



SEASON GREETINGS

WARMEST WISHES FROM THE UCCE SAN JOAQUIN MASTER FOOD PRESERVER VOLUNTEERS! AS THE HOLIDAY SEASON APPROACHES, WE WANT TO EXTEND OUR HEARTFELT GREETINGS TO OUR CHERISHED FOOD PRESERVATION ENTHUSIASTS AND YOUR BELOVED FAMILIES. MAY THIS SPECIAL TIME OF YEAR BE FILLED WITH JOY, LAUGHTER, AND THE SWEETEST MOMENTS OF TOGETHERNESS. FROM OUR KITCHEN TO YOURS, MAY YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON BE A FEAST OF LOVE, TRADITIONS, AND DELICIOUS MEMORIES. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

PRESERVE & SAVOR: HOLIDAY GIFTS, TREASURED RECIPES AND FAMILY TRADITIONS

In this special Holiday Newsletter, our team of Master Food Preservers is excited to share some of their favorite recipes and cherished family traditions. As dedicated advocates of the culinary art of preserving, we have become known for our penchant for gifting homemade preserved foods. The act of giving these kitchen-crafted delights is more than just a tradition; it's a timeless and heartwarming gesture that fills both the giver and the receiver with joy and appreciation. These artisanal treats not only offer a tantalizing taste of the season but also serve as a reflection of the love and effort poured into their creation. Whether you're celebrating a special occasion, expressing gratitude, or simply showing you care, preserved foods stand as a delectable and meaningful way to share happiness and love from your kitchen to theirs. So, the next time you ponder the perfect gift, consider reaching for those cherished jars and treats from your kitchen.

Favorite Recipes Gifting Ideas from Ball Website ballmasonjars.com



Carrot Cake Jam
Sweetened with crushed pineapple and spices, this sunny fall jam tastes just like carrot cake.



Cranberry Orange Pear Jam
Enjoy the taste of the holidays all year with this Cranberry Orange Pear Jam. Perfect with baked brie, on toast.



Candied Jalapeños
These pickled jalapenos, also known as candied jalapenos, deliver a real punch of sweet heat! Outstanding on sandwiches, nachos, in tacos and topping chili.



Orange Flower & Pistachio Marmalade
This sweet, flowerful orange and pistachio marmalade goes well with toast, muffins, and desserts.



Lemon Curd
This recipe is not canned, it is frozen. Combine bottled lemon juice and grated lemon peel with butter and egg yolks for a delicious curd you can freeze for up to one year.



Mango Jalapeño Pepper Jelly
The addition of mango offers a tropical twist, perfectly capturing sweet and spicy flavors. This tasty jelly works well as a complementary spread on a charcuterie board or with a block of warm cream cheese served with crackers.



Pina Colada Jam



Salted Caramel Pear Butter



Pomegranate Jelly

Favorite Recipes Gifting Ideas from Ball Website ballmasonjars.com



Pineapple Papaya Chili Salsa
This tropical salsa is perfect for outdoor summer meals. Serve with grilled pita bread brushed with olive oil.



Pineapple Mango Salsa
Fresh and fruity with a little bit of heat, this salsa is a little bit of sunshine in a jar. Pair it with your favorite chips or use it as a topping on a fish taco or pulled pork sandwich.



Roasted Salsa Verde
This traditional salsa is equally delicious served with tortilla chips or as a base for enchiladas.



Cinnamon Pears in Apple Juice
Naturally sweet pears spiced with cinnamon sticks.



Honey Orange Slices
They make an excellent addition to salad greens, tossed with a raspberry or balsamic vinaigrette and sprinkled with candied walnuts.



Apple Pie Filling
Want the taste of home all year round? It's full of all the fragrant flavors. You can use for a pie or topping on ice cream!



Plum Jam



Applesauce



Pickled Cauliflower

Goble Up History

The Turkey's Rise to Thanksgiving Fame

by Sherida Pibbs, UCCE Master Food Preserver

The tradition of serving turkey for Thanksgiving in the United States has deep historical roots. While the exact origins are not entirely clear, there are several theories and historical events that contribute to the association between Thanksgiving and turkey.

