



Retro Holiday with Peef and Lo

The hap happiest season of all!

Wow. It's that time of the year again.. Already. And soon it will be 2002 and we'll all feel a little bit older, a little bit wiser and a little bit creakier.

In the meantime, though, it's time to attend to all of those festive preparations that make the Holiday season so very bright.

Shopping for gifts! Putting up the Christmas tree! Hanging lights! Wrapping gifts! Making cookies! Buying a dreidel for Elmo! Chasing Zoe away from the tissue paper! Chasing Elmo away from the tissue paper! Drinking lots of eggnog! Gaining 5 lbs! Gaining 10 lbs! Buying all new clothing! What could be better than that?

Ah, how I am looking forward to the holidays!

Oh, I really shouldn't complain. This year's festivities have gotten off to a great start. We got all of our Christmas shopping done by mid-November (thanks, in part, to a great little shopping adventure in Illinois, during which Paul gave me a tour of an excellent new department store called THE GREAT INDOORS -- a new Schlage account for him).

We haven't begun wrapping our presents, of course -- that is an adventure all it's own with two cats lingering about, trying to chase every last piece of loose ribbon and winding themselves up in tissue paper until they turn into small, crumbled blobs. We'll save that challenge



for a more opportune moment closer to the celebratory bliss.

We also haven't gotten around to making cookies or fudge or candies yet. Probably a good thing in some ways (I'm thinking hips here)..

And things are slowly coming together, however. We're actually planning to go out hunting for a Christmas tree this weekend. According to the most recent weather forecasts, there is a cold front moving in with some nice cold rain/snow showers (after all of that nice sixty degree weather!). Just in time for us to trudge around looking for a Christmas tree!

Seems that every year when we shop for trees it's one of the coldest days of the year... and we always end up dragging out our scarves and mittens just for the occasion. Usually that's what gets me to dig all of our "gear" out for the first time. Funny how that works...

We always pick out the tree for which we feel sorriest -- it's usually a sad number with a crooked top or a wavy trunk. We name the poor thing something like "Harry" and load it up onto our truck.

When we set it up in its tree stand at home, we always try to find its "best" side to display -- this seems to boost the tree's self-esteem in the grandest way, which convinces him to hang around and drink lots of water for a good long time. And usually, once we decorate him up, he looks as good as perfect.

For some reason this always seems like a small act of charity to us. Picking out the poor trees that no one else can love... and giving them a home for the holidays.

It's like that Charlie Brown Christmas special where they have that poor little tree at the Christmas pageant.. And all the needles fall off. And Pigpen is so very dirty. And nothing seems to go right. But it all ends up happy in the end.

Yes. That's it. Kinda like this newsletter :)

God Bless US ...
every one!

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Sending each of
you a little bit of
love in this
wonderful season..

And wishing a
**WONDERFUL
HOLIDAY**

To you and yours!

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A Story We Didn't Write, but which we wanted to share

Thou Shalt Not Skim Flavor From The Holidays

By Craig Wilson, USA TODAY

I hate this time of year. Not for its crass commercialism and forced frivolity, but because it's the season when the food police come out with their wagging fingers and annual tips on how to get through the holidays without gaining 10 pounds. You can't pick up a magazine without finding a list of holiday eating do's and don'ts. Eliminate second helpings, high-calorie sauces and cookies made with butter, they say. Fill up on vegetable sticks, they say.

Good grief.

Is your favorite childhood memory of Christmas a carrot stick? I didn't think so. Isn't mine, either. A carrot was something you left for Rudolph. I have my own list of tips for holiday eating. I assure you, if you follow them, you'll be fat and happy. So what if you don't make it to New Year's? Your pants won't fit anymore, anyway.

1. About those carrot sticks. Avoid them. Anyone who puts carrots on a holiday buffet table knows nothing of the Christmas spirit. In fact, if you see carrots, leave immediately. Go next door, where they're serving rum balls.

2. Drink as much eggnog as you can. And quickly. Like fine single-malt scotch, it's rare. In fact, it's even rarer than single-malt scotch. You can't find it any other time of year but now. So drink up! Who cares that it has 10,000 calories in every sip? It's not as if you're going to turn into an egg-nogaholic or something. It's a treat. Enjoy it. Have one for me. Have two. It's later than you think. It's Christmas!

