



Simple Gifts

HOLIDAYS AT THE WHITE HOUSE 2010



Thank you for visiting the White House as we celebrate the simple gifts of the season.

This special time of year provides countless reasons large and small to be grateful for the blessings of time spent with loved ones, and for the richness of culture and natural surroundings we as Americans enjoy. As families gather across our country during this holiday season, even in trying times, we can reflect on the universal pleasures of cheer and goodwill, and can find reason to rejoice in the moments the holidays bring.

During your visit to these storied rooms, we invite you to find joy in the everyday gifts that surround us, and to take pleasure in the simple ways we can enrich the lives of others. From our unending gratitude for America's servicemembers to the abiding love we share with our family and friends, each of us can brighten the holiday season for others in the little ways that really do make all the difference.

We wish you all the best for a happy holiday.

 Michelle Obama



EAST WING LOBBY

Our country is filled with natural treasures—from faraway wonders to our own neighborhood parks. Decorated with magnolia garlands, oak leaf rosettes, and pinecone topiaries, the entrance to the East Wing of the White House celebrates the bounty of the American outdoors.



GINGERBREAD ORNAMENTS

Ingredients:

1 cup ground cinnamon

1 cup applesauce

1/4 cup school or craft glue

Tools:

Wax paper or plastic wrap

Rolling pin or round glass bottle

Gingerbread man cookie cutter 3-5" in height

Plastic drinking straw

Directions:

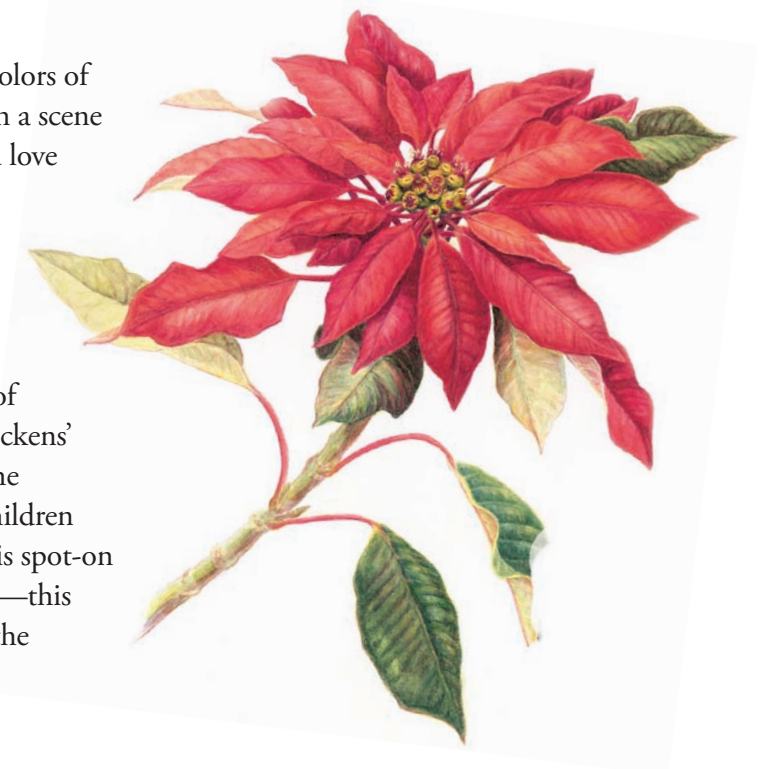
Combine 1 cup cinnamon, 1 cup applesauce, and 1/4 cup glue. Mix thoroughly. Dough should be stiff; add more cinnamon if it is too soft. Roll between sheets of wax paper or plastic wrap to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut out gingerbread shapes with cutter and make a hanging hole with straw. Move to drying rack, paper towel, or newspaper. Allow to dry for 2-3 days, carefully flipping occasionally. Ornaments will lighten in color as they dry.

