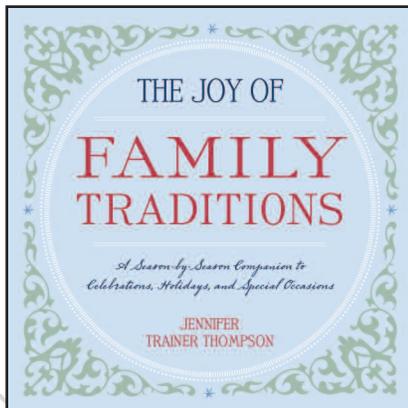


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# THE JOY OF FAMILY TRADITIONS

*A Season-by-Season Companion to  
Celebrations, Holidays, and Special Occasions*

JENNIFER TRAINER THOMPSON

*“We don’t need special occasions to  
celebrate our lives.”—Jennifer Trainer Thompson*

Slow down and savor the moments with *The Joy of Family Traditions*. This season-by-season collection of more than 400 multi-cultural traditions and activities offers exciting new ways families can celebrate not just holidays and major milestones—from weddings and baby showers to the first day of school—but any day of the year.

Make soap together on “Spring Cleaning Day” or let the kids create a holiday of their own. Turn a favorite vacation spot into a ritual so every generation will have treasured memories of the same place. From noticing the first day of the season to celebrating an accomplishment, opportunities abound (see reverse for examples).

Traditions offer a sense of history. They ground us and serve as guideposts and tools along the way. For author Jennifer Trainer Thompson, traditions bring her blended family together. With the birth of her son, Thompson gained renewed interest in traditions and a desire to create magical moments for her family, from picking apples in the fall to making sand dollar ornaments in summer. When she adopted her daughter Isabel from Guatemala, she realized just how important family rituals are.

“The search for meaning through ritual is ancient, but in today’s hectic world it’s more important than ever,” says Thompson. “Often, people live great distances from their families. Many children don’t have the advantage of knowing their grandparents. Divorce is commonplace. One out of three parents is a step-parent and there are 22 million ‘step’ families in the United States. Many good parents simply don’t have as much time to dedicate to their kids, but they can make the moments they do spend together special—and it’s as simple as starting a tradition.” She also reminds us that rituals don’t have to be time-consuming—there are dozens in the book that take minutes—and they’re fun!

*The Joy of Family Traditions* not only explores the historical, cultural, and often quirky origins of holidays, customs, and milestones, but also inspires families to preserve, personalize, and create meaningful traditions of their own. Delightful to read, this fun-filled tome of fresh ideas unleashes the imagination so families can mark any occasion and make it memorable year-after-year.

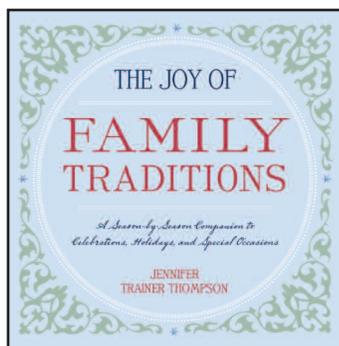
*Jennifer Trainer Thompson* is the author of a dozen books, including the best-selling *Beyond Einstein*. Her articles on science, food, travel, and lifestyle have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Omni*, and more. She is also the creator, owner, and chef of the “Jump Up and Kiss Me” brand of food products. She lives with her husband and children in western Massachusetts and travels frequently to Boston, New York, Chicago, and throughout the Northeast. She is available for interviews.

*The Joy of Family Traditions:  
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Celebrations, Holidays, and Special  
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A sampling of ideas from . . .



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**Family Hibernation Day:** Create a mini-retreat from the world for the whole family by designating the weekend closest to Groundhog Day as “Family Hibernation Day.” Sleep late, stay in your pajamas, play board games, rent movies, and take a collective nap.

**Father’s Day:** Plant a fruit tree together as a family and literally enjoy the fruits of your labor every Father’s Day.

**Summer Vacation:** If travel isn’t an option for your family, try a “virtual” vacation. Have the kids pile on mom’s or dad’s lap and imagine a destination, then sing about and discuss the sights they would see. *If you do travel*, hang a map in your child’s room. After each trip, find the place you’ve just visited and mark it with a sticker.

**Unusual Baby Gifts:** If you were a bridesmaid at a friend or family member’s wedding, take the bridesmaid dress and use the fabric to make a baby quilt for their first child.

**Recording the Years:** On your child’s first birthday, buy a tablecloth that can be used year-after-year. Have your baby leave a handprint along the cloth’s edge thereby creating a “handmade” palm-print border. Ask party guests to sign the cloth or add little drawings with a permanent marker. Repeat this ceremony every year.

**Birthday Rituals:** Share a little history by toasting the birthday of someone famous. On Mozart’s birthday rent *Amadeus*, listen to his music during dinner, or ask everyone to bring one fact about Mozart to the table. You can do this with Einstein, Dr. Seuss, Rosa Parks, Eleanor Roosevelt . . . the list goes on. Or, discover which famous person in history shares your child’s birthday, and make a special connection.

**Giving Thanks:** On Thanksgiving, give each guest a piece of paper and ask him or her to write down something for which they are thankful. If there are children at the table, give them the task of organizing the responses and reading the compilation aloud to the group as an improvised blessing before the meal.

**Harness Curiosity:** When kids seize on a topic (be it trains, trucks, ballet, or dinosaurs) they can’t seem to get enough of it. Take advantage of their natural curiosity by giving them a certificate dedicating their birthday month to their favorite subject. Dinosaur month, for example, might include a trip to a natural history museum, renting *Ice Age*, hunting for dinosaur books at the library, and making dinosaur cookies.

*“The beauty of traditions is that they endure, in our lives  
and in our memories and, long after we’re gone, in the  
memories of our children.”* —Jennifer Trainer Thompson

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Family tradition, also called Family culture, is defined as an aggregate of attitudes, ideas and ideals, and environment, which a person inherits from their parents and ancestors. The study of Family tradition and personality has attracted attention of social scientists. Ernest W. Burgess, Professor of Sociology, University of Chicago, has defined the term in these words: My family tradition consists of these three things: 1 )Eating together for every single meal. 2) Unwinding in our hometown every single weekend. 3) Celebrating all traditional holidays and family occasions together. My ethnicity is Chinese but my family is from Malaysia. We are the second generation Malaysian Chinese but we still hold on to our Chinese roots and keep most traditions. Things like rice dumplings, Chinese New Year, Mid-Autumn mooncake festival make the bulk of my childhood memories.