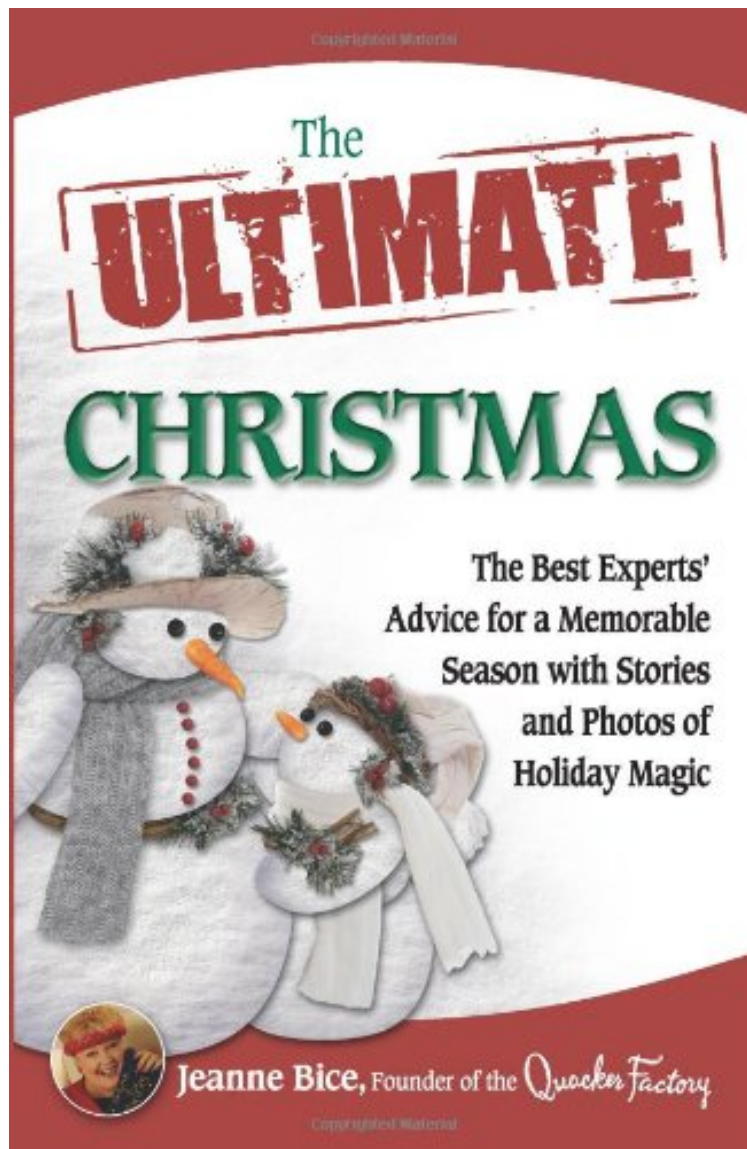


(Download) The Ultimate Christmas: The Best Experts' Advice for a Memorable Season with Stories and Photos of Holiday Magic

The Ultimate Christmas: The Best Experts' Advice for a Memorable Season with Stories and Photos of Holiday Magic

Jeanne Bice

*DOC | *audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF | ePub*



DOWNLOAD



READ ONLINE

#1385931 in Books 2008-09-23 2008-10-03Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.44 x .72 x 5.561, 1.02 #File Name: 075730754X304 pages | File size: 21.Mb

Jeanne Bice : The Ultimate Christmas: The Best Experts' Advice for a Memorable Season with Stories and Photos of Holiday Magic before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Ultimate Christmas: The Best Experts' Advice for a Memorable Season with Stories and Photos of Holiday Magic:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. GREAT READING AND PHOTOS!By Anne StepienWonderful book, similar to the Chicken Soup book series. Delightful reading. The 1st and 4th full page color photos just inside the front cover alone are worth the price of the book....the rest is an added bonus :)2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Good Christmas ReadingBy cookbook collectorI guess you could say Christmas is my all time favorite holiday! Like others I have lots to do to get prepared for this special time, but I love it all! However, I must admit sometimes it can get a little too hectic. At times like that I always welcome any help or advice I can get. This book has just that. There's great ideas for decorating, ideas to help keep the children busy, great uplifting stories telling of the true meaning of Christmas and so much more. There's even a few recipes that I know you'll want to try. The North Pole Peppermint Pie is delicious!! I would recommend this book to anyone who loves Christmas!0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy JeetGood value.

