

Holiday

GUIDE

**Holiday decorating tips,
Holiday recipes,
Gift ideas & more!**

Special Supplement to
 **THE REPORTER**

It's TIME TO THINK SMALL in Delaware County!

By Ray Pucci

One of my favorite movies this time of year is "It's a Wonderful Life." The story centers on George Bailey, who, through the intervention of an angel, is given the opportunity to see how his life has affected his entire community. In this affirmation of life, George realizes that each life is valuable and each decision can have profound consequences on the future of seemingly unconnected lives.

During the next few weeks we will be encouraged to "buy local" and "shop small." Small Business Saturday is November 30. It's a nationally recognized day held on the Saturday after Thanksgiving and it has now become a tradition, encouraging holiday shoppers to support local brick-and-mortar businesses rather than big box brands or online-only stores.

Shopping in our neighborhood stores offers great

value and superior service. Many of us, both personally and for our businesses, try to purchase goods and services from our neighbors whenever possible. Like George Bailey, we have the ability, particularly this time of year, to make decisions that will affect our communities.

Our decisions to buy locally during this holiday season and throughout the year have broad implications. Every dollar we spend in the county is one more dollar that can circulate through our economy, working to maintain and expand private-sector employment.

Imagine our communities without its small local businesses. Who will give the additional support our school athletic teams, music programs, and other school activities need and deserve? Where will our local service groups look for members and financial support? What will be our

community hub - that gathering spot for the exchange of news and stories? Pretty bleak picture, huh?

Throughout the year, we count on our Main Street to be the heart of our community. At this time of year, Main Street counts on us to remember its importance and support with our purchasing decisions.

But what exactly are the benefits of shopping small, and why should you do it on Small Business Saturday and every day? Here are some huge reasons:

- Small businesses give back (more) to your community.
- When you support a local business, you're supporting your neighborhood. What's more, on average, 68% of each purchase at local independent businesses is recirculated locally, compared to less than 14% of purchases at chain stores.
- Small businesses make a major economic impact
- More than half of jobs

created in the U.S. since 1995 were created by small businesses. The more you shop at a local store, the more potential job opportunities you could help them provide.

- Small businesses provide greater access to product diversity
- Small businesses have just as much access to vendors that big box businesses do. If a small business doesn't have the products you want or need, ask them! They're also much more receptive and willing to order them for you.
- Small businesses provide better customer service.
- Small business owners strive to survive and one of the biggest advantages they have over large retailers is the ability to provide more personable, hands-on, and memorable customer service.
- Small businesses create a sense of community.
- You're much more likely to get to know a small business owner in your neighborhood.
- You're going to feel good.

It is, in many ways, "a wonderful life" in Delaware

County. So, when you start your holiday shopping, remember George Bailey and plan to visit that neighborhood store or seek out that local artisan or entrepreneur.

This year, take the Pledge to Spend LOCAL, Shop SMALL, Eat LOCAL, Enjoy LOCAL, and support the small businesses that support you and your community.

Your purchases will mean more when your dollars are spent closer to home and those receiving your gifts will appreciate your thoughtfulness for selecting such unique items. Your communities will appreciate your thoughtfulness, too.

Ray Pucci is the president of the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce. The Delaware County Chamber of Commerce believes that healthy communities begin with prosperous businesses. By taking action in key areas--ADVOCATE, CONNECT, and GROW--we are the unified voice of business for the improvement of our communities. Visit delawarecounty.org for more information.

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These decorative items add a lot to holiday festivities



It's easy to recognize the holiday season has arrived. Holiday-centric sights and sounds abound this time of year. In fact, the arrival of decorations in stores seemingly comes earlier and earlier each year, perhaps to accommodate people's undying enthusiasm for the holiday season. Decorating a home or business for the holidays involves some familiar items, but this is a time of year when people can truly make the holidays their own. With that in mind, here are some considerations for decorations and other trinkets that can add a lot of cheer to this already festive time of year.

• **Wreaths:** Wreaths are one of the simplest ways to dress up windows, doors or other areas of a home. These decorative items can be made from various materials. Evergreen boughs are one of the more traditional, but there's also colorful garlands, flowers or even ribbon that can be wrapped to make a wreath.

• **Lights:** Lights are integral parts of both Christian and Jewish holiday celebrations. Lights adorn homes to represent Christ being the Light of the World. In Judaism, the lighting of eight candles for Chanukah represents how a small amount of Temple oil miraculously burned for eight days and nights. Filling a home with artificial lights or candles adds a festive touch to dark winter evenings.

• **Advent calendar:** While it is called an advent calendar and traditionally ties into the time preceding Christmas, anyone can utilize an advent "countdown" calendar as they anticipate the arrival of Christmas Day. There are different iterations of advent calendars, from chocolate calendars to decorative ones featuring doors behind which there are whimsical figurines. Kids may even want to get involved in making home-made calendars.