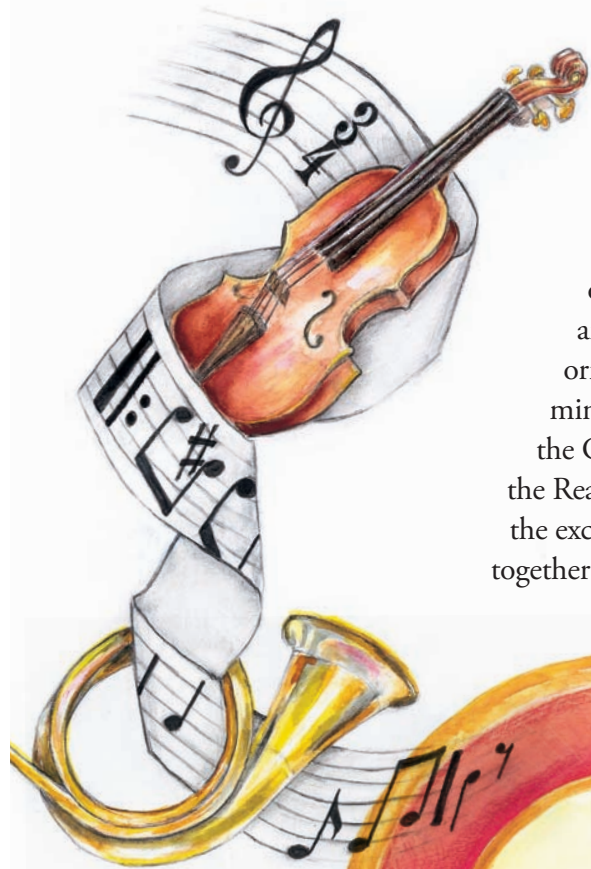
Every day, we are grateful for the courageous service of our military members and their families, and in the spirit of the season we honor their countless contributions to our Nation. On the East Landing, wreaths and garlands display gingerbread men and women decorated by servicemembers' children, and a Christmas tree is adorned with ornaments featuring the seal of each military branch. The tree is topped by a dove carrying an olive branch, symbolizing our hope for a future full of peace.

GROUND FLOOR CORRIDOR

The poinsettias decking the halls of the ground floor celebrate the legend of this flower, first presented by children as a humble gift to decorate a manger scene in a Mexican village. Introduced to the United States by Dr. Joel Poinsett, our first minister to Mexico, these stunning flowers have come to be a staple among Christmas decorations.

The traditional red and green colors of Christmas enrich the Library in a scene that celebrates the warmth and love of hearth and home. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had this room converted into the White House Library in 1935, maintained a family Christmas tradition each year of reading aloud from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* upstairs in the Residence. He delighted the children with his dramatic voices and his spot-on depiction of Ebenezer Scrooge—this time together was precious to the Roosevelt family.





