

2022

Holiday Guide



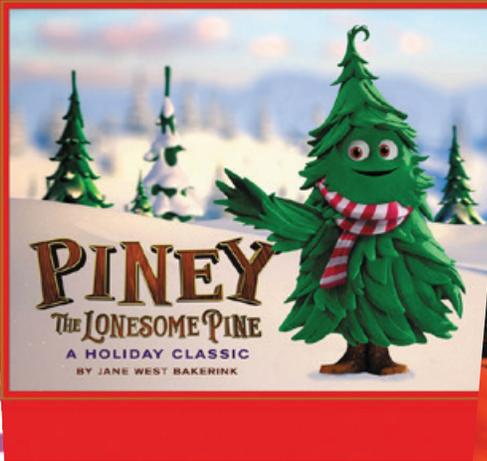
A SPECIAL PULL-OUT SECTION FROM

localtownpages 

'Tis the Season to Spread Joy with the Gift of Books!

Whichever holiday you celebrate this season with family & friends, books always make a thoughtful gift. There are unending possibilities for subjects of interest and inspiration. Here are just a few for consideration.

If you are looking to celebrate the magic of the season to share with young readers, *A Very Mercy Christmas* is the latest offering by favorite author Kate DiCamillo, illustrated by Chris Van Dusen. For fans of Mercy Watson, old and new, comes a joyful crescendo of favorite characters in a picture-book celebration of the quiet miracles the holidays bring. Mercy ornament included! In *Piney the Lonesome Pine* by Jane West Bakerink, holiday traditions come in all shapes and sizes in this fun adventure following a little sap-



illustrations by Daphna Awadish. *How to Catch a Reindeer* is the latest of the N.Y. Times bestselling series published by Sourcebooks where children attempt to catch Santa's reindeer Comet as Santa delivers presents to their neighborhood on Christmas Eve. The store also includes factual information about reindeer.

ling on a journey to become an amazing Christmas tree. Mendel can never seem to get anything right. But when he steps up to spread Hanukkah joy, he finds his moment to shine in *Mendel's Hanukkah Mess-up*, written by Chana & Larry Stiefel with cute watercolor il-

dren's classic, try *Mr. McCloskey's Marvelous Mallards* written by Emma Bland Smith, with sweet illustrations by Becca Stadtlander. This behind-the-scenes look at the creation of the classic and beloved picture book *Make Way for Ducklings* will

captivate young artists, writers, readers, and animal lovers alike. Another seasonal board book perfect for toddlers' little hands is **S is for Snow: A Snow**

ABC Primer filled with all sorts of fun things to do outside in the snow.

For slightly older readers, there's *How Winston Came Home for Christmas, a new Winston Adventure in Twenty-Four and a Half Chapters* by Alex T. Smith. Each chapter features its own festive activity for families and friends to do together in this heart-warming, magical adventure to enjoy during the countdown to Christmas as you follow Winston the Owl around the world to find a missing mouse. Readers looking for action & adventure can try *Skandar and the Unicorn Thief* by A,F, Steadman. A young boy

BOOKS

continued on page 4

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BOOKS

continued from page 2

who dreams of riding a deadly unicorn of his own fights for his destiny in this fantastical middle grade debut perfect for fans of the *Percy Jackson* and *Eragon* series.

It wouldn't be the holiday season without desserts! **New England Desserts: Classic and Creative Recipes for All Seasons** by Tammy Donroe Inman will get you through the whole year with featured treats using the bounty of New England. Homemade cakes, cookies, candies, pies, crisps,

cobblers, crumbles, and ice cream—year round! For some fun, holiday-inspired cooking, there are options too. **The Christmas Movie Cookbook** by Julia Rutland presents scrumptious recipes from your favorite holiday films like *A Christmas Story*, *The Polar Express* & many more. Or how about **The Nightmare Before Christmas: The Official Cookbook & Entertaining Guide** by Kim Laidlaw? Throw the spookiest soiree of the season with this delightful cookbook and entertaining guide inspired by Tim Burton's iconic holiday film *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