Early Colonial Period (1621): The most well-known origin of the Thanksgiving holiday dates back to the early 17th century when the Pilgrims and Native Americans gathered for a harvest feast in 1621. The event is often considered one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations. While the exact menu is unknown, historical accounts suggest that the Pilgrims and Native Americans likely consumed a variety of foods, including wild game birds. Though not specifically mentioned, turkey could have been part of the feast.

Primary Meat Source: In the 19th century, as Thanksgiving became a more widespread and formal holiday, cookbooks and magazines started promoting turkey as the main dish for Thanksgiving meals. Turkeys were abundant, affordable, and large, making them a practical choice for a festive occasion.

Sarah Josepha Hale's Influence: Sarah Josepha Hale, a prominent 19th-century

magazine editor and author, played a significant role in popularizing the idea of Thanksgiving as a national holiday. She lobbied for the establishment of Thanksgiving as a national holiday for many years and wrote editorials and letters promoting the idea. In her efforts to create a unifying Thanksgiving tradition, she emphasized the importance of turkey as the centerpiece of the meal.

Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation: In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln officially proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday. The proclamation was partly influenced by Sarah Josepha Hale's persistent campaign. This helped solidify the association between Thanksgiving and a bountiful feast, often featuring a roasted turkey.

Symbol of Prosperity: The turkey's size and affordability made it a practical choice for families to serve during Thanksgiving, symbolizing abundance and prosperity. Over time, the tradition of serving turkey on Thanksgiving became deeply ingrained in American culture.

Today, the tradition of serving turkey on Thanksgiving has continued and evolved. While some families may choose to incorporate alternative main dishes, turkey remains a symbol of Thanksgiving and is enjoyed by millions of people across the United States during this annual celebration.

Harvest Delights

Thanksgiving Treasures

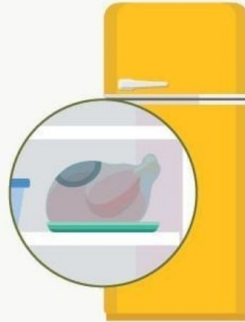
by Linda Driver, UCCE Master Food Preserver

One year, I crafted two delectable delights: a batch of luscious plum jelly and a flavorful cranberry chutney. To add a touch of charm, I adorned each jar with carefully cut felt leaves and berries sourced from a garland. These petite jars not only graced the Thanksgiving dinner table as charming seating arrangements but also served as delightful gifts for each guest.



3 Ways to Thaw a Turkey

While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely. As soon as it begins to thaw, bacteria will begin to grow. Here are three ways to safely thaw your bird:



REFRIGERATOR (USDA recommended)

How to thaw:

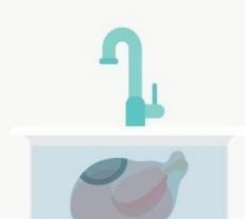
Allow approximately 24 hours for every 4 – 5 lbs of bird.

Safe to store the turkey for another 1 – 2 days in the refrigerator.



Did you know?

It's safe to cook a frozen turkey though cooking time will be 50% longer!



COLD WATER

How to thaw:

Submerge the bird in cold water and change every 30 minutes.

Cook immediately after thawing.



MICROWAVE

How to thaw:

Use defrost function based on weight.

Cook immediately after thawing.

For more information on safe thawing methods, visit www.fsis.usda.gov.

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Feasting Safely

A Holiday Feast Journey from Prep to Leftovers with Food Safety at the Helm

by Sherida Phibbs - UCCE Master Food Preserver

Thanksgiving is a beloved holiday marked by gratitude, family gatherings, and of course, a feast that often centers around a succulent turkey. While the focus is on delicious food and quality time with loved ones, it's crucial to remember the importance of food safety to ensure everyone enjoys the celebration without any unwanted health concerns. In this article, we'll explore the key aspects of food safety for preparing Thanksgiving dinner, including handling the turkey, cooking, stuffing, and dealing with leftovers.

