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Hello Readers

Since simplifying is about focusing on what's important, we thought we'd share our favorite Christmas memories with you. It's easy to get lost in the frenzy of shopping and presents, but those are the moments our families are least likely to savor.



We both love Christmas because Ursula (our Mom), made it so much fun. We always had a fresh fir tree (no plastic!). Ursula was especially fond of the Charlie Brown version, lonely and lopsided at the edge of the lot--waiting for us, since no other family would buy it. The picture to the right is of an actual Bohn family tree, circa 1975. When I was very little, we even had real candles on it until my parents decided it was too dangerous, given that we lived in a wood house. We alternated decorating the tree at the beginning of December (the American tradition) and the 24th of December (the Swiss tradition). We had a homemade advent wreath, with real candles, and our Mom spend the month baking traditional Swiss Christmas cookies.

**Becca:** My favorite Christmas tradition was the day St. Nicholas--we called him Swiss Santa--visited, on the 6th of December. On the evening of December 5th, we put our boots (the Swiss equivalent of a stocking) outside our front door. Swiss Santa somehow maneuvered his donkey across the Atlantic to bring us gifts. We woke up to a boot filled with chocolate, a book (or other small item), nuts, and an orange. As grown-ups, my siblings have all introduced Swiss Santa into their own homes--it's a fun way to remember the excitement we felt as children.

**Christine:** Our family celebrated Advent, the four Sundays before Christmas, and we'd often invite friends or relatives to join us for the evening. We sang English and French Christmas carols, and read a holiday story. Our Dad had a penchant for tragic tales--year after year we'd weep while he read *The Little Match Girl* by Hans Christian Anderson. We'd then eat special holiday desserts and visit with our friends. I've continued

this tradition in my own family (with not-quite-so-tragic stories) and think it adds warmth and joy to the season.

We hope your holidays are full of magic and memories.

*Becca and christine*