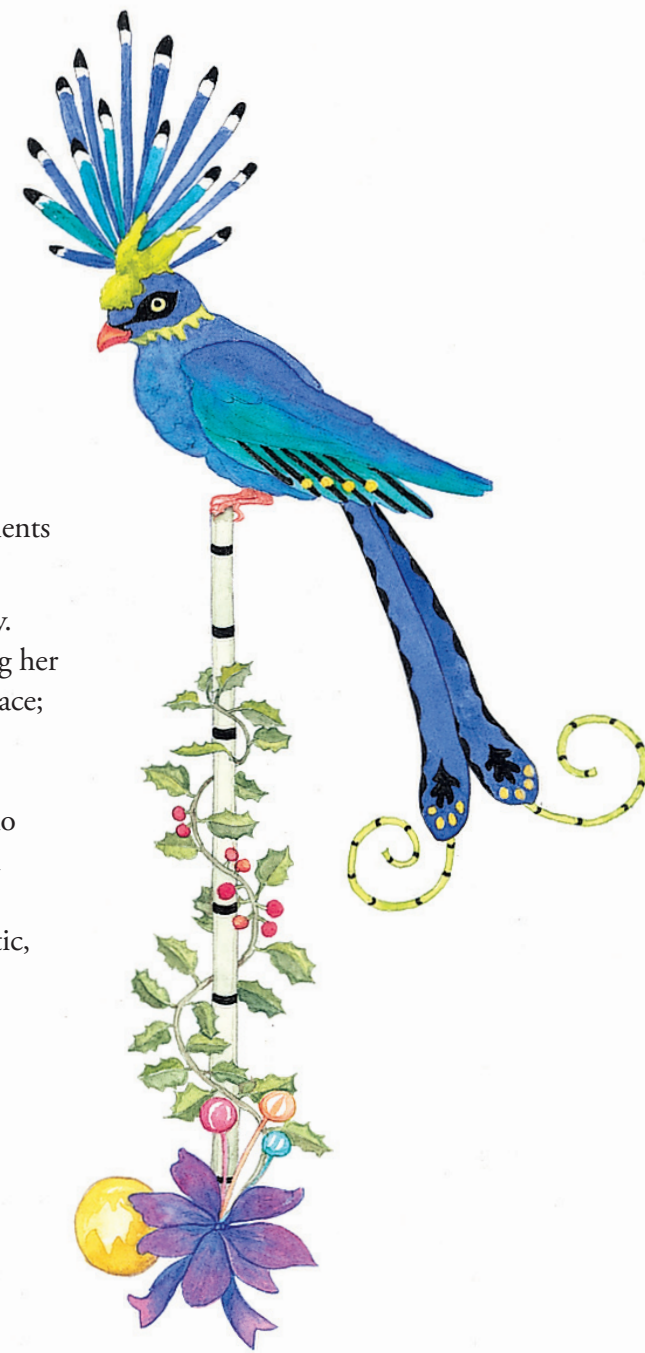
In the Vermeil Room, peach, gold, and amber colors highlight the excitement of our musical tradition, with mantel and table decorations of musically themed ornaments. Music and the hearth bring to mind the joy of a holiday gathering, and the China Room displays a table set with the Reagan and Clinton china, illustrating the excitement of bringing family and friends together for a holiday meal.



EAST ROOM

On a winter night in 1835, President Andrew Jackson transformed the East Room into a wonderland for children—complete with a cotton snowball fight and a sugary spread of candies and cakes. Today, the East Room once again turns into a bright winter scene, with elegant birds and glittering ornaments enhancing the space.

This grand hall has a remarkable history. Within these walls, Abigail Adams hung her laundry to dry across the unfinished space; President Thomas Jefferson partitioned the South end as a bedroom and office for his secretary, Meriwether Lewis, who later embarked on the Lewis and Clark expedition; five presidential daughters have been wed, and countless diplomatic, legislative, and celebratory events have unfolded. This rich history provides an enduring reminder of our cultural inheritance as a people, and of the contributions so many Americans have made to shaping our Nation.



GREEN ROOM

The Green Room is decorated with trees and wreaths made of recycled magazines and newspapers, reminding us both of the pleasure of a holiday craft and of the importance of preserving and cherishing the many gifts of nature. This year to promote conservation, the majority of the holiday decorations that fill the White House were repurposed from past years.

When Jacob Lawrence's painting, *The Builders*, was added to this room, First Lady Laura Bush remarked that it depicts the significance of people working together to build a brighter future. It is in this same spirit of common purpose that Americans of all ages and backgrounds commit to taking small steps to protect our natural resources and ensure our children, too, will be blessed by the vibrant surroundings we enjoy.

BLUE ROOM

For generations, Americans have celebrated the abundance of our diverse lands—the simple gifts that are found from coast to coast. This year's official White House Christmas tree, a rich green 19.5 foot Douglas Fir from the Crystal Spring Tree Farm in Lehighton, Pennsylvania, is the centerpiece of the Blue Room this holiday season, and it displays the bounty of our Nation.

Traditionally, the official Christmas tree was set up in the East Room and decked with silver tinsel, but First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy placed it in the Blue Room. She decorated the tree with sugar plum fairies and characters from the Nutcracker Suite to delight her daughter, Caroline, and her friends. Since then, many First Families have chosen the Blue Room as home for the official tree.