• **Poinsettias:** Poinsettias come in a variety of colors,

but red is the hue of choice for holiday decorating. Surprisingly, poinsettias are tropical plants. The "flowers" you see on the plants aren't flowers at all. They're modified leaves called bracts. If you take good care of poinsettias, they even can be planted outdoors for the summer.

• **Boughs and branches:** One of the easiest ways to add a festive touch to a home for the holidays is with items that likely can be scavenged from outdoors. Take a hike and gather some evergreen boughs, tree branches, pinecones, and holly sprigs, which can be turned into garlands, wreaths or centerpieces. With a little white speckle paint, you can give them a snow-covered look. Decorating for the holidays is a popular tradition and one that can make spaces even more festive to enjoy. Various items can enhance the ambiance and set the scene for the joyous weeks to come.

WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to holiday baking.

G E R N G I

Answer: Ginger

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Kick off the Holidays with a Festive Cookie Recipe Exchange

(StatePoint) When we think about the holidays, a lot of the special moments we remember most fondly from years past involve sharing food with loved ones — from festive cookie exchanges to the scents and smells of family-favorite dishes and desserts, to warm beverages on cold nights.

That's why McCormick is dishing up these cooking tips for creating special moments:

- Incorporate seasonal

herbs, spices and seasonings like sage, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon and nutmeg into your cooking and baking to provide long-lasting fresh flavors, vibrant colors and appetizing aromas.

- Use ready-to-make dry recipe mixes, such as turkey or brown gravy, to easily create perfectly blended flavors for sauces that elevate your holiday meals.

- Rely on extracts like pure vanilla and peppermint to enhance the flavors and aromas of holiday treats.

This holiday season, the McCormick brand is also going on a virtual quest for the best holiday cookie recipe through the McCormick Cookie Quest contest. If you have a winning cookie recipe, consider joining the fun.

Official Rules and entry instructions can be found by visiting: mccormick.com/cookie-quest-terms-and-conditions Ends Dec. 8. Sponsor: McCormick & Company.

In the spirit of the virtual cookie recipe exchange, McCormick is partnering with famed bakery Milk Bar and its rule-breaking, award-winning founder and CEO, Christina Tosi, to create and share Milk Bar x McCormick Candy Cane Pretzel Bark Cookies. On Dec. 4, which is National Cookie Day, select Milk Bar locations in New York City, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. will give away these scrumptious cookies to the first 100 customers, while supplies last. The limited-time cookie will also be on sale at select locations starting on National Cookie Day through Dec. 31. And as part of the collaboration, McCormick and Milk Bar are also sharing the recipe, so you can make these delectable cookies at home!

"The holiday season is all about sharing. That's why we're so excited to share one of our favorite holiday cookie recipes and encourage creative bakers all around the country to do the same," says Giovanna DiLegge, vice president of Marketing, North American Consumer at McCormick.



Festive Cookie Recipe

Ingredients:

2 sticks (1 cup) unsalted butter, softened
 3/4 cup granulated sugar
 1/2 cup light brown sugar
 1 large egg
 1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Peppermint Extract
 1/2 teaspoon McCormick Pure Vanilla Extract
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon kosher salt
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
 2 cups white chocolate chips
 1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons McCormick Candy Cane Sugar, divided
 1 1/2 cups mini pretzels

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spray two half-sheet pans with no-stick cooking spray or line with parchment or silicone baking mats. Mix butter and sugars in large bowl with heavy spatula for about 2 minutes until well blended. Add egg and extracts, stirring until combined and fluffy, about

1 minute.

2. Mix flour, salt, baking powder and baking soda in a medium bowl. Add dry ingredients to butter and sugar mixture, stirring just until combined. Stir in white chocolate chips, 3 tablespoons of Candy Cane Sugar and mini pretzels, mixing until evenly blended.

3. Place the remaining 1/4 cup Candy Cane Sugar in medium bowl. Use a 1/3-cup measuring cup or 2 3/4-ounce cookie scoop to portion dough into balls. Toss dough balls in Candy Cane Sugar to coat and place 2 to 3 inches apart on prepared baking pans.

4. Bake 8 to 10 minutes, until the edges are golden brown. Cool completely before serving.

Tip: Can't get your hands on McCormick Candy Cane Sugar? Increase McCormick Peppermint Extract to 1 1/2 teaspoons, stir in 2 tablespoons of red colored sugar along with the chocolate chips, then use 1/4 cup red colored sugar to roll cookies before baking.

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Make holiday crafting a family affair

Families gather frequently during the holiday season as everyone enjoys the feasts and festivities that are synonymous with this time of year. Families often bake and decorate together, as these activities are inclusive of people of all ages.

This time of year also is one for dabbling in creative pursuits. Now is a prime opportunity to bond with children over a table full of paint, glue, beads, and other crafty supplies. The crafts made during the holidays often become cherished mementos that will be regarded fondly for years to come. Here are some ideas to inspire holiday creativity.

Snowman family

Handprint crafts are popular among children. Adults and children can dip their hands into washable white paint and make a handprint stamp on a small canvas, wooden palette or even a terracotta flowerpot. Decorate the white fingerprints with black dots to look like the faces of the snowmen and paint on top hats and scarves. In the years to come, artists can marvel at how small their hand prints once were.

