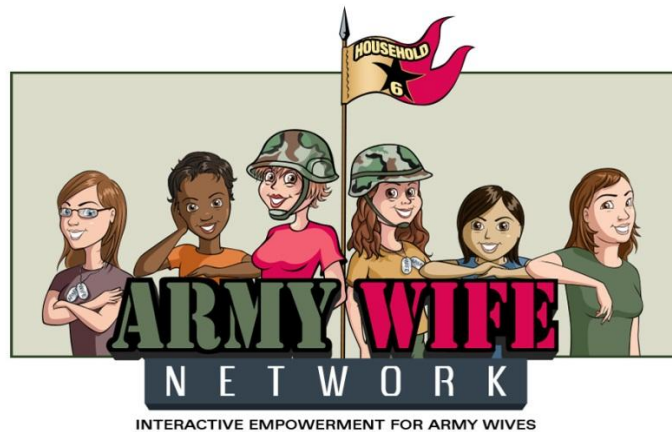


Household 6:

PRESENT

for the Holidays



From the middle of November through the New Year, the calendar gives us plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the season. No matter how your family chooses to celebrate, the family traditions we establish and maintain offer a touchstone for the rest of the year, a warm memory to reach back to. That is, if you aren't too busy in the kitchen, running errands or vacuuming to be "present" for the holidays. This guide offers you a framework for organizing your holiday planning efforts. Print the pages you need and use them to help you to stay ahead of the rush.

Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays

Holiday Traditions

It is the small things that really make a moment special. Splitting the wishbone between the oldest and youngest at the table, opening a gift on Christmas Eve, or certain stocking stuffers: these can link the celebrations from year to year. A little planning will help you keep those traditions alive. If you don't have traditions yet, this is the perfect time to start some!

Activity:

Supplies:

Details:

Activity:

Supplies:

Details:

Activity:

Supplies:

Details:

Activity:

Supplies:

Details:

For some tradition examples see <http://www.armywifetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Holiday-Traditions.pdf>

*Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays*

Preparing Your Home

Let's talk about cleaning.

Believe it or not, deep cleaning is not that important. As long as your home is safe and functional (you can walk around without falling over and have the counter space to prepare your meals), the cleaning and decorating is icing on the pumpkin roll. It's far more important that you are enjoying the time with your family and friends.

But a clean, organized, welcoming home certainly makes the holidays less stressful and more enjoyable.

If it's been a while since you really gave your house a good cleaning, then waiting until the day before your guests arrive will only take you away from the important moments. Remember that in ten years it won't be that spot on the carpet, some crayon on the wall, or unfolding towels that you or your family will remember.

Go through the rooms as you have time and declutter: dump, donate, and put away. Clear horizontal surfaces appear clean. The more organized and clutter-free those horizontal surfaces (shelves, floors, counters, and tables) are, the cleaner your home will feel.

Give your home a good "scrub" one room at a time. Vacuum and mop the floors. Dust blinds, window sills, moldings, and baseboards. Spot clean the couches and soft surfaces.

Once your home has been scrubbed, take the time to keep it up! Fifteen minutes each day to keep things clean and put away. Take an hour or so on the weekends or your day off to wipe down surfaces like counters, blinds and window sills. This maintenance will leave you with just a quick wipe down the day before your celebration.

Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays

Preparing Your Kitchen

A little pre-meal organization in your kitchen will make preparing the holiday meal easier! As you are going through your ingredient list, throw away any old or expired spices and packaged food. Clean out your fridge and freezer to make room for leftovers and holiday meal ingredients. Donate or toss appliances that you used once before sticking a corner cabinet behind the shot glasses from last year's vacation. Make sure that your oven and stovetop are clean of any bits and pieces and you have the appropriate cookware/baking pans for the menu you've planned.

Holiday Menu Planner

Meal _____

Date _____

of guests _____

Start Time _____

	Dish	Find Recipe @	Prepared By:
nibbles			
entrée			
side dish			
side dish			
side dish			
salad			
dessert			

Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays

The Meal

If you are uncertain, apprehensive, or scared of preparing a holiday meal, it's time to take charge of your kitchen. Repeat after me: "A good holiday meal is one that brings together those I care about." Notice there is no mention of exotic spices, elaborate table décor, or the turducken you should painstakingly assemble the night before. It's about *you* and the people you choose to spend time with. So, if spaghetti night is the extent of your cooking skills or meets the preferred taste of the toddlers in attendance, then spaghetti night it is.

