

Front & Back of the House

Making Them Happy— The Holidays for the Rest of Us

By Gael Hees

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The holidays are upon us, and for many people, this means getting together with friends and family members, sharing good food, perhaps playing games, throwing around a football. The holidays are about candles, special music, the fragrances of baking cookies and greenery.

But to those of us in the hospitality industry, the holidays mean working overtime, providing cheerful holiday service and catching up with family and members and friends on the fly. Here are ideas from several hospitality professionals who shared how they navigate the line between work and family life at holiday times...

Andy Porter, general manager of Slice of Vegas, looks at the holidays this way:

I've spent almost 20 years in the industry, starting in Baltimore where you could be a bartender at 18, but couldn't drink until you were 21. I worked over the holidays for years. Now, I fly back to spend Thanksgiving in Baltimore every year—it is the one holiday in our family where everyone gets together. Taking off at Thanksgiving is easier than trying to get time off at Christmas. There is a point when you've moved into a management position and are able to take a holiday off now and then. I've bartended and served to give others who had kids the time off. The team I have on board right now, half have kids and half don't. The ones who don't have kids are willing to work holidays and then they get another day off, an extra day. We've known

for months who gets off and who doesn't—it's pretty transparent. Somehow it seems to work for everyone.

Terry Clark, co-lead at Sparrow + Wolf, celebrates on another day:

I am still trying to figure out how to do this myself. I've had to work every holiday I can remember for over 10 years now. My family tradition has become having to meet up a few days before or after the holiday.

Adam Rains, mixologist and Tiki at the Golden Tiki, finds fun in working the holidays:

I have a wife and two kids and when we can, we will have friends come over and family will come from California and eat and drink a lot. We definitely like to celebrate each other's company and life in general. This year at Thanksgiving, we celebrated the following Tuesday with everyone. It worked out great. This year I'm lucky to have Christmas off and I'm glad because it's so special for the kids. However, it's fun to work on the holidays. There is a special vibe in the air and it is fun to be part of someone else's celebration and to know you're making their time special. It's part of the fun part of the job. However, it is tough not to be with your family during a holiday.

So let's think about this.

Traditions

If you've been in the industry for many years — you have probably already developed traditions

of your own—you just may have never thought of them as such. Do you "always" go to your mom's house two days after a holiday? Do you "always" buy a special pie or other baked good to share with friends the weekend before a holiday? Do you "always" send a festive text to your family members telling them you're with them in spirit? If you "always" do anything on a holiday (or before or after), you have traditions of your own and they should be honored as such!

A Day Is a Day

The specific date of a holiday can be important, or not. Any time you spend with friends and family members is of value—whether it's a day around the pool in August or a day around a tree in December. It is always about the quality of the time you have with people, not the quantity.

You May Be Giving More Than You Know

Are you single and working the holidays, after having volunteered to do so? I have heard many stories from people in the industry who have volunteered to work the holidays, and others who are so grateful to have been with their young children because someone at their restaurant volunteered for holiday duty. Not everyone can have time off.

One's method for making it through the holidays is totally personal. But, no matter how you celebrate, know that all of us at *The Las Vegas Food and Beverage Professional* hope that yours are happy!