Wine cork reindeer

Repurpose wine corks by crafting adorable little reindeer. Two corks make up the head and the body, and four vertically will comprise the feet. Stick on googly eyes, and add a small red or black bead for the nose. Pipe cleaners can be bent to form the reindeer's antlers.

Family garlands

This craft also makes use of handprints. Ask all family members to trace their handprints on different colors of construction paper or

card stock. Cut out all of the paper hands, punch holes in the tops and then string a ribbon through. Decorate the Christmas tree or a mantle with this garland.

Miniature Christmas trees



Paint the tips of gathered pine cones with green paint and allow to dry. Add white glitter or paint as snow. Glue the pine cones to wine corks that will serve as the tree trunks, and attach a small wooden star to the top of the trees for the finishing touch.

Decoupage ornaments

Purchase wood or plastic ball ornaments. Cover with small scraps of cut fabric or paper dipped in craft glue or Mod Podge, and attach to the ornament in an overlapping fashion. Remember to add a string from which the ornament can be hung on the tree. Allow to dry completely before use.

Paper chain Advent calendar

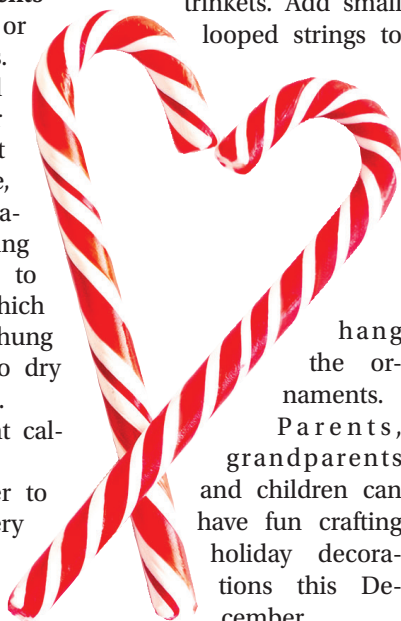
Cut strips of paper to make a link for every day of Advent. Advent begins Sunday, Dec. 1, and lasts until

Christmas. The top link can be any design artists prefer, but those who need a little inspiration can consider a religious symbol, the face of a reindeer, a snowman, or a Christmas tree. Hang the

chain and then children can take turns ripping off a link from the bottom each day as they count down to the holiday.

Popsicle stick snowflakes

Paint four popsicle sticks per snowflake in desired colors. Decorate with glue, pompoms, beads, or other trinkets. Add small looped strings to



hang the ornaments.

Parents, grandparents and children can have fun crafting holiday decorations this December.

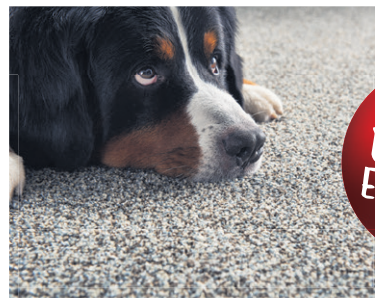
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Holiday decorating ideas

Homes are often described as sanctuaries for their residents. Homes also provide a great way for homeowners to express themselves, an opportunity that is amplified during the holiday season.

Holiday decor takes center stage come December, and there are a number of ways for homeowners to utilize their homes to showcase their holiday spirit during this special time of year.

• **Wrap the front door.** Gift-wrapped front doors have been popular for some time, and they remain a great way to utilize a home's entryway to spread a little holiday cheer. Shiny, single-color door wraps may never

go out of style, but homeowners can choose patterned wraps as well. A bow door cover lets all visitors know a home and its residents are full of holiday cheer.

• **Go for the garland.** Garland can add a touch of the holiday season to any room of the house. Wrap garland around a staircase, alternating between the banister and spindles so residents and guests can still safely navigate their way up and down. Garland streamed along foyer tables sets a decorative tone for all guests, and living

room television stands and dining room banquets also can be made a touch more festive with some garland.



• **Hang stockings throughout the house.** Stockings have long been hung by chimneys (with care), but they also can be incorporated into holiday

decor throughout a home. Spread holiday cheer in each room with brightly colored holiday stockings, which can be hung along a staircase wall as well.

• **Don't forget the kitchen.** Realtors and contractors often note the popularity of the kitchen, a room where families tend to congregate each day before work and school and then again upon returning home. Some festive kitchen accessories, like a holiday-themed cutting board, jar sets and table settings can bring the spirit of the holiday season into the busiest

room in the house.

• **Create some pinecone Christmas trees.** Involve the whole family in holiday decorating by spending a weekend afternoon creating pinecone Christmas trees. Gather pinecones from your own backyard, if possible, or take a trip to some nearby woods for some supplies. There's no shortage of websites offering instructions on crafting pinecone trees. Once completed, the trees can be placed in various rooms to spread holiday cheer throughout the house.

Decorations are a big part of the holiday season. Families can make their homes holiday central by ensuring each room is decorated for this special time of year.

