

WHAT IS CHANUKAH?

In 2nd century BCE, in an effort to pull Jews away from Judaism and adopt the Greek culture – Hellenism, the Syrian-Greek regime of Antiochus outlawed aspects of Jewish observance, including the study of Torah, which began to decay the foundation of Jewish life and practice. In response, a band of Jewish settlers took to the hills of Judea in a revolt against this threat to Jewish life. Led by Matitياهو, and later his son Judah the Maccabee, this small band of devout Jews led guerrilla warfare against the Syrian army. Antiochus sent thousands of well-armed troops to crush the rebellion, but the Maccabees succeeded in driving the foreigners from their land.

Jewish fighters entered Jerusalem in December, 164 BCE. The Holy Temple was in shambles, defiled and desecrated by foreign soldiers. They cleansed the Temple and re-dedicated it on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev. When it came time to re-light the Menorah, they searched the entire Temple, but only one small jar of oil bearing the pure seal of the High Priest could be found. Miraculously, the small jar of oil burned for eight days, until a new supply of oil could be brought. From then on, Jews have observed

a holiday for eight days in honor of this historic victory and the miracle of the oil. Today, the observance of Chanukah, meaning “dedication” features the lighting of a special Chanukah menorah with eight branches (plus a helper candle), adding one new candle each night. Other customs include spinning the dreidel (a top with Hebrew letters on the sides), eating “oily” foods like potato latkes (pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly donuts), and giving Chanukah gelt (coins) to children.



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Pesto Puff Pastry Pinwheel

- 2 sheets puff pastry
- 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
- 8 ½ ounces ricotta cheese
- 8 ½ ounces pesto




Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking tray with parchment paper and dust lightly with flour. Lay puff pastry on a flat work surface; cut a 12-inch circle from each sheet. Transfer 1 circle to the prepared baking sheet. Spread ricotta evenly over the pastry circle. Top with an even layer of pesto. Lay the second pastry circle on top. Set a small glass upside down in the middle of the circle. Cut the circle, away from the glass, into 4 equal quarters. Cut each quarter in half, then each eighth in half, to make 16 equal strips. Remove glass. Twist strips twice, two at a time, in the opposite direction. Pinch ends together. Repeat with remaining strips to make a pinwheel shape. Bake in the preheated oven until pastry is browned, 25 to 30 minutes.


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WRAP IT UP!

Have you noticed that wrapping a gift can cost more than the gift itself? There are some ways to cut the cost of gift-wrapping. Try these tips this holiday season!

- ❑ Brown paper bags can be decorated with stamps, markers, or paint. Tie the top with yarn or raffia. Use white trash bags to wrap large or oddly shaped presents. Check your local newspaper office to see if they sell “ends” from the newsprint paper. You can decorate the paper in many different ways.
- ❑ Make the wrapping part of the present itself. Wrap a gift of clothing in a pretty scarf and tie it with a hair ribbon. A purse or small bag could hold another smaller gift. Use a tablecloth or towel to wrap up a gift. Check thrift shops for old tins, hatboxes, or fabric remnants that would make great gift containers. Baskets make great gift holders.
- ❑ Use curling ribbon instead of other bows or ribbon. It is cheaper and can give a wrapped gift a very festive look. Make tags by cutting up holiday cards from the year before. Simply cut around an image from the front and write on the back. Punch a hole in one corner and thread curling ribbon through it. Tie it on your package for a nice touch.



Finally, buy your wrapping paper for next year at the after Christmas sales this year. You can save up to 75% off. Place it in a plastic bag to keep it clean and dry.

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