



**SENIOR  
LIVING**  
for the  
Holidays

# Vintage Celebrations: 1940s

Familiar recipes from an elderly person's childhood taps into sensory memory and can trigger positive emotional responses for seniors living with memory problems.

Holidays in the 1940s were initially defined by World War II and then the postwar recovery. Early years saw food rationing, limited travel and practicality in terms of celebrations.

These recipes reflect that, as well as the ingenuity of Americans of the time.

## STEWED APPLES

Recipe is from *These Old Cookbooks*. Serves six.

### Ingredients

5 medium apples, washed, peeled and cored and cut into equal-sized slices

1/2 cup sugar

1 cup water

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

10 drops of red food coloring, optional

### Directions

Bring sugar, water, cinnamon and food coloring to a boil over high heat. Once boiling, reduce to a simmer for five minutes. Add the sliced apples, then raise the sauce back to a boil. Boil uncovered for 5 to 8 minutes or until apples are fork tender and soft. Serve.



© ADOBE STOCK

## SWEET POTATO PUFF

Recipe is from *Julia's Child*.

### Ingredients

4 medium sized sweet potatoes

1/2 cup orange juice

1/2 cup light cream or milk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/2 cup sugar

6 tablespoons butter

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

1/2 cup brown sugar

1 bag of mini marshmallows

### Directions

1. Bake or boil the sweet potatoes. Drain, if boiled, or remove from skin.

2. Place the potatoes in a bowl and mix in three tablespoons of butter, the cream or milk, orange juice, vanilla, sugar and cinnamon. Mix with an electric mixer until smooth, then pour into a casserole dish.

3. Melt the remaining butter in a bowl and mix in the brown sugar. Sprinkle it over the top and bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes.

4. Remove from the oven and pour

the mini marshmallows over the top. Put back in the oven until the marshmallows are slightly browned.

## PECAN CRISPIES

Recipe is from the *Vintage Recipe Project*.

### Ingredients

1/2 cup shortening

1/2 cup butter

2 1/2 cups brown sugar

2 eggs, beaten

2 1/2 cups flour

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup chopped pecans

### Directions

1. Cream together the shortening and sugar. Add the eggs and beat.

2. Sift together the flour, salt and soda. Add to the egg mixture. Stir to combine.

3. Add the nuts. Drop from a teaspoon onto a greased baking sheet.

4. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes at 350 degrees.

# Decorating a Small Space

Downsizing is a normal part of senior living, but it can be a challenge to achieve the same holiday atmosphere in a smaller space. That's especially true in a senior living or other assisted living facility.

## FOCUS ON THE DETAILS

Small spaces need to be big on details. Winnow down years of Christmas decor into a few select collections and display them, arranging them in varying shades and sizes. Hang stockings with care and if there's no fireplace, over a window or on a wall hook will work, too.

## RIGHT-SIZE THE TREE

Choose a simple, small faux tree and dress it up as much as you can. Pick a festive tree skirt for a pop of color and decorate it with a mix of ornaments old and new. As you pull out the old ornaments, talk about the memories of holidays past and share warm stories.

## WREATH IT

Add a wreath to the door, if allowed. There are hundreds of styles on the market, from simple greenery to lights and ornaments. If you're feeling crafty, use some of the holiday ornaments you may have downsized and glue them onto



© ADOBE STOCK

a wreath form for a beautiful and loving gift.

## USE GARLAND

Use garlands of greenery to deck the halls (and windows and doors). Faux greenery is easier to maintain and can be packed away for next year. And

it doesn't have to be plugged in. Just make sure, if you place greenery on a fireplace mantel, that it's well away from any source of heat.

## DASHING THROUGH THE DOOR

Add a seasonal doormat in-

side and out. Some are funny, some are classic, some are just plain festive. Pick a pair that suits the mood and put them down.

## SWITCH OUT THROWS

Switch out the everyday pillows and throws for more

festive options. Look for options that could last all winter long, including pillows with snowflakes or blankets in a solid color. Throw blankets can double as a tree skirt. Do the same for the bedding in the home, choosing warm festive flannels in holiday patterns.



© ADOBE STOCK

# Make a Holiday Memory Box

Making a memory box is just as precious as the finished product itself.

A holiday memory box can bring out stories you've never heard before and prove to seniors that their memories, stories and treasures will continue to be cherished.

The objects in the box are more than keepsakes; they're pieces of a life well lived — and loved.

## **CHOOSING A MEMORY BOX**

It can be a beautifully carved wooden box or just a decorated shoebox, the tone of your memory box is totally

up to you and should suit the recipient as well. As far as size, think about how the box will be handled and where it will be stored. Large, heavy boxes might be hard for elderly family members to move while small boxes may not contain everything you need it to. And it can change. A shoebox might be the initial container with the contents moving to a more permanent home later. Decorating the box with loved ones could be a wonderful part of the process.

## **GATHERING THE ITEMS**

Working with your loved one, choose a selection of items to include in the memory box. They can be pictures, cards, letters, notes, recipes, ornaments, bows, wrapping paper, decorations, anything that signifies meaning around the holidays. Sometimes, the most ordinary objects can hold a surprising amount of emotional weight. Think about a well-worn wooden spoon or a holiday brooch.

