When the holiday season rolls around, many family budgets become strained. With a long list of family and friends, finding enough money to go around may be challenging. To help reduce the stress of your next holiday season, try making gifts instead of purchasing them. Consider these fun and economical gift ideas:

✔ Create gift baskets. For the family member who loves movies, make a “night-in” basket. Get a large bowl for popcorn to use as the container. Add packaged popcorn and a coupon for a free movie rental. Gardening, sports or any other themed baskets also work.

✔ For parents with young children, provide a homemade coupon good for free baby-sitting. Other ideas include coupons for helping walk the dog, painting or cleaning.

✔ Create a recipe booklet with favorite holiday recipes. Copy the recipes onto festive recipe cards, punch a hole in the corner of the cards and tie them together with a red ribbon. Holiday photo albums also can be used to hold recipes.

✔ Fill a holiday mug with packets of flavored tea, hot cocoa or coffee for those who enjoy warm beverages. Or tie a packet of soup mix to a large wooden spoon. Include a bowl and package of biscuit mix for a complete gift.

✔ If you are computer savvy, create homemade calendars for family members. These could include highlighted birthday and anniversary dates. Try adding family photos for a personal touch.

✔ Repurpose old tins, filling them with cookies, muffins or other holiday goodies. A gift like this will be a delight to anybody who has little time for baking.

✔ Make homemade mixes in a jar. Mixes for soups and cookies are popular gift items that are fairly inexpensive to make. The gift recipient will appreciate the attractive and thoughtful gift and also will value the convenience.

![Image of jar with mix]

Try any of these four tasty and inexpensive recipes during this holiday season. You can decorate the jar with fabric and a ribbon. Either photocopy and cut out the provided recipes or hand-print each recipe on a card and attach it to the jar.

### Country Chili Mix

1 lb. kidney beans
3 Tbsp. chili powder
2 Tbsp. dehydrated onions
1 Tbsp. garlic salt
1 tsp. oregano
¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. cayenne pepper (optional)

* To reduce sodium, substitute garlic powder for some of the garlic salt.

Pour the kidney beans into a clean quart-sized jar. In a small bowl, mix the remaining ingredients. Pour mixture into a clear sandwich bag and place it on top of the beans. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate and attach a copy of the recipe card.

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**Key to Abbreviations**

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This material is funded in part by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

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Country Chili

- 1 container Country Chili Mix
- Additional ingredients: 10 c. water (for soaking beans)
  1 (8-oz.) can reduced-sodium tomato sauce
  1 (24-oz.) can diced tomatoes
  1 lb. ground beef or turkey
  6 c. water (for cooking beans)

Insert bag of seasoning into a clean quart-sized jar. Mix all ingredients in a large bowl. Place the mixture in a clean quart-sized jar. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

Homemade Cornbread Mix

1 c. flour
¾ tsp. salt
¼ c. sugar
2 tsp. baking powder
½ tsp. baking soda
½ c. dry milk powder
1 c. plus 2 Tbsp. cornmeal

In a large bowl, mix all the ingredients. Place the mixture in a clean quart-sized jar. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

Cranberry-Oatmeal Cookie Mix

- 1 container Cranberry Oatmeal Cookie Mix
- Additional ingredients: ½ c. butter
  1 tsp. vanilla
  1 egg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, mix butter, vanilla and egg together until smooth. Add cookie mix and mix well. Place by spoonfuls onto a greased cookie sheet and bake for eight to 10 minutes until golden brown. For best flavor, use this mix within nine months.

Homemade Cornbread

- 1 container Homemade Cornbread Mix
- Additional ingredients: 1 egg
  1 c. water
  2 Tbsp. oil

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Pour dry mix into a large bowl. Add egg, water and oil. Add liquid ingredients to dry ingredients. Stir well. Pour into a greased baking pan and bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the top is golden brown. For best flavor, use this mix within nine months.

Makes 10 servings. Each serving has 150 calories, 4 g fat, 25 g carbohydrate and 330 mg sodium.

Friendship Soup Mix

- ½ c. dry split peas
- 2 Tbsp. beef bouillon granules
- ¼ c. pearl barley
- ¼ c. dry lentils
- ¼ c. dry, minced onions
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- ½ c. long-grain white rice
- ½ c. macaroni noodles

In a clean, quart-sized jar, layer all the ingredients except the macaroni. Place the macaroni in a sandwich bag and place it in the jar. Cover the jar tightly with a lid, decorate it and attach a copy of the recipe card.

Friendship Soup

- 1 container Friendship Soup Mix
- Additional ingredients: 1 lb. lean ground beef or turkey
  3 qt. water
  1 (28-oz.) can diced tomatoes

Brown meat and drain. Place in a large pot and add the water and tomatoes. Add soup mix except macaroni. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for one hour. Add macaroni and continue cooking for another 10 to 15 minutes (until macaroni is done). For best flavor, use this mix within one year.

Note: To avoid overcooked pasta in leftovers, add the appropriate amount of macaroni to the portion being served.

Makes 12 servings. Each serving has 150 calories, 4 g fat, 12 g carbohydrate and 390 mg sodium.

Cranberry Oatmeal Cookies

- 1 container Cranberry Oatmeal Cookie Mix
- Additional ingredients: ½ c. butter
  1 tsp. vanilla
  1 egg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, mix butter, vanilla and egg together until smooth. Add cookie mix and mix well. Place by spoonfuls onto a greased cookie sheet and bake for eight to 10 minutes until golden brown. For best flavor, use this mix within nine months.

Makes 28 cookies. Each serving has 100 calories, 4.5 g fat, 13 g carbohydrate and 70 mg sodium.