Preparing the Turkey

1. Purchasing the Turkey - Selecting a fresh or frozen turkey is the first step in ensuring food safety. If you opt for a frozen turkey, plan ahead and thaw it properly. The safest way to thaw a turkey is in the refrigerator, allowing 24 hours of thawing time for every 4-5 pounds of turkey. Alternatively, you can use the cold-water method by submerging the turkey in a sealed plastic bag, changing the water every 30 minutes.

2. Safe Handling - Proper handwashing is crucial when handling poultry. Before and after touching the turkey, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Also, sanitize all surfaces and utensils that come into contact with raw turkey to prevent cross-contamination.



3. Rinsing poultry - such as chicken or turkey, before cooking it is no longer advised due to food safety concerns. In the past, it was a common practice to rinse poultry under running water, believing it would help remove bacteria, contaminants, or any residual debris. However, this practice has been discouraged by food safety experts and government agencies for several reasons:

- Spread of Bacteria: Rinsing poultry can actually increase the risk of spreading harmful bacteria, such as Salmonella and Campylobacter, to your kitchen surfaces, utensils, and other food items. When water splashes off the poultry, it can carry these pathogens to other areas, leading to cross-contamination.

- Ineffectiveness: Rinsing poultry under cold water is not very effective at removing bacteria. The bacteria on the surface of the poultry are tightly bound and are not easily dislodged by water alone. Cooking poultry to the recommended internal temperature is the most effective way to kill any bacteria present.

- Food Waste: Rinsing poultry can also contribute to food waste by washing away juices that contain flavor and nutrients. Additionally, rinsing poultry may make it more likely to dry out during cooking.

- Water Contamination: Rinsing poultry can contaminate the kitchen environment and water sources with bacteria. This can pose a risk to other foods, kitchen surfaces, and even individuals who come into contact with the contaminated water.

4. Stuffing Considerations - If you choose to stuff your turkey, do so just before cooking. Ensure that the stuffing reaches a minimum internal temperature of 165°F (73.9°C) to kill harmful bacteria. It's safer to prepare the stuffing separately from the turkey to avoid potential foodborne illnesses.

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Cooking the Turkey

1. Use a Food Thermometer - The only reliable way to determine if your turkey is safely cooked is by using a food thermometer. The turkey's internal temperature should reach a minimum of 165°F (73.9°C) in the innermost part of the thigh, wing, and thickest part of the breast. Check the temperature in several places to ensure uniform cooking.

2. Cooking Times and Methods - Various factors, such as the turkey's size and cooking method (oven, grill, or deep fryer), can affect cooking times. Always refer to guidelines provided by reputable sources and consider using a meat thermometer with a timer function to ensure your turkey is perfectly cooked.

Stuffing Safely - As mentioned earlier, it's safer to cook stuffing outside the turkey. However, if you do choose to stuff your bird, take extra precautions:

- Ensure the stuffing reaches 165°F (73.9°C) to kill any bacteria.
- Stuff the turkey loosely, as tightly packed stuffing can lead to uneven cooking.
- Use a food thermometer to verify that both the turkey and stuffing reach the recommended temperature.



Handling Leftovers - Thanksgiving often means enjoying leftovers for days to come. To ensure the safety of these delicious leftovers:

1. Prompt Refrigeration - Refrigerate leftover turkey, stuffing, and other dishes within two hours of cooking. Bacteria can multiply rapidly at room temperature, so it's essential to store leftovers in the fridge or freezer promptly.

2. Divide and Conquer - Separate large portions of leftovers into smaller, shallow containers. This allows for quicker and more even cooling in the refrigerator, reducing the risk of bacterial growth.

3. Reheating - When reheating leftovers, make sure they reach an internal temperature of 165°F (73.9°C) to kill any bacteria. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature in various spots, especially in the center.

4. Consume Promptly - While leftovers are convenient, they shouldn't linger in the fridge for too long. Consume them within three to four days, or freeze them for longer storage.

Thanksgiving is a time to savor delicious meals and create cherished memories. However, ensuring food safety should always be a top priority. By following proper handling, cooking, and storage procedures for your Thanksgiving dinner, you can guarantee a memorable and safe holiday celebration for everyone at the table.

With these precautions in mind, you can focus on giving thanks and enjoying quality time with family and friends, knowing that your feast is not only tasty but also safe to eat.