If a little holiday fantasy & intrigue is on your list, **The Night and Its Moon** is an addictive fantasy romance from TikTok sensation Piper CJ. Two orphans grow into powerful young women as they face countless threats to find their way back to each other. Light holiday themed rom-coms abound in **Just Like Magic** by Sarah Hogle and **The Holiday Trap** by Roan Parrish. In the former, from the author of *Twice Shy* comes a sprightly Christ-

mas novel, a rollicking romp through the absurdity of family holidays and the hope of new love. The latter takes place between a tiny Maine hometown, where an act of family meddling goes way too far, and the heart of big city New Orleans. Would swapping homes for the holidays lead to new dreams or bring appreciation of what they already have? **The Christmas Murder Game** by Alexandra Benedict is a perfectly plotted festive mystery. Twelve clues. Twelve keys. Twelve days of Christmas. But how many will die before Twelfth Night? Finally, **Spirit of the Season** by Fern Michaels, #1 New York Times bestselling author, delivers another heartwarming holiday novel set in a North Carolina B&B where guests may have the opportunity to reunite with the spirit of a loved one who's passed on.

For some insight into holiday traditions, **Why We Kiss Under the Mistletoe** by Michael P. Foley offers up a variety of explanations from the merry to the macabre. Don't forget something for the sports fanatic! A celebration of the last

two decades of sports success in Boston from the co-host of the #1 sports radio show in New England, Tony Massarotti has written **This Is Our City: Four Teams, Twelve Championships, and How Boston Became the Most Dominant Sports City in the World**.

Around the World in 80 Birds by Mike Unwin accompanied with gorgeous illustrations by Ryuto Miyake, is a beautiful and inspiring book that tells the stories of 80 birds around the world. Many birds come steeped in folklore and myth. Each has a story to tell that sheds a light on our relationship with the natural world and reveals just how deeply birds matter to us.

These suggestions are just the tip of the literary ice-berg. There are plenty more enchanting offerings to choose from. Find out for yourself as you explore the shelves of your local, community bookstore. Have a cozy holiday season!

Recommended by Debra Horan, Owner of Booklovers' Gourmet in Webster, MA

Shop Small this Holiday Season

The holidays are upon us. The hustle and bustle, parties, events, kids' school events ... the list seems to grow each year. And let's face it, as the list grows, we want — need even — to have other things become simpler. We use online stores with next day shipping and gift-wrapping services. We pick up prepackaged meals from the grocery store — or fast food on the way home because we're too tired to cook. Then ... there's Black Friday. Some people live for the hunt to get that special deal. They wait in lines, freezing, with that hope that they can get to the item they want before the other shoppers beat them to it. But what happens when they don't find the gift they wanted on Black Friday, or when they want that certain something for someone special — and a big box store just doesn't cut it?

Welcome to Small Business Saturday.

Small Business Saturday (November 26 this year) was created during the recession in 2010 to encourage shoppers to — well, you guessed it — shop small and locally. Since then, all 50 states

participate and a Small Business Saturday Coalition was formed.

It is estimated, that an average of .67¢ of every dollar spent on SBS stays in the local community as opposed to only .43¢ when you shop at chains. And folks, we're not just talking retail stores, don't forget your locally-owned restaurant and coffee shops — and their e-commerce sites.

Here are five reasons to patronize local establishments on Small Business Saturday (and every day):

More money stays in the community. Approximately 67% of every \$100 spent at local businesses will be reinvested back into the community. That money goes toward better schools, libraries, social services, and beautification projects.

Small businesses give back to their communities. Small business owners sponsor Little League teams, donate to community charities, and host fundraising events for area causes — making a direct impact on a community's quality of life.

Job creation is fueled by small businesses. Local establishments tend to hire within the

community. By patronizing Main Street shops and non-chain restaurants, consumers can help these businesses grow and thrive, creating even more jobs.

Small businesses carry unique products and gifts. Small businesses often carry items that consumers cannot find anywhere else. From handmade candles and jewelry to artwork and small clothing lines, local stores tend to stock products that are not mass-produced, helping area craftspeople and artists make a living, resulting in a more diverse, interesting community.

Small businesses support the "American Dream." Shopping small helps local entrepreneurs achieve the "American Dream," the belief that anyone, no matter his or her background, can attain success and upward mobility through hard work and perseverance.

While big retailers and chains are also part of many communities, it is the small businesses that truly make towns and cities unique. Independent restaurants and shops add character and interest and help create a sense of place.



Eat, Drink, Shop LOCAL

The proverbial Main Street, with its mix of small shops and restaurants, is the heartbeat of a community and an indicator of a community's overall economic health. By shopping local

on Small Business Saturday, and shopping small whenever possible, consumers can help ensure their communities remain vibrant, interesting, and great places to live.