Create a Magical Holiday Season for You and Yours . . . You know the moment when it feels like Christmaswhen you make your annual pilgrimage to the tree lot and the 'blue spruce or pine' debate commences, when you share favorite memories over a second helping of your mother's stuffing, or when you feel the tug in your throat during the holiday pageant. Now you can revel in the true meaning and spirit of the season with Ultimate Christmas, an entertaining, touching, and uplifting collection of true stories and awe-inspiring photographs of holiday magic (and a little mania!). From the kindness and generosity of strangers to the turkey that got away, from the innocence and pure joy of a child to the tree that really was too tall to fit, this Yuletide treasury will make you laugh and cry, and help you celebrate everything that is delightfuland perhaps slightly dysfunctionalabout the holidays. And, if you're searching for some holiday inspiration, fashion and decorating guru Jeanne Bice, the founder of The Quacker Factory, shares must-know info for making things merry, including eco-friendly ways to deck the halls, a simple, sensational open house menu, homemade crafts, and etiquette rules for regifting, holiday 'brag' letters, and the dreaded fruitcake. This is the ultimate Christmas volume you'll want to bring out year after year to help create lasting memories and savor the warmth of the season.

About the AuthorJeanne Bice is the warm and vivacious creator of the multimillion dollar clothing design company, Quacker Factory, which specializes in whimsical and embellished fashions. Having become a fixture on television shopping, Jeanne's apparel line is a perennial best seller on QVC. She is the author of Pull Yourself Up By Your Brastraps and Jeanne Bice's Quacker Factory Christmas. Jeanne has appeared on Good Morning America, The View, The Tony Danza Show, The CBS Early Show, and has been featured in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and many other publications. Jeanne's quirky sense of humor and inspirational style have earned her a loyal following of avid fans who can be seen around the country wearing their fun Quacker clothes.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.The Lineup Christmas Eve day. One-half shopping day left and this was it. Husband Dick and I, son Rick, and his family descended on the city mall with a mixture of excitement and panic, precipitated by the knowledge that visions of sugarplums were due to start dancing in a matter of hours.Expediently finishing my shopping first, I found an empty chair bordering the main walkway through the mall and settled down for an innocent orgy of people watching. One familiar motto caught my eye on a passing sweatshirt: Practice senseless beauty and random acts of kindness. I wondered if the wearer or in fact anyone in the mall that day had time for such luxuries. Sounded unlikely.My attention soon drifted across the procession of shoppers straight into the living room of a Nordic cottage where Santa Claus and an itinerant lapful of radiant believers sat enthroned in an ample maple rocking chair. Behind him a painted fire roared silently in its huge fireplace. Beside him stood a real Christmas tree trimmed with ropes of fake cranberries and popcorn and genuine candy canes.I was close enough to notice a sheen of perspiration form along the line of Santa's white beard and to hear all of his Christmas questions and most of their answers. A long queue of eager lap replacements and resigned parents wound down the mallway. The line was at least an hour long. That was going to challenge a few Christmas spirits.Two adjacent families about halfway through the line caught my eye. The first was a mother and a group of little boys about two, four, and five years old. The smallest was corralled in a stroller. That was the good news. The other two were free agents, poking, scuffling, and pushing in the red-blooded way little boys have that amuses onlookers and drives mothers to consider substance abuse.The children were neatly but modestly dressed in matching red sweatshirts that seemed to have suffered a few indignities from prior owners. But their faces were shiny, their eyes as blue as they were mischievous, and their hair fine, blond, and unruly. Directly behind them stood another familymother, father, and little girls about five and seven. The girls wore blue velvet dresses, trimmed in lace at the hem and featuring a line of white organdy rosebud buttons. Their long white stockings and black patent Mary Janes had never seen Christmas before. Their long black hair, caught in flowing ponytails, reached almost to their waists. When they squirmed, their parents took turns walking with them to relieve the tedium of the wait.The line inched forward until the little boys were next. But something was wrong. The boys didn't dash for Santa's lap. Instead, the mother and Santa's linebacker, who guarded access to Santa and a cash register with equal fervor, were in animated conversation.The mother couldn't believe she had to pay for a set of pictures just so her children could talk to Santa. Wasn't Santa for all children at

