Top 5 free apps for the holiday season

Kasey Panetta, Associate Editor

Back in the dog days of summer, we offered up a list of the 6 must-have apps for a stress-free summer [1]. It was all about keeping kids distracted, watching your spending, and utilizing apps that got you to the relaxation phase faster.

Now we've entered a season that can feel entirely the opposite of relaxing: holiday season. So, for your sanity, and that of your family and friends, check out the apps we've rounded up to keep you footloose and fancy free from Turkey Day into the New Year.

Organizing the Season: Whether it's presents for kids, menus for holiday dinners, or planning out your party for New Years, Evernote [2] is a must have for any occasion. Take "clips" of ideas for creative snacks or the perfect necklace for your wife, you can even save entire web pages, and save them to your phone or computer. You can sync up all of your devices, so it doesn't matter where you save it. Plus, as a bonus, you can use the app to track all those pesky travel details so you won't get stuck without important travel documents or when you're supposed to pick up your aunt at the airport.
Price: Free

Turkey Day: Cooking on Thanksgiving is pretty stressful. There is a lot of pressure to get everything *just* right. So if you get to step 12 of 52 and you can't decide if "medium caramel" means brown or tan, you should check in with the Food52 Hotline app. [3] It's a real-time app where you can ask all your foodie questions from :"How do I make this vegan" to "Should this gravy be lumpy" and hear expert answers from the Food52 editors, other home chefs, and even food writers like Dorie Greenspan and Mollie Katzen. If you need someone to look over your shoulder, just include an image of your food and wait for help.
Price: Free

Black Friday: Bargain shopping on the day after T-day is all about strategy and planning. Get in. Get out. Get home for leftovers. For this to happen, you need to get the Black Friday App from dealnews.com, Inc. [4] This app gives you the means

to note your favorite retailers—the app will let you know when they post a new discounted product—and compare them to all the other major retailers. You can also make up a shopping list so you don't forget anyone or miss out on any deals. The app will let you know when the stores are open and you can share any good deals with your friends and family.
Price: Free

'Tis the season: A lot of the holiday season seems to center around giving, so it's a big time for charities. If you're looking to give a little back this season, try downloading "Instead" [5]. It's designed to make donating a decision between using money for something you want – eating out – or donating money to your favorite charity. Just log on, select an amount, pick a non-profit, plug in your info, and donate. The app takes 5 percent of the donation for overhead, and the rest goes to the charity.
Price: Free

New Years Eve: If New Years is your favorite holiday, you probably already have the Happy New Year Countdown app ($.99), but if watching the Times Square show live is your only goal this year, download the official app [6]. You can watch the whole show live wherever you are and find out everything you ever wanted to know about the NYC celebration, from history to events schedule and even the weather conditions. Celebrating with friends? Post a photo to the app for the chance to have your picture featured on the Toshiba Vision screen beneath the famous Waterford Crystal Ball.
Price: Free

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