

Christine Estes



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**"Every minute should be enjoyed and savored."**

— Earl Nightingale

Dear Friend,

November 2008

At this time of year, do you feel like you are pressed for time? If the stress that may accompany the holiday season is affecting your spirit of joy, contentment and goodwill, perhaps a few reminders will be of assistance. I found a wonderful card that says it quite beautifully:

*Not what we have, but what we enjoy, constitutes our abundance.* John Petit-Senn

This month, I chose a mailing item that includes several ways to help to reduce your stress level and help your seasonal finances at the same time. It also has several delicious recipes guaranteed to satisfy your sweet tooth. And you'll notice a few web links to charitable organizations that can help you make a difference in the lives of needy children during the holidays.

During this holiday season, experience the giving season the way it was meant to be experienced—fun and stress-free!

And with that same goal of stress-free and informed thinking, the October numbers are in for our local area and the good news for our local economy is that they are *not* in free fall. They are certainly reflecting a slower market as we head toward the end of the year; the average days on market are up a bit from September. But King County as a whole is seeing average sale prices at the same level as last month, the Eastside is actually up (by less than 1%), and Seattle Metro is up just over 4%. Pierce County is up too, just over 2%, and Snohomish County is only down ~1.5%. As a reminder, take the monthly numbers as just a data point. Until we have quarterly numbers, these can be so skewed by the number of sales that they are truly just informative, not a measure of true trending data.

Despite some blows to its pride--the loss of Washington Mutual to JPMorgan and the loss of basketball's SuperSonics to Oklahoma City--Seattle still looks like a good place to weather the coming downturn. Despite all those bad mortgages on WaMu's books, Seattle homes are mostly in the clear, and unemployment is low. Forbes has named Seattle one of the "Ten Best Cities To Ride Out The Recession":

[http://www.forbes.com/business/2008/10/15/economy-housing-recession-biz-beltway-cx\\_jz\\_1015econocities.html](http://www.forbes.com/business/2008/10/15/economy-housing-recession-biz-beltway-cx_jz_1015econocities.html)

So, very much as the card quote above reminds us, please look around at all of the people you love and the things that you enjoy doing, and celebrate the abundance of life. This economic time of upheaval will pass. We all owe it to ourselves and our families to stay focused on the present, even as we continue to plan for the future. May we all be incredibly successful at that this year and always!

Sincerely,

*Always looking for ways to encourage you and the people in your life...if you know of someone who would appreciate the level of service I provide, please call me with their name and business number, and I'll be happy to follow up and take great care of them.*

*And... as the flyer suggests, if you do choose to hire a cleaning service or caterer to help out, I have some great referrals for you there too!*

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# Illuminate the Season

... wild and sweet the words repeat of peace on  
Earth, good will toward men.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

When gearing up for the new year, consider starting some new holiday traditions or some exciting activities to celebrate this special season:

- Consider taking a family vacation to visit relatives. Share each other's holiday traditions and experience new activities and climates. Engaging in a fresh alternative to your holiday season can be fun and rewarding for the entire family.
- Call a charitable organization and see how you and your family can get involved. As a family, go through your closets and the rest of your house to see what you no longer need. Check with local charities to find the most appropriate one for the various items you would like to donate. Many dry cleaners will clean coats, free of charge, to give to those in need.
- This is an important time of the year. Our hectic lives often keep us too busy to focus on those things that are the most valuable. Make the commitment to enjoy all this season has to offer and approach it with a positive attitude. It is important to remember what we value the most, and it's the perfect time to create memories that will last a lifetime.

## Plan to Make This Holiday Rich, Memorable and Stress-free.

A study by Wirthlin Worldwide revealed that approximately 52 percent of women and 40 percent of men ages 35 to 54 said their stress levels go up during the holidays. The American Psychological Association reports that Americans list lack of money (61%), the pressures of gift giving (42%), lack of time (34%) and credit card debt (23%) as the top causes of holiday stress.

