

CHRISTMAS KEPT

Gather together, lift the lid, and savor holidays past and present.

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SAVOR HOLIDAYS PAST AND PRESENT · SAVOR HOLIDAYS PAST AND PRESENT · SAVOR HOLIDAYS PAST AND PRESENT · SAVOR HOLIDAYS PAST AND PRESENT

"DON'T OPEN UNTIL CHRISTMAS."

The gentle plea is stenciled on the lid in vintage cursive. But we always cheat and open this one box on the eve, reliving the thrill of being mischievous children who just couldn't wait. Sitting around the dining table, dishes from our seven-fish feast pushed back but not yet cleared, we begin the unboxing ritual. I lift the layers of tissue paper that cocoon its contents and hold up each item, passing them around. And our whole family reminisces…

Two tiny elf hats trimmed with red and green felt worn by the twins the year their birth made Christmas come early. *How ridiculous they looked! And how precious…*

Photos of annual trips to the North Pole by way of our mall. *The big kids noticing how Santa looks different in each picture, us adults noting how the little ones have long outgrown his lap.*

A playbill from the time we all went to see the musical *A Christmas Story* at our local playhouse. *We mispronounce "Fra-gee-lay" and laugh about dancing leg lamps, declaring it must be Italian, like us…*

The shared memories continue until we reach the bottom of the box. Before we pack it all back up, we reflect on the current season and decide which new memory to add. This year, everyone has agreed it will be the silk snowman tie that Pop always wore when he was with us at this table—the one that plays holiday songs when you press the button. *We can still see him wearing that tie, hear Pop laughing as each grandkid takes a turn…*

Each Christmas, our memory box returns us to the traditions and feelings that make this time of year special. When the holiday is over, I seal the box, heeding the note to not open it until next Christmas. And as the season inches closer, I know I'll look forward to that moment. When we lift the lid and hear Pop's music play again.

COLLECT, CREATE & DISPLAY

Consider curating your own keepsake box, filling it with holiday mementos that don't quite fit on the mantel or tree. Choose relics that get you in the spirit and take you back to Christmases past, then choose a vessel that fits—maybe an old cigar box or hatbox. Start a tradition of going through the box at one special time each year, or keep it out all season long on a coffee table, bookshelf, or even under the tree. Family and friends merrily revisit holidays shared, and we remember: Our memories become more magical when reflected through the eyes of those we've made them with.





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