

# Holiday Traditions



Special supplement to the November 27th



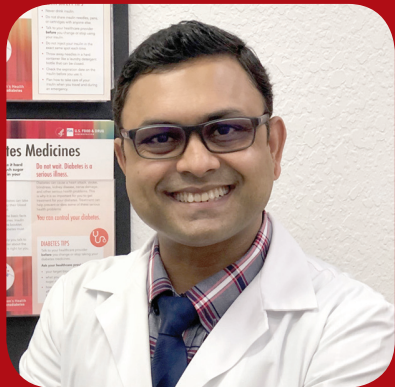
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# How to make a home welcoming for holiday guests

**M**illions of individuals travel to see family and friends during the holiday season. The automotive group AAA estimated that roughly 115 million travelers planned to travel 50 miles or more during the 2023 year-end holiday travel period, which the organization defined as a 10-day window that began on December 23 and ended on New Year's Day.

The 2024 holiday season figures to be just as busy for travelers as 2023, and many of those individuals will accept the hospitality of loved ones while away from home. Holiday hosts can embrace these strategies as they prepare to welcome guests in the weeks ahead.

- **Clear clutter from working spaces.** The pandemic sparked some lasting changes, including a greater number of professionals working from home. Some do so part-time while others have become fully remote workers. That shift has led many homeowners to transform guest rooms or pockets of shared living spaces into home offices, which can make a residence feel a little more cramped once guests arrive. Declutter these spaces prior to guests' arrival so they have ample room to relax and maneuver in guest rooms and to ensure there's no shortage of seating or room to spread out in shared spaces like living rooms or dens.

- **Provide some guest room creature comforts.** Some creature comforts in the guest room can make guests feel right at home. A smartphone charging dock on a bedside nightstand is a nice



A clutter-free guest room is one way for hosts to make spaces more welcoming for guests this holiday season.

touch that allows guests to keep their chargers tucked into their luggage, ensuring they won't be forgotten when the time comes to return home. A scent diffuser in the guest room is another nice touch that can help travel-weary guests relax and unwind during their stay. A small handful of books and magazines left on a guest room dresser so guests have some nighttime reading material is another welcoming gesture that can make them feel right at home.

- **Ask ahead about food allergies.** Cooking is a big part of holiday hosting, as the dinner table is a relaxing setting to catch up with loved ones. Prior to planning a holiday hosting menu, hosts can reach out to guests and ask if they have any food allergies or other dietary restrictions. This small gesture lets guests know hosts are thinking of them even before they arrive, which can establish the welcoming vibe hosts are aiming for.

- **Designate a guests-only bathroom, if possible.** If hosts' homes have multiple full bathrooms, designate one exclusively for guests during their stay. This gesture affords guests some privacy that they're sure to appreciate. Parents can explain this gesture to kids before guests arrive so there's no confusion during their stay.

As individuals prepare to welcome loved ones into their homes this holiday season, they can embrace various strategies to welcome their guests and ensure their stay is comfortable and relaxing.

*Holiday*  
**Traditions**

## WHO WE ARE:

Lake Okeechobee News' annual section Holiday Traditions publishes just in time for Thanksgiving to kick off the holidays. Featuring recipes, gift giving ideas, shopping tips and more, this special section will have you feeling festive in no time! In addition to this print edition, the special section is available online for one full year at [LakeONews.com/holiday](https://LakeONews.com/holiday)!

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# 7 ideas for a festive holiday fête



## The holiday season has arrived

and with it comes many opportunities to socialize. With so many events on people's calendars, holiday party hosts may wonder what they can do to set their gatherings apart from others to make them memorable. Read on for seven festive ideas that can set a holiday season party apart from the rest.

**1. Cook ahead.** Being able to mingle with guests and guide conversation or activities is the key to being an excellent holiday host. By cooking foods that can feed crowds ahead of time, you won't be stuck in the kitchen when you should be out and about. Casseroles, stews, soups, and quiches can be cooked in advance and then warmed (or set in a slow cooker) to bring to temperature

**2. Choose a color scheme.** Choose a color scheme that really pops and sets a festive tone. For a holiday cocktail party, consider bold reds and pinks and add a burst of gold for that contrast of color that adds impact.