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Preparing for the Holidays through the Eyes of a Puppy Named Luke

AMY PALUMBO-LECLAIRE

There's something about Fall that has Luke hooked. Maybe it's the dip in temperature allowing for chillier walks, or the smell of apple crisp baking in the oven. Maybe it's the pumpkins.

"Pumpkins!!"

Luke's first encounter with a pumpkin came as expected, with the intrigue of a puppy that's never seen a squash. Allow me to set the scene. We were at a neighborhood block party, and one full of adults outnumbered by children. Kids were everywhere: running, screeching, dropping crackers, gliding on scooters, crying, climbing, and feeling better. Luke identified with the action.

He sat leashed in the middle of the street's lollipop, smiling casually while his mouth moved

from time to time, as though he was dying to say something. "I feel like we have a connection!" He studied his neighborhood friends.



I could tell that he longed to be with them and share in the craziness and free-

dom that goes along with being young, and thinking young thoughts. He was only seven weeks old when he first met (and heard) the happy squeals of the neighborhood gang. "Look at the puppy!" Ears pinned back, he dashed for the safety of my lap like a frightened bunny. "They're going to get me!"

Luke grew taller and wiser while his fear faded. He matured, learned boundaries, and accepted training treats from the kind palms of his friends' hands. They helped teach him how to sit on command and "be easy." They hollered to him from opened car door windows. "Loooooook!!" They visited him at the bus stop. "Luke's here!" He'd watch them emerge from the big yellow bus with the fascination of a child gazing up at a star. The closer they got to my front lawn, the more he wiggled and whimpered. "I just can't believe this is happening! My friends are get-

ting off the bus! I love them so much!" Luke's exuberance, however adorable, sometimes got in the way.

"Luke, that's not yours," I scolded him one time, wiping down the slimed head of a bald baby doll that had dangled helplessly from the arms of one of his smaller friends. He backed off while I consoled her tears, but I could see the desperation in my pup's eyes. "I just want to hold the baby."

Another time he crashed a craft-party happening on one of

the girl's driveways. "Luke!!" I pried open his mouth to extract a few fuzzy pom-poms. Needless to



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say, Luke can be a handful. Sixty pounds or not, he's still a puppy.

For this reason, I had every intention of keeping him on a short leash during the neighborhood block party. Friends were free to grab a bowl of chili and come to the pup's side, should they want to socialize. Dogs belong on leashes and that's that. I gazed down at my puppy. He sat proudly, wearing a big smile, just trying to fit into the culture of a suburban neighborhood. A weak moment found me. I scanned the landscape. Children had dispersed to other areas, snacks had been cleared, and adults continued to sip from red cups.

"Go ahead, Luke." I un-snapped my pup's leash and off he went. "PUMPKINS!!" He headed straight for the pumpkin patch on my neighbor's front lawn, a cluster of perfect, smooth pumpkins lined up as though prepared for a contest. Overwhelmed, he sniffed each squash one by one in a zig-zaggy kind of way. "This one smells so good. No this one's better. What about this one? Or this one? So many pumpkins, so little time!" I watched him sniff pumpkins with the critical eye of a wise

Dog Mom. Today was not the day for tears. "Good boy, Luke." He sniffed. He nudged. But he did not take.

The incident made me think about surprises yet to come. Christmas is around the corner. Children, in their grand innocence, bring light to the magic of Christmas. Whether it's cuddling up to watch Rudolph on television, decorating the tree, bundling up to play in the snow, or opening a present; children are content just to be together and share in the wonder of the holiday season. Puppies are like children. They are innocent, present and naturally appreciative of the joys of the holiday season.

Thanks to a puppy named Luke Valentino, this Christmas will be full of all of this, along with a few surprises. Stay tuned.

Tell me your dog story. Write to me at amyleclair@hotmail.com

Luke Valentino is our furry friend from the Pages of our sister publications, The YankeeXpress and Blackstone Valley Xpress. Want to hear more about his adventures? Follow him online at TheYankeeXpress.com and on Instagram @livingwithlukevalentino

Holiday gifts for four-legged family members

Holiday shoppers who are busy making lists and checking them twice should make sure they don't overlook the family pet. Christmas has gone to the cats and dogs, as a greater number of people include their companion animals when selecting gifts each year.

