



# Galley Guide

## Holidays Onboard



Perhaps one of the most difficult things about being a voyaging sailor is being away from friends and family for long periods of time. It's true that modern technology helps ease the feelings of isolation but many sailors still struggle, especially during the holidays.

I discovered during the early years onboard *Kate* that keeping my holiday traditions was going to be difficult. For starters, sailing in the tropics meant that there were no seasonal weather changes to “get me in the holiday mood.” The heat also made slaving over a hot stove unbearable and making things like pie pastry was impossible. Most of my traditional holiday recipes either included ingredients I couldn't find or suddenly seemed unappetizing in the heat.

Our birthdays often fell when we

were on passage, and even if I did make a cake inevitably, in the moist tropical climate it soon got moldy and was tossed overboard. Even Halloween, one of my favorite celebrations, was difficult. Pumpkins prefer cooler weather to grow so weren't always in the markets at the right time or, when we did find them, they were very expensive. It was obvious that holidays onboard were not going to be like the holidays we celebrated on land.

### MAKE YOUR OWN TRADITIONS

In cultures around the world food plays a major role in life's celebrations. Be it a religious festival, a national holiday, or a personal milestone, people gather together at special times to share food and good company.

It might be a pig on a spit, shrimps on the barbie, or matzo balls in broth but most everyone has a traditional meal that evokes nostalgic feeling for

the holidays. Sometimes replicating those dishes onboard is impossible; even if you could find a turkey for Thanksgiving there is no guarantee it would fit in your oven.

Instead of trying to recreate the meals of holidays past I think it is better to think outside the pot and create new holiday food traditions. Sometimes all it takes is putting a new twist on an old recipe. I re-imagined the savory French-Canadian pork pie, *tourtière*, into canapés one year by skipping the pie crust and serving the meat filling on toast points instead. And sometimes a little creative substitution does the trick; mango chutney instead of cranberry sauce, fruits dipped in chocolate instead of a decadent baked dessert, rice pilaf instead of potatoes.

There is no need to forego festivities just because you don't have all the right ingredients onboard. In

fact those locally foraged meals can make for some of the most memorable holidays, as our friends Dave and Suzi on *S/V Sidewinder* discovered when they ended up anchored at a remote island in Papua New Guinea in late December.

“As I’m sure you can imagine,” says Dave, “Christmas there was celebrated much differently from what we are used to. We celebrated on Christmas Eve preparing lobsters we bought from local divers for the feast. And what a feast it was! We baked the lobsters in the oven with a light sauce, had some Chinese cabbage that was given to us by the locals, served fresh baked bread with pumpkin soup and opened a nice bottle of wine we had saved. It wasn’t your typical Christmas dinner but it seemed perfect considering where we were.”

Food traditions can also go beyond the meals that we eat, as I learned from my friend Jim on *S/V Kalokalo*. When invited to our annual BYOP Halloween Carve-Off, Jim naturally thought that since we were in the tropics the “P” stood for pineapple. His sweet jack-o-lantern turned out to win best on board and was an inspiration for me to break with convention.

Halloween is also a time for a little sugary indulgence, and our friends Mike and Alisa onboard *S/V Galactic* made sure that despite the cold of Patagonia their two boys had a fun afternoon. “Mike and I had the kids dress up in costumes and ‘trick or treat’ to us in the back room. We dished out a few candies and it was a fit of giggles and fun. It was just the thing to liven up our isolated and frosty tour of the fjords in the Beagle Channel.”

### **INSTANT PARTY, JUST ADD YACHTIES!**

Ask people about some of their favorite aspects of sailing and most will talk about the sense of community readily found among yachties. From sharing information and helping other mariners in trouble to extending a warm welcome to the latest boat in the an-

chorage, most yachties are ready with a smile, and a sundowner at the drop of a hat.

Making holiday plans with fellow sailors is a great way to recapture the sense of family and togetherness that many people crave during the holidays. Organizing a potlatch is a popular approach. Not only does it take some of the pressure off the cook, who now needs to prepare only one dish instead of several, but it allows everyone to participate and share in the festivities.

Such events don’t need to be formal or well-choreographed. My good friend Medi on *S/V Katemba* said that on her 30th birthday in eastern Panama “John announced it on the SSB so lots of people showed up, even strangers and we had a great time.” Alisa onboard *S/V Galactic* takes the same approach with birthday celebrations for her two young boys putting out an “ALL KIDS INVITED” call and reports that “We’ve had some whoppers in the past, like Elias’ 5th birthday in Tuamotu Atolls!”

Planning on being in or around a marina for a special holiday is another way to find a community to celebrate with. We spent Christmas 2014 at Vuda Point Marina in Fiji, sitting out the South Pacific cyclone season. Many boaters take such opportunities to fly back to see relatives and friends but there were a few other hearty sailors who stayed, busy with boat maintenance and living on the hard. On Christmas Eve we all dressed for

dinner and met on the lawn for sun downers and finger food. Resources were pooled and tables, chairs, decorations and music set the scene. At sunset the marina manager surprised us by arranging a visit by the marina staff who sang carols in Fijian. It was a lovely evening.

