

Santa's dilemma: To give, or not to give... potatoes!

Written by The Conversation

I remember the Santa depicted in the movies being a kind man that spent the entire year making toys to give all the boys and girls. But the songs painted a slightly more cynical picture of a man who used all the tricks to *"find out who's naughty and nice"*.

In the schoolyard I heard whispers that Santa would give coal or potatoes to the naughty kids, but I never met anyone that actually got a piece of coal or a potato in their stocking. I figured it must have been a false threat ... until a few weeks ago.

Speaking to some of the other parents, I discovered that one of my daughter's best friends had indeed been given some potatoes last year. While another mother reported that one of her friend's six-year-old daughters had received an entire sack of potatoes - and not a single gift - from Santa because she had been exceptionally naughty that year. **THESE ARE TRUE STORIES!**

I couldn't believe it! That didn't sound like the Santa from the movies. Surely nobody would have the gumption to give my kids potatoes for Christmas!

Then my dear little five-year-old Susie started getting naughtier and naughtier. So I thought I should remind her that Santa *"sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been good or bad"* ... so she should be good for goodness sake!

This certainly got Susie worried, but not enough to behave any better. As I ripped out my hair with frustration, I told her that her own best friend from school had been given potatoes last year from Santa, so Susie better be careful otherwise she might find a few in her stocking. That did the trick. That and a few good nights of sleep!

She has been on her best behaviour for the last few days. So I thought we had avoided confronting Santa with his perennial Christmas dilemma – to give, or not to give, potatoes!

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That was until last night when my daughter calmly explained that she thinks she will probably get two potatoes this year. One for the time at home when she was so naughty that I was forced to explain Santa's potato rule. The second potato was for the one time she was REALLY naughty at school. "Ahh huh??"

After some questioning, she confessed to me in her most adult voice that *"one day all of my friends were saying very nasty things to each other, so we all had a big fight and got in trouble from the teacher"*

Susie figures she probably deserves a potato for that. As her parent, I am pretty sure it would be unwise to argue against this logic.

It is horrible to imagine your own children receiving potatoes on Christmas morning. On the positive side, however, my Susie is quite sure that Santa's potatoes must taste delicious.

I have no idea what Santa's potatoes taste like ... but I have a sneaky suspicion I am about to find out.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays!

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