



White House Christmas

Where will you and your family sleep on Christmas Eve? How will you spend the holiday? If you lived in the White House, your family Christmas would probably involve opening presents in the Yellow Oval Room, then sharing a big turkey dinner.



This week, The Mini Page learns more about Christmases in the White House.

Christmas history

In the early years of the United States, Christmas was a private, family holiday. People gathered together and perhaps shared a special meal.

In the 1800s at the White House, Christmas preparations were quite simple. Greens such as holly or fir might have decorated the mantelpieces, along with stockings.

Some presidents had young children, but others sometimes had grandchildren or extended family living in the White House along with the first family.

For example, the first Christmas party at the White House was given in 1800 for President John Adams’ granddaughter Suzannah, who also lived there. In 1834, President Andrew Jackson planned a big party for children that included dancing, games, dinner and an indoor “snowball fight” with cotton balls!

In the mid-1800s, President Andrew Johnson held a party for about 500 children in the East Room. President Theodore Roosevelt invited children to a carnival party in 1903 where they danced, played games and received special treats: ice cream shaped like Santa Claus.

Blue Room tree

The first Christmas tree in the Blue Room of the White House was placed there by the children of President William Howard Taft. The president and first lady were away from the White House at Christmas in 1909, and their grown children were hosting extended family for the holiday.

Mrs. Hoover was the first to have an “official” White House tree, and it became a project for future first ladies. In 1961, Jacqueline Kennedy declared a theme for the public Christmas display for the first time.

The tree must not be more than 19 feet tall. Before its arrival, workers have to remove the chandelier in the Blue Room for the tree to stand in the center!



President and Mrs. Kennedy stand next to the Blue Room tree in 1961. The theme for the tree was the “Nutcracker Suite.”

Mini Fact:

The family tree of President Grover Cleveland in 1896 was in the Second Floor Oval Room.

Presidents’ ornaments

In 1981, the White House Historical Association started making annual Christmas ornaments. Each one honors one of our presidents.

Money earned from sales of the ornaments helps the association preserve historic rooms at the White House and educate the public about the president’s home.

The first ornament, honoring President George Washington, was shaped like a weathervane from Mount Vernon, his home in Virginia.



The 1981 ornament.



The 1999 ornament was in honor of President Abraham Lincoln.



The 2025 ornament celebrates the 150th anniversary of state dinners at the White House. It features two plates from the White House State china collection.

Resources

On the Web:

- [bit.ly / 46ToRyl](https://bit.ly/46ToRyl)
- [bit.ly / 4oiioJl](https://bit.ly/4oiioJl)

At the library:

- “A White House Christmas” by Laura Dowling

Try ‘n’ Find

Words that remind us of a White House Christmas are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

ADAMS, BLUE ROOM, CHANDELIER, CHRISTMAS, CLEVELAND, FAMILY, HOLIDAY, HOOVER, JACKSON, JOHNSON, KENNEDY, ORNAMENT, PARTY, ROOSEVELT, TAFT, THEME, TREE, WHITE HOUSE.

T	Y	S	M	A	D	A	K	X	P	A	R	T	Y	W
F	A	C	J	Y	D	E	N	N	E	K	O	Z	U	T
T	D	F	H	C	H	R	I	S	T	M	A	S	R	N
H	I	W	T	P	J	O	H	N	S	O	N	I	E	E
E	L	W	H	I	T	E	H	O	U	S	E	U	V	M
M	O	O	R	E	U	L	B	B	A	K	I	L	O	A
E	H	Y	L	I	M	A	F	J	A	C	K	S	O	N
K	Y	Q	G	D	N	A	L	E	V	E	L	C	H	R
X	M	R	O	O	S	E	V	E	L	T	J	I	C	O
P	R	E	I	L	E	D	N	A	H	C	E	E	R	T

Cook’s Corner

Butternut Squash With Maple Butter

You’ll need:

- 1 large butternut squash, halved lengthwise
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted
- 2 teaspoons light brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

What to do:

1. Scoop out seeds and stringy stuff from squash halves. Using a sharp knife, score the inside of each half several times.
2. Place the halves in a shallow baking dish, cut side up. Add about 1/4 inch water to the bottom of the baking dish to prevent the skins from burning.
3. Season the insides of the squash with salt and pepper.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together the syrup, butter, sugar and cinnamon. Brush the mixture inside each squash half.
5. Bake for 1 hour or until squash is very soft and tops are browned. Serves 4.

Adapted from “The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families” with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).

* You’ll need an adult’s help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. noontime meal (5) _____

2. military horn (5) _____

3. bug that eats wood (7) _____

4. one person (10) _____

5. sweet treat (5) _____

6. mountain that spews lava (7) _____

7. international competition (8) _____

ICS	IVID	ANO	GLE
UAL	MITE	LUN	OLY
VOLC	CH	DY	TER
BU	CAN	IND	MP

Answers: lunch, bugle, individual, termite, candy, volcano, Olympic.

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Mini Jokes

Nick: What do gingerbread men use when they break a leg?

Nora: Candy canes!

Eco Note

Solar power has become the world’s cheapest energy source, now outcompeting coal, gas and even wind. Researchers from England’s University of Surrey found that falling prices for lithium-ion batteries, down 89% since 2010, and breakthroughs in solar panel materials are making clean energy cheaper. Global solar capacity surpassed 1.5 terawatts in 2024, twice that of 2020, and enough to power hundreds of millions of homes.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for items about Christmas at the White House.

Teachers:

Follow and interact with The Mini Page on Facebook!

KidSpot

By Dan Thompson

12-13

Holiday
How many words of two or more letters can you make from the letters in the word HOLIDAY? Use each of the seven letters only once in each new word.