

Make Holiday Lanterns from Milk Cartons

Here's an easy way to make a lantern that you can light with a votive candle (careful!) or glow stick. This is good to make with older children but will need supervision since it does involve some cutting.

Materials: an empty 1/2 gallon milk or juice carton, decorative paper such as gift wrap, glue, transparent paper (optional), glitter or sequins for decoration (optional), paints (optional), votive candle or glow stick, sand, a stick to carry your lantern.

Tools: scissors, Exacto knife, hole punch

Instructions:

1. Rinse out the carton, and cut off the top.
2. Cut "windows" into 2-4 sides of the carton, being sure to leave enough of a "lip" to contain the sand that keeps the candle from falling over.

An alternative method is to cut designs (such as stars) with an exacto knife into the sides *AFTER* step 3. *Be very careful, as it's easy to cut yourself accidentally – the glue needs to have dried to prevent slipping.*

3. Color the sides of the carton with the paint or cover with colored paper or wrapping paper. At the windows, you have the option of cutting paper flush or folding & glueing it into the inside.
4. For "windows", use transparent paper, glued to the inside of lantern. This is helpful for windy situations. Caution: Do not use tissue paper, as it may catch on fire from the candle!
5. Use the needle to punch holes on two opposite sides of the lantern. Using wire or pipecleaners, create a loop at the top to attach the lantern to your stick.
6. Fill bottom of lantern with sand and place votive candle in the middle.
7. You're ready to parade your lantern and celebrate the Winter Solstice!

How to make ice lanterns

#1: The yoghurt container Method:

Fill 32 oz containers with water and place outside (if it's seriously below 0F you may get away with 4 hrs; at 10F will need at least 6 hrs; if it's hovering in the 20's, you probably need all day or night, 8-10hrs).

Test a couple before bringing them all inside -- if they break handling (sides are too fragile), then give them more time in the great outdoors!

Do this next step at the sink: Run some warm water to loosen ice -- then invert (TOP will become bottom of lantern) as the bottom is the weakest spot. Using a sharp kitchen knife, punch thru ice at the weak spot, then keep on widening/carving the circle until it is large enough to put a candle inside. Empty the ice-cold water, and rinse with some warm/hot water to get rid of any sharp ice protrusions.

#2 Balloon Method:

Fill birthday-party balloons with water. Stick them in a snow bank with the knot down, or else place on individual plates or bowl -- but don't let them touch. When frozen, bring a couple inside to test (they make take longer than yoghurt containers). Again, the weakest point is the bottom. Cut and peel off the plastic balloon, and using a sharp knife, make a hole at the bottom to drain the water.

Hint: Heat a heavy duty pan on the stove and "melt" off the jagged edge until you have the desired sized opening.

Also, you can use the melting method for flattening the other end: the ice is really thick there, and you may want it flat to be able to place lantern on a level surface. Otherwise, just stick the wobbly lanterns in the snow!

