



# Have yourself a Dickens of a Holiday!

The past few years have seen a trend away from our brief flirtation with the snazzy, jazzy modern holiday season. Traditional red and green are back in style as Canadians look to the Victorians for inspiration. Without much effort you may be able to re-create an authentic Dickensian holiday for your family and friends this year:

## CANDLES TO LIGHT THE ADVENT

December is our darkest month, and we traditionally chase the darkness away with bonfires and lights: one of the oldest customs of the season. Look for pure beeswax, or soy-based candles for long clean burning indoors. Place candles on or next to mirrors – for maximum glow. The golden colours of natural candles look wonderful when surrounded by cranberries and bunches of green holly.

## DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY!

For some lucky Canadians, holly is readily available. If you cannot gather your own native branches and sprigs, be assured that every florist carries a good supply of B.C. holly this month. Tuck sprigs into mirror and picture frames, centerpieces, wreaths and most importantly – into your plum pudding.

## BRING US SOME FIGGY PUDDING!

Figs, raisins, and other dried fruits are the features in the famous plum pudding of holiday storybooks. If you haven't yet tried this spectacular dessert, find a recipe this year and treat your loved ones to the dramatic presentation and rich taste of this steamed classic. No need for a fancy mould, any ovenproof bowl will do. Put the pudding on a small silver platter, plant a sprig of holly, douse lightly with brandy, and bring it flaming and gorgeous to your table.

## BROWN PAPER PACKAGES TIED UP WITH STRING

The Victorians didn't spend a gift-giving fortune on pre-printed wrapping paper. Rediscover the charm of a simple wrapping. Kids can rubberstamp plain brown paper with festive designs: a flurry of snowflakes, or a potato print of red mittens, for example. This is a great activity for children – it will make them feel important, and best of all, they can't make a mistake!

## BOWLS OF SEASONAL FRUIT AND NUTS

make your holidays simple, delicious, and beautiful. Keep nutcrackers and picks at the ready – there will always be someone who will take advantage of the fresh nut harvest. And what could be more attractive than heaps of glossy lady apples or crisp golden pears?

## YOUR TREE!

It must be fresh of course, and adorned with whatever heirlooms (old and new) that are meaningful to you and your family. The Victorians would have relied on many handmade items – like garlands of berries and popcorn, paper chains, and cornucopia cones filled with sugared almonds. All of these decorations are Victorian in style and easy to make. It's not wise or practical for us to put candles on our evergreens, but small white lights will do the trick. No need for a fancy tree stand; a sturdy galvanized bucket filled with sand will do the trick. Remember to water regularly. If you have young children or pets, consider tying your tree to a nearby wall or ceiling hook with fishing line. Wrap your bucket with a pretty throw or length of fabric for a bit of luxury. So celebrate a Dickens holiday this year: polish the apples, light the candles and, if you can, roast chestnuts by the fire. Then whisper loving thoughts to those who matter the most.

*“...red and green are back in style...”*



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