A study by OnePoll conducted by Rover.com, the nation's largest network of dog sitters and walkers, found that 95 percent of pet owners have bought holiday gifts for their pets. Gifts can range from everyday needs, like food and treats, to more lavish extravagances like spa treatments.

Pet owners who plan to get their pets gifts this year may want to consider some of the emerging pet trends as they browse wares and services. The Balance, a business, career and industry information site, says pet industry trends point toward these segments seeing growth.

Natural pet products

Just as people are interested in protecting the health of the planet and their own personal health, so, too, are they extending this concern to companion animals. Natural pet products, which can include natural flea and tick remedies, holistic foods, organic items, and all-natural grooming products, can make great gifts.

Specialty pet services

The American Pet Products Association says the demand for high-end pet grooming and other services is substantial. In addition, personalized training, behavioral consulting, portrait photography, dog sitting, and upscale spa treatments like pet Reiki and massage are booming.

Mobile pet grooming

Mobile pet grooming has become the norm in many areas. Mobile pet grooming can reduce the potential stress on animals, and tends to be very convenient

for customers, particularly seniors and others who have mobility issues.

Beyond these growing trends, pet owners have a bevy of other ideas from which to choose. Here are just a few different suggestions:

- tests to detect pets' DNA and trace breed and ancestry,
- interactive puzzles to keep pets engaged and banish boredom,
- stylish storage baskets for pet toys,
- hidden cat litter or dog crate items that camouflage commonly used pet items,
- heated pet bed for cozy nights and mornings, and
- signature vests, coats and sweaters to look good and remain comfortable.

Pet gifts are popular this time of year, ensuring all members of the family have a treat to open.

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Lesser known Chanukah traditions

Chanukah is a relatively modern holiday in regard to the Hebrew calendar. Unlike Yom Kippur or Passover, which are steeped in rich traditions, there are few Chanukah customs.

Chanukah celebrants still participate in various customs each year, some of which are customized according to family preferences. While some traditions, such as the lighting of the Chanukah menorah, are familiar, others may not be as widely known — especially to those outside of the faith. Here’s a look at a select few.

- **Saying the Shehecheyanu blessing:** Traditionally, there are two blessings that some people say each night while lighting the candles. The first is recited while holding the lit shamash, and the second is said while lighting the candles. Another blessing, known as the “Shehecheyanu,” is said the first night. According to 18Doors, a resource on the Jewish faith, it’s the same blessing traditionally said on the first night of all Jewish holidays and other special occasions.
- **Display or use of the shofar:** A shofar is a type of instrument made from a ram’s horn. It is a symbol of the ram that Abraham offered as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac, exemplifying heroic faith of the fathers of the Jewish people. The sho-



far also serves as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and calls people to strive for Israel’s renewal and fellowship with God.

- **Singing “Ma’oz Tzur”:** Chanukah songs may not be as numerous or as widely sung as Christmas carols during the holiday season, but there are a select few that are part of the festivities. “Oh Chanukah Oh Chanukah” and “The Dreidl Song” are some of the most widely known

songs, but some people also follow the custom of singing “Ma’oz Tzur (Rock of Ages)” around the menorah.

The words were composed in the 13th century, and the song summarizes historical challenges faced by the Jew-

ish people that were overcome with God’s help.

- **Use of oil in Chanukah feasts:** It’s well known that latkes, or fried potato pancakes, are served around Chanukah. The reason is due to the oil used to fry them, which traditionally is olive oil. Fried foods call to mind a specific Chanukah miracle. After the Greeks destroyed the sanctuary and defiled what was thought to be all of the oil, one jug sealed with the imprint of the High Priest was found. That one jug managed to keep the Temple’s menorah lit for eight days, despite it being insufficient to handle this task. This was considered a miracle and celebrated in subsequent years.

Chanukah is a relatively modern holiday with few traditions. However, the customs associated with this holiday are held dear.

