



Samantha Harris
OUR BLENDED HOLIDAY

THE ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT CORRESPONDENT GIVES HER GIRLS THE BEST OF BOTH HOLIDAYS BY BAKING HANUKKAH COOKIES AND CELEBRATING SANTA'S ARRIVAL

By THAILAN PHAM • Photographs by LISA ROMEREIN

As a kid celebrating Hanukkah in suburban Minneapolis, "my biggest memory is singing the prayer over the candles with my family," says Harris, 37. "To me that was so beautiful." She is now sharing that joy with her daughters Josselyn, 4, and Hillary, 11 months. "What's fun is that Jossie [who attends a Jewish preschool] is singing the Hebrew words and learning all the Hanukkah songs," says Harris, who also started a new tradition last year. "I got cookie cutters in the shape of a dreidel, menorah and Star of David. Then we use a paintbrush with the food coloring, and Jossie can paint them any color she wants." But husband Michael Hess, a financial wholesaler, clamored for a chance to introduce his kids to Santa because, although he was raised by Jewish parents, he grew up looking forward to a Christmas that included "Mr. and Mrs. Claus, a tree—the whole thing!" So Harris has slowly made some concessions. "It took a lot of prodding, but I realized that this is about making our own family traditions," says Harris, who now hangs leopard-trimmed stockings and garland in their L.A. home and leaves cookies out for Santa but stops short of buying a Christmas tree. "We are trying to find the perfect balance," says Harris. "Jossie and Hillary will appreciate the best of both holidays."



● Harris (above with Hess) wraps gifts in holiday-specific paper. "That way we know which holiday they're for!" But she only makes Hanukkah sweets: "Painting the cookies is her favorite part," says Harris of Josselyn (below)



THE GIFTS

Hanukkah The girls unwrap one present after lighting a candle each night. At the end of the eight days, they open the remaining gifts mailed in from extended family.

Christmas Santa fills each stocking with stickers or DVDs, and Hess's family delivers their gifts for Jossie and Hillary on Christmas morning.