If you choose to prepare a more traditional meal, there are some tips and tricks that keep you with your family and friends and out of the kitchen while still putting fabulous food on the table.

Menu

The internet is a veritable wonderland for the discriminating menu planner. Want the traditional taste of turkey without worrying about defrosting? Try a turkey breast or have the meat department cut a turkey up into quarters- both will roast *much* faster with less prep time but still provide the familiar taste. Try finding side dish recipes that can be prepared ahead of time or cooked in the slow cooker. Choose dessert recipes that can be made the day before.

Once you've chosen your menu, take a look at the preparation and cook time of each dish. When does each dish need to be on the stove or in the oven? Do you have the room? Make sure your planned menu doesn't include two sides plus rolls that all need to be in your (one?) oven at the same time. The trick to putting a fabulous meal together lies in the planning.

Pantry Inventory

After you've chosen your menu, it's time to take a look at what is in your pantry, fridge and freezer. Using the recipes from your menu, make an ingredient list for the meal. Go through your kitchen and mark off what you already have. Guess what's left? Your shopping list!

*Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays*

Holiday Budget

Have you ever gotten all the presents wrapped and under the tree before you realized just how much you bought? There is something about the holidays that sets us up to overspend. Food, gifts, clothes, decorations, and festivities are integral components of the holiday experience. Without deliberate budgeting, those details can create a financially damaging and stressful holiday hangover.

Simply keeping a record of your spending can be an effective preventative tool. Use an envelope to keep all of your holiday spending receipts together. Track your spending in the included budget worksheet to make sure you are staying within your intended budget. Make the most of your holiday dollars by utilizing money saving resources. There are blogs, websites, and books available to help you find coupons and discounts. If you would like to learn more about couponing, [Army Wife Network](#) offers a couponing webinar that will teach you the basics.

Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays

Around Our Home	Budget	Cost	Total So Far
holiday meal:			
Christmas cards/letters			
Christmas card postage			
party supplies			
lights/outdoor decor			
inside decor			
tree			
travel expenses			
holiday clothing			
Total Cost			

Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays

<i>Christmas Card List</i>		
	2011	2012
name	Sent	Rec
address		
city/state/zip		
name	Sent	Rec
address		
city/state/zip		
name	Sent	Rec
address		
city/state/zip		
name	Sent	Rec
address		
city/state/zip		
name	Sent	Rec
address		
city/state/zip		
name	Sent	Rec
address		
city/state/zip		
name	Sent	Rec
address		
city/state/zip		

*Household 6: **PRESENT** for the Holidays*

However you choose to celebrate the holiday season, it offers a wonderful opportunity to take time out of a busy schedule and connect with family and friends. The food, decorations, gifts, and cards are just outward expressions of those connections. If you are looking for some more inspiration, check the links below for make ahead and slow cooker meals, handmade gifts, and decorations and party planning help!

Party Planning

<http://www.hwtm.com>

<http://www.divinedinnerparty.com/how-to-calculate-food-for-party.html>

<http://www.armywifetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Holiday-Party-Ideas-for-Military-Families.pdf>

Make Ahead Recipes

<http://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/recipe-collections-favorites/seasonal/make-ahead-thanksgiving-recipes-00000000022429/index.html>

http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus/collections/healthy_holiday_make_ahead_side_dish_recipes

Slow Cooker

<http://crockpot365.blogspot.com/2007/11/crockpot-holiday-food.html>

Gift Options

<http://www.marthastewart.com/275134/handmade-gifts-for-her>

<http://www.momswhothink.com/christmas/homemade-christmas-gifts.html>

<http://www.favecrafts.com/>

Decorating

<http://www.diynetwork.com/topics/christmas/index.html>

Holidays in the Army

<http://www.armywifetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Holiday-Care-Package.pdf>

<http://www.armywifetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Celebrating-Holiday-Season-Alone.pdf>