Christmas? Wasn't every child equal in his sight even those who didn't have \$11.94 for the smallest set of photos? Couldn't they just sit in his lap for a minute, even if she promised not to take a picture with the camera she had brought along? No, no, no, the linebacker snarled. This was a photo shop in the express business of selling photos. They were not about to overwork Santa for freeloaders. It was too bad she had waited an hour, but the linebacker could take no responsibility for that. As their voices rose, I realized I was not the only eavesdropper. The father of the blue velvet daughters returned from one of his mini-strolls and, realizing the nature of the controversy, reached into his pocket. He deposited twelve dollars on the cash register. 'This is from one of Santa's plainclothesmen,' he grinned. 'Now let's get those boys on Santa's lap where they belong.' The mother relaxed. The little boys leaped. Across the aisle, I smiled as tears of pride collected in my eyes. Santa's plainclothesman was my son. Mike and I were busy gift-givers shopping, wrapping, and hiding gifts under the tree. Three-year-old Andy sat and watched as we pulled out colorful paper and carefully tied ribbons and bows. When he begged to help, I handed him the tape dispenser. He pulled out a sticky length as long as his little arm could stretch. He ripped it off, the tape curling around itself, and secured the paper with the tangled mess. His gifts were covered with more tape than paper. He sat and watched, too, as we wheeled carts through stores, meticulously selecting a sweater for Uncle Randy and a coloring set for Cousin Crystal. 'What's that?' He pointed at the items I placed in the cart. 'These pretty dishes are for Gramma. And this book is for Kate.' 'Me, too,' he said. 'No, these are presents we'll give away.' 'Me, too,' he insisted again. I shrugged and tried to distract him. On Christmas morning, we all gathered around the tree, ripping paper from packages and exclaiming over new clothes, CDs, and toys. Of course, Andy squealed with delight. He pushed buttons to set off the siren on his new fire truck and gleefully dumped the pieces of his plastic building set all over the floor. Still, several times I noticed him glance anxiously toward the tree. Finally, he reached beneath the boughs and withdrew a handful of gifts. 'Here Mommy,' he said, plopping down in my lap and handing me a present. I recognized the zealously taped wrapping. 'What could this be?' I asked. Mike hadn't mentioned taking him to the store to select anything. I pulled off the holly-green paper and unwrapped a fork. Just like one of the forks in our kitchen drawer. In fact, it was one of the forks from our kitchen drawer. I looked at Andy's little face, glowing with expectancy and pride. 'Why, thank you, Andy. It's just what I wanted!' I laughed and gave him a huge hug. He beamed. He jumped from my lap and handed out the rest of his presents. Mike worked at his well-taped gift to discover the garage key dangling from its glowing orange chain. 'I was wondering where this went,' he whispered to me, and then, to Andy, 'It's perfect!' His sister Kate stripped away tape and paper and found a small, well-used blue pony with a rainbow-colored tail. 'Thank you, Andy,' she played along and gave her brother a big hug. There were other surprises, too: a deck of cards, a pen, a tape measurer. Andy looked like he'd just given us all a million dollars. And, funny thing was, we all felt like that's what we received. I don't know when he did it or how he managed to do it in secret. All I know is Andy wanted to be part of Christmas. And he certainly was. He showed us that the spirit of giving really is all wrapped up in the heart and sometimes with a whole lot of tape. My experience with Christmas was minimal and not exactly positive. When I was five years old I learned that, unlike my friends, I was not to expect Santa at my house bearing gifts. To console me, my Jewish mother explained that the big jolly fellow didn't really exist. Santa Claus was a tale spun for little children; the children's parents put the presents under the tree. Armed with this information, I didn't hesitate to denounce Santa to all the kids on my block. I jeered at their belief in the myth. I stole St. Nick from my young friends simply because they would be getting presents when I would not. With this childhood faux pas as my sole Christmas memory, I was terrified when my boyfriend Chris invited me to Minnesota for the holidays. I channeled my terror into an obsession with finding perfect gifts for each member of his as yet unknown Catholic family. I wanted to get it right. I scoured New York City, searching in every shop I passed. I spent hours considering what might be right for each individual and days purchasing and then returning gift options. I learned the hard way why people try to complete their shopping before Thanksgiving; I waited in line after line and navigated waves of gift-crazy shoppers in crowds that blew even my city-jaded mind. I tried to consult with Chris on his family's predilections, but he was no help. He seemed genuinely ignorant of what his family might want, and he tended to err on the side of buying gift cards. 'You don't need to get them anything,' he demurred. But I knew better. I didn't want to seem ungrateful to people who might become important in my life, especially when they were opening their home to me for Christmas. Only two days before our departure, I finally completed my shopping. I took inventory of the purchases and stuffed a second suitcase with the packages. I even hand-carried a bag of gourmet cookies onto the airplane. On Christmas Eve, I was as ready as I would ever be. I arrived with Chris to meet his family at St. Henry's Church. They were already there, well-groomed in their Christmas finest. His parents. His sister. Her husband. Their two kids. We filed in as a group. I was all eyes and ears, taking in the rites of my first Christmas Mass. The choir sang carols as the congregation filled the pews. I was surprised to notice how familiar the songs were. Although I was raised Jewish, it was impossible to avoid the Christmas culture. Seasonal music wafted through stores and from radios. And every year our school choir produced a holiday program full of Christmas songs, with a few Hanukkah tunes tossed in for good measure. Realization struck: although I was not Catholic, I was American, and therefore Christmas was already partly mine. After Mass, we joined Chris's family at his parents' house, where we nibbled on hors d'oeuvres and got to know one another. As we sat down to dinner, I could feel the polite smile awkwardly pasted to my face when Chris's father offered grace. 'We give thanks

