

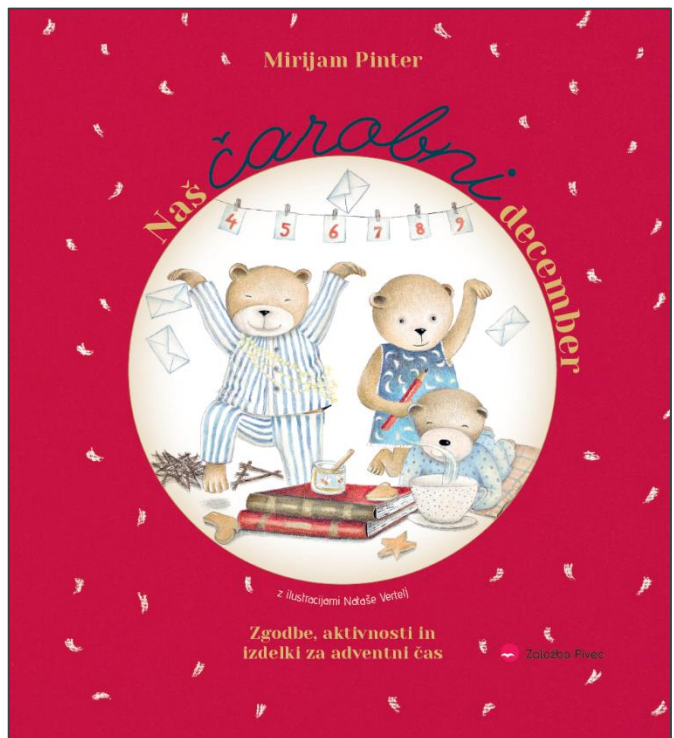
OUR MAGICAL DECEMBER

Stories, things to do and things to make for the festive season

Written by: **Mirijam Pinter**

Illustrated by: **Nataša Vertelj**

Three little bears, Elly, Teddy and Freddy, are impatiently awaiting Christmas. But there are 24 days still to go! Luckily, their mother has an idea how to make the time go by faster. She suggests that the little bears should make an advent calendar full of activities! That very same night they get to work and make 24 cards on which are written the festive activities. They can hang them up and the days begin to fly by. The days leading up to Christmas are full of fun, drawing, creating, baking, singing and dancing.



The family book *Our Magical December* is intended for all the little bears that cannot wait for Christmas to come. You can choose how to arrange the activities and look forward to each upcoming day. Each activity takes around half an hour and is connected to an item – and you can read what the three little bears, Elly, Teddy and Freddy, did that day.

Author **Mirjam Pinter** created this collection of family activities based on her own family's experiences. Her understanding that parenthood today is quite the challenge and spending quality time with the family is a valuable thing led her to choose activities that can be done by all the family, even by its very youngest members.

Format: 23.5 × 25.5cm, colour print, hardcover, 56 pages

Reading Sample

Content:

- Let's write to Santa
- Let's go camping
- Let's take our picture
- Let's have a pancake party
- Let's clean our shoes for St Nicholas' Day
- Let's be charitable
- Let's have a sweet treat
- Let's watch a Christmas movie
- Let's write Christmas cards
- Let's bake cookies
- Let's watch family movies
- Let's build a gingerbread house
- Let's go on a walk with lights
- Let's do some colouring
- Let's have a snowball fight with socks
- Let's make snowflakes
- Let's have a pyjama day
- Let's read Christmas stories
- Let's feed the birds
- Let's have a tea party
- Let's decorate the Christmas tree
- Let's set up a nativity scene
- Let's have a Christmas picnic
- Let's create some memories

24 days till Christmas

(Introductory story)

The three little bears, Elly, Teddy and Freddy were rolling around on their bed and could not sleep at all.

"Mum, when will Santa finally come?" Asked Freddy, the youngest bear.

"There are still 24 nights until Christmas," Mum replied.

"How long is 24 nights?" Freddy asked.

"Almost a month," Mum replied.

"How long is one month?" Freddy asked again, not understanding.

