

A Holiday Chat with Zola



We sat down recently to chat with Zola and learned all “merry” of things holiday-related:

Do you go “all-out” with your holiday decorating?

I used to. Now I do what I call “holiday lite.” This year I decorated the balcony with two lighted trees and another planter with sticks and greenery. Out by our front door is greenery with sparkly sticks in it. Two reindeer and a door knocker that is silver and white with birds and holly.

Favorite Family Recipe?

My new favorite recipe is Lemon Brownies. I designed the recipe for Thanksgiving instead of serving pie. We loved it.

Your favorite Christmas moment?

I love the morning of Christmas Eve. That’s when I get to just chill with a warm beverage and sit in front of my tree and just take it all in. I look at the gift wrapping I’ve done, admire the decorations. It’s my “me” time at Christmas. A cup of low carb hot chocolate doesn’t hurt either.

What do you do for gift wrapping?

That's one thing I still go all out on. Each year my gifts have a theme color. This year is silver, black and white. I wrap all gifts so they match/coordinate and then I go nuts on the bows. My husband wraps my gifts and turns them over to me for to do the bows.

Your favorite Christmas food?

I still look forward to mashed potatoes. This is one of the few times a year I eat an adult-sized portion. So carb-laden! But now I don't feel guilty when I load them with butter and cream. I hear sour cream is a great addition, too. And caramelized leeks! BIG YUM! If you make this recipe the day before and chill it overnight the potatoes become carb resistant. You can heat them up and eat them guilt-free.



What's always in your refrigerator/freezer?

Butter, various mustards for my husband, whipping cream, and a variety of bottles of vinegar are always in my fridge. Never know when you might have to whip up a dressing! And in my freezer, you'll always find frozen raspberries. My husband is NUTS for the raspberry ice cream recipe. He even eats it when we are in ZReboot!

Do you make Christmas Cookies?

I have. It's not a thing that was a must in my family though. We used to make chocolate peanut clusters when we were kids, and we'd keep them chilled in the attic behind my parents' bedroom. My little brother and I would sneak in the attic for an extra treat. I also liked them cuz when I was a tiny child and had no cooking skills, I could still "help" make them (my siblings just handed me a wooden spoon to hold and I thought I was helping).

Favorite Guilty TV Watching:

Right now I am kinda into watching Jeopardy. I can do that and make dinner at the same time. My husband and I compete for who can blurt out the answer faster.

If I had an extra hour in my day today, I would:

Go to the zoo. Even in winter, I love to stroll through the zoo. This year they are having an Asian Lantern Parade. I am also looking into going to see a light display put on by the city/power company.

My secret cleaning weapon:

Windex. I love a shiny surface.

I love to shop for:

You are asking the wrong woman. I am not a shopper – that is

except for food. I take an hour in the afternoon and shop for dinner. The French do that. They shop day-of. Who knows what they want for dinner before 3 pm? Not me! I know, I'm spoiled.

Household chore I actually like:

Cooking. Go figure!

I also don't mind cleaning. I get a great feeling of satisfaction from that. I love a spotless kitchen. My husband cleans the floors and I love him for that. I hate ironing though.

Signature dish:

I don't have one. I rarely cook the same thing twice. Hence the development of over 1000 recipes for Plan Z! My husband will ask for a few repeats here and there but strangely enough, I cook a new meal probably over 150 times a year. That's not normal behavior. I know.

Favorite holiday movie?

My favorite holiday movie is actually one that is a tad on the adult side. You would not want to watch it with the little kiddies. It's "Love Actually." That scene with Hugh Grant dancing gets me every time. I actually ran into Hugh Grant once. Really! Literally! We were visiting London and went to a play. During intermission, I decided to go to the ladies' room. I had to part a big, velvet curtain to get into the hallway. As I stepped out Hugh Grant came running in and smacked right into me. "So sorry" came out of both of us and that was it.

When I got back from the ladies' room I spied him in the crowd sitting about 4 rows in front of us. He was sitting next to his lady-friend at the time, Elizabeth Hurley – the model. The odd thing is she was sitting in the theatre in a grey sweatsuit! A

bit casual for legitimate theatre, I'd say.

The movie is heartwarming and my husband and I watch it every year. There are few spicy scenes in it though, and I think it has a grown-up rating.

If you want to know what I watch with the kiddies it's "Home Alone." The paint can in the head just kills me – and almost kills the burglar. I love to listen to my husband laugh at scenes he's literally seen dozens of times.

Favorite Christmas Song

This one brings tears to my eyes and fond memories every time.

Bing Crosby singing White Christmas is the tune. It HAS to be the Bing version, though. Do you remember that part of the song where Bing whistles? Well, my dad could whistle that part perfectly and always did it in perfect pitch. I was so impressed as a little kid.

Second place would be Feliz Navidad. That's cuz I took Spanish, can sing the words, and actually know what they mean!