to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for what we are about to receive.' I was so touched by his sensitivity to my Jewish background that it took me a moment before I could tackle the feast in front of me. We had ham and turkey and chicken and green beans. We had salads and cheesy potatoes and roast beef. We had carrots and pickles and the pice de rsistancecranberry pudding served with decadent sweet gravy known as 'hard sauce.' It was food heaven. But that was only the beginning of the celebrations. Chris's family exchanged gifts on Christmas Eve, and I was about to be initiated into their gift-giving tradition. With only my limited experience of Hanukkah and birthday gifts, I couldn't have dreamed up this exercise in Bacchanalian indulgence. After dinner, we all trooped upstairs to the sitting room where a Christmas tree stood guard over a mountain of presents. I saw the presents I had bought, neatly wrapped and adorned with overpriced bows by underpaid retail workers. To my surprise, I saw countless presents with my name on them. Chris's young niece and nephew diligently divided the booty into individual piles that they placed at the feet of each adult. Soon, a heap of presents accumulated in front of me. I stared. I don't think I'd ever gotten so many presents at one time. 'Now, we go around the room, taking turns opening one gift at a time,' the kids explained the family ritual. They were eager to go first; then I was invited to choose my first gift and open it. I was paralyzed by indecision. Should I open the red polka-dot box, just the right size for jewelry? Or should I start with the three-foot cube wrapped clumsily by Chris in Santa Claus paper? 'Open that one!' The children decided for me. I reached toward the turquoise and green box they pointed out and got to work. At first, I tried to open the package neatly. Then I hit the snags of Scotch tape and tore at the wrappings with kamikaze vengeance. Soon, all of us were drowning in crumpled piles of paper, bows, and partly demolished boxes. To the children's amusement, I stuck bows and ribbons on my head. My smile grew wider and wider till it threatened to split my face in two. I was gleeful. I was giddy. The five-year-old inside me released her disappointment and experienced Santa Claus for herself. At the age of thirty-one, I had finally encountered the jolly old man. He did exist. I found him in the joy of gift-giving and receiving. It was worth the wait. Last year, one week before my preschool's Christmas pageant, the dad who volunteered to play Santa had knee surgery. As the day of the holiday extravaganza drew near, I asked for a volunteer, but no one offered. Desperate, I cajoled my husband. 'Honey, would you please wear the beard and suit for my school pageant?' On the day of the performance, Bill telephoned my school and I put him on speaker phone. He told the children he was leaving the North Pole en route to St. Louis and he would arrive that evening. The preschoolers cheered and sang him a song: 'He's too fat for the chimney, too fat for the chimney. Open the door and let dear Santa come in.' 'Santa ho-ho-hoed. 'Yes, I have been eating a lot of cookies. Tell your teacher to be sure and leave a door open for me tonight.' 'We will Santa, we promise! We'll leave the door open,' the children shouted in unison. Before the show began, I escorted Bill to a small back room where the red suit hung on a hook. My high heels clicked like reindeer hooves as I pranced away. 'Wait,' he called. 'Come back. There's no mirror!' I had no time to assist him; a crowd of 300 waited. 