5 fun gift exchange ideas

Gift-giving is a significant component of the holiday season. Families can embrace traditional gift-giving, but those who want to add a touch of whimsy to gatherings with loved ones can consider these five creative and fun ways to exchange gifts.

1. Play the plastic wrap game. To exchange small stocking stuffer gifts, compile gift cards, cash, small toys, candy, and even some larger gifts (all participants can chip in and one person shops for the gifts). The designated person in charge begins rolling up the gifts in the plastic, adding one every few rolls. Turning the ball 90 degrees while wrapping helps make a more round, finished gift ball. To play, the person with the ball puts on oven mitts and tries to unwrap as much as they can to access the gifts, while the person to the left is attempting to roll doubles on dice. When doubles are made, that person passes the dice to the left and starts

his or her own attempts to get at the gifts in the plastic ball. The game ends when all the gifts are revealed whether everyone has had a chance to unwrap or not.

2. Plan a white elephant gift exchange. A white elephant exchange is like a secret grab bag. Everyone brings a wrapped gift, and then takes turns choosing a gift based on the number they've been given. When the gift is chosen, the person opens it. The next player can select a fresh gift or steal one of the presents that's already been opened.

3. Host a make-and-take craft party. With this type of exchange, participants will engage in some form of crafting for the duration of the event, whether its pottery, painting, epoxy resin pouring, or even knit crafts. At the end of the night everyone can swap their creations with another or keep their own crafts as gifts.

4. Give the gift of a group outing. Instead of exchanging material gifts, focus on

sharing experiences with friends and family. A trip to watch a sports game or a theater performance can be an excellent way to spend time together, and something a person may not be inclined to do on his or her own. Certain venues will offer discounts on group tickets, so everyone can pool their resources.

5. Host a DIY cookie and cocoa exchange. Cookies, cocoa and the holidays are a perfect combination. A gift exchange where participants supply ingredients for these sweet treats, share their favorite recipes and then put together the finished products can make for an entertaining and festive afternoon. Each person can fill a cookie tin with baked cookies to take home and mason jars filled with homemade hot cocoa mix and marshmallows can be an additional gift to enjoy later on a chilly evening. There are plenty of fun ways to exchange gifts during the holiday season.

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Impress guests with this flavorful appetizer

Appetizers can make a strong first impression when eating at a restaurant. Indeed, a flavorful appetizer can give diners a taste of what's to come throughout the rest of the meal, creat-

ing a sense of anticipation that will linger all the way to the last bite. Appetizers may be most associated with restaurants, but holiday hosts can go the extra mile and prepare some flavor-

ful apps at home as well. As hosts prepare to welcome loved ones into their home this holiday season, they can treat guests with these "Stuffed Mushrooms" courtesy of Lines+Angles.



Stuffed Mushrooms

Makes 28 servings
Olive oil, to coat baking sheet
Ingredients:
28 mushrooms (2 1/2 inches in diameter), stemmed
1/2 cup butter (1 stick)
1 small onion, minced
2 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced
3/4 cup Italian breadcrumbs
1/2 cup Romano cheese, grated
3 tablespoons fresh Italian parsley, chopped
Freshly ground black pepper and salt, to taste.

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Drizzle olive oil on baking sheet and coat thoroughly.
2. Gently clean the mushrooms and remove stems. Finely chop stems. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add stems, onion and garlic, and sauté until stems and onions are soft and garlic is fragrant.
3. In a mixing bowl, add bread crumbs, cheese and parsley. Season with salt and pepper and stir to combine. Add sautéed mixture to bread crumb mixture and

mix well.
4. Spoon filling mixture into mushroom caps. Arrange on prepared baking sheet, stuffed side up. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, or until the mushrooms are tender and the tops are golden. Cool for several minutes before serving. Arrange on serving tray or platter. Serve.
Preparation time: 15 minutes
Cooking time: 35 minutes
Total time: 50 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

Did you know?

Even though the debate continues regarding the merits of artificial and real Christmas trees, it seems there is a winner, at least within the United States. According to Statista, 47% of American households own an artificial Christmas tree, while 24% purchase real trees. Though real trees might not be as popular as their artificial alternatives, the number of real trees that are purchased each year remains significant. According to the National

Christmas Tree Association, roughly 25 to 30 million real Christmas trees are sold annually in the United States. Canadians may favor live Christmas trees, or they're at least skilled in growing them. In fact, Canada exported more than 2.4 million fresh Christmas trees in 2021, and 97.2% ended up in the U.S., according to Statistics Canada. In June 2022, there were 1,895 business locations across Canada in the nursery and tree production industry.

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Gingerbread takes the cake

Plenty of foods are associated with Christmastime, but none perhaps as familiar as gingerbread. Although the slightly spicy and warming tang of gingerbread

often is enjoyed in cookie form or baked into panels used to create gingerbread houses, the spice combination of ginger, cloves and cinnamon can impart a deli-

cious flavor to cakes as well.

This holiday season, whip up this recipe for Tender Gingerbread Cake from Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.