Many marinas also organize events for kids. “Last year in the Bahamas the marina put on a great Christmas party for the kids.” Says Medi, “Santa and his helper arrived on a skiff! There was cupcake dressing, arts and crafts, they could sit on Santa’s lap and even got an age-appropriate present from the marina.”



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### BE PREPARED

Like many other occasions onboard, the key to a successful celebration is to be prepared. Sometimes that might mean be prepared to be flexible, to be willing to enjoy the day despite being away from loved ones and all that is familiar.

This past December Steve and I found ourselves in Gizo, the second largest town in the Solomon Islands, after several days at sea. Having left our holiday shopping until our arrival, we quickly discovered that the second largest town in the Solomon's was little more than a short main street with several small stores all selling the exact same items. Our gift exchange on Christmas morning was brief, but included cans of tuna in previous unheard of flavors; peanut butter sauce and chili with beans. The cabin was definitely filled with laughter.

Stocking up in major ports is par for the course for most cruisers, but a little special attention around holidays can make all the difference. Whether it's a few special galley treats to be shared on the day like olives, pickles or a favorite bottle of spirits, or just making sure you have enough staples to throw together a cake or a simple meal, your thoughtfulness will be appreciated by the crew.

Being prepared is especially important if you are sailing with kids. Alisa advises; "Have lots of cake decorating stuff aboard and decorations too; streamers, colored paper, birthday candles, sparklers or glow bracelets, noisemakers. And it is a good idea to have a few spare gifts aboard like art supplies or Lego for the time when your child is invited to someone else's birthday party." And sailing mom Medi reminds us that "The kids will remember a bonfire on the beach that was past their regular bed time a lot more than a toy they got. Of course if you have a little forethought you can have both, but always consider that those gifts will have to be stored somewhere, so be careful."

### TASTE THE LOVE

Feeding our spirits is just as important as feeding our bodies and the holidays are a perfect opportunity to do something for the people and area that you are visiting. You can organize to clean the beach where everyone is meeting for a potlatch, raise funds for a local charity or invite the local community to join in the festivities. Dave, Suzi and their buddy boat collected some items for the islanders in PNG. "Their appreciation and excitement for the gifts of sugar, flour, rice, fishing supplies, tools, rope and a few school supplies for the kids was heartwarming." Remembers Dave. "In turn they presented us with some handmade items that are displayed on *Sidewinder* to this day."

I have a passion for cooking, so one of my favorite things about any holiday is my galley time. Often my sweet tooth gets the best of me and I end up with way too many baked goods for two people to eat. My solution is to share my confections with local friends, marina staff or fellow yachties. My reward is smiles of gratitude.

On the special occasions that we typically spend surrounded by familiar faces and traditions, it can sometimes feel like you're sinking when in a foreign port. Wherever and whatever you celebrate remember that it's not about expensive gifts or a perfect meal served but about appreciating what you have and the people you get to share it with. Planning ahead, being prepared but being flexible and using creative problem solving is all you need to sail through any holiday onboard. **BWS**

*Heather Francis is from Nova Scotia, Canada and for over a decade has worked and lived on boats throughout the world. In 2008 she and Steve, her Aussie partner, bought Kate, a Newport 41', and have been sailing ever since. They are planning to do a lap around the planet, albeit slowly. To follow their adventures log onto [www.yachtkate.com](http://www.yachtkate.com).*



**LEMON (or LIME) CARAWAY COOKIES**

This is a family recipe, and one of my very favorite cookies. Usually made with lemon juice and zest, I often use limes, which are more easily found in the tropics. The bright citrus cuts the sweetness of the cookie while the caraway seeds add a warm, exotic flavor.

Using real butter and white sugar not only gives the cookie a nice texture, it tastes appropriately decadent for a special occasion. You could use raw sugar but the cookie may have a grainy texture and be slightly darker when finished.

The best part about these cookies is that the dough will keep in the fridge for up to a week (longer in the freezer!). Not only can you do some holiday baking prep ahead of time but you can cut and bake as many, or as few, as you like, perfect for a crowd or just two.

Yield: 5 Dozen    Oven: 400°F    Difficulty: Easy

**INGREDIENTS:**

- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ teaspoon caraway seeds
- grated zest of 1 lemon or 2 small limes
- 2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice
- 2 ½ cups flour
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt

**METHOD:**

In a large bowl cream butter and sugar together until mixture is light and fluffy. Add the egg, caraway seeds, juice and zest of lemon or lime and mix well to combine. Add the dry ingredients and mix together until a uniform dough is formed. Tip cookie dough out onto a piece of plastic wrap or waxed paper, form into an even log and wrap tightly, twisting ends of wrap to seal. Place in fridge for at least one hour and up to one week. To bake remove dough from fridge, unwrap and slice 1/8th inch thick. Place cookies evenly on cookie sheet and bake 10 minutes @ 400°F, or until slightly browned. Cool on rack completely before storing in airtight container.



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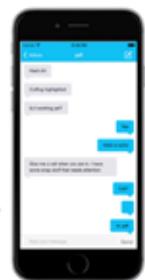


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