'When you hear us sing 'Jingle Bells' make your grand entrance.' Onstage, I situated the children and welcomed parents and grandparents as they took pictures. What a sight to behold! During the first song, a girl dressed in red velvet toppled backward from the twelve-inch riser where she sat. She landed in the blue velvet curtain like a piece of felt stuck to a flannel board. Her feet pointed straight up in the air. I interrupted the performance to upright her. 'Santa's coming. Santa's coming, hop into bed!' We continued with another song. Little voices rang out and children hopped in place. One mischievous twin got carried away and continued hopping until his pants fell around his ankles. His hands flew to his mouth instead of his trousers and he giggled uncontrollably. 'Pull your pants up!' his mother shouted as she ran onstage. When they hit his ankles a second time, both his mother and I nearly fainted. A few songs later, a baby made a wild dash from the crowd, climbed like a monkey onto the stage, and shrieked when I carried her off. I felt my blood pressure rise. After their last song, we all exited the stage. I hurried the students into the hallway to get ready for our grand finale. The audience oohed and aahed as all sixty children walked out wearing paper antlers and red sparkly noses. Videos zoomed in and cameras flashed as paper noses fell off toddlers when they did the 'Reindeer Hokey-Pokey.' The auditorium rang with laughter, and the show concluded with a huge round of applause. In the pause that followed, all eyes swung toward me. 'Santa will arrive as soon as we sing his favorite song,' I announced and led the children in 'Jingle Bells.' A hush fell over the crowd; eager expectation filled the room; heads swiveled to search the doorway. But Santa did not appear. I encouraged them to sing again. Still no Santa. 'He's probably parking the sleigh,' I stalled. 'Why don't you parents sing along?' Voices rocked the room with a rousing rendition. Both adults and children looked confused when Santa still did not make his grand entrance. My heart palpitated; my deodorant quit working; my mouth went dry. Then it occurred to me that Santa is hard of hearing. 'Once again, all together nowsing as loud as you can!' Midway through the chorus, Bill heard his cue. He came barreling out of the back room with his sack slung over his shoulder and his wig a bit cockeyed. 'Ho-ho-ho, you children remembered and left the door open for old Santa,' he shouted over their excited squeals. As he approached the stage, I gasped. I jumped from the platform and bellied up to him. Forgetting about my lapel microphone, I sputtered, 'Santa, XYZ!' He lifted a shoulder and cocked a brow, then shrugged and sang obligingly, 'A-B-C-D . . . ' Horrified, and wide-eyed, I hissed, 'Santa, XYZ!' 'E-F-G, H-I-J-K, L-M-N-O . . . ' 'Stop singing!' I could see the confusion in his eyes. 'XYZ! Examine. Your. Zipper. Fix your pants,' I shrilled. In his haste to get dressed, Bill had cinched the fur of his jacket into his belt. I tugged it down over his gaping pants. Thank heavens he'd worn jeans underneath. 'Don't you know what XYZ stands for?' I muttered in his ear. 'Nope,' he

whispered back. 'In my day, we said, 'The barn door's open.'"Well, the children had promised to 'leave the door open.' But I never thought Santa would, too!-- Nancy Bechtolt2008. Nancy Bechtolt All rights reserved. Reprinted from The Ultimate Christmas by Jeanne Bice. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the written permission of the publisher. Publisher: Health Communications, Inc., 3201 SW 15th Street , Deerfield Beach , FL 33442.