Don't Miss Out on the Delicious Potential of That Leftover Turkey or Roasted Chicken!

by Sherida Phibbs, UCCE Master Food Preserver



Image by Dmytro from Pixabay

Every time I indulge in a delightful roasted chicken, I make sure that none of its flavor goes to waste. Instead of discarding the skin and carcass, I transform them into a rich, flavorful broth that's perfect for enhancing countless dishes.

This liquid gold can be preserved for later use – either by freezing it or through the art of pressure canning detailed instructions in the link below.

One of my all-time favorite culinary creations is my 'Easy Asian Dumpling Soup,' which starts with the chicken broth I've previously prepared. This recipe is not only simple but also incredibly convenient. I pre-cook all the ingredients, except for the wontons, water chestnuts, and spinach, then cool and freeze it quart-sized containers. When I crave a quick, wholesome meal, I simply retrieve a container from the freezer, bring it to a boil, add the remaining components, and voilà – a nutritious, satisfying soup is ready in under 30 minutes.

Enjoy this delightful, homemade Asian Dumpling Soup that's not only a comforting meal but also a smart way to make the most of your roasted chicken or turkey leftovers!

Easy Asian Dumpling Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 cups homemade chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 bunch green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 cup carrots, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon of sea salt
- 1.5-pound bag frozen dumplings (mini wonton or potstickers)
- 2 cups fresh spinach, roughly chopped
- 1 can (5 oz) sliced water chestnuts

Directions:

1. In a pressure pot, heat the sesame oil over medium heat, then add garlic and ginger. Sauté for 3 minutes or until it becomes wonderfully fragrant.
2. Add your homemade chicken stock, soy sauce, green onions, chopped carrots, and sea salt to the pot. Bring it to a rolling boil.
* Note: If you plan to make this in advance for freezing, stop at this point, let it cool, and transfer it to freezer-friendly containers, leaving about 1 inch of headspace.
3. When ready to prepare to eat, add the water chestnuts and the frozen wontons or potstickers to the pot, and bring it back to a boil. Let this cook for about 5 minutes.
4. Remove the pot from the heat and stir in the fresh, chopped spinach.

[Pressure canning broth can be found here:](http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_05/stock_broth.html)



Favorite Floral Gifts Unveiling the Unique Charms of the Holiday Cacti

by Sherida Phibbs, UCCE Master Gardener

As the holiday season approaches, many homes are adorned with festive plants, adding a touch of nature to the celebrations. Among these popular choices are the Christmas cactus, Thanksgiving cactus, and Easter cactus. While they may seem similar at first glance, these plants have distinct characteristics that make each one a unique addition to your seasonal decor.

Whether you're decking the halls for Christmas, celebrating Thanksgiving, or welcoming spring with Easter festivities, these cacti offer a burst of color and natural beauty. Understanding their unique characteristics and care requirements will help you enjoy their splendid blooms throughout the holiday season.

Key Differences for These Three Cacti:

Blooming Period: The primary distinguishing factor among these cacti is their blooming periods. Christmas cacti bloom in late fall to early winter, Thanksgiving cacti bloom around Thanksgiving, and Easter cacti typically bloom in spring.

Stem Characteristics: The shape and projections of the stem segments differ, with Christmas cacti having flattened stems, Thanksgiving cacti featuring pointed projections, and Easter cacti having more rounded segments.

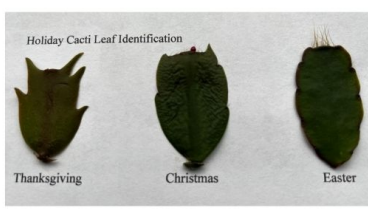
Color Palette: While all three cacti produce colorful flowers, the shades may vary. Christmas cacti often showcase a broader spectrum of colors, Thanksgiving cacti lean toward vibrant reds and pinks, and Easter cacti display softer hues.

Care Guidelines:

Light: All three cacti thrive in bright, indirect light. Protect them from prolonged exposure to direct sunlight.

Watering: Maintain consistently moist soil, but avoid waterlogging. Allow the top layer of soil to dry between waterings.

