



Happy Holidays... In October?

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Organizational experts are forever chastising us mere mortals for failing to do our holiday shopping in July, when the bargains are plenty and time is on our side. But given the hurly burly existence most of us live, it's simply not a reasonable expectation. It's also arguably a lot less fun; holiday shopping in the depths of summer somehow seems to miss the point of the holiday. Happily, shopping in July isn't the only way to get a head start on the looming holiday activities. There are some simple things you can do now to make the next few months a lot less stressful. We encourage you to get started with these suggestions.

Alicia on "Party Planning"

"If you've decided to host a party this season, use the internet to help you plan and organize your event. Sometimes, the process of planning a party is more work than the party itself. But there are party planning tools online that can really help minimize the stress that goes along with playing hostess. Evite.com is a great resource that I've used to organize parties. They have amazing tools like a drink calculator, a budget calculator, and a menu planner that can help you ensure you throw a perfect party."

Sarah on "Five minutes today..."

"It's not impossible to find gifts for your loved ones that are inspired *and* on budget. The key to coming up with great gift ideas is to take a minute to walk in the shoes of the person receiving the gift to so that you understand their wants and needs. Once you are clear on that, set a budget and then take a little time to brainstorm before you spend a

penny on gifts. Schedule a window shopping appointment for yourself now, when you're not crazed, to get your creative juices flowing. Or sit down with your family after dinner one night for a bit of idea generation. Budgeting a few minutes today to come up with gift ideas can save you a mountain of money and sanity in December."

Here are three small investments you can make in October that are sure to pay off once December rolls around:

#1: Goals

Before the holiday season is in full swing, take a moment to set a few reasonable, weekly goals that will get you through the holidays with sanity intact. This isn't about chasing unrealistic expectations of getting all the holiday shopping done by Halloween or family cards finished before Thanksgiving. Just set a few goals that you'll be able to reach without stress such as purchasing a small amount of gifts each week or purposely scheduling free time in your calendar for unexpected activities.

#2: Playing With Food

Isn't it nice to partner new recipes next to old family favorites at the holiday dinner table? But, unless you are a master chef, it always helps to test out recipes prior to the day they are being served to your guests. Turn experimenting with recipes into a night of family fun by selecting a few and having your family taste-test them. This will let you perfect those questionable recipes you found in a magazine and will also give you the heads up as to which ones are sure to be hits once the holidays roll around.

#3: Family Involvement

This season, give yourself one less thing to worry about and get your whole family involved with decorating for the holidays. Nothing is cozier than a home adorned with hand made decorations. So plan a night before the holidays are in full swing for everyone in your family to get creative and make decorations for the house. Once the holidays do roll around, not only will your halls be decked with homemade holiday cheer, but these heartfelt items make great gifts that grandparents are sure to cherish.

We are the co-founders of Buttoned Up, inc., a company dedicated to helping stretched and stressed women get themselves organized (along with everybody else they're responsible for too!). We welcome your thoughts! Please send ideas and questions to us at: yourlife@getbuttonedup.com or visit us at www.getbuttonedup.com