

## Hello, Friends!

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November 2019 – Preparing For The Upcoming Holidays

As I started to put together this month's newsletter, I first considered sharing this topic in December. But as I worked further, I realized it will be more helpful for you in November because the holiday season is just so crowded that you'll need more time while there are still several weeks ahead of you!

And so, the busy holiday season is upon us once again. How did that happen? Well, let's take a deep breath and remember to breathe. We will get through it together, even if we need a little wine, right?

Here are a few categories to address:

**GIFT GIVING** — It's wonderful to listen to people throughout the year to hear if there is anything in particular that they want. If you have to buy a gift for someone who has everything, then we have to think outside the box.

Do they enjoy the theater? Do they enjoy a particular type of music and could you buy concert tickets? Do they enjoy eating out? Make a gift card to their favorite restaurant.

Do they enjoy a cooking experience? In Fenton, we have a place called Feast – [www.feastcookingschool.com](http://www.feastcookingschool.com) and in Troy and Birmingham, there is Sur La Table - [www.surlatable.com](http://www.surlatable.com)

Don't forget that making things from your heart also works, so if you are big baker or love to personalize gifts, then you can think of things like making your own jams. There are several great websites that offer tips for homemade gifts.

**MENU** — Are you hosting this year? What day and time? Are you taking care of everything yourself or can you delegate? That way each family can bring a casserole or dish to pass around so the stress isn't all yours. People are pleased to be able to share their own favorite recipes, too.

**CALENDAR** — Having a discussion with the family and extended family on who is hosting what and when so you all can share the holiday season with as many people as possible. Plus, remember to talk about possible holiday get-togethers for next year, to reduce future confusion.

**HOLIDAY GREETING CARDS** — Have you seen a drop in cards, family newsletters and so on? I think Facebook and emails have a lot to do with this declining tradition, but I still like to write one and let everyone know what my family is up to.

But start early. I like to get this underway by early November. Now that my kids are older too, last year I asked them to email me a paragraph of what they were up to and wanted to share with friends. That made my process easier.

When you can check this off your "to do" list, remember to set aside a few hours to actually complete this work. Gather envelopes, stamps and other needed elements as early as possible. If sending holiday cards takes you a long time or really frustrates you, ask yourself — is there a way to make this process simpler? Can you print out your addresses electronically, and maybe pre-print address labels? I know it will take some time to do this project, but once it done, it will be so much easier the next time. Plus, people appreciate receiving this traditional family update, just as you enjoy seeing what family, friends and neighbors have done in the past 12 months.

**HOLIDAY BUDGET** — Do you have actual money set-aside for all the extra holiday work? It's a great idea to create a budget, and then keep a running list of what you have purchased with prices paid. This can help keep you on track. You don't want to be a statistic where you are paying off last year's gifts still this holiday season, right?

**GIFT WRAPPING** — You don't have to do this all yourself! I have asked my kids and husband to help in the wrapping process. Everything takes time, so why should you have to do it all yourself?

**ACTUAL SHOPPING** — Do you give yourself a weekend and try to knock out all your gift buying, or do you spread it out across a few days? It all depends on how you want to approach this project. Sometimes I look at where I am going to be and that helps me plan things out. For instance, if I'm going to be in Ann Arbor or Novi, then I can hit Briarwood Mall or 12 Oaks Mall, hopefully early enough in the season that I can easily find a parking spot!

Happiest of holidays from your local professional organizer,

Betty Huotari

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