RED ROOM



This year, the custom of decorating the Red Room with cranberries continues with a fresh take on the cranberry tree. Topiary spheres of branches and cranberries are the focal point of this room, and are framed by Christmas trees and scarlet lacquered magnolia wreaths in each of the windows.

STATE DINING ROOM

Vibrant colors fill the State Dining Room, and playful ribbons dance across floating ornaments of greenery, creating a festive environment perfect for a gathering of family and friends. Sequined ornaments illuminate the Christmas trees, and beautifully wrapped presents topped with bows remind us that a true gift of the season is the joy of giving. President Grover Cleveland took special care in packing his children's stockings with candies in the toes, fruit in the heels, and trinkets in the legs.

The breathtaking gingerbread White House, a tradition that dates back to the 1960s, brings to mind memories of holiday cookie parties and decorating with family and friends. This year's gingerbread house, made of white chocolate and gingerbread, weighs over 350 pounds and took more than four weeks to create. To symbolize the importance of spending time with loved ones, this replica features the interior of the White House.



APPLE CAKE

A recipe from the White House Pastry Kitchen

<i>¾ cup canola or safflower oil</i>	<i>1 ¼ cup all purpose flour</i>
<i>½ cup light brown sugar (tightly packed)</i>	<i>1 tsp baking soda</i>
<i>½ cup honey (local if possible)</i>	<i>¼ tsp salt</i>
<i>2 eggs</i>	<i>1 tsp cinnamon</i>
<i>1 tsp vanilla</i>	<i>1 cup grated apples (Granny Smith or Golden)</i>

Preheat the oven to 350°. Grease one 10 inch cake pan and place parchment paper on the bottom.

Combine oil, brown sugar, honey, vanilla, and eggs in the bowl of an electric mixer – a handheld mixer can be used as well. In a separate bowl, sift dry ingredients: flour, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon. Add half of sifted dry ingredients into the liquid mixture, and mix on a low speed. Once everything is combined, add the grated apples and the remainder of the dry ingredients. Finish mixing by hand, and pour into greased cake mold.

Bake for 50-60 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Take out of the oven and let cool before unmolding.

When ready to unmold, run a paring knife around the edge of the cake pan. Place a serving dish on top of the cake upside down and then flip cake over onto the dish, carefully lifting the cake pan off the cake.

Makes one 10 inch cake

MAPLE GLAZE

<i>¼ cup maple syrup</i>
<i>⅓ cup confectioner's sugar</i>

Once cake is in the oven, mix together maple syrup and confectioner's sugar over low heat until combined. Then increase heat and boil for 30 seconds. Set aside on the stovetop, but off the heat. Pour over cake once it is finished baking and on the serving dish.