Temperature: While they can tolerate variations, maintaining a cooler environment especially during the blooming period, encourages healthier growth and more abundant flowers.



Thanksgiving Cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*)



Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera bridgesii*)



Easter Cactus (*Hatiora gaertneri*)

Image Credits:
Leaf ID by Beverly Kukuk, UC Master Gardener, Humboldt
Christmas Cactus Image by Sabine from Pixabay
Thanksgiving Cactus Image by TonioG from Pixabay
Easter Cactus Image by gwendoline63 from Pixabay

Floral Tradition Rooted in Christmas Cheer

The Poinsettia and its Care

by Sherida Phibbs, UCCE Master Gardener



The tradition of gifting poinsettias during the holiday season is rooted in the story of Joel Roberts Poinsett, an American diplomat, physician, and botanist. Poinsett is credited with introducing the plant to the United States in the early 19th century. Joel Poinsett served as the first United States Minister to Mexico from 1825 to 1829. In 1828, Poinsett sent some of these plants back to his home in South Carolina.

The poinsettia plant, known scientifically as *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, became popular in the United States, and its association with Christmas grew over the years. The plant's bright red and green foliage, which resembles the colors of Christmas, made it a natural choice for holiday decorations and gifts.

While the tradition of gifting poinsettias during the holidays is not necessarily documented in specific historical records, the plant's popularity during the Christmas season can be traced back to Joel Poinsett's introduction of the plant to the United States. Over time, the poinsettia has become a symbol of holiday cheer and is commonly exchanged as a festive gift.

It's important to note that the information provided is based on historical knowledge, and specific sources for the tradition of gifting poinsettias may vary.

Caring for Your Poinsettia Year-Round

While many can keep them alive, achieving that stunning holiday bloom can be a challenge. In this comprehensive guide, we'll share tips on not only keeping your poinsettia alive but also helping it thrive and bloom year after year. Plus, we'll debunk some common myths about poinsettia toxicity.

The poinsettia's true flower is the yellow center cluster (cyathia), while the colorful bracts, modified leaves, attract insects. After pollination, these bracts drop, so when choosing a poinsettia, opt for one with minimal or no yellow pollen showing.

Poinsettias bloom when days become shorter, a phenomenon known as photoperiodism. This means they require a period of darkness to change color, followed by abundant daylight to achieve their vibrant hues.

Contrary to popular belief, poinsettias are not poisonous to humans but can cause dermatitis if sap comes in contact with the skin. However, they are toxic to pets, including dogs, cats, and horses, leading to mouth and stomach irritation and sometimes vomiting.

Temperature and Light Requirements: Poinsettias are native to Mexico and thrive in temperatures between 65-70°F. Avoid exposure to temperatures below 50°F and frost, as these can harm the plant. When indoors, place your poinsettia in a well-lit area, ideally near a south, east, or west-facing window. Avoid drafts, heat ducts, fireplaces, and heaters.

Watering and Fertilizing: Only water when the soil surface feels dry to the touch or when the pot feels light when lifted. Do not let the plant wilt before watering, as this stresses it. Ensure proper drainage by removing the foil or outer pot before watering in a sink. As for fertilizing, use a water-soluble, all-purpose houseplant fertilizer at ¼ to full strength, depending on the growth period.

Pest Management: Regularly check for pests while watering and address any infestations promptly to prevent them from getting out of control.

Re-potting: Consider repotting in late spring or early summer using a container 2-4 inches larger than the original pot with proper drainage. Use a sterile potting mix with organic matter and water thoroughly after repotting.

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Poinsettia Reblooming Instructions

I personally have not given this a try. For those willing to invest time in reblooming, follow this calendar of care information from Dr. Leonard Perry. Dr. Perry states "There is no guarantee that your poinsettia will bloom again next December, even with year-round care. But if you'd like to try, there are a few tips":

- New Year's Day: Fertilize at the recommended rate, provide adequate light, and maintain proper watering.
- Valentine's Day: Check for insects, trim leggy growth to 5 inches, promoting compactness.
- St. Patrick's Day: Prune faded parts, remove dropped leaves, and maintain bright sunlight.
- Memorial Day: Trim branches for side branching, repot if necessary.
- Father's Day: If temperatures permit, place the plant outside in indirect light.

