



The *Guilt-Free* Times

In This Issue

[Top 10 Tips to Guilt-Free Holidays](#)

[Keeping Food safe](#)

[Schedule Highlights](#)

Quick Links

[Guilt-Free Website](#)

[Meet Victoria](#)

[Schedule](#)

[Testimonials](#)

[Connect with Victoria](#)

Season's Greetings,

Looks like Winter is here in full force...complete with a snow day for us already! We got our Christmas tree up the weekend after Thanksgiving, so it really is "...beginning to look a lot like Christmas..." around our home. The holidays are always a special time of year, but can also be stressful trying to meet everyone's expectations. I'm excited to share with you my Top 10 Tips for Guilt-Free Holidays. I hope you find it inspiring and informative. I even took some of my own advice and cut back on the decorating this year. With a one-year-old (I can't believe Aidan is that big ALREADY) cruising around, it's too hard to keep things out of his hands!

Additionally, I'm always on the look out for good resources and information to benefit you, my valued subscriber. As a busy working mother myself, I'm on the look out for time saving ways to make life easier. I've come across one I just have to share! It's **Dinner by Design!** True to their motto "**It's Simple, It's Smart and it's truly Delicious.**" My family and I have enjoyed meals from Dinner by Design that I've either put together in their kitchen or purchased out of their freezer (healthier than the drive-thru!). I'm headed to the Crystal Lake DBD kitchen with friends on 12/14/06 if anyone local wants to join us.

Check out the tips below from my friends Sandy Melone and Sandra Garrity, Dinner by Design Kitchen owners in Crystal Lake and McHenry respectively. Stop in their kitchens to say hello and check out the monthly menu or book your own session and make 6 or 12 meals in less than 2 hours. If you're not in the area, look for a Dinner by Design Kitchen near you!

Wishing you and your family all the joys of the Christmas season and a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year!

Cheers!

Victoria

Top 10 Tips to Guilt-Free Holidays

Enjoying a guilt-free holiday season isn't just about avoiding carbs and sugar. It's about the ways in which you spend your time and how it makes you, and those around you, feel. Avoiding holiday guilt is easy when using these 10 easy tips:

- 1.** Keep yourself energized so you skate through the season by giving yourself the gift of time...add appointments to your calendar (and KEEP them) for enjoying your hobby, pampering yourself, a special date night with your sweetie, or just curling up by the fireplace to read a good book. Anything that will rejuvenate your energy and spirit so you have more of it for giving others.
- 2.** Ditch any holiday traditions you or your family don't enjoy like a bad fruit cake! Replace them with ones that offer joy, laughter and meaning for all.
- 3.** Get into the spirit of the holiday not the consumerism of the season by making someone else's holiday special. Visit an aging relative you haven't seen in some time, bring lunch to a new Mom, or volunteer at a local shelter.
- 4.** Ideally, spend time with people whose company you enjoy and who increase your energy. Take steps to avoid or limit your time with energy draining family and friends. When difficult gatherings are inevitable, pre-charge your energy levels before the event (see #1) and do something fun or relaxing after, like meeting a friend for coffee or sitting in a candle lit bath. Sandwiching the less pleasant event can make it more enjoyable, and helps maintain your holiday cheer.
- 5.** Decide early whether or not you are going to send holiday cards. Make it a conscious choice not just an automatic response because you perceive it to be expected. If you desire staying connected but can't seem to beat the 12/24 deadline, consider sending Thanksgiving greetings or New Year Wishes instead. A plus is your card/letter won't get lost in a stack with all the others.
- 6.** Eat, drink & be merry - - The holidays are a time for extra sweets and treats. To combat the added calories, do something FUN each day for the physical you. Make snow angels with the kids and sing Suzy Snowflake, partake in a snowball fight, or raise a couple cans of jellied cranberry sauce (you know the ones I mean, they come out the shape of the can - - I LOVE them) up and down over your head 50 times before you open them, just to get your blood pumping. Every little bit counts!
- 7.** Feeling stressed trying to keep up with the Grizzwald's when it comes to your holiday decorating? Cut back on the amount or types of decorations you hang. Try using non-breakable decorations when children are young or rotate which decorations you use each year. If a Martha Stewart setting is really important to you, but time is scarce, consider hiring someone to do the decorating for you.