3. If something comes with gravy, use it. That's the whole point of gravy. Pour it on. Make a volcano out of your mashed potatoes. Fill it with gravy. Eat the volcano. Repeat.

4. As for mashed potatoes, always ask if they're made with skim milk or whole milk. If it's skim, pass. Why bother? It's like buying a sports car with an automatic transmission.

5. Do not have a snack before going to a party in an effort to control your eating. The whole point of going to a Christmas party is to eat other people's food for free. Lots of it. Hello? Remember college?

6. Under no circumstances should you exercise between now and New Year's. You can do that in January when you have nothing

else to do. This is the time for long naps, which you'll need after circling the buffet table while carrying a 10-pound plate of food and that vat of eggnog.



7. If you come across something really good at a buffet table, like frosted Christmas cookies in the shape and size of Santa, position yourself near them and don't budge. Have as many as you can

before becoming the center of attention. They're like a beautiful pair of shoes. You can't leave them behind. You're not going to see them again.

8. Same for pies. Apple. Pumpkin. Mincemeat. Have a slice of each. Or, if you don't like mincemeat, have two apples and one pumpkin. Always have three. When else do you get to have more than one dessert? Labor Day?

9. Did someone mention fruitcake? Granted, it's loaded with the mandatory celebratory calories, but avoid it at all cost. I mean, have some standards, mate.

10. And one final tip: If you don't feel terrible when you leave the party or get up from the table, you haven't been paying attention. Reread tips. Start over. But hurry! Cookieless January is just around the corner.

PEEF AND LO THINK THIS GUY HAS THE RIGHT IDEA. EGGNOG, anyone?

There are Better Ways to Thumb a Ride...

Cooking is always great fun.. Well, that is, until somebody gets hurt.

We found that out the hard way -- a couple of weeks before Thanksgiving, to be exact. And Paul has lived to tell his tale.

We'd just finished an evening of Indian food (one of our infamous rotating ethnic dinners), and were busy doing dishes in the kitchen and reflecting on our lovely evening. It was pretty close to midnight, and we were fairly tired. Both of us were looking forward to getting done so that



we could fall into bed.

But God had other plans.

As Paul was finishing up, a horrible thing happened. The Cuisinart blade hopped right up out of the dishwasher and bit him in the thumb.

It was a good, hard bite. The kind that makes you wince once, blink twice, and hike it to the Emergency Room as fast as you can.

Which is what we did. We wrapped his thumb as best we could and drove off to the hospital.. For a nice long visit with the 3rd

shift ER staff.

It was actually a fairly pleasant time. The nurses were impressed that we weren't drunk (since most of the fools in ER at 1:30 in the morning are there for a reason). The doctors were in a fine joking mood. And they whip-stitched Paul's thumb nice and pretty. The stitches (all eight of them) came out just after Thanksgiving, and Paul seems to be recuperating fairly well -barring his completely justified fear of the poor, innocent Cuisinart.

I just wish I could get him to wash dishes again.

VICTORY. We Have Seen Victory at Last!

If Peef and Lo have one vice which overshadows all others in the realm of healthy eating, it would have to be ice-cream. Ice-cream. Custard. Gelato.. All of those deliciously creamy desserts which taste so extraordinary going down, but which leave a discernable mark on one's physique (if you can even call it a physique!). Ice-cream is the supreme evil in our lives. And we can't seem to abolish it from our diet.

So, this particular story begins about three or four months ago when Lo ran into an INCREDIBLE deal on a Krups ice-cream maker. A deal which was just too marvelous to pass up. Of course she had to buy it -- just think of all the possibilities if they were able to make THEIR VERY OWN ice-cream. After all, they could make HEALTHY ice-cream, right?

Well, yes. They probably could make healthy ice-cream. That is, if they could make ice-cream at all.

The day that the machine arrived, they waited in nearly breathless anticipation as the base sat in the freezer. Hours later, when the bowl seemed sufficiently frozen (the directions merely said that when the liquid inside no longer sloshed

that the bowl was ready.. Easy enough, right?), they set to work.