**3. Hire some entertainment.** Conversation and reminiscing can fill some time, but allot some of the party budget to entertainment. Perhaps hire a DJ who can keep the music flowing, or a karaoke professional who will have guests up and singing holiday (or non-holiday) tunes?

**4. Create a signature cocktail.** An open bar can be expensive, especially if you want to stock it with top-shelf offerings. Wine and beer is more affordable, and hosts who want to offer something a little different can create a signature cocktail for the party. Tie in seasonal flavors, whether you go sweet with a chocolate cream liqueur and mint or something more tart like a cranberry-based drink.

**5. Rearrange the furniture.** If the music is playing and guests are fired up, you'll need a spot where they can dance. Move large furnishings out of the main gathering space to create room to cut a rug; otherwise, create an outdoor gathering area complete with strung lights so guests can take the fun outside, if necessary.

**6. Plan for prizes.** Guests always appreciate some sort of takeaway. Gifting is commonplace this time of year, but perhaps have guests work a little to reap the rewards? Simple trivia games or a scavenger hunt can increase the fun and make it possible for guests to walk away with some swag.

**7. Have at least one unexpected item.** This can be anything from a very clever and cute dessert to a special guest to an over-the-top decorative item that gets people talking and ensures the party is one no one will forget.

Throwing a festive holiday party is easier than one may think. With some creativity, hosts can plan a party to remember.





# Merry Christmas



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# Why you should **shop local for the holidays and beyond**

**V**arious components come together to make the holiday season a festive time of year. There is a lot to get done in a short amount of time during the holiday season, and part of that includes shopping for all of the family members and friends on your shopping list. Shopping can be a complicated process that involves identifying which stores will be the best places to shop. Local retailers make the perfect place to shop for holiday items.

According to the American Express Business Economic Impact Study, more than two-thirds of every dollar spent with a local business stays in the community. Indeed, shopping local benefits consumer and community alike. The following are some of the many perks to shopping locally throughout the holiday season.

- **Personalized attention:** Small businesses are known for their personalized customer service and owners and staff are often lauded for taking the time to interact and learn about their customers, a dynamic that is impossible at larger retailers.

- **Meet and interact with people:** Shopping in-person at local stores, you'll see faces from your community and become better known in the

local area.

- **Shorter lines:** Local stores are bound to have smaller crowds and thus shorter lines. That translates to less stress and hassle when it comes to getting in and out with holiday gifts.

- **Smaller carbon footprint:** Pollution, traffic congestion, habitat loss, and resource depletion may not occur on the same levels when shopping locally compared to patronizing big box stores. That's because local retailers tend to create or source their products locally, whereas many big box stores secure their goods overseas.

- **Easier parking:** This goes hand-in-hand with smaller crowds, as shopping locally does not typically require driving up and down endless aisles at malls or standalone retail stores in an effort to find a parking spot. Local retailers in town may have on-street parking or closed lots that are convenient to shoppers.

- **Small batch shopping experience:** Consumers can secure items in small businesses that are not carbon copies of those found across the country at major retail chains. When seeking a unique, thoughtful gift, shopping locally is the way to go.



## Tips to plan an eclectic holiday menu

**T**he holiday season is steeped in tradition. Though family traditions are part of what makes December such a special time of year, holiday hosts still have some wiggle room when welcoming loved ones into their homes.

If tradition governs how holiday hosts celebrate the season with their families, they may find some flexibility in the kitchen. This December, hosts can consider these ways to make their holiday menus a little more eclectic and unpredictable.

- **Embrace local ingredients.** Locally sourced foods have a tendency to taste more fresh than imported alternatives, which is reason enough to incorporate them into holiday menus. In addition, relying on locally sourced foods when preparing holiday meals can be a great way to introduce new dishes to a holiday dinner table. Guests may be impressed by a new flavor profile, and they'll surely be happy to learn they're supporting local businesses during a time of year when shopping local has gained greater popularity.

