

Holiday Hints

Top Tips To “Deck Your Desktop”

by Katie Brown

(NAPSA)—My PC is the best tool I've found to make life work during the holidays. And just like a kitchen, a useful PC must have all the right ingredients and sup-



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plies to keep things moving smoothly. I've developed a few tips on how to “Deck Your Desktop” for the busy season ahead. These tips will help you see

your PC in a whole new light. Happy entertaining.

• **Make Your List and Check it Twice.** Before I even sit down at my computer, I do my prep work—just like I do in my kitchen. I figure out my holiday tasks and decide what software and other tools I'll need to get them done. This way, I know my PC will be as ready for the holidays as I am.

• **Fill Your Holiday Toolbox.** Once I've decided how I'm going to use my computer during the holidays, I find the right software to help me. The best approach I've found is to rely on several different programs to build holiday lists, research holiday traditions and turn holiday snapshots into keepsakes.

• **Strike a Holiday Pose.** I'm a stickler about getting my holiday cards out early, so that's always the first thing on my to-do list. But, to me, sending a store-bought card is a little like serving stuffing out of the box—it's never as good as homemade. The easiest way I've found to edit my photos and make my own cards is with my favorite pictures and Microsoft Picture It! Digital Image Pro. Say goodbye to red eye.

• **Find a Few Favorite Things.** Before I plan a menu, I

like to check with my guests about their likes and dislikes. That way, I can almost always guarantee my dinners will be a success. I do the same thing when making my holiday gift lists by encouraging my family to create online holiday wish lists. Popular Web sites such as Amazon.com are a great place to start.

• **Discover Traditions.** Some people can't imagine celebrating the holidays without cranberries. I can't imagine the holidays without celebrating some of our nation's wonderful cultural traditions. I like to incorporate traditions I find in Microsoft Encarta Reference Library into my party themes, menus and even my cocktail chatter.

• **Create Festive Folders.** To keep my sanity during the holidays, one of the first things I do is create folders on my desktop for each of my holiday tasks. This way, everything I need is right at my fingertips.

• **Get the All-Purpose Holiday Tool.** In my kitchen, my stand-mixer is the all-purpose tool that does almost anything. With everything I have to juggle between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve, I need a software program that lets me do it all, from tracking my to-dos to organizing recipes to building my guest list to managing my budget—the list is endless. Microsoft Works Suite helps me do all of that plus give my holiday party guests door-to-door directions.

Software programs, such as those I've mentioned here, also make great holiday gifts for active households. For more holiday tips, visit: www.microsoft.com/katie.

Lifestyle expert Katie Brown is the author of the new book, Katie Brown Decorates: 6 Styles, 12 Rooms, 126 Projects.