Mum thought for a moment, then said, "There are exactly 24 activities until Christmas."

"Twenty-four activities?" Freddy wondered. "What do you mean by that?"

Mum explained that together they will make an Advent activity calendar, one activity for each day, and count down the days until Christmas. "We will cut out cards from paper, write numbers and activities on them, and then we will play, have fun and create every day, so that the time until Christmas will pass faster," added the mother.

"Great!" Said the excited bears. They started jumping on the bed with joy.

"No jumping! If you want to start counting down tomorrow, we have to get to work," their mother interrupted their boisterous playing.

The bears immediately did as she said. A few minutes later they were sitting at the table, cutting, drawing and writing.

In little over an hour, there were 24 cards, 24 numbers, and 24 activities on the table that Mum had suggested. The cards were clipped to a string stretching over the fireplace.

"Well, we're ready for the countdown to Christmas. Now hurry to bed so that tomorrow you will be rested for our first activity," said Mum and kissed the bears.

This time, the bears immediately obeyed their mother, settled comfortably in their beds, and in the next few minutes they sank into a deep sleep.

Pages 10–11

Let's go camping

"Let's make a camp!" Teddy shouted out excitedly and headed to the basement to find a tent.

"And where are you off to?" Dad asked him.

"Getting a tent to put outside before dark," Teddy replied.

"We can't camp outside in the winter," Dad explained.

"We'll be camping in our living room."

"How? The tent is too big for the living room," said Teddy, disappointed.

"We're going to make a tent out of sheets, pillows, chairs and clothes pegs," Dad explained.

When Freddy and Elly heard this, they immediately stopped playing and started carrying all the pillows, blankets, and sheets they could find into the living room. Teddy, meanwhile, was already setting up chairs around which they would build a tent.

They pulled the sheets over the chairs, fastened them with clothes pegs, then they placed the thick blankets and lots of pillows on the floor. When the tent got the right shape, Christmas lights were installed on the roof.

"Now, all that's missing are the lights in front of the entrance and the fire, and it will be like a real campsite," Elly said.

Mum brought jars in which they put candles and lit them, they took some logs from the fireplace and put them in a pyramid.

"Are we going to light a fire in the middle of the living room?" Elly asked.

"Don't worry, we will not actually be making a fire. We'll just place a bunch of Christmas lights at the bottom of the pyramid. When they are switched on, it will look like there is a fire burning there," their mother explained.

The bears were thrilled with the idea. When the tent was ready, they climbed into it, covered themselves, listened to a bedtime story and then slowly fell asleep.

Activity

Find a play tent or a smaller camping tent. If you don't have it at home, with some imagination, sheets, chairs and string or clothes pegs, build a tent in the middle of the living room. You can decorate it with Christmas lights. Put some soft pillows on the floor, grab a sleeping bag or blanket and find a lamp. Then you can all sit together comfortably in the tent, tell stories or jokes, or just cuddle up.

Make something: Create accessories for your tent

Find some glass jars, put them in a white paper bag and put a tealight in them, and place them in front of the tent. Cut triangles (10 cm) out of colourful paper (A4 size), glue them to the string along the shortest side to get a colourful chain of flags that will adorn your tent. To create your campfire, you need a few logs of the same length, which you stack into a pyramid. It is best to tie them at the top so that they do not collapse. Then gather up the Christmas lights into a pile and place them in the centre of the camp fire, at the base, so the logs can lean on the lights and stand up nicer. Turn on the lights and you will have a campfire in the middle of your living room.

Pages 36–37

Let's have a snowball fight with socks

"A snowball fight with socks," Teddy read aloud. "Having a fight with socks?" He repeated aloud, looking at his red socks, which he had just put on.

"What does that mean?" He wondered.

"I only know how to have a snowball fight," added Freddy, who was eagerly awaiting the day's activity.

"Let's try," Teddy told him, taking off his socks.

He held them in his hands, turned them over and asked, "And how am I supposed to throw those two socks at someone. They won't fly anywhere."

Teddy, too, waved his socks as if he were holding two flags fluttering in the wind. "It won't work that way," he said, disappointed. "Let's ask Dad."