- **Offer a new twist on old favorites.** Celebrants, including hosts, have come to expect certain foods during the holiday

season. For instance, some may shudder at the thought of a Thanksgiving dinner table without turkey. Though holiday season staples may need to make an appearance at dinnertime this December, hosts can offer a new twist on some old favorites. In lieu of roasting a turkey this year, offer a deep-fried alternative. Such a twist produces an entirely different flavor profile. When it comes time to serve dessert, offer apple crumb pie in place of traditional apple pie. Fall is peak apple-picking season, so come the holiday season hosts and guests may be happy to enjoy a unique twist on this beloved dessert.

- **Incorporate seasonal ingredients.** Another way to ensure freshness has a place at your holiday dinner table is to emphasize seasonal ingredients. Such items are those that are at their most fresh in late fall and early winter, and which foods you choose may depend on where you live, particularly if you're focused on providing locally sourced seasonal ingredients. Some simple tweaks to existing recipes can provide an entirely new flavor profile that will impress guests and leave them asking for another helping.

• See **Menu** on page 9



**Menu**

• From page 8

• **Prepare an ethnic dish.** Traditional holiday entrées like turkey and rib roast are not necessarily associated with any particular ethnic group or region of the world. Hosts who want to incorporate their heritage into holiday cooking, or simply include food from a favorite country they've visited or hope to visit, can prepare an ethnic dish as an appetizer, entrée or dessert. This unexpected addition to the menu can prompt engaging discussions and can serve as a great way for hosts to introduce their loved ones to a dish or style of cuisine they love.

Tradition is a big part of the holiday season. This season, hosts can start a new tradition by taking steps to prepare a more eclectic menu for guests.

## Give this beloved side a tasty twist this holiday season

Hosts have free rein when it comes to planning a holiday menu. Despite that freedom, many hosts feel obligated to prepare some holiday season staples their guests will surely expect when they sit down at the dinner table.

Stuffing is a dish many celebrants can't wait to see on the holiday dinner table. For hosts trusted with preparing holiday meals, the beauty of stuffing lies in its versatility. A host of unique ingredients can be added to holiday stuffing without adversely affecting the popularity of this beloved side dish. In fact, adding some unique ingredients can make people love stuffing even more. Such could be the case with this recipe for "Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing" from Lines+Angles.

### Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing

Makes 8 servings

1 loaf crusty white or wheat bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus extra for baking dish  
1 medium yellow onion, peeled and diced  
2 large celery stalks, rinsed, trimmed and diced  
4 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped  
1 cup packed dried tart cherries



1 cup roughly chopped toasted pecans  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage leaves  
1 tablespoon crushed fennel seed  
Coarse salt, to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley  
3 large eggs, lightly beaten  
3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Position oven racks in the middle and lower third of the oven. Arrange bread in a single layer on two rimmed baking sheets. Toast until dry and golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool.

2. Lightly butter a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion, celery and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until onion and celery are softened, about 7 minutes. Add cherries, pecans, sage, and fennel seed; cook, stirring for 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl and season with salt and pepper.

3. Add parsley, eggs and bread to the cherry mixture; stir to combine. Add broth in two additions, stirring until absorbed. Season generously with salt and pepper; transfer stuffing to butter baking dish. Bake on middle rack until the top is deep golden brown, about 25 to 30 minutes. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

**Preparation time:** 30 minutes

**Cooking time:** 50 minutes

**Resting time:** 5 minutes

## Embrace a crowd pleaser to feed loved ones this holiday season

Holiday hosts recognize it's not always so easy to feed a crowd. That pressure may be even more notable come the holiday season, when food is such an integral component of gatherings with family and friends.

It may be impossible to please everyone all of the time, but few can resist a hearty comfort food like baked ziti. That makes the dish an ideal option for holiday hosts tasked with feeding a crowd. This holiday season, hosts welcoming loved ones into their homes can consider this easily prepared recipe for "Baked Ziti With Chicken and Cheese" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

### Baked Ziti With Chicken and Cheese

Makes 4 to 6 servings

16 ounces dry ziti pasta  
1 large onion, peeled and chopped  
1 pound ground chicken  
8 cups spaghetti sauce  
Butter, for pan  
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded  
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
Salt, to taste

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add ziti pasta, and cook according to package instructions



until al dente, about 8 minutes; drain well.