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Holiday Recipes

Christmas Breakfast Casserole

2-3 Cans of Pillsbury Grands Flaky Layers
8-10 Eggs
1 tbsp of butter
1 bag of Cabot Shredded Extra Sharp Cheddar
Your choice of Breakfast meat: Sausage, Bacon, Ham, Corned Beef Hash
2 Large Potatoes, diced
2-3 tbsp of olive oil
Onion (Optional)
Peppers (Optional)
Salt, Pepper
Chipotle Black Pepper (if you like a kick)

(Serves 4-6 people - 9x13 pan)

Spray Casserole Pan with baking spray set aside. Open a can of Pillsbury rolls, sprinkle flour on the surface and roll out dough so thin and flat.

Cover Baking Dish with dough so all sides and bottom are covered. Set aside.

In a pan, cook up sausage, bacon, corned beef or ham (use as many meats as you like) cut or break up into bite size pieces. Set aside.

Once the pan is empty, prepare scrambled eggs (8-10 eggs, with milk whisk until combined). Put 1 tbsp of butter in the pan,

melt and add egg mixture and scramble together. Season salt and pepper.

Cook until slightly wet or undercooked.

In a pan, boil diced potatoes so fork tender (about 10 minutes).

Once that is done, set aside potatoes.

Cut up peppers, onions and saute with olive oil until cooked through. Set aside. Fry up potatoes with olive oil, season with salt, and chipotle black pepper (or pepper if you prefer). Then add pepper and onion mixture to peppers and toss together. Drain any excess oil, water etc.

Take the casserole pan layered with biscuit, add in scrambled eggs, cheese, meat, potato, pepper and onion mixture and layer with cheese and finish with some cheese on top too.

Open the other can of Pillsbury biscuits and layer the top the same way you did the bottom. Pinching them together so no holes in dough. Cut a few small slits in dough

Bake 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until golden brown on top.

Tip: Prepare the day before and leave in the fridge. Take out early to bring to room temp then cook

Egg Nog Holiday Cake

by Ree Drummand

Need a Bundt Cake Pan.
Baking Spray
1 Cup of Unsalted Butter (I use salted came out fine)
2 cups of Sugar
4 large eggs
2 3/4 cups of all purpose flour
1 tsp of baking powder
1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
1 cup egg nog
2 tbsp of rum
1 tbsp of vanilla bean paste (a heaping tbsp is best!)

Icing:

2 cups powdered sugar
2 tbsp of egg nog
1 tbsp of rum
1 tsp of vanilla bean paste

For the cake: Prepare a 12-cup standard Bundt pan with non-stick baking spray. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat the butter and sugar on medium until smooth and creamy, about 4 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.

With the mixer on low, add one-third of the flour, and all of the baking powder, salt and nutmeg. Add one-half of the eggnog, and

all of the rum and vanilla bean paste. Add another one-third of the flour, then the remaining eggnog, and the remaining flour, mixing well to combine between each addition.

Transfer the batter to the prepared Bundt pan and smooth the top. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center of the pan comes out clean, 50 minutes to 1 hour. Let the cake cool in the pan for 10 minutes. Turn the cake onto a wire rack and cool completely, about 1 hour.

For the icing: In a medium bowl, whisk together the powdered sugar, eggnog, bourbon, and vanilla bean paste until smooth. Spoon the icing over the cake and let stand until hardened, about 15 minutes

Cranberry-Orange Bread

2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 cup butter, softened
1 tablespoon grated orange peel
3/4 cup orange juice
1 egg
1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries, chopped
1/2 cup chopped nuts (optional)

Heat oven to 350. Grease bottom only of loaf pan, 8 1/2 x 4 1/2 x 2 1/2 or 9 x 5 x 3 inches. Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and baking soda; stir in butter until mixture is crumbly. Stir in orange peel, orange juice and egg just until moistened; stir in cranberries and nuts. Spread in pan. Bake until wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean, 8-inch loaf pan 1 1/4 hours, 9-inch loaf pan 55 to 65 minutes;

cool 5 minutes. Loosen sides of loaf from pan; remove from pan. Cool completely before slicing.

Bailey's

4 eggs (or egg beaters)
1 cup whiskey
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tbs. chocolate syrup
1 tbs. instant coffee
1/4 tsp. almond extract
1 can of condensed milk
1/2 pint of cream

Mix all ingredients together in an electric mixer and serve - or keep for up to seven days.

Kahlúa

3 1/2 cups of sugar
2 ounces of instant coffee
2 cups of boiling water
1 quart of Christian Brothers Brandy
6- to 8-inch vanilla bean

Dilute instant coffee with a little boiling water. In a bowl add sugar and rest of boiling water. Combine coffee mixtures with sugar mixture and pour into a 1/2-gallon container. Add the Brandy. Slice the Vanilla bean lengthwise and drop into bottle. Shake bottle, store in dark place for six to eight weeks shaking every two days.

