



I have mixed feelings about Christmas. I love the way it brings people together, family and friends gathering to celebrate, to laugh, eat good food and spend time together, but I also find Christmas hard. Christmas brings a flurry of activity for my family. On Christmas Day, the kitchen is packed with my mum, sister, grandma and aunties – cooking up a storm. The hustle and bustle can become overwhelming, especially when everyone’s smiling and bopping to Christmas music, let alone when stress spills over. Things can get heated in there! Put down the knife, Mum! Watch out with the skewers, Grandma! I’m joking. But honestly, I just want to curl up somewhere with a book, enjoy some peace and quiet, and maybe take a nap.



But I also want to care for and serve my family. It took me some time to work up the courage to be joyful in the kitchen, but I made the choice to go into that war zone and ask what I could do to help. I was surprised to find that by choosing to bring a bit of peace into a chaotic place – doing the dishes, grabbing ingredients, etc. – the chaos was more manageable. Now, I’m not saying I fixed it, but these days I feel like I can face it and even enjoy the company of the women in my family, instead of feeling like I am going to be slurped up (like my Grandma’s chicken sauce!) > **Liz Schultz**

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Christmas for my family isn’t a huge deal, but I still look forward to the time when



we get together to reconnect and eat a lot of good food. I’m the youngest of seven and most of my brothers and sisters have kids of their own. Because there are so many of us, we usually have a BBQ and my mum, sisters and step sisters cook a lot of food. My dad also loves to invite our family friends, so our backyard is filled with people and laughter. Did I mention – food, glorious food? There’ll be a little fire pit in the back and the kids will toast marshmallows and the adults will talk. We try to make Christmas special for the kids by hanging up some Christmas lights and finding a tree. One year we didn’t have a fake tree (because some mice got into the box) so I convinced my brother to cut down a tree so we could have something to decorate. We stuck the tree into a pot full of sand and it looked cute, especially after wrapping tinsel around it. I think decorating the tree is one of my favourite parts of the whole Christmas experience as you can turn a plain tree into something bright and colourful. The kids would help me hang up the baubles and it’s a fun time for everyone.



I remember one year my parents invited a Filipino chef who didn’t have a place to stay for Christmas. In the beginning it was a bit weird having a stranger with us but he was friendly, funny and most importantly, a fantastic chef. He cooked us beautiful meals and even created little animals from apples and pears. My mum keeps in contact with him so he can always have a place to stay with us. > **Cielo Klass**