THE WEEK Junior

Christmas crafts

Make hot chocolate stirrers

What you need

- A few drops of sunflower oil
- 300g of your favourite chocolate
- A packet of Smarties
- A pastry brush
- 6 clean, empty yoghurt pots
- A small bowl
- A saucepan
- 6 wooden lolly sticks

WARNING!
Make sure you ask an adult for help when boiling water.

Method

Use the pastry brush to lightly grease the inside of the yoghurt pots with the vegetable oil. Melt the chocolate in a bowl that you've balanced over a pan of very gently simmering water (this is called a bain marie), and give it a stir every now and then to make sure it melts evenly. When it's nice and runny, pour it into the greased pots, put a lolly stick in the middle and scatter the Smarties round the edge as decoration. Place them in the fridge for a few hours, until they've set hard, then pull the chocolate out of the containers by the lolly stick. Stir into hot milk to make delicious hot chocolate.

Write a thank-you letter

TOP TIP

If you get clothes and wear your present again later in the year, take another photo and send it to the person who gave it to you. It makes them very happy.

It's lovely to get presents at Christmas but it is also great to say "thank you" in a letter or note to show the person how much you like their gift. Here are some tips for writing a thank-you letter:

- As you open your presents, write down who gave you what. That way you won't thank the wrong person for the wrong gift.
- Write your letters as soon as you can after Christmas. Do it before you go back to school so you don't forget.
- Keep each one short. You don't need to write a really long letter – the person will appreciate the effort you made no matter what.
- Decorate your letters with stickers or pictures. Why not draw a picture of the present, or even include a photo of you enjoying the gift?
- Make sure you have paper and stamps ready before Christmas; that way you can post the letters straight away.

Don't forget to share your perfectly laid tables and salt-dough decorations with us on Facebook and Twitter ***@TheWeekJunior***

WORD OF THE WEEK

MISTLETOE

Kissing beneath the mistletoe is a Christmas tradition, but the name of this pretty plant has unromantic beginnings. The toe in mistletoe began as the Anglo-Saxons' word *tan*, meaning twig. Mistle is from an ancient word meaning dung or poo. That's because mistletoe often grows among the droppings of birds, including those of the pale, black-spotted mistle thrush, which feasts on the plant's berries.

Lay the table perfectly

Make your table look really festive.

What you need

- Tablecloth
- Placemats
- Cutlery
- Side plates
- Glasses
- Candlesticks and candles
- Sprigs of holly
- A centrepiece

Instructions

Laying the table is one of the most helpful things you can do on Christmas Day. First, you'll need to put down the tablecloth. Then go round and lay the placemats, making sure they're evenly spaced. Now, lay the cutlery. The fork should go on the left; on the right you should have your spoon closest to the plate, and your knife outside it. This is where you put the side plate, too. Put a glass on the right, above the knife and spoon. Now, decorate each person's place with a sprig of holly or a placecard with their name handwritten on it. A centrepiece can be a lovely addition – some candles or a bowl overflowing with holly, mistletoe and other Christmassy plants, for example.

Make salt-dough decorations

What you need

- 1 cup plain flour
- ½ cup salt
- Mixing bowl
- Wooden spoon
- ½ cup water
- Greaseproof paper
- Rolling pin
- Shaped cookie cutters
- Drinking straw
- Acrylic paints
- Paintbrush
- Glitter
- Ribbon

WARNING! Ovens are hot. Ask an adult to help you put the tray in and take it out.

DID YOU KNOW? The tradition of decorating trees started in Germany. People would hang colourful decorations on their trees during winter to encourage the spring to return.

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 120°C. Put the flour and salt into a medium-sized bowl and stir. Add the water and mix thoroughly.

Sprinkle some greaseproof paper with flour and knead the dough on it, until it is soft and easy to mould. Add more flour if it's too sticky. Roll out the dough and use cookie cutters to cut out the decorations. Place them on the baking tray. Use a straw to punch a hole in the top of each shape. Put your decorations in the oven. After one hour, ask an adult to help you turn them over, then bake for another hour. Remove from the oven and allow them to cool completely. Paint the decorations and sprinkle them with glitter then, when they're dry, thread ribbons through the holes and hang them up.

TOP TIP To make your salt-dough decorations last longer, paint them with a couple of layers of clear non-toxic varnish.

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