Prime Rib

1/4 cup dry red wine
2 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
1 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. coarse ground black

RECIPES

continued on page 13

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Safety first when buying toys for children this holiday season



December is a special time of year for children, millions of whom await the arrival of Santa Claus and the bounty of toys he delivers each year. When buying holiday gifts for youngsters, adults must consider safety. According to the Alliance for Children and Families, approximately 217,000 children are treated at hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries each year. Holiday shoppers are urged to stick to age-related recommendations on product packaging and avoid toys that do not contain the ATSM (American Society for Testing and Materials) label.

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RECIPES*continued from page 10*

pepper
5-5 1/2 lbs. boneless prime rib roast

In large resealable plastic bag, combine all ingredients, except roast, and mix well. Add roast and seal bag, turning to make sure roast is coated on all sides. Refrigerate for 6 to 8 hours, turning occasionally.

(Note: this marinate can be done overnight - just turn several times before cooking.)

Heat oven to 350. Place roast flat side up, on rack in roasting pan; discard marinade.

Bake for 2-2 1/2 hours for a medium roast. Let stand 12-20 minutes before slicing.

Italian Cookies

Cookies:
3 eggs
3/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 tsp. anise or lemon extract
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
pinch of salt
3 1/2 - 4 cups flour
3/4 cup milk

Icing:
2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar
1/2 tsp. of flavoring (anise or lemon)
2 tbs. water

Beat eggs well, add the rest of ingredients and beat well again. Add 3 1/2 - 4 cups of flour, adding the last cup gradually to form a rather stiff cookie dough. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper and drop dough by tablespoons to form long loaves to a cookie sheet. Bake at 400

for about 15 minutes. Frost with confectioners' sugar icing flavored with lemon or anise. Cut into slices when cool.

Yum Yums

An annual Christmas treat

1 package of dates, chopped (approx. 1 1/2 - 2 cups)
1 cup sugar
2 cups crispy rice cereal
1 egg
1/2 cup glace cherries (candied cherries)
1/4 lb. butter
1/2-1 cup desiccated coconut
1/2 cup chopped nuts

Melt butter and stir in dates and sugar. Beat the egg and stir in. Cook on low heat for 10 minutes - until dates are soft. Add nuts and stir in rice cereal and cherries. Let cool for approximately 15 minutes. Form into balls and roll in coconut. Refrigerate or freeze until served. Makes approximately 4 dozen.

Day After Turkey Divan

(1) 10 oz. package of frozen broccoli or asparagus spears, cooked and drained
4 large slices of Turkey
1 can of condensed cream of vegetable, celery, chicken or mushroom soup
1/3 cup milk
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Arrange broccoli or asparagus in shallow baking dish. Top with turkey slices. Blend soup and milk; pour over turkey; sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 450 until sauce is slightly browned - about 15 minutes.

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When did Christmas lights become so popular?

Holiday lights are now everywhere come the holiday season. Private homeowners tend to hang the holiday lights outside their homes around Thanksgiving weekend and keep them up through New Year's Day. Though it might seem like a tradition without a deep history, decorating a Christmas tree with electric lights can be traced all the way back to the nineteenth century. In 1882, Edward Johnson, who was a friend and colleague of the man who invented light bulbs, Thomas Edison, replaced candles, which had traditionally been used to briefly light Christmas trees, with light bulbs. But at the time of Johnson's innovation, the high cost and relative infancy of light bulbs ensured the idea did not catch on. And though United States President Grover Cleveland used electric lights to illuminate a Christmas tree in the White House in 1895, it would be another eight years before General Electric would begin selling Christmas light kits. Those kits cost \$12 in 1903, which equates to several hundred dollars today. The first outdoor Christmas light shows started to become popular in the 1920s, and this is the same time when commercial sales of Christmas lights picked up. In the 1960s, GE's decision to begin manufacturing Christmas lights overseas helped reduce the price of outdoor lights even further, thus paving the way for the tradition of decorating home exteriors with string lights during the holiday season to take a firm hold. And that tradition remains wildly popular today.



