

Nest Building

by KATE BRIDGER

THE PERFECTLY IMPERFECT CHRISTMAS

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The holidays that I remember best are the less than perfect ones: like the year the power went and we had to cook the turkey on the barbecue. Then there was time the cat pulled over the Christmas tree in the middle of the night and scared us all out of our deep winter sleeps. And, I'll never forget the frigid northern Ontario Christmas that grounded all our relatives for an extra three days!

On the other hand, the occasions that went by without a hitch tend to blend together forming a soft blanket of delightful warm memories, but with nothing remarkable standing out.

I feel the same about holiday ornaments. My little wooden elf with its chewed foot and my tattered, discoloured treetop fairy that looks like it's suffering from liver failure are among my favourites. Sick or wounded, they remain part of a long tradition and have earned their prominent positions on my Christmas tree. Newer, as yet undamaged ornaments have a lot of catching up to do.

It is easy to be seduced by the perfect holiday arrangements featured in magazines and on television shows. We all enjoy the magical holiday vignettes displayed in department shop windows. But, remember, these are just sets, not real living rooms where people spill hot chocolate, trip over pets and proudly show off the festive crafts created by their children and grandchildren. These are just gorgeous, glittery, strategically contrived marketing tools that can put a lot of unnecessary pressure on seasonal hosts and hostesses.

Relax. Enjoy the holidays with all the delightful mishaps and broken pieces that eventually form the stuff of family folklore. Don't allow the quest for the perfect Christmas tree, or holiday centrepiece to ruin a warm and charmingly imperfect holiday gathering with precious friends and family.