2. In a large skillet, brown chopped onion and ground chicken over medium heat. Add spaghetti sauce, and simmer for about 15 minutes.

3. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Coat a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with butter. Drizzle sauce in the bottom of the baking dish and arrange the ziti on top. Ladle remaining sauce over the ziti. Top with mozzarella cheese. Gently toss to completely coat the ziti with sauce and cheese. Sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese over the top.

4. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the cheese melts and the pasta is heated through.

**Preparation time:**

20 minutes

**Cooking time:** 55 minutes



# Set the tone for a holiday party with this beloved seasonal beverage



**H**oliday season celebrations have a reputation for being especially jovial. The spirit of the season undoubtedly has something to do with that, as people from all faiths and backgrounds tend to have an extra hop in their step and a slightly wider smile on their faces each December.

Holiday hosts also do much to promote the festive spirit of the season. Hosts often go to great lengths to ensure holiday guests enjoy their visits, and that even extends to the food and drinks they serve the people they welcome into their homes. Many celebrants would insist no holiday season get-together is complete without eggnog, a classic beverage that's most popular in December. This holiday season, hosts can treat their guests to this recipe for "Eggnog" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

## Eggnog

Makes 2 Servings

2 ounces brandy or cognac  
2 ounces dark rum,  
plus more for sugar rim  
1 cup eggnog, prepared  
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/8 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon light brown  
sugar  
2 sticks cinnamon,  
for garnish (optional)  
2 pods star anise,  
for garnish (optional)  
Shortbread or gingerbread  
cookies, for garnish (optional)

1. In a cocktail shaker with ice, add the brandy, rum and eggnog together, cover and shake.
2. Add the nutmeg, cinnamon and sugar to a small plate and stir around to combine. Wet the rims of 2 glasses with rum. Roll the rims of the glasses in the spices to coat.
3. Strain the eggnog mixture into the two glasses. Garnish with cinnamon sticks, star anise pods and festive shortbread cookies, if desired.

# Show guests this much maligned staple is a tasty treat

**F**ew foods garner the types of responses generated by the mere mention of fruitcake, which drives many holiday celebrants to run for the hills. But fruitcake may not deserve its reputation, particularly when individuals brave enough to prepare it serve it covered in a sugary glaze. Such is the case with this recipe for "Gluten-Free Fruitcake With Sugar Glaze" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

## Gluten-Free Fruitcake With Sugar Glaze

### For the cake:

4 ounces golden raisins  
2 ounces chopped candied  
orange peel  
8 ounces candied cherries,  
quartered  
6 ounces raisins  
3 1/2 tablespoons sherry  
4 ounces butter  
1 cup sugar  
1 pinch salt  
1 pinch grated nutmeg  
1 teaspoon ground mixed spice  
3 eggs, beaten  
1 cup self-raising gluten-free flour  
6 ounces chopped almonds,  
blanched

### For the icing:

1 cup confectioner's sugar  
3 tablespoons water

1. For the cake: Place all the fruit in a bowl with the sherry, stir well, cover and leave to stand overnight.
2. Heat the oven to 325 F. Grease a loaf pan and line the base with parchment paper.
3. Beat the butter with the sugar, salt and spices in a mixing bowl

until  
light  
and  
creamy,  
then  
gradually  
beat in the  
eggs.

4. Gently fold in the flour, followed by the soaked fruits and almonds, stirring well.
5. Spoon into the pan and bake for 2 to 2 1/4 hours until cooked through. Leave to cool in the pan.
6. For the icing: Mix the sugar with a little water, adding a little at a time, until it is thick and smooth.
7. Spread the icing on top of the cake, allowing it to run down the sides. Leave to set.

**Preparation & Cooking time:** 2 hours and 45 minutes  
**Resting time:** 12 hours





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# These colorful cookies are tailor-made for family baking sessions

**B**aking during the holiday season is a tradition in many households across the globe. Family baking sessions provide a perfect holiday season bonding activity, and the payoff is both cherished family time and delicious, indulgent foods once the items are ready to eat.