Consider including not only family items but also things from their lives, such as a church program or an advertisement from a volunteer association, a political button or other memorabil-

ia. You can work with your loved one to write down their memories or record them to help tell the story.

## **INVOLVING OTHERS**

Making the memory box can include friends and family members, who can all contribute items and stories to add rich detail to the memory box's contents. These gatherings can become celebrations and even include people on video calls that are far away. Children and grandchildren can participate with drawings and their own memories. The more people you involve, the richer the picture of your loved one will be.

# Vintage Celebrations: 1950s

Holidays in the 1950s were glittering days of postwar optimism with rising consumerism that gave rise to what are today deep-rooted family traditions.

This was the age of road trips and traditional TV broadcasts.

## PLUM PUDDING

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

### Ingredients

1/2 cup butter, softened  
 3/4 cup packed brown sugar  
 3 large eggs at room temperature  
 3/4 cup dry bread crumbs  
 1/2 cup flour  
 1 tablespoon grated orange zest  
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
 2, 15-ounce cans of plums, drained, pitted and chopped  
 1 3/4 cups chopped dates  
 1 cup golden raisins  
 1 cup shredded carrots  
 1/2 cup dried currants

### Hard sauce:

1/2 cup butter  
 3 cups confectioners sugar  
 1/4 cup dark rum or orange juice

### Directions

1. Grease an eight-cup pudding mold, metal gelatin bowl or ovenproof bowl. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, cream the butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy, about 5 to 7 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. In a second bowl, mix the bread crumbs, flour, orange zest, cin-



© ADOBE STOCK

namon, baking soda, nutmeg, salt and cloves. Gradually add to the creamed butter mixture. Fold in plums, dates, raisins, carrots and currants.

3. Transfer to the prepared mold. Cover tightly with heavy duty foil and tie with kitchen string to secure. Place on a rack in a stockpot. Add 3 inches of water and bring to a gentle boil. Steam the cake, covered, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, 2 to 2 1/2 hours. Add more water to the pot as needed. Remove the pudding from the pot and let stand 5 minutes before unmolding.
4. In a bowl, beat the hard sauce ingredients together until smooth and creamy. Once the pudding is unmolded, serve warm with sauce.

## CRANBERRY SALAD

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

### Ingredients

3 cups fresh or thawed frozen cranberries,

chopped

1, 20-ounce can unsweetened crushed pineapple, drained  
 2 cups mini marshmallows  
 1 medium apple, chopped  
 2/3 cup sugar  
 1/8 teaspoon salt  
 2 cups heavy whipping cream  
 1/4 cup chopped walnuts

1. Mix the first six ingredients in a large bowl. Refrigerate, covered, overnight.
2. Beat the cream until stiff peaks form. Fold it into the cranberry mixture along with the walnuts and serve.

## DUCHESS POTATOES

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

### Ingredients

2 pounds russet potatoes, peeled and quartered  
 3 large egg yolks  
 3 tablespoons milk

2 tablespoons butter

1 teaspoon salt  
 1/4 teaspoon pepper  
 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
 1 large egg, lightly beaten

### Directions

1. Place the potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cover and simmer, 15 to 20 minutes or until tender. Drain.
2. Over very low heat, stir the potatoes 1 to 2 minutes or until the steam has evaporated. Remove from heat.
3. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Press the potatoes through a potato ricer or strainer into a large bowl. Stir in the egg yolks, milk, butter, salt, pepper and nutmeg.
4. Using a pastry bag or heavy-duty resealable bag and a large star tip, pipe the potatoes into six mounds on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Brush with beaten egg. Bake 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown.

# Staving Off Holiday Depression

Depression is a mood disorder characterized by feelings of sadness, anxiety or apathy that may last for weeks and affect a person's ability to function normally.

While the CDC says most older adults aren't clinically depressed, 1% to 5% of older adults living in the community are, the National Council on Aging says. That rises to 11.5% for older adults who are hospitalized and up to 13.5% for older adults who require home health care.

There's no single, specific cause of depression in older adults, NCOA says, but there are risk factors. Those include:

Chronic conditions — about 80% of older adults have at least one chronic health condition, the CDC says.

- Decreased functional ability
- Reduced mobility
- Chronic pain
- Financial issues related to retirement
- Elder abuse
- Caregiver stress
- Lack of physical activity
- Loneliness

Over the holidays, depression may be more likely to hit as they can stir feelings of loss or separation. Clinically depressed seniors may lose the will to live. Look for signs of depression, including:

- Persistent sadness
- Irritability



© ADOBE STOCK

- Fatigue and low energy
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- A sense of hopelessness
- A loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Trouble concentrating and other cognitive changes
- Overeating or a marked decrease in appetite
- Slower speech or movement

- Persistent digestive problems
- Physical pains that don't improve with treatment
- Recurring thoughts of death

If you or a loved one are struggling around the holidays, start by making an appointment with a health care provider, who can rule out other factors that may be causing

the symptoms. If there are no underlying health problems, treating depression usually includes antidepressant medications such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, as well as counseling and possibly electroconvulsive therapy, or ECT.

