



# The New Holiday Picnic

A FESTIVE NEW TAKE ON GATHERING 'ROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE. BY KELLEY L. MOORE

I am beckoned each December 25 to awake at dawn, rouse my slumbering parents and relatives and begin the day. It's a morning unlike any other in my house: the smell of my mom's fresh-baked cinnamon pull-aparts, delving into stockings, watching as every present is opened—and waiting as my dad studies the owner's manual for his newly gifted technical gizmo.

Traditional celebrations provide a much-needed break from our modern bustle, and a reason to gather with family and friends. But who says you can't tweak your Yuletide tradition, say, by throwing a country-themed holiday picnic?



**Above:** Gifts under the tree wear this season's trend twist: polka dots, bold stripes and classic prints. **Tip:** Wrap half of your goods in a muted color, the rest in a bold color with tone-on-tone ribbon, and personalize with a tag inscribed with a quote from a favorite holiday story or memory. **Left:** Mikey guards a retro-themed stocking, complete with note to Santa and his elves.

PHOTOGRAPHY  
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Left: Throwing a holiday picnic is the ideal combo of quick preparation meets easy cleanup. Along with hot cocoa and fresh-ground coffee, offer fresh-squeezed orange juice in farmyard-inspired juice glasses (\$2.95, **Cookin'**). A hard-boiled egg perched in a retro egg cup is a perfect folksy touch (egg cup, \$17.75, Martha E. Harris, 4218 E Madison St.; 206.568.0347). Hunt at the Salvation Army (brooches, \$12–\$32, 1101 Pike St; 206.447.9944) or Rhinestone Rosie (rhinestone brooches, \$8–\$100, 606 W Crockett; 206.283.4605) for vintage brooches that you can pin to your favorite napkin (black-and-cream checked napkin, \$12.75, Martha E. Harris) for extra holiday glitz. Incorporate an old-fashioned gift-receiving notebook into your tabletop décor to help you remember who to thank for your gifts. Below: Kelley shows off her mother Pat's delicious cinnamon pull-aparts. Find the recipe at [nwhome-andgarden.com](http://nwhome-andgarden.com).

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Laying out a picnic below the tree breaks up the present-opening routine while adding new colors and comforts to a familiar scene. In lieu of a blanket, place a faux-fur rug next to the tree and add a low picnic table with comfy oversize floor cushions, perfect for lounging throughout the morning (Table in a Bag, \$39.95; Teddy floor pillows in natural, \$99.95 each; **Crate and Barrel**, 2680 NE 49th St.; 206.937.9939, [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com)). The floor cushions are also a good resting place for stockings now brimming with Santa's sweet surprises. Set the table with a thermos of hot chocolate paired with bowls (kiwi ramekins, \$4.50–\$8.90, **Cookin'**, 4224 E Madison St.; 206.328.2665) stuffed with mini-marshmallows, chocolate shavings and peppermint sticks—or make fresh espresso tableside with a stove top espresso maker (\$16.95, **Cookin'**)—and a platter of your tastiest homemade break-

fast rolls or pastries. Add a roaring fire and a flickering of candlelight, and your holiday scene is complete.

Whether you fill your tree with photos of wintry vacations past, vintage ornaments or your children's paper chains, remember to search for items that evoke the warmth and memories of the season. Hang homespun sachets designed by Nella Pearson, adorned with hand-stitched one-of-a-kind prints from classic children's storybooks on the tree (sachets, \$16–\$58, **Island Life at Home**, 212 First St., Langley; 360.221.8922; [islandlifeathome.com](http://islandlifeathome.com)). The sachets infuse the air with a wonderful aroma and can be given as gifts throughout the season to those very special guests who come to visit. ✦

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