Holiday hosts know they'll need to feed their guests over the course of their stay, and that includes snacks. This holiday season, hosts can involve their guests in family baking sessions and whip up a batch of these delicious and colorful "Christmas Biscuits" from Lines+Angles.



assorted colored sugar crystals (e. g., red, pink and white)

1. For the dough: Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease and line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Combine flour, confectioner's sugar and almond meal in a large mixing bowl. Stir well to mix.
3. Add butter, egg yolk, water, and salt, and mix well with an electric mixer with spiral attachments until mixture starts to come together as a dough.

4. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead briefly until even. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.
5. After chilling, roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to approximately 0.25" thickness.

6. Use assorted star-shaped cookie cutters to cut out approximately 23 variably sized star shapes. Arrange between prepared sheets, spaced apart.
7. From remaining dough, cut out one teardrop and two semi-circles of dough, using appropriate cutters or working freehand with a paring knife. Arrange on one of the baking sheets.

8. Bake cookies for 12 to 15 minutes, until golden and dry to the touch. Remove to cooling racks to cool.
9. For the icing and decoration: Thoroughly stir together confectioner's sugar and meringue powder in a large mixing bowl.

10. Gradually beat in warm water and vanilla extract mixture using an electric mixer until icing is smooth and of a

flooding consistency; you may not need all of the water.

11. Divide icing between three bowls. Color two bowls pink and red, respectively, by beating in enough pink and red coloring to achieve uniform colors. Leave the third bowl uncolored.
12. Spoon pink and red icing into separate piping bags fitted with small, round-tip nozzles.

13. To ice the cookies, pipe around their perimeters with the icings to create borders. Fill in middle of cookies with more icing; you can use a damp, warm offset palette knife to spread out icing to an even finish.
14. Carefully transfer iced cookies to cooling racks, decorating with the sugar crystals in festive patterns.

15. Using same technique as in steps 13 and 14, ice teardrop cookie with red and white icing for Santa's hat and beard, respectively. Ice the two semi-circle cookies with white icing.
16. Before icings have set, carefully attach semi-circle cookies to teardrop cookie to fashion Santa's mustache. Color any remaining white icing with turquoise coloring and then dab onto teardrop cookie for Santa's eyes. Pipe some pink icing below eyes for his nose.

17. Let cookies set and harden before serving.

18. Let cookies set and harden before serving.

19. Let cookies set and harden before serving.

20. Let cookies set and harden before serving.

**Tip:** Flooding consistency should be similar to the consistency of toothpaste. If your icing is too thick, thin it out with some warm water, mixing it into the icing in drops

**Preparation time:** 1 hour, 20 minutes

**Cooling time:** 30 minutes

## Christmas Biscuits

*Makes approximately 24 cookies*

### For the dough:

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, sifted, plus extra for dusting
- 1 1/3 cups confectioner's sugar, plus extra for dusting
- 3/4 cup almond meal
- 1 cup unsalted butter, cold and cubed
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon cold water
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt

### For the icing and decoration:

- 4 cups confectioner's sugar
- 3 tablespoons meringue powder
- 7 tablespoons warm water, combined with 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, assorted food color (e. g., red, pink and turquoise),



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# Serve a classic dish when hosting this holiday season



**T**hough a holiday trip to a far off locale can provide a welcome respite from the hustle and bustle of this often hectic time of year, millions of people feel there's no place like home during the weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The familiar, cozy confines of home certainly make this festive time of year a little warmer. When spending the holidays at home, families tend to welcome friends and family into their homes so they can celebrate with the people they love most. In such instances, it's customary to enjoy a sit-down meal together. This season, those spending the holiday season at home can up the culinary ante with this recipe for "Roast Duckling With Apples and Red Onions" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

## Roast Duckling With Apples and Red Onions

*Makes 6 Servings*

**1 duckling, 5 1/2 to 6 pounds**  
**1 teaspoon kosher salt**  
**1/4 teaspoon black pepper**  
**2 apples, cored and cut into wedges**  
**1 small red onion, sliced**

