

Home for the Holidays? – Solutions on how to Create the Space

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Written for **Mom in the Know** www.mitk.com

The holiday season is fast approaching and I, like many others, am starting to realize that before the festivities get underway, we have to make the annual effort to clear away all that accumulated clutter that we have 'ignored?' and that is sure to be inconveniently visible. So, at the beginning of December I like to spend time organizing the house for all the family and friends who will come by for eggnog, fruit cake and the usual spiritual glasses of cheer. I usual break it down into three areas to tackle: 1. My kids' spaces, 2. My mudroom (or foyer) and 3. My kitchen.

Kids Space first!

Get rid of toys you're not using! Remember the Island of Lost Toys from the kids Christmas TV classic Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer? Last year I had a room in my house that literally became that island 10 times over. I had been keeping baby toys for my *mommy coffee mornings* and for my sister's visits with her three kids, but it came to a clutter point where I realized I didn't need to hold onto all of them, and I didn't need to keep them out for my kids to inevitably spread them further around the house. It was simply time to purge the playthings.



So, sort through the toys that your kids are no longer playing with (if they haven't been played with in six months they certainly are candidates) and begin by grabbing a handful, a small one of 4-5 items, and store these in a decorative box or hidden bin (in a corner of the basement) for those times you have guests with smaller children. Then simply bundle up all the others and give them to the amazing toy drives that are held at this time of year. You will feel great for cleaning up all that excess plush and plastic, and feel even better for giving toys to those who can truly use them!

My Mud Room!

Organize your Clothing! Sadly, my family members have summer clothes and other summer items still in rotation. The result is my mud room is looking more like a holiday down south than a weekend at Tremblant. Once the temperature drops, winter jackets, snow pants, hats, mitts, scarves, all pop-up in our mudroom, ending up piled on top of rain coats, rain boots, sun hats and summer jackets. And the challenge here isn't just all the piles; it's what my girls want to wear right now, despite the weather. My objectives immediately become, reduce their options... reduce the debate... and now I stand a chance of getting them to school and myself to work. As the saying goes: out of sight, peace of mind! Besides, who needs a reminder about hot summer days when it's -40 anyhow?

Get a grip of your gear! This is Tim the Toolman Taylor time! There are innumerable solutions for the organization of storage rooms and garages, but here's one I found most efficient. I sent my husband shopping for hooks, bins, shelves, boxes, anything to stop the piles on the floor from growing and making our garage looking like a scene from TV's Hoarders. If you have a garage, lucky you! But if not perhaps you have a shed, porch, basement, or mud room. It's amazing how tidy an area can look if you have shelves and clearly labelled storage bins. But it isn't just about bins in the garage or

shed. I haven't snowboarded in 10 years, but this is my year to get back into it. I'm sure we have goggles, knee pads, helmets, gloves, littered throughout the house. I'm gathering it all, and have purchased small gorgeous inexpensive boxes to sit on my closet shelves. Now, when I open my closet door, I grab and go instead of duck and cover.

The Kitchen, our hub of the house

This is the season for baking, family dinners, parties, and in our house, a lot of breakfasts with pancakes! Without an organized kitchen, I would be setting myself up for failure every December. By no means am I suggesting I know my way around a kitchen when it comes to baking or large dinner parties. But I can pour a mean glass of wine, and fill anyone's belly with a plate of food. We had a dog three years ago and she was on a special diet for health reasons, so I had bought a rice cooker to help feed the 120 pound beauty. After she passed away we put that cooker in a cupboard and never used it again. We like rice, but our portion is nothing a pot can't handle. Go deep in your cupboards, clear out all the gadgets, gizmos and rice cookers you haven't used in the last year. If you've hit every holiday and haven't needed something, get rid of it! Counter clutter is a big no-no in my house. Once your cupboards are cleaned up, you all of a sudden have room for small kitchen appliances. I don't have to see my toaster to know I have one.



The holidays are busy enough, these few tips can help create orderly space and in turn maximize your festive time. Take this time to sit and enjoy that glass of wine, or two if you're my guest.

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