

# Snowman Slam

These two simple activities can be played indoors and gets the kids up and moving while waiting on Christmas dinner or while waiting on opening Christmas gifts.

These are the items required to play these two activities: 12 styrofoam cups, black and orange construction paper, glue, scissors, several white socks (highly balled up.)

Cut the snowmen's eyes, noses, and mouths out of the construction paper. Place the cups upside down and glue.

Stack the cups on top of one another and see how many each child can knock down by throwing the sock at the snowmen cups. To be competitive, make up points for each throw. If two cups are knocked down they get 2 points, etc.

## Snowman Shooters

Use the same cups as in the Snowman Slam activity. Turn the cups up right and line them up. Have the children stand back several feet and they can throw the sock and see if they can get the sock in the cup. Again, each sock that goes in a cup could be 1 point, etc. Let each child have the same amount of turns, keep up with the points, and see who wins!



# Do You Believe?

By **Hannah Davis**  
Tribune Staff

Christmas has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870, but it wasn't always the same holiday cheer and eggnog around the fire that many know it to be today. Though many celebrate the holiday as a religious day in recognition of Jesus Christ's birth, winter has been a time of celebration long before then. Early Europeans rejoiced in the light and darkness and the birth that the season could bring, even in the coldest of days. There were often celebrations during the winter solstice, when people could recognize that the coldest and longest days were past them, and they were now moving towards spring. Similarly, some Romans celebrated December 25 as it was Mithras's birthday, the Roman god of the sun. Though Rome is known for its order and structure, it celebrated the month of December in an event called Saturnalia, celebrated the god Saturn. At this time, slaves were given the month to celebrate their freedom, there were feasts, and schools and businesses were closed.

In addition to the celebrations that may have inspired people's general cheer and excitement around the end of December, one of the lasting images of Christmas came from pagans in Germany. Many tell their children the story of Santa Claus and his annual flight across the sky to deliver presents. But the origins of this come from early German pagans fearing the nightly flights of the god Oden, who would decide who had been good enough to live another day and who would perish in the night.

The religious tradition of Christmas is also somewhat manufactured. In the fourth century, priests decided to add the birth of Jesus as a holiday, but the day of his birth is not included in the Bible. As a result, priests would have to come to a decision about when they would make the holiday. Pope Julius I chose December 25, despite some evidence that he was born in the spring, in order to overshadow the Roman celebration of Saturnalia. Furthermore, the church thought that having a celebration in the winter would increase people's enthusiasm for the holiday. Though it also meant that they couldn't control the celebrations, their inclination was right, and Christmas soon became a widely celebrated holiday, replacing the Pagan traditions by the Middle Ages. It evolved into a time of giving, where the poor could come to the rich's homes and accept gifts from them. Aligning with the Church's morals, Christmas became a time of honoring one's blessings and giving back to those in need.

When America was still in its early days as a collection of colonies, Christmas was widely discouraged, as it was a holiday that reminded colonists of their English roots. For instance, Christmas was even outlawed in Boston from 1659-1681. It wasn't until the publication of Washington Irving's *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent and Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol* that people's visions of Christmas shifted from a carnival-esque celebration to an intimate family-centric holiday. Though the books depicted imaginative stories and events, they emphasized that their fictitious traditions were ancient and were truly at the core of the Christmas season. Soon, Americans everywhere were embracing the new vision of Christmas. They relied on older traditions of gift-giving and applied them to their families and friends. They rallied around Dickens' and Irving's qualities, choosing to ring in the holiday spirit with humility and gratitude. Though over the years, the Christmas season has also come to be associated with mad rushes to the best sales and perfecting your grandmother's gingerbread recipe and posing for the right Christmas card, it remains still a holiday that was truly created for the people to celebrate what they have and the hope that the new year might bring.



Santa and the Grinch visited Village Manor.

# Make it a Hard Candy Christmas!

Have you ever made old fashioned hard candy? It's easy to make and delicious to eat. A batch of this candy will make a great gift.

- Ingredients:**
- 1 cup Granulated Sugar
  - 1/4 cup Light Corn Syrup
  - 1/2 cup Water
  - Food Coloring
  - 1/2 teaspoon Flavoring Oil
  - Powdered Sugar

A liquid food coloring or gel food coloring that can be dropped into the hot sugar mixture is recommended.

Flavoring oils, not extracts are recommended. One brand is LorAnn.

First, place a piece of aluminum foil on a cutting board or cookie sheet and dust it with powdered sugar. Molds can be used. Set out the food coloring and flavoring oil and have a wooden spoon and a whisk handy. Fill a small bowl with cold water and put in an ice cube.

Place sugar, water, and corn syrup in a small sauce pan and bring it to a boil on the stove over medium-high heat. Stir with wooden spoon to combine until the sugar dissolves. Stop stirring once the mixture starts boiling. Cook the sugar syrup until it reaches 310 degrees. This will take about 10 minutes to reach this stage. After about 8 minutes of boiling, the mixture should start to thicken. Dip the

wooden spoon into the boiling syrup and drop some of it into the ice water. This will quickly chill the syrup down so you can tell what stage it is at:

- If the candy dissolves immediately, it has quite a ways to go
- If the candy sticks together but stays soft, it's at a soft ball stage. Keep boiling.
- If the candy feels hard but bendy, it's getting close. Keep boiling.
- When the candy forms hard, brittle threads that snap when you try to break them, it has made it to the hard crack stage and remove it from the heat and wait a minute to let the boiling action calm down.

Drop in some food coloring and the flavoring oil and whisk VERY WELL to combine. There will be steam so be careful. Pour out the hot candy onto the prepped foil or in the molds. Use the wooden spoon to make sure all the candy is removed from the pan. Dust the candy with powdered sugar. When it starts to cool, use a large knife or pizza cutter to score it into small pieces. Allow candy to cool completely - about half an hour - and then break it into pieces along the scoring lines. Store in an airtight container. The number of candies will depend on how big or small the candy is cut.

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

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