Tender Gingerbread Cake

Yield: 1 cake

Ingredients:

1 cup packed muscovado sugar (dark brown works great)
1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons butter, softened
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 eggs, room temperature
1/4 cup plain full-fat Greek or plain yogurt
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon apple pie spice
1 cup hot water
3/4 cup molasses

Garnishes:

1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1 cup pomegranate arils

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a 9-by-9-inch cake pan with parchment paper.

2. Cream the sugar, butter, and vanilla on low speed, 3 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time and mix until just incorporated, then scrape down the sides of the bowl and gently fold the yogurt into the batter.

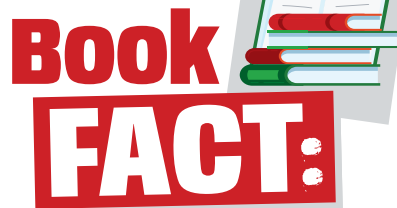
3. In a separate bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, salt, and spices together.

4. In a third bowl, mix the hot water and molasses together.

5. Now mix the dry ingredients into the batter in three additions, alternating with the hot molasses water. Do not over mix.

6. Pour the batter into your

lined pan and bake 25 to 30 minutes until the cake is well baked. Allow the gingerbread to cool, then dust with confectioners' sugar and pomegranate arils. This cake is also lovely with cream cheese icing! Serve and enjoy.



This author penned a poem that is typically recited each year at Christmas.

Answer: Clement Clarke Moore

Pediatricians Say Sharing Books with Children is the Best Holiday Gift

(StatePoint) A book can inspire joy and stir the imagination, and even better this holiday season is the gift of sharing that book with your child.

“Turning the pages of a high-quality, print book filled with colorful pictures and rich, expressive language is best,” said Dr. Dipesh Navsaria, a pediatrician. “While touchscreens and other electronic devices

only for a few minutes, and making it part of the bedtime routine. Each evening, set aside 20 to 30 minutes with screens off for sharing books.

Remember that the experience should be fun. You don’t have to finish a story if your child loses interest. Let your child choose the book, even if it means reading the same book over and over. You can invite your child to

including fairy tales, poetry and nursery rhymes, as well as non-fiction books on subjects children love, such as the ocean or dogs. Follow your child’s interests in choosing books. Children’s librarians can help you with high-quality book selections on a range of topics. And during the holidays, consider building your home library and reinforcing the value of great books by giving them as gifts.

By age 4, a child can typically tell you which books they want to share with you; pretend to read a favorite book aloud to you; and tell you how a story is like things they have seen or done. They may ask you questions about books you are enjoying together or “correct” you if you skip a word or page in a favorite book. As children grow older, reading can help develop character and values that are important to your family. In fact, a really great book has the power to counterbalance negative outside influences and teach children important lessons as they grow.

“It might be a book on kindness after your child experienced or witnessed cruelty,” Dr. Navsaria said. “It might be a book on expressing emotions after your child saw or heard scary news coverage, or maybe a book on understanding differences after your child saw someone who looked differ-

ent than they expected.”

The AAP and Reach Out and Read have compiled a list of books—organized by age and topic—to help you raise children who are curious, brave, kind, thoughtful and aware of the world around them. You can find the list at healthychildren.org

“Books are great conver-

sation starters,” Dr. Navsaria said. “They’re also just a lot of fun and can help create wonderful memories, particularly during the holidays when you’re spending extra time together. A shared reading experience, as a tender, magical and loving time spent with your child, is truly a gift. It speaks to the heart of what parenting is.”



may be popular, they are typically passive or solitary experiences for children and do not offer the same benefits of interpersonal connection and relationship building.”

Starting from infancy, reading aloud helps build the foundation for healthy social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development. Sharing books helps with language development and vocabulary and gets them ready to listen and learn in school. And over the past decade, research has found that reading together helps foster positive interactions, strengthening the safe, stable and nurturing relationships young children must have to thrive.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends reading with your child every day, even if

“read” to you from a familiar book that they have memorized. Dr. Navsaria suggests asking about the illustrations or what your child thinks will happen next. You can say: “Can you find all the blue things?” or “Show me all the things that can fly.” Point out colors, shapes, numbers and letters and respond with enthusiasm to your child’s questions and comments.

Local libraries offer a variety of children’s literature,

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Ship Smarter, Not Harder: Holiday Shipping Insights Unwrapped

(StatePoint) In today's fast-paced, digital world, there are many gift-giving options for loved ones far and wide, from sending e-gift cards to their favorite shops and restaurants to creating custom video messages. However, a new survey from Duck brand, a leading maker of mailing and shipping products, finds that the festive fun of sending physical presents isn't lost.

"We learned that most people — 98% — send at least one package containing gifts and nearly half — 46% — typically mail up to three gifts throughout the season," says Natalie Guillaume, director of product marketing, packaging tapes,

at Shurtape Technologies, LLC, the company that markets Duck brand.

"To make the process holly and jolly, we recommend planning ahead and purchasing high-quality supplies to ensure presents arrive on time and in one piece."