Paul had boiled up an excellent looking combination of cream and sugar, adding white chocolate chips and all the flavorings needed to make a delicious bowl of decadent ice-cream. We poured the mixture into the machine, and patiently waited forty minutes for it to do its thing.

And then -- nothing.

Our ice-cream machine apparently didn't like our combination of flavors. Or it stood, somehow, morally opposed to doing its job. Our cream sat languidly in the bottom of the ice-cream maker, far from frozen, and not looking very appetizing at all. We were crushed.

It took us a week or two before we tried again. This time, we took great precautions with the freezing process. We took exceptional pains with the directions for the cream and sugar. And still, the ice-cream maker refused to freeze our ice-cream.

Hrmp. They sighed in unison, and promptly returned to the booklet

for some trouble-shooting advice.

Sure enough, there it was right on the page -- freezer temperature must be below -20 degrees. Aha! We found our culprit. We promptly turned down the freezer, determined to try ONE MORE TIME.

Of course, it took us almost two months to work up the gumption.

We held our breath as we took the ice-cream bowl out of the freezer and unwrapped it's plastic covering. We put our hands to our hearts and whispered sweet prayers as we poured in the cream mixture (this time laced with a nice dose of malt powder). And we closed our eyes as we turned the power button to ON.

Forty minutes later -- to our great surprise, we came back to find.. Ice-cream. Creamy, rich, too-good-to-be-true calories. I think we did a happy dance to celebrate.

And then we did what any sane ice-cream lovers would do. We ate it. Mmmm...



Dreidel, dreidel, dreidel.. dreidel made of clay.

Things around our house are always challenging around the Christmas holiday.. particularly with Elmo being Jewish and all.

(Of COURSE he's Jewish.. haven't you ever wondered about the yarmulke?)

And, of course, having Zoë running around this year is going to be even more of a challenge. Not only will we have to deal a whole new set of holiday-induced kitten antics, but I am certain she will be confused by the parallel Hanukah celebration.. And I'm not sure that Elmo really has the patience to explain it all to her.

For example, what WILL she do when she catches sight of Elmo's dreidel for the first time? Will she be jealous and attempt to abscond it? Might she be frightened of it? Will we have to buy her one of her own?

And when Elmo begins reading from the Torah, will she respect his silent moments of study? Or will she chew at the edge of his book like the teething creature she is?

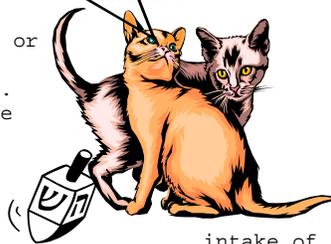
And the gelts.. How will we get her to realize that chocolate is bad for kittens, and that the gelts are

simply decorative elements for Jewish cats (and dogs for that matter)?

And then there's the whole issue of whether or not Zoë will choose to become Jewish as well.. It is a very attractive option, after all. The Festival of Lights offers many benefits with which our sad, Christian Christmas can only begin to compete. There's so much HISTORY there. And tradition. I can see why a cat would be drawn to Orthodoxy, as Elmo most certainly is.

But she's definitely a different sort of cat. I can't really picture her spending her late-night hours in fervent study, with only her keen night vision to keep her alert. And her tiny, screamy voice isn't exactly conducive to Hebrew recitation. After all, I'm thinking that you want to be able to RESPECT someone who's speaking in Hebrew - and to be honest, her little puny

Oh, Zoë, there is SOOO much you do not understand...



voice doesn't exactly COMMAND respect. It demands earplugs. And that just isn't the half of it.

Zoë, our little goat, would find it exceedingly hard to observe the traditional kosher diet. Give up cloven hooves? I can see her wincing already. Monitor her

intake of shrimp? I think not. She's not a terribly disciplined cat.

But who knows? Maybe Elmo will be a positive influence on her. And then we can buy two dreidels each year, instead of just one.

In any case, we're very much looking forward to the holidays. They should be an adventure.. For all of us.

God Bless US ...
every one!

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Amore Sitis Unita