Safety First

Decorating the interior and exterior of a home is a beloved holiday season tradition in millions of households. Such decor makes it easy to dive into the festive nature of the season.

Many people could not imagine a holiday season without decorating their homes, and it's vital that celebrants do so safely. Fire safety is especially important during a time of year when string lights and potentially dried out trees feature so prominently. These fire safety tips can ensure this holiday season is safe.

- Buy the safest lights. It might be tempting to buy the most inexpensive lights, especially given all the extra costs already associated with the holiday season. Testing laboratories such as CSA, Intertek and UL certify products to ensure they're safe for use. Products that aren't certified should be avoided.

- Use lights and cords where they're intended to be used. The packaging on lights will indicate if the product is intended to be used indoors or outdoors. Extension cords made for indoors also should not be used outdoors and

vice versa.

- Ask an electrician to inspect your exterior outlets and circuits. Ground fault circuit interruptor (GFCI) outlets are designed to prevent electric shocks and reduce the risk of electrical fires. Most areas now require new homes be built exclusively with GFCIs, which are recognizable because they feature two buttons between the outlets. But older homes may not be equipped with GFCIs, particularly with exterior outlets. GFCI installation is not an especially expensive job, so homeowners should ask an electrician to inspect their interior and exterior outlets and replace non-GFCIs with GFCIs.

- Avoid overloading circuits. Overloaded circuits pose a significant fire hazard. When plugging in lights, choose outlets that aren't already occupied by devices and other electronics. If need be, unplug appliances like televisions and devices while lights are on and plugged in.

When decorating this holiday season, celebrants are urged to do everything they can to reduce the risk of fire in their homes.

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Recycle and reduce waste for the holidays

The holiday season is a special time of year. Individuals often spend a little more on gifts, indulge a little more on rich foods and treats and make a concerted effort to enjoy more time with their loved ones during the holi-

days. The tendency to overdo things during the holiday season can create a lot of waste. In fact, Americans produce 25 percent more garbage from Thanksgiving through the end of the year,

according to Waste Advantage magazine, a publication of the waste and recycling industry. That uptick equates to one million tons of extra trash per week throughout the holidays.

Extra food, plastic and paper waste is generated this time of year, but people can be mindful of the potential to go overboard and take some steps to be more waste-conscious as they entertain.

- Reuse a small portion of wrapping paper or look for other wrapping items. Sunday comics, newsprint, colorful magazine pages, and even pieces of fabric can be used to wrap gifts in lieu of purchasing new wrapping paper. Otherwise, collect used wrapping paper and reuse it next year, doing the same with boxes and bows. According to researchers at Stanford University, if every American family wrapped just three presents in reused materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

- Skip disposable party items. It's certainly easy to use disposable plates, napkins and cups when hosting holiday



parties, but that is very wasteful. Opt for durable, reusable products that can be packed away and used each year during holiday events.

- Buy durable and reusable items as gifts. Avoid fad gifts and focus on items that will have staying power. Homemade gifts, such as foods, knitted scarves, artwork, and more, are generally eco-friendly.
- Set up marked trash and recycling receptacles. Remind

party guests to recycle the appropriate materials by clearly marking a pail designed for collecting recyclables, such as cans, plastic beverage bottles and glass wine bottles. Most hard plastics can be recycled.

- Remove your name from catalog lists. Call companies and ask to be taken off promotional mailing lists to reduce paper waste.

• Send a photo. Mail holiday card recipients photos of the kids or the entire family in lieu of cards. They're apt to save the photos and display them, helping to keep even more paper trash out of landfills.

- Research new recipes for leftovers. With an abundance of food remaining after entertaining, turn leftovers into new meals by exploring recipes from friends or by doing a little research online.

Waste can get out of control during the holidays, but there are ways to tame the excess.

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Toys for Tots spare change roadside collection on Nov. 26

The mission of the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation is to assist the U. S. Marine Corps in providing a tangible sign of hope to economically disadvantaged children at Christmas. This assistance includes providing day-to-day leadership and oversight of the Program, raising funds to provide toys to supplement the collections of local Toys for Tots Campaigns, to provide promotional and support material and defray the costs of

conducting annual Toys for Tots Campaigns. Other Foundation support includes providing administrative, advisory, financial, logistic and promotional support to local Toys for Tots Coordinators; managing funds raised and monies donated based on the use of Toys for Tots name or logo;

to action in support of this patriotic community action program.