8. You've worked hard all year and more than earned your time off from work. Take it and get away or just lay low. Whatever your desire, but turn off the pager, e-mail account and cell phone. The place will still be standing and the work still waiting when you return. Your son or daughter won't be 2 or 22 ever again.

9. Own your holiday celebration. Set reasonable expectations and create the celebration you desire. Don't let anyone talk you out of serving lasagna or tacos if that's what you crave.

10. Be choosy about accepting invitations to holiday festivities and avoid calendar clutter. Try alternating attendance at regular events every other year. Having too many holiday commitments won't necessarily increase the festivity levels. Dashing through the snow is only fun in a sleigh, so select a couple gatherings where you can relax and enjoy the time with your hosts and fellow partygoers.

Crank up your favorite holiday CD, dance around the room, and sing with guilt-free reckless abandon this holiday season!

Keeping Your Food Safe

During the holiday season we often make big spreads of food to share with friends and family. Here are some tips from **Dinner by Design** Kitchens owners **Sandy Melone** (5186 Northwest Highway, Crystal Lake) and **Sandra Garrity** (Northgate Center at Rte. 31, north of Rte. 120, McHenry) to help you keep things fresh and safe:

Thawing Tips:

- Thaw foods in the refrigerator, never on the kitchen countertop or in the sink. This prevents bacterial growth, assures even thawing and cooking.
- Store completely thawed entrees in your refrigerator no more than two days.
- Maintain your refrigerator temperature below 40 degrees.

Cooking Tips

- Cooking times are based on the thawed condition of entrees
- Oven, grilling, and broiling times assume pre-heated appliances.
- Slow cookers must be half to three-quarters filled for food safety and cook timing. Recipes are developed for 5-quart slow cookers.
- Use of an instant read meat thermometer is encouraged to ensure food is cooked to your liking and is safe to eat.

Food Serving Tips:

- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- The food temperature danger zone is between 41 - 141 degrees. Bacteria grow rapidly between these temperatures.
- Discard any food left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Place leftovers in shallow containers. Immediately refrigerate or freeze for rapid cooling.

Leftovers:

- Use or discard leftovers within four days.
- Reheat leftovers until a meat thermometer reads 165 degrees.
- If you have leftovers and aren't sure of the cooking date, discard.

Dinner by Design is a great answer to the question "What's for dinner?". They help make it a less stressful answer by doing the hard part of the work - - shopping, prepping, cleaning up.

Schedule Highlights

December

I'll be enjoying time with Friends & Family this month. I wish you a safe, joyous, and Guilt-Free Christmas and an exciting 2007!

January 2007

January 16, 23, 30 and February 1st, 2007

Three Secrets to Prevent & Reduce Burnout

Four weekly sessions at 10:30 - 11:30 AM OR 7:30 - 8:30 P

This 4-week teleclass will show you how to reduce stress, have more energy, achieve bigger goals, and find more time to do what YOU really want to do - - Guilt-Free!

January 29, 2007

Claiming the "I" in Time

Hosted by Mothers & More

7 PM

Tired of trying to be Wonder Woman, running at break-neck speeds yet feeling like the important things never get done? Do you feel depleted and long for more time for yourself but feel guilty about taking it? Then join this informative and interactive session and leave with steps to slow down your hectic schedule, get done what really matters and **Claim the "I" in your TIME - - Guilt-Free!**

Find out more....

email: Victoria@TheGuiltFreeCoach.com

phone: 847.516.0190

web: <http://www.theguiltfreecoach.com/>