opened a very heavy box, there were these two stone faces, and I was so perplexed until I was told their purpose. I was rather downcast, for I had no idea what to do with them or why they had given them to me! However, I have kept them all this time and they have been part of every office, holding up books, closing CDs, or whatnot. Those of you who saw my office at Baker doubtless saw them there! I think of my grandparents whenever I see them.