Good Tidings Delivered on Time

More than 60% of survey participants say they send their packages two to four weeks in advance of when they need to arrive. Still, 43% express their greatest concern when mailing goods throughout the yuletide season is the parcel arriving on time. Knowing they can't rely on the magic of Santa's sleigh to make a

timely delivery, Guillaume suggests getting ahead of the holiday hustle by checking delivery deadlines for the busy season. Then, leaving a little leeway to account for delays due to winter weather or other logistical challenges.

Don't Let Tape Get Your

Tinsel in a Tangle

When it comes to shipping, the wrong tape can turn anyone into a Grinch. Nearly half of people (45%) say tape not sticking well to boxes is their biggest challenge. In this case, a heavy-duty tape will do the trick. Look for one with a wide

temperature range performance, so you don't have to worry about damaged deliveries due to a frosty forecast.

Additionally, 40% of people have experienced difficulty tearing packing tape. Duck Brand EZ Start Packing Tape, made with Frustration Free technology, provides a simple solution for smooth, easy and quiet removal from the roll. The easy-to-use dispenser is uniquely designed to eliminate the annoyance of losing the tape end, which 39% of respondents say is a struggle.

With these tips, you can send parcels on their merry way for a holiday season of stress-free gift giving.



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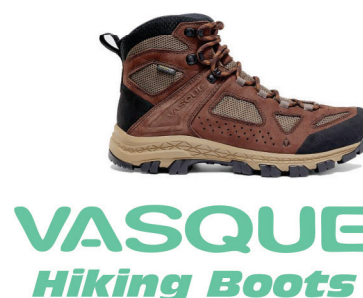


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How some popular holiday traditions got their start

Will you be baking gingerbread or hanging stockings by the fireplace this holiday season? Perhaps you'll be lighting the menorah or playing a game of dreidel? The holidays are steeped in tradition, some of which are older than celebrants may realize. Individuals gather during the holidays and participate in various traditions that have withstood the test of time. Most people engage in these traditions or recognize symbols automatically, but it can be interesting to learn how these traditions came to be.

Christmas caroling

The British traditions of wassailing and mumming and the Slavic tradition of koliada were some of the precursors to more modern caroling. People would go door-to-door and recite poetry or sing with the hope of bringing about good fortune or influencing a future harvest, according to Rutgers University. Carolers spread hope and good tidings through song during a time of year when sunlight was limited.

Christmas trees

Pagans once displayed evergreen branches as a reminder that spring would come again, while Romans placed them around temples to honor Saturn, the god of agriculture. Eventually the evergreen was used in conjunction with Christian Christmas celebrations. In the sixteenth century, German Christians put trees inside their homes as symbols of everlasting life.

Santa Claus

Children who celebrate Christmas eagerly await

the arrival of a jolly sort who goes by the name of Santa Claus. His origin story stretches back to the third century, when Saint Nicholas became the patron saint



corresponds to the eight-day festival. It was used to celebrate the rededication of the Second Temple. The available oil supply was supposed to light the meno-

of love, made the plant a symbol of love and vowed to kiss anyone who passed under it. Mistletoe blooms under cold conditions, which is how it became associated with the holiday season.

Yule log

Yule logs were once part of winter solstice celebrations to bring good luck and fortune, but America is where a yule log really caught on as a holiday tradition. In 1966, the WPIX television station in New York City aired a continuous

loop of a fireplace burning for three hours with holiday songs playing. It became an annual tradition, says History.com. Some people even serve a cake that looks like a yule log. The Bûche de Noël is a traditional Christmas cake that is especially popular in France.

Holiday traditions continue in full force. Traditions are an endearing component of celebrations and help to unite people from all backgrounds during this special time of year.

of children. Saint Nicholas was a monk in what is modern-day Turkey. It is said that he traveled helping the poor and the sick. History.com says he is believed to have saved three impoverished sisters from slavery by providing them with a dowry so they could be married, and he also provided gifts to children.

Menorah

The menorah is a multi-branched candelabra used in Jewish religious rituals. The menorah is first mentioned in the book of Exodus when the design of the lamp was revealed to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. Many menorahs are seven-branched, but during Chanukah, an eight-branched menorah is used. The Chanukah menorah is modeled after the Tabernacle menorah that

rah for just one day, but the candles actually burned for eight.

Mistletoe

Kissing under the mistletoe is a holiday season tradition that can lead to some red faces when couples are caught beneath the plant. Norse mythology paved the way for kissing under the mistletoe. Legend has it the gods used mistletoe to resurrect Odin's son, Baldur, from the dead. Baldur's mother, Frigg, the goddess



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The ultimate playlist to give your home the right holiday season vibe

Staying home for the holidays can make the season a little more convenient, saving celebrants from having to contend with the millions of individuals who take to the roads, railways and friendly skies each December. But staying home comes with its fair share of obligations, especially for individuals who are planning holiday get-togethers with family and friends. Mood and merrymaking go hand-in-hand come the holiday season, and music can be used to establish a celebratory vibe this time of year. Whether you're hosting a holiday party or simply aspiring to create a festive atmosphere throughout the month of December, the following songs can help set the right tone this year.

