

Once Thanksgiving has come and gone it's time to get in the Christmas spirit. Depending on what else is going on ... well, getting in the spirit can be a snap or close to impossible. We've all had those times when suddenly it is Christmas Eve. Where did the time go? Why is the tree still in the garage? What happened to that wreath I bought the day after Thanksgiving? The stockings haven't been hung by the chimney with care. And oh my gosh, I still have to wrap the presents or bigger gosh ... I haven't even bought them yet!

If you are having trouble getting into the holiday spirit, here are a few tricks:

1. **Get an advent calendar.** Make sure it's the kind with a chocolate behind every door. As the days lead up to Christmas, the calendar will help you keep track of time. The chocolate will give you a lift on a cold winter day.
2. **Bake cookies.** An afternoon of warm, sugary aromas will take you back to your childhood; baking with Mom and Nana. Nothing says Christmas memories like a batch of cookies.
3. **Deck the halls and trim the tree.** Spend a Saturday or Sunday pulling out the nutcrackers and filing bowls with shiny, glass ornaments. The smell of the tree and the greens on the mantle will blend beautifully with the cookies.
4. **Check out the lights.** A drive through the town to see the lights is a time-honored tradition in my family. Every town has their prime spots for decorations. Perhaps it's Main Street where the Inn, is all done up in shining glory. Or that junction with the post office and community center. Take your pick and enjoy.
5. **Make a gift.** Knit a scarf, roast some nuts or decorate a tote bag. Psychologist tell us that creating and giving a special present brings joy to the gifter as well as the recipient. It really is more fun to give than receive.
6. **Host a Christmas movie marathon.** Pop some popcorn and settle in with Jimmy Stewart, Bing Crosby and/or Tim Allen for a relaxing good time. If you think you don't have time for a Christmas movie, you can knit or wrap presents while you watch.
7. **Play Christmas carols.** Whether it's your favorite radio station in the car, a stack of CD's you've been collecting for years or Pandora ... have yourself a merry little musical time.
8. **Re-read a Christmas classic.** Dickens or Seuss or something else entirely, an old favorite will fill you with the joy of the season. Share that story by reading aloud to an elderly loved one with failing eyesight. Or ask a child who loves books to read it to you.
9. **See a holiday spectacular.** You don't need to go to New York to see the Rockettes. (Although a trip to the Big Apple could be fun!) You'll find Christmas revels, dancing nutcrackers and great concerts much closer to home. From a sing along at your local church to something a bit more professional at a nearby arts center, there are holiday performances everywhere.
10. **Invite friends over.** No one says it has to be a big, fancy do. Host a cookie swap or a skating party, sing a few carols and sip hot chocolate or something stronger.



Have fun and enjoy the spirit of the holidays! Bon appétit!

Citrus & Spice Sugar Cookies

These aren't your same old-same old sugar cookies. They are buttery delicious with just the right touch of citrus and spice.

Enjoy!

Makes about 2 dozen cookies

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling out the dough

Grated zest of 1/2 lemon

Grated zest of 1/2 lime

Grated zest of 1/3 orange

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ginger

1/4 teaspoon cloves

Pinch nutmeg

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 cup softened unsalted butter

1/2 cup light brown sugar

1 large egg

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1 teaspoon each lemon, lime and orange juice

Sanding or colored sugars or Citrus Icing (optional)

Garnish: sprinkles, chocolate chips, candies or colored sugars (optional)



Put the flour, grated citrus zest and spices in a medium bowl and whisk to combine.

Beat the butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer until fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, add the brown sugar and beat 2 to 3 minutes more. Add the egg and vanilla extract and beat until smooth.

Turn the mixer to low and gradually add the dry ingredients. Divide the dough into a 2 balls and then flatten into disks. Wrap the dough in plastic and refrigerate for 2 hours or until firm.

Evenly space the racks in the oven and preheat to 350 degrees.

Put the dough on a lightly floured work surface. Roll out the dough and cut into cookies with decorative cutters. Transfer the cookies to a parchment-lined or nonstick baking sheet. Press excess dough together, roll and cut more cookies. You may want to stick the dough in the freezer for a few minutes to re-chill it.

If you like, sprinkle the cookies with sanding or colored sugar before baking. Bake until the cookies' edges are golden, about 10 minutes. Cool on a rack.

Ice the cookies with Citrus Icing and decorate with sprinkles, chocolate chips or candies. Let sit until the icing sets, about 30 minutes.

Citrus Icing

- 1 3/4 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons powdered eggs whites or meringue powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- Pinch salt
- 4 – 6 tablespoons mix of lemon, lime and orange juices
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted (optional)
- Food coloring (optional)

Put the confectioners' sugar in a medium mixing bowl, add the powdered eggs, cinnamon and salt and whisk to combine. Whisk in the citrus juices until the icing reaches the desired consistency for painting, piping or drizzling. Whisk in the melted butter.

Transfer the icing to small bowls and add drops of different color food coloring.