Seniors can help preserve their mental health by getting plenty of sleep, around seven

to nine hours each night. Exercise can help, too, even small tasks like taking a walk, swimming or light yard work. Seniors with social connections are less likely to suffer from depression, so keeping up with social activities is important. Eating right can boost energy levels and prevent medical conditions that can lead to depression.

# Meaningful Gifts for Seniors

Seniors who are downsizing or who have moved into assisted living facilities often don't have room for more things.

What they may appreciate instead are gifts of experiences. Keep reading to get ideas for making this holiday season one of the best ever.

**Tickets:** Tickets to a symphony, play, musical, museum, sporting event, tours, or other events are a great idea for seniors, particularly if you get a group together to go with them. Plan a day or an evening, depending on how much activity your loved one would enjoy.

**Classes:** Book a spot in a class your loved one has wanted to take or improve upon. Artistic workshops include pottery classes, painting classes, yoga classes, cooking classes, or technology workshops.

**Digital subscriptions:** Get your loved ones a digital subscription for audiobooks (for the bibliophile) or to streaming movies or shows. There are also subscriptions such as MasterClass where they can learn at their own pace.

**Spa services:** Set aside some time for a spa day, including massages, which can help seniors manage pain and relax. If they would enjoy a manicure or pedicure, consider adding that, too. You could even find professionals who can provide the services in the home.



© ADOBE STOCK

**Meal subscriptions:** These services ship boxes of bespoke menus to your loved one, ensuring they get healthy meals and perhaps even learn a few new recipes. Other subscriptions you might consider are boxes of snacks, books or

puzzles.

**Zoo or aquarium experiences:** These experiences will allow your loved one to get up close and personal with a favorite animal. They may be able to feed or even touch the animal and are perfect for se-

niors who love animals.

**Personal chef experience:** Hire a professional chef to come and cook a personalized meal for your loved one and the whole family. Use it as a time to sit, eat and share memories without the worries of

going out.

**Scheduled dates:** Set up recurring dates on a regular basis to spend the day or even just the afternoon or evening together. Plan meals and outings and share and create memories.

# Vintage Celebrations: 1960s

Holidays in the 1960s, in a 180 from the consumerism of the 1950s, were more homespun affairs with an emphasis on family togetherness.

Instead of glitzy parties, holidays were more relaxed, cozy affairs.

## GINGER COOKIES

Recipe is from Cooking Vintage.

### Ingredients

- 5/8 cup molasses
- 1 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup thick sour cream
- 2 tablespoons chopped orange peel
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon each cloves, allspice and ginger
- 4 egg yolks
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 6 cups of flour

### Directions

1. Heat the molasses and sugar until dissolved. Add the butter and allow the mixture to cool before adding the cream, chopped orange peel and other seasonings.
2. Sift the flour with the baking soda. Add the egg yolks, one at a time, alternating with the flour. Roll out the dough and cut out in festive shapes. Brush each with egg yolk and sprinkle with colored sugar.
3. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 15 minutes.



© ADOBE STOCK

## PEANUT BUTTER BARS

Recipe is from Allrecipes.

### Ingredients

- 1 1/8 cups white sugar
- 1 1/8 cups brown sugar
- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cup peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups flour
- 1 2/3 cups rolled oats
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- Pinch of salt

### Frosting:

- 2 cups powdered sugar

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons milk, or more, as needed
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a baking sheet.
2. Cream together the sugars, butter and eggs in a mixing bowl. Mix in the peanut butter and vanilla extract. Add the flour and blend well, then add the oats, baking soda, salt and mix to combine. Spread into the prepared pan.

3. Bake until golden and the edges start to pull away from the sides of the pan, about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool or chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

4. Make the frosting by blending powdered sugar, butter, milk and peanut butter in a bowl. Add more milk, if needed, to give the frosting the desired consistency. Frost the cooled bars and serve.

## SHRIMP AND CUCUMBER ROUNDS

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

### Ingredients

- 1/2 pound cooked shrimp, peeled, deveined and finely chopped
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 celery rib, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon dill pickle relish
- Dash of cayenne pepper
- 1 medium English cucumber, cut into 1/4-inch slices

### Directions

- In a small bowl, combine the first six ingredients. Spoon onto the cucumber slices. Serve immediately.

## JEWELED COOKIES

Recipe is from Taste of Home.

### Ingredients

- 1 pound butter, softened
- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 5 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 1/2 cup raisins
- 1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts
- 1/2 cup each chopped red and green candied cherries
- 1/2 cup chopped candied pineapple

### Directions

1. In a bowl, cream the butter and sugar. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Combine the flour and baking soda; add to the creamed mixture. Stir in raisins, nuts, cherries and pineapple. Mix well. Shape into 2-inch rolls and wrap in waxed paper or foil. Freeze for two hours.
2. Cut into 1/4-inch slices. Place the cookies on a greased baking sheet. Bake 8 to 10 minutes at 350 degrees or until lightly browned. Cool on wire racks.