

BETTER FAMILY

A family affair

Start the New Year right with good food, great activities—and your kids. Staying home has never been so much fun.

BY KATHY BARNES | PHOTOS MARTY BALDWIN



PARTY PROPS

There's just something about party hats and horns that sets a festive mood for the evening. Make your own hats with cardstock that you roll into cone shapes. Attach a length of elastic to each hat to hold it on your head. Headbands from a drugstore tied with tulle make cute crowns. Tie jingle bells to dowels for easy noisemakers. Cut up scraps of paper to throw when the clock strikes 12 (and keep a vacuum nearby to clean up the mess). Young families can set the clock ahead and declare the New Year at bedtime. Throw that confetti, blow those party horns, and bang pots. Then tuck in little ones for the night.

Party favor shortcuts

Go to BHG.com/partyhats to download hat and decoration templates.

After hosting holidays rich with tradition and expectation, Gia Russo chooses a low-key approach to New Year's Eve: staying in. "I like to chill out after the holidays," says Gia, a wife, editor of mom blog *The Daily Thred*, and mother to 6-year-old son Grayden. "We have friends over, eat an early dinner, and do fun activities. After the kids go to bed, we engage in an extremely competitive game of '80s Trivial Pursuit. For us, it's just about having fun."

Bonus: All that fun is good parenting, too.

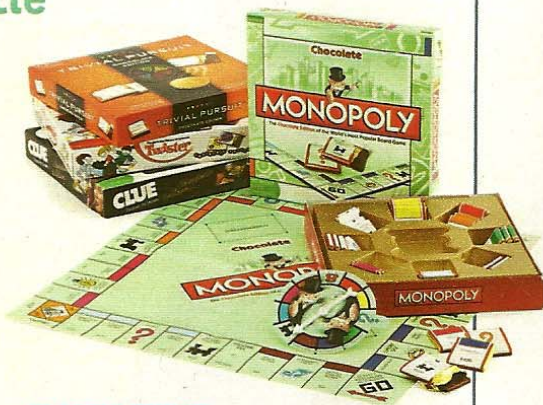
"Fun, quality time like this is the ultimate parenting gift regardless of the age of children," says Jude Bijou, a marriage and family therapist and author of *Attitude Reconstruction: A Blueprint for Building a Better Life*. "Young children learn they are valued and can participate in this special occasion with the adults. Teens see that they can have fun without drinking and being wild. College students can share time with their parents as equals, rather than holding on to old roles."

Here are some ideas to make your family-friendly New Year's Eve one to remember.

Even in your living room, there's no shortage of ways to celebrate the New Year. Just add food, games, and a little ingenuity—instant party!

ENTERTAINING EATS

Turning dinner into an activity means less solo work for you—and all family members get what they want. Stop by a local pizza place for an order or two of fresh dough. At home, divide the dough into individual portions, put out sauces and toppings, and let everyone have at it. For dessert, bake the New Year a birthday cake. Just remember the candles! And because you might not be popping any champagne corks at this all-ages shindig, you'll want some festive and fizzy mocktails. You can experiment together with juice, fruit, or candy; ginger ale or seltzer provides the bubbles. Serve drinks in party glasses for flair.



CLASSIC TWIST

Game night and movie night are family-fun standbys. A few tweaks can make either extra-special on New Year's Eve. Put a sweet spin on classic games with Hasbro's chocolate editions of Scrabble, Twister, Trivial Pursuit, Clue, and Monopoly (all \$10, available at Target stores). They're dessert and fun in one: In Monopoly, for instance, real estate cards, game pieces, and hotels are foil-wrapped chocolates. Or plan a movie marathon. Pick an all-ages lineup with *Big*, *The Goonies*, and *The Princess Bride*, or go for wholesome nostalgia with original versions of *The Love Bug*, *The Parent Trap*, and *Angels in the Outfield*. Or stick with New Year's favorites such as *High School Musical*, *After the Thin Man*, and *About a Boy*. Set up a snack bar for a theater-style treat—bowls of popcorn (cheese, caramel, buttered, and plain) with loads of mix-ins.

FUTURE FUN

Breathe new life into the old party game of charades by acting out your resolutions. Kids will love to see how parents express their desire for a more balanced life or better eating habits. And parents have a chance to glean insights to their teenagers' lives. Plus, when you act out your resolutions, you go public with your goals for the coming year, which means you're more likely to stick with them. If resolutions aren't your thing, make predictions for 2012. Have everyone write down thoughts—both silly and serious—about what the next year will hold and put the prognostications in an envelope to be opened next New Year's Eve. ■



 **Bake it a night!**
Think outside the box: Go to BHG.com/birthdaycakes for from-scratch cake recipes.