**“Sleigh Ride” by
Ella Fitzgerald**
**“The Christmas Song” by
Gregory Porter**

"Jingle Bell Rock" by Bobby Helms
"Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!" by Frank Sinatra
"Jingle Bells" by Kimberley Locke
"Silver Bells" by Tony Bennett, featuring Count Basie and His Big Band
"Here Comes Santa Claus" by Elvis Presley
"Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" by Diana Krall
"White Christmas" by Bing Crosby
"Winter Wonderland" by Louie Armstrong
"The First Noel" by the cast of "Glee"
"Happy Holiday" by Peggy Lee
"O Tannenbaum" by the Vince Guaraldi Trio
"Boogie Woogie Santa Claus" by the Brian Setzer Orchestra
"All I Want for Christmas Is You" by Mariah Carey

“Santa Baby” by Eartha Kitt
“Mele Kalikimaka” by
Bing Crosby and
The Andrews Sisters
“Blue Christmas” by
Elvis Presley
“Frosty the Snowman”
by Gene Autry
**“Santa Claus Is Comin’ to
Town”** by Bruce Springsteen
& the E Street Band
“Deck the Halls” by
Nat King Cole
“Fairytale of New York” by
The Pogues featuring Kirsty
MacColl
**“Rudolph the Red-Nosed
Reindeer”** by Burl Ives
“Baby, It’s Cold Outside”
by Dean Martin and Mari-
lynn Maxwell
**“The Twelve Days of
Christmas”** by
The Ray Coniff Singers

These are just some of
the songs that can make up
a merry and festive holiday
season playlist.

























A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

CRYPTO FUN











Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to poinsettias.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 11 = O)

A.
16 11 14 11 1 23 19 14

Clue: Vibrant

B.
16 3 1 4 20 17 5 16 20

Clue: December holiday

C.
14 13 15 18 13 20

Clue: Parts of plants

D.
21 13 16 11 1 15 17 4 11 25 20

Clue: Home adornments

Answers: A. colorful B. Christmas C. leaves D. decorations

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Classic holiday films the whole family can enjoy

Celebrants owe the joy of the holiday season to various components. Decor and gift-giving go a long way toward making December a joyous time of year. Holiday films also do their part to make the season so special. Many people have their own favorite holiday films, and the following are some that can engage viewers who are young or simply young at heart.

"A Christmas Story"

Released in 1983, this warmly nostalgic, humorous film is a perennial favorite among families. It follows the story of Ralphie, who has his heart set on a very specific Christmas present: a Red Rider BB gun. Amidst wintry exploits and family drama, the true spirit of Christmas manages to shine through in this beloved film. Some of the subject matter can be off-color, and there are some

bullying scenes. So this is a movie best watched with children who are mature enough to make it through without being scared.

"Little Women"

Based on the Louisa May Alcott novel of the same name, the 1994 telling of this classic follows the March sisters, who confront financial difficulties, romance and family tragedies in mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts. While it's not a traditional Christmas movie, the importance of spending time with family around Christmastime is a core theme in this coming-of-age tale.

"Klaus"

Perhaps not as well known as other animated holiday flicks, "Klaus," released in 2019, has a personality all its own. Postman Jesper, who is not making the grade at the postal academy, is sent to

work in a frozen town in the North, where he discovers a reclusive toy maker named Klaus. The unlikely duo ultimately team up to make and deliver toys and bring smiles to children's faces.

"Meet Me In St. Louis"

Starring the irreplaceable Judy Garland, this movie musical focuses on four sisters who are awaiting the 1904 World's Fair in their hometown, but learn that their father has accepted a new job and the family must move to New York beforehand. A Christmas miracle occurs and all is right in the end. Garland sings a memorable version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" in the film, solidifying this as a holiday classic.

"The Santa Clause"

This Disney film came out in 1994 and remains a family favorite. When divorced dad

Scott (Tim Allen) accidentally kills a man in a Santa suit, he magically becomes the next Santa. He must learn to cope with the ways the transformation to the man in red interrupts his normal life, eventually giving over to the magic of Christmas.

"Emmet Otter's"

Jug-Band Christmas"

Though this 1977 Jim Henson production is a tele-

vision special and not a full-length feature film, Generation X likely remembers the heartfelt tale of a poor otter family who sacrifice prized possessions to have what's needed to enter a talent contest. The goal is to win the prize money to buy special Christmas presents. Audiences get to enjoy narration by Kermit the Frog.





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Games add another layer of levity to holiday celebrations

The holidays bring together friends, neighbors and family members to celebrate some of the most festive days of the year. Although celebrants often incorporate traditions they hold dear this time of year, downtime provides an opportunity to embrace new games and entertainment ideas as well.

The following are some fun games to play this holiday season that can help to break the ice and keep everyone laughing.