- Fourth of July: Trim again, move to full sun, and continue fertilization and watering.
- Labor Day: Bring the plant indoors, ensuring at least six hours of direct light.
- Fall Equinox: Give the plant 16 hours of darkness and 8 hours of bright light daily, maintain temperatures in the low 60s°F.
- Thanksgiving: Discontinue the short day/long night routine, place in a sunny window, and reduce water and fertilizer.
- Christmas: Enjoy your "new" poinsettia and begin the cycle anew after the new year.

By following these guidelines, you can not only keep your poinsettia alive but also encourage it to bloom beautifully year after year. Happy gardening!

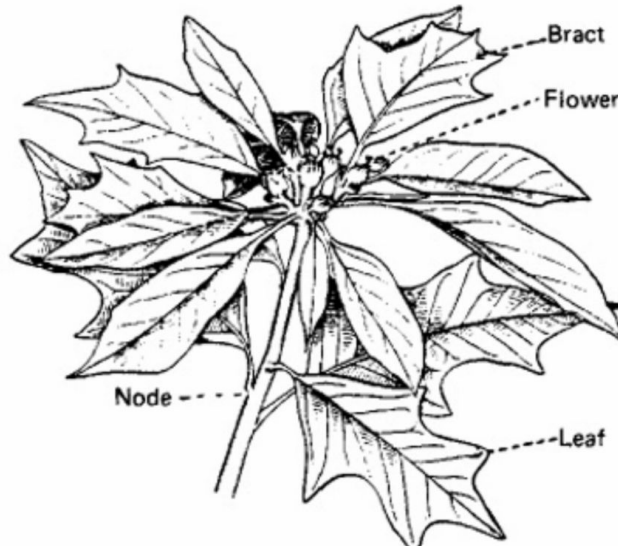


Diagram Credit: aces.mnu.edu

A Retired Christmas Tradition A Tale of Joy, Family, and Reindeer Riddles

by Sherida Phibbs UCCE Master Food Preserver & Master Gardener

Reflecting on the cherished memories of past Christmas traditions, which have now retired along with our grown grandchildren, one particular tradition stands out prominently. It was the week leading up to Christmas, when our family would come together to celebrate. That Saturday, we'd host a special Christmas Eve for the grandkids, granting their parents a well-deserved date night and the opportunity for some last-minute holiday shopping. Then, on Sunday, the entire family would gather for a gift exchange and a grand Christmas feast.

The Christmas Eve spent with Grandma and Grandpa was always a delightful affair. We'd transform our home into a DIY pizza paradise, complete with all their favorite toppings. Observing the grandkids as they assembled their own pizzas was an absolute delight, akin to a craft project. Whether it involved decorating cookies, crafting candy, making ornaments, or another creative activity, the day was filled with laughter and joy. Games and a movie would cap off the evening's festivities. The excitement kept them awake, making it a challenge for Santa to arrange the presents under the tree.

Our oldest grandchild, the only girl among the six, took on a special role. She played the part of a little mother figure, helping me place gifts around the Christmas tree. Afterward, it was time for Grandma and Grandpa to retire for the night, fully aware that an early morning awaited us on our Christmas Day.

Christmas morning arrived with a festive Sunday brunch, eagerly anticipated by all. Our table was graced with a spread of delectable treats: succulent ham, French toast casserole, fluffy scrambled eggs, eggs Benedict, biscuits and country gravy, fresh fruit salad, ambrosia salad, and steaming hot apple cider. Of course, there was no shortage of desserts, including cookies, homemade candy, carrot cake, cheesecake, apple pie, and pumpkin pie.

The gift exchange was always a source of great amusement, featuring a unique twist each year. One morning, the grandkids dashed into the living room to find gift boxes adorned not with their names, but with the names of Santa's reindeer. This delightful surprise stirred up quite a bit of confusion during brunch as they were trying to figure out which reindeer they were. To identify which reindeer they corresponded to, the children had to solve a fun and festive puzzle, adding an extra layer of excitement to our already unforgettable Christmas tradition.



Grandpa reading the Christmas story



Facebook

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