

# Holiday TV Favorites

The holiday season tends to bring out the best of the small screen – with turkey mishaps, family dysfunction and a bit of magic, it's impossible not to laugh at these classic sitcom episodes

BY LAUREL MILLS



## 1 "OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS"

*The Bob Newhart Show*

November 22, 1975

When Emily (Suzanne Pleshette) heads home for the holidays and her husband, Dr. Bob Hartley (Bob Newhart), stays behind in the Windy City, it quickly becomes a no-girls-allowed Thanksgiving for the psychiatrist and his pals. Choosing a liquid meal over the traditional Turkey Day fare, hilarity ensues for Hartley and the boys. The moment when Bob attempts to order "Moo Goo Goo Goo" from a nearby Chinese restaurant is a comedy classic.

## 2 "NO NUKES IS GOOD NUKES"

*Family Ties*

November 24, 1982

Elyse and Steven Keaton can't deny their activist, hippie roots despite the fact that it's Thanksgiving and Elyse's parents, Kate and Charlie Donnelly, are in town to spend the day with their daughter and her family. Intending to be home by dinner time, Elyse and Steven head off to protest nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, a run-in with the police lands the couple in jail. Charlie and the much-more-conservative-than-his-parents Alex try to bail the two out, but Elyse and Steven can't leave because they refuse to sign a contract barring them from future demonstrations. Eventually, the whole Keaton clan proves the strength of their "Family Ties" (hee hee) by sharing a holiday meal together down at the county lock-up.



## 3 "THANKSGIVING ORPHANS"

*Cheers*

November 27, 1986

When the ever-sassy Carla agrees to host Thanksgiving for her co-workers and select Cheers regulars, nothing goes as planned. Sam is stood up, Diane arrives in period costume and the turkey just won't cook. It takes one of the most memorable food fights in television history to save the day.



## 4 "IT'S A WONDERFUL JOB"

*Moonlighting*

December 16, 1986

The show known for its elaborate fantasy sequences and thick sexual tension provides both in spades in its third season. Maddie Hayes (Cybill Shepherd) insists that the entire office work through Christmas, leading to much resentment and sadness from her staff. Maddie's guardian angel, whom she meets at the corner pub, shows her the error of her ways with a glimpse at what life would have been like if she had never taken over the Blue Moon Detective Agency. Maddie also realizes how much Agnes Dipseto and that impish David Addison (Bruce Willis) mean to her.



## 5 "TRICK OR TREAT"

*Roseanne*

October 30, 1990

As a sitcom famous for its blue collar humor and non-traditional ways, it is only fitting that *Roseanne* made a bigger deal of Halloween than Thanksgiving or Christmas. In the nine years of prank-filled episodes, this one stands out the most because of Roseanne's decision to dress as a man and head down to the Lobo for some incognito fun. Between buying a drink for unsuspecting gal pal Crystal and talking trash during a game of pool, only Dan is wise to Roseanne's devious ways.

## 8 "OLDER WOMEN"

*Everybody Loves Raymond*

November 19, 2001

As is often true in families, the holidays rarely bring out the best in those lovable but cantankerous Barones. In this episode, it's the first time the whole family has gotten together since Debra's parents, Warren and Lois, divorced. To add fuel to the already uncomfortable fire, Warren has a date for the occasion. The family expects Warren to have traded his wife in for a younger model, and is surprised that his date is, well, not so young. As per usual, that's when the wisecracks begin.



## 10 "A BENIHANA CHRISTMAS"

*The Office*

December 14, 2006

When love turns sour for the often over-eager Michael Scott, head of the Scranton branch of Dunder Mifflin paper company, he finds comfort in the women and booze of the Benihana Steakhouse. Michael invites the Benihana waitresses to the Dunder Mifflin holiday gathering where his antics certainly enliven the party – it's just too bad he can't distinguish his date from her tag-along friend. Plus, Pam presents Jim with a gift that Dwight won't appreciate.

## 6 "THE ONE WITH THE FOOTBALL"

*Friends*

November 21, 1996

Proving that only true athletes should compete on Thanksgiving Day, the 1996 *Friends* football tournament remains a fan favorite. Phoebe flashes the boys to steal the ball, Chandler and Joey compete over the attentions of a beautiful on-looker and Monica and Ross find themselves in a grudge match that puts all other sibling rivalries to shame.



## 7 "THE STRIKE"

*Seinfeld*

December 18, 1997

It's hard to believe that it's been a decade since the world was first introduced to Festivus, the holiday created by Frank Constanza (Jerry Stiller) in response to the over commercialization of both Christmas and Hanukah. Celebrated primarily with a dinner time "airing of grievances" and the "feats of strength" (which involves father-son wrestling), Festivus is truly one-of-a-kind. And who could forget the lovely seasonal décor that is the Festivus aluminum pole?

## 9 "MR. MONK MEETS HIS DAD"

*Monk*

November 17, 2006

Obsessive-compulsive Adrian Monk is forced into nearly unthinkable conditions when he hits the road in a semi with his long-absent father. This holiday reunion of father and son and Monk's desperate need to reconnect with the father who abandoned him 39 years ago (in addition to watching the ever-phobic and hygienic Monk navigate truck stops) demonstrate the incredible poignancy that makes this show so great season after season.

