

Create Elegant, Easy Holiday Sparkle

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LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — Ideas for food, gifts, decor, and the energy and right attitudes to cope with holiday stress are a primary concern for many homemakers.

"Get the Holiday Spirit," offered some unique perspectives to the 300 persons who attended the annual holiday program sponsored by the Berks County Extension.

Beginning the day-long program, repeated on two consecutive days recently, was a motivational pep talk by Grover Gouker, motivator and humorist. Gouker maintains that "no one can ruin your day without your permission."

Gouker said, "It doesn't matter how miserable someone is, if you don't give into it, they can't ruin your day."

For people who are critical of positive thinking influencing happenings in their lives, Gouker asked, "What are the benefits of being negative?"

Holiday 'Attitune Ups'

- No one can ruin your day without YOUR permission.
- Most people will be about as happy as they decide
- The man who feels certain he will not succeed is seldom mistaken.
- The greatest discovery in the world is SELF-DISCOVERY.
- One of the rarest things that a man ever does is the best he can.
- There is no future in any job. The future lies in the man who holds the job
- There isn't any map to success; you have to find your own way
- Happiness is like a kiss. In order to get any good out of it, you have to give it to someone else
- Life is not a having and a getting, but a being and a becoming.
- Go out on a limb once in a while. That's where the fruit is
- Losers, in life, get started

An example of looking at a negative experience from a positive perspective was demonstrated by Gouker's response to losing hearing in one ear: "I don't want to hear half the stuff anyway," he said.

Elegant, Easy Decorations

Mary Haldeman shared design ideas that she uses at Sycamore Springs.

Haldeman demonstrated how easy it is to transform a Thanksgiving wreath into a Christmas one by adding greens and berries, and changing the bow.

For a window decoration, Haldeman used a decorative box with a lid. She inserted styrofoam in the box, tucked in a variety of greens that spilled over the edges and added a gold bow.

For the windows, Haldeman started with three decorative holiday balls and threaded sheer gold ribbon through the hangers. She tied the balls to hang at three diffe-

rent levels. The swinging balls can be attached to the inside of a window from the top or from the middle.

Use tiny wreaths to surround candles. Tuck pepper berries, chokeberries, cedar and yew into the wreath and attach to a tall candleholder.

"Don't limit yourself to using candleholders only for candles," Haldeman said. "Use the holders to hold decorative holiday balls."

Styrofoam balls can be covered with lemon leaves and sprayed with both green and gold paint. Wrap with sheer wire ribbon. Glue to prevent sliding and press onto a candlestick. Under the bow, tuck greens, berries, a silk rose or as much or as little decorations as desired.

"Sunday afternoon walks are a great place to find wonderful natural materials to use in holiday arrangements," Haldeman said of hedgerows that often contain rose hips, bittersweet, and American holly.

Other ideas included the following:

- Cover grapevine wreath with preserved ivy and insert preserved fruit or flowers.
- Fill the base of a clear container with cranberries or lemons or even carrots, potatoes, and grapes. Insert a bouquet of roses and greenery.
- Give a holiday touch by lightly spraying cream-colored rose petals with gold paint.
- Spray pinecones lightly with gold paint to give a holiday sparkle to a basketful.
- Urns, vases, and other items can be given a new life by spraying with antique paint to make them appear old.
- A variety of sugared fruits are available for purchase. Haldeman prefers fruits that are coated with coarse salt instead of sugar.

Italian Flavors

Italian cooking in America today is universally popular in all cultures and with good reason, according to Fay Strickler, home economist. "It's economical, easy, fun, and delicious."

"Italian food is a feast for the senses. Tantalizing aromas, rich and varied colors, and savory flavors tempt the cook to try one new dish after another," she said.

In addition to sharing typical foods served by Italians during Christmas celebrations, Mae Candelori, part owner of Monte Lauro, also shared customs observed in her country.

Candelori said that traditions from the old country includes a 12-day celebration before Christmas Day. Musical instruments such as the flute and accordion are played throughout the town.

Families visit a manger scene, and Christmas Eve the animals must always be cared for before attending to one's own needs.

Children are satisfied with simple things because consumerism is lowkey. In fact, no gifts are given except each child receives one orange on his or her plate.

"Each Christmas, children compose letters to their parents and tell them how they appreciate them.

On Christmas Eve, Italians eat a bitter herb as a reminder to rid one's life of bitterness while waiting for the Christ child. No meat is served during the Christmas Eve meal. Chick peas are eaten as a reminder to thank the Lord for plenty.

Christmas dinner includes traditional Italian dishes such as wedding soup, antipasto, bread loaves,



Fay Strickler holds a canning jar that holds a cord of 20 miniature lights and filled with potpourri. Top with a crocheted doily. When the lights are plugged in the heat released the potpourri scent.



Candlesticks can be used to hold more than candles as this design by Mary Haldeman demonstrates. Purchased decorative holiday balls or make your own by covering Styrofoam balls with natural materials and wrapping with sheer ribbon. Tuck in greens, berries, or silk materials to create your own preferred personal touch.



Mary Haldeman demonstrates wreath making by adding new touches to an outdated wreath.

roast chicken, veal, and stuffed olives that are breaded and fried.

Additional Topics

Other topics addressed during the workshop included toasting etiquette taught by Strickler and a new look at books for gift giving.

Melinda Fant from Borders, a book and music cafe, encouraged people to give books as presents. Fant introduced many new books

and pointed out the significance of selecting books tailored to the receivers' interests.

A booklet including some of Candelori's recipes and other Italian recipes sent in by participants were compiled and reveals the ever-widening variety found in Italian cooking.

Here are some of the recipes:

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