It is possible to find peace and enjoy the holidays, both this year and next. It's simply a matter of prioritizing, parsing out tasks and planning ahead.

### MAKE A LIST.

Divide a piece of paper into two columns. List the things you must do for the holidays in the first column (gift shopping, planning for travel, etc.) and the things you would like to do in the second column (such as special holiday baking or helping those in need). If the items in the first column outnumber the items in the second, then it's time to re-prioritize. Start eliminating some of the tasks you feel are least important to make room for the ones that will be more enjoyable for you and your family.

A great way to manage a big crowd is to set up food in a buffet. Also, consider serving roasts or casseroles, which can be left alone freeing up more of your time.

### EASE YOUR HOLIDAY LOAD.

Whoever said you had to wrap all your holiday gifts personally? Consider a gift-wrapping party. If it's the cleaning and cooking that's stressing you out, consider hiring a cleaning service or a caterer.



# Favorite Dessert Recipes

## Old Fashioned Double Chocolate Fudge

Recipe by: Emeril Lagasse, 2005

3 tablespoons + 1 teaspoon butter  
1 ½ cups sugar  
½ cup light brown sugar  
¾ cup half-and-half  
2 ounces milk chocolate, chopped  
2 ounces dark chocolate, chopped  
1 teaspoon light corn syrup  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
½ cup chopped walnuts, toasted



Line an 8 x 8 x 2-inch square pan with aluminum foil. Butter the pan with 1 tablespoon of the butter. Butter the bottom and sides of a 2-quart heavy saucepan with 1 teaspoon of the butter. Combine the sugars, half-and-half, chocolates and corn syrup in the saucepan. Place over medium heat and cook until the mixture reaches a boil, stirring constantly. Carefully clip a candy thermometer to the side of the pan. Continue to cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture reaches the soft ball stage (234°F), which takes about 10 minutes.

Remove from the heat and add the remaining butter and vanilla. Let the mixture stand, without stirring, for about 1 hour or until the mixture reaches 110°F. Remove the candy thermometer. Using a wooden spoon, beat the mixture continuously until it thickens. Add the nuts and continue to beat the mixture for about 10 minutes or until it's very thick and loses shine. Spread the mixture in the pan. Let the mixture set completely, preferably overnight. Carefully lift the foil from the pan and cut the fudge into individual squares.

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/emiril-lagasse/old-fashioned-double-chocolate-fudge-recipe/index.html>



### Pumpkin Pie

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/paula-deen/pumpkin-pie-recipe/index.html>



### Gingerbread Cookies

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/saras-secrets/gingerbread-cookies-recipe/index.html>



### Sugar Cookies

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/food-network-kitchens/3-in-1-sugar-cookies-recipe/index.html>

## Making a Difference This Holiday Season.

The latest data shows that 37 million Americans are living in poverty. Families continue to remain displaced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Military families are still waiting for loved ones to return home. In fact, a greater portion of families and their children live in poverty in America today than three decades ago. The season is a time for giving, and giving to those less fortunate is rewarding for you and a great way to show your children the true meaning of this special season.

## Resources for Holiday Donations

Make-A-Wish Foundation, [www.wish.org](http://www.wish.org)—This program's goal is to provide children who have life-threatening medical conditions the opportunity to realize their greatest wish, whether it is meeting an admired athlete, riding a horse or visiting a theme park.

Be An Elf, [www.beanelf.org](http://www.beanelf.org)—Each year, millions of children send Christmas lists to Santa Claus and his elves via the U.S. Postal Service. The Be An Elf program helps volunteers obtain a real letter written by a child in need and fulfill his or her dreams.

Toys For Tots, [www.toysfortots.org](http://www.toysfortots.org)—Established by the Marine Corps, Toys For Tots allows participants to donate unwrapped toys at a number of drop sites located throughout the country. Cash and vehicle donations are also accepted.