"Dad, do you know how we can have a snowball fight with socks?" they asked.

"Sure," Dad said. "You have to make a ball out of the socks first." He took Teddy's red socks, rolled them up like a Swiss roll, and turned them inward to form a ball. "Like so. Now you can throw it just like a snowball. Look!" He threw the ball of socks straight at Teddy.

"You are out!" he said as the ball hit Teddy.

"We're not playing for real yet," Teddy defended himself.

"Of course not, we first need rules," Dad said.

Freddy began to list the rules, "Everyone has 3 lives, the game stops in the bathroom and you're not allowed to throw it at anyone's head." He wanted to continue when Dad interrupted him.

"I think we have enough rules," Dad said. "Let the fight begin!"

The bears each rolled their socks into a ball and began to toss them at each other. They hid behind chairs, the table, beds, in a wardrobe, wherever they could not be hit and from where they themselves could hit others well. They liked the game so much that they continued it in the evening when they went to bed.

Activity

Everyone playing gathers the socks that need to be rolled into balls. Agree on the rules of the game: where it is allowed to hide, how many lives everyone has, how a life is lost (e.g. when the socks hit you in the head, legs and so on) and determine the prize for the winner.

Make something: Sock snowballs

If you want your sock-balls to look like real snowballs, find all the white socks you have at home. Fill them half-up with foam or cotton wool, then pull the other part of the sock over the filled part. A white ball will form. You can, however, draw black eyes on them along with an orange nose. Then you'll be having a snowman fight instead of a snowball one.

Pages 52–53

Let's have a Christmas picnic

When Freddy heard Teddy reading the Advent calendar, he thought a little, "How do we have a picnic in the winter, since we can't sit on the cold ground?"

Teddy immediately explained, "You know, like camping in the living room, let's just have a picnic on the blanket in the living room."

"That would work," Freddy said, finding a blanket and starting to prepare everything he needed.

Teddy, meanwhile, continued reading, "If you already have a Christmas tree set up, have a picnic under it."

Freddy said nothing but brought his favorite honey and crackers, laid down under the Christmas tree and started eating.

"What are you doing on the floor under the Christmas tree?" Elly asked, coming into the living room.

"I'm having a picnic under the Christmas tree, as it says in today's activity," Freddy replied.

"You silly," Elly laughed at him. "This isn't meant literally. You can't eat lying down. It doesn't really mean UNDER the tree, but BY the Christmas tree."

"Oh," Freddy was a little offended as he jumped out from under the tree and sat down next to him. "Will it be better this way?" He asked.

"Yes, this way we can all sit together, eat and enjoy the view of the beautifully decorated tree," Elly said.

Freddy grabbed the honey again with his paw and admitted with a full mouth, "It's really much easier to eat like this." They called Teddy and they all reached into the pot and had a sweet treat with the honey produced by their bee neighbours.

Activity

You usually have picnics in the middle of summer on the garden or in the woods. But you've probably never had a picnic in the middle of your living room before. Find a picnic blanket, or any other blanket that you don't mind putting on the floor, spread it out and make delicious snacks (e.g. bread with different spreads, sliced apples, carrots) and plenty of drinks. To spare parents the additional work, vacuum up all the crumbs when you have finished.

Make something: Christmas mozzarella tree

You will need:

For the dough:

- * 400g flour,
- * 4 tablespoons olive oil,
- * teaspoon of salt,
- * approximately 300ml warm water
- * packet of dried yeast.

For the topping:

- * 1/4 cup melted butter,
- * 1/2 cup parmesan,
- * teaspoon of basil,
- * teaspoon of rosemary.

Buy pizza dough or make your own. Mix the dough ingredients well, knead and leave to rise. When the dough is ready, roll it out and cut it into 4 x 4cm squares, in which you place a ball of mozzarella and wrap it. Place the wrapped balls on a baking sheet in the shape of a Christmas tree so that the balls touch each other. Coat with an egg wash and bake at 220°C for about 10 minutes. Once the tree is baked, pour a mixture of butter, parmesan and spices over it.