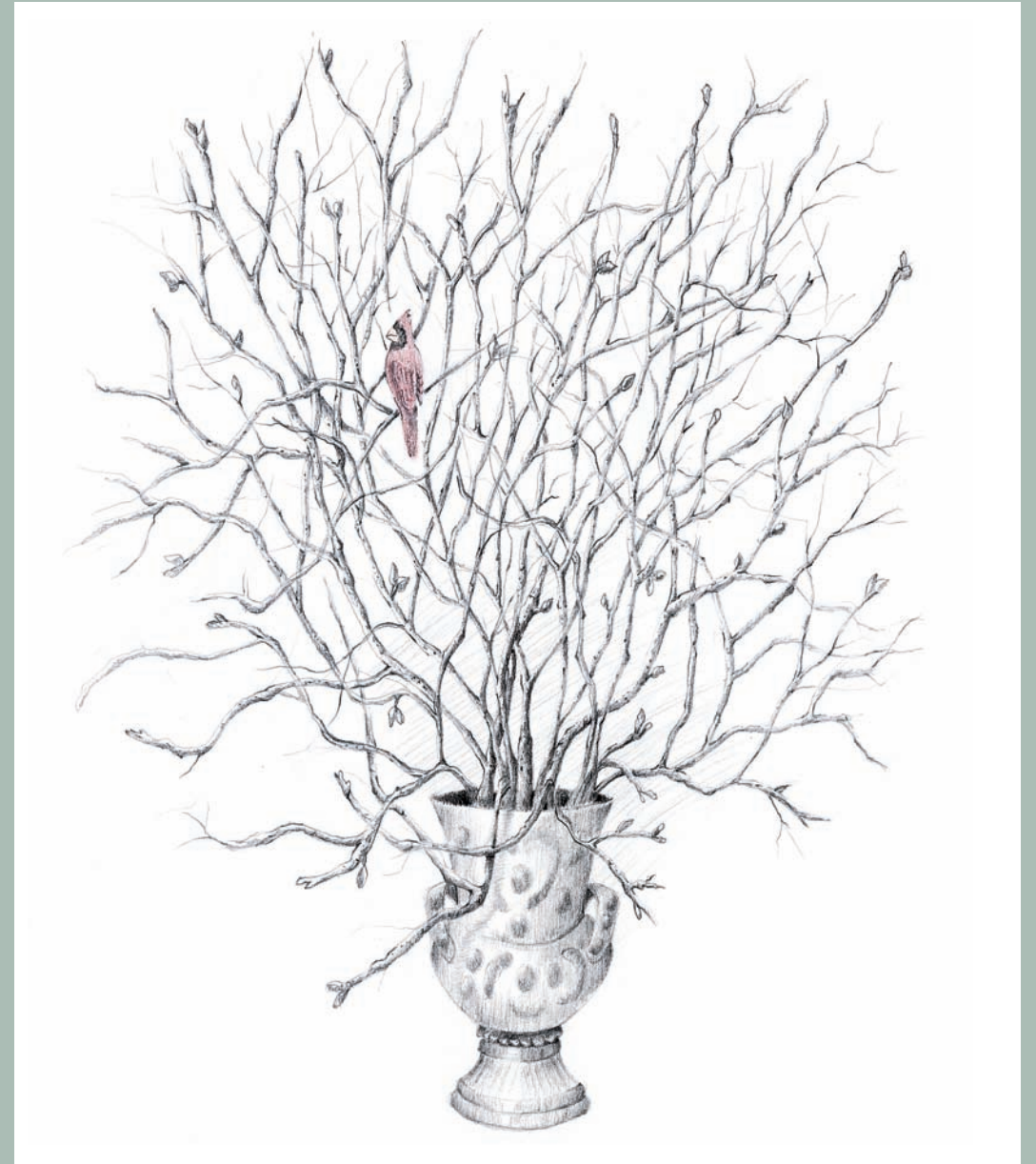
ENTRANCE HALL FOYER AND CROSS HALL

The crystallized branches and white lights of the Grand Foyer and Cross Hall convey the uncomplicated yet striking beauty of winter. Crimson cardinals and birch branches overhead showcase the grandeur our land offers throughout the year.

In this elegant setting where American presidents have greeted foreign heads of state for generations, white flowers crafted from recycled ribbons fill over-sized urns. These beautiful decorations, made from the most simple ingredients, offer a reminder of the creativity that can enrich the season.

THE WHITE HOUSE VISITOR CENTER

During the holiday season, ornaments and ribbons that coordinate with this year's White House decorations will be on display at the Visitor Center. The Center is located inside the north end of the Department of Commerce building, between 14th and 15th Streets at 1450 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., and is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. every day except Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. You will find interesting exhibits, tourist information, and helpful staff to answer your questions.





IN APPRECIATION

The White House is grateful to the Executive Residence staff, Event Architects, Savannah College of Art and Design, James Lutke, Ariella Chezar, and the many volunteers from around the country for decorating the White House with the simple gifts of the holiday season. We greatly appreciate all of the hard work of the students, faculty and alumni from the Corcoran Gallery of Art and College of Art + Design for creating the artwork for this holiday booklet. The featured illustrations were drawn by Roberta Bernstein, Wendy Cortesi, Leslie Exton, Charlotte Fremaux, Vicki Malone, Kappy Prosch, Eva-Maria Ruhl, and Ellen Saunders.

Thanks to the hard work and creativity of those involved, this year's holiday decorations reflect the everyday gifts that surround us.