On Saturday, Nov. 26, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., the United States Marines and Toys for Tots will hold a roadside collection for spare change in the area of Route 16 and Cumberland Farms in Hopedale.

Representatives will be on the sidewalks and will be wearing Marine Corps Dress Blues, red jackets or red reflective jackets.

To find out more about the Toys for Tots program which celebrates 75 years this year, visit toysfortots.org/donate.

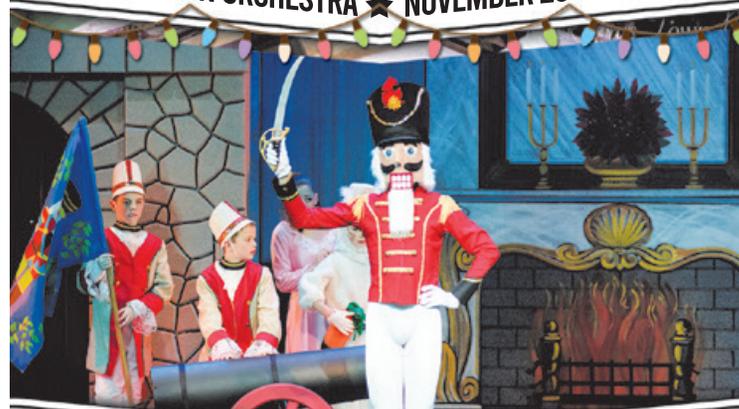


providing other support the Marine Corps, as a federal agency, cannot provide; and conducting public education and information programs about Toys for Tots that call the general public

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Craft an entire day around tree shopping

Though retailers may begin playing holiday tunes shortly after Halloween, for many people, no date on the calendar marks the beginning of the holiday season better than the day they pick up their Christmas tree.

There are many different ways to acquire a Christmas tree. Some people prefer artificial Christmas trees that can be stored and taken out each year. Others make a yearly expedition to a tree lot or a Christmas tree farm to find the perfect fir or spruce. Historians believe a man named W.V. McGallard planted 25,000 Norway spruce seedlings at his Mercer County, New Jersey farm in 1901, essentially establishing the first commercial Christmas tree farm. By 1908, customers could visit the farm and choose trees for \$1 each. McGallard helped create an entirely new industry that now accounts for 350 million trees being grown and sold in the United States every year.

Selecting a Christmas tree may not take more than an hour or two, but there are ways for



families and other tree shoppers to maximize their time spent looking for a tree.

- Bring refreshments. Couple Christmas tree shopping with picnicking if the weather is amenable. Pack some foldable chairs into the vehicle (sitting on the ground on a blanket may be too cold) and

bring along thermoses of coffee or hot cocoa. Snacks like granola bars, Christmas cookies or other filling treats can keep everyone satisfied and energized while they shop for a tree.

- Pair tree shopping with a trip to see lighting displays. Find the tree lot or tree farm and

then scope out potentially scenic spots to view holiday lighting displays nearby. Neighborhood Facebook or other social media groups often tout homes that put up eye-catching displays. Ask around for addresses and plan your own tours.

- Plan a night out. Everyone may be tired and hungry after a long day of Christmas tree hunting. Plus, it's typically a good idea to wait some time for boughs to open before decorating. Use this opportunity to dine out and return home ready to decorate. Make it a regular occurrence that Christmas tree shopping is followed by a family meal at a favorite restaurant.

- Watch a classic film. Many different holiday movies are broadcast this time of year and each enhances the Christmas spirit. While putting up the tree, play a favorite film in the background. What better way to enjoy decorating your own tree than by watching Charlie Brown adorn his meager evergreen at the same time?

Make a day of selecting and putting up the Christmas tree each year. Doing so can enhance the holidays and make for an entertaining way to spend time together as a couple or family.



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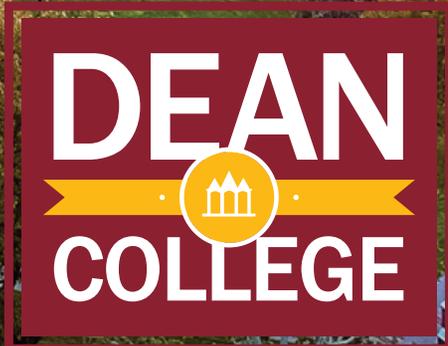
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