Reindeer Games

Everyone knows that Rudolph wanted to have fun and participate in “reindeer games,” but he was left on the sidelines. Inspired by the tune, everyone can participate in reindeer games at your home. These types of games can include tests of endurance and dexterity, like fruitcake-eating contests, running races or doing hurdle competitions in the yard.

Candy Cane Home Runs

Participants can see how well they can launch a marshmallow into the outfield by hitting it with a candy cane taking the place of the baseball bat. Each participant gets three swings. The person with the most home runs wins.

Guess the Gift

In this game, party hosts wrap five oddly-shaped gifts specifically for the game (the gifts may be oddly shaped or just the wrapping as a decoy). Players take turns trying to guess what is inside and mark down their answers on sheets. One by one the gifts are revealed. If anyone guesses the gift, it is given as a prize. If more than one person guesses a gift, come up with a fun way to break the tie, such as rock, paper, scissors or thumb wrestling.

Christmas Karaoke

Singing traditional carols and popular holiday tunes is not uncommon come December. In this competitive version of karaoke, singers have to keep on sing-



ing, even when the lyrics get turned off or covered to test their true knowledge of these songs.

Present Stackers

This requires keeping a collection of oddly shaped gifts at the ready. Game participants try to stack the presents as tall as they can without them toppling over.

Fishing for Fun

Hang strings on the straight ends of candy canes to fashion fishing poles, with the curved ends serving as the “hooks.” Participants try to “fish” smaller candy canes

out of a bowl and see how many they can reel in.

The “No L” Game

The game referee has a list of a few categories (i.e., food, sports, colors, cars, etc.) and players are split into a few teams. When the category is called, the teams have to jot down as many words as they can pertaining to the category that do not have a letter “L” in them before a timer runs out.

These are just a few festive ways to have fun with friends or family members during holiday gatherings.

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This eggplant dish is perfect for a crowd

Orthodox Christian churches celebrate Christmas later in the holiday season than other denominations. That's because the Orthodox faithful still celebrate the birth of Jesus in accordance with the Julian calendar rather than the Gregorian calendar that is currently used in other Christian churches. That means Orthodox Christmas falls on January 7 each year.

As with other Christmas celebrations, there is bound to be plenty of fanfare and delicious food to commemorate this special time of year.

Moussaka is a classic dish served in Eastern European countries like Greece and Turkey. There are many variations, but moussaka often is made with eggplant and a creamy white sauce called béchamel. As a layered casserole similar to lasagna, it

can be made in advance and then served to a crowd. It's hearty, tasty and filling, and likely something that will appeal to most guests this Christmas. Hosts interested in preparing "Moussaka" can try the following recipe, courtesy of "Throw a Great Party" (iUniverse) by Mary Bartlett, Antonia Hoogewerf and Catherine Monnet.

Moussaka

Serves 25

Ingredients

6 pounds eggplant
1 cup olive oil, approximately
1 pound onions, chopped
2 tablespoons garlic, finely chopped
6 pounds ground beef or lamb
1 can tomatoes (29 ounces)
1/2 bottle red wine
1/2 bunch parsley, chopped
1/2 bunch dried oregano
2 tablespoons cinnamon
2 teaspoons nutmeg
1 teaspoon salt and pepper

Béchamel

8 ounces butter
1 cup flour
2 quarts milk
Nutmeg
Salt and pepper

Directions

Slice the eggplant into 1/2-inch round slices and sprinkle with salt. Let the eggplant rest about one hour to draw out the liquid. Pat dry, brush each slice with olive oil and arrange overlapping on baking sheets. Bake about 20 minutes or until soft. Set aside. This step may be done in advance.

If you prefer to grill the eggplant, brush both sides with olive oil or cooking oil

and cook on a hot grill about two minutes per side.

Using one or two large skillets, heat about 1/4 inch of oil and sauté the onions and garlic until softened and set aside. Do this in batches, as necessary.

Using the same pan, add additional oil and sauté the beef or lamb until lightly browned. As each batch browns, place it in a very large pot.

Add the cooked onion and garlic mixture, tomatoes, red wine, parsley, oregano, cinnamon, and nutmeg to the browned meat. Simmer slowly about 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

While the meat mixture simmers, prepare the béchamel sauce. Melt the butter in a large pot until it is bubbling. Whisk in the flour gradually and continue to stir for about 8 to 10 minutes over low heat without browning the mixture. Heat the milk in a large pan or in the microwave. Gradually add the hot milk to the flour mixture, stirring continuously. Add the nutmeg, salt



and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and whisk a few minutes until thickened. Taste and correct the seasoning.

Oil two 9 x 13-inch baking pans or one large roasting pan. Using half of the eggplant slices, distribute them on the bottom of each pan. Top with meat mixture followed by remaining eggplant. Spread the sauce evenly over the eggplant. Bake in a moderate oven (325 F) for about one hour. The béchamel should be lightly browned. Let the moussaka sit about 10 minutes before cutting into squares. It may be served at room temperature.

Serve with rosé or a medium-bodied white wine.

WORD SCRAMBLE



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Answer: Holiday

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