## 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves

1. Preheat oven to 425 F.
2. Season both the outside and inside of the duckling with salt and pepper. Tie the duck's legs together with a piece of butcher's twine. Place the duck breast side up on a sheet pan and roast for 15 minutes.
3. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 F and roast for 30 minutes. Remove pan from oven and remove excess fat with a bulb baster, if desired. Add the apples and onion around the duck. Sprinkle the thyme over the top and bake for an additional 30 minutes or until the duck reaches an internal temperature of 165 F.
4. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes

**Cooking time:** 1 hour, 15 minutes

**Total time:** 1 hour, 25 minutes

# Spice up your holiday dinner table this season

**H**osting family dinners during the holiday season is an opportunity for hosts to share their spirit and express their love for family and friends. Tastes have evolved over the years, and that evolution has afforded dinner hosts more wiggle room when planning holiday menus. Though traditional staples like ham may never be relegated to the holiday dinner dustbin, cooks can spice things up to make these beloved favorites a little more flavorful.

The following recipe for "Spicy Maple-Glazed Ham," adapted from chef Jacques Pépin's "Heart and Soul in the Kitchen" (HarperCollins) for Bonappetit.com, adds a little heat to ham. The former personal chef to French president Charles de Gaulle, Pépin notes that poaching a ham before roasting removes excess salt, ensuring the finished product is tender and juicy.

## Spicy Maple-Glazed Ham

*Makes 8 to 12 servings*

**1 10 lb. cured smoked bone-in ham or 6 lb. cured smoked boneless ham**

**1/3 cup ketchup**

**1/3 cup pure maple syrup**

**2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**

**2 tablespoons sriracha**

### Step 1

If one 10-lb. cured smoked bone-in ham or 6-lb. cured smoked boneless ham has a fat cap, score lightly in a crosshatch pattern, spacing cuts about 3/4-inch apart.

### Step 2

Transfer ham to a large stockpot and pour in cold water to cover. Cover pot with a lid and bring water to

a simmer. Cook, adjusting heat as needed to maintain a simmer, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the ham registers 140 F, 70 to 80 minutes for boneless, 80 to 90 minutes for bone-in. Remove pot from heat and let ham cool in cooking liquid until lukewarm, about 45 minutes.

### Step 3

Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 400 F. Stir 1/3 cup ketchup, 1/3 cup pure maple syrup, 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, and 2 tablespoons sriracha in a small bowl to combine.

### Step 4

Carefully transfer ham to a wire rack set inside a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet and pat dry with paper towels; discard cooking liquid or save for another use. Brush ham with about half the glaze. Transfer to oven and bake until glaze is tacky and lightly browned in spots, 30 to 40 minutes. Brush with remaining glaze and continue to bake until glaze is deeply browned, 10 to 15 minutes more.

### Step 5

Transfer ham to a cutting board and let rest 15 to 20 minutes before slicing and serving.

**Do ahead:** Ham can be simmered 12 hours ahead. Let cool completely, then transfer ham to a wire rack set inside a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet and chill uncovered. Let sit at room temperature 60 to 90 minutes before glazing and baking.



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# Christmas cookies embody the joy of holiday cooking

The holiday season simply wouldn't be the same without food. The joyful spirit of the season lends itself to sharing a bite if not a full meal with family and friends. Perhaps that explains why so many people embrace the joy of baking each holiday season. Some bake to honor and continue family traditions, while others spend hours crafting cookies to put a smile on the face of loved ones each holiday season.

Whatever it is that inspires individuals to break out the measuring cups, flour and whisk, cookie fans undoubtedly appreciate that spark of confectionary creativity. This holiday season, those with an urge to bake some cookies can try this recipe for "Christmas Linz Shortbread Cookies with Red Jam" from Lines+Angles.

## Christmas Linz Shortbread Cookies With Red Jam

Makes 24 cookies

**2 cups all-purpose flour**  
**¾ cup almond flour**  
**½ teaspoon kosher salt**  
**½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**1 cup unsalted butter, softened**  
**¾ cup sugar**  
**2 egg yolks**  
**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**  
**1 tablespoon lemon zest**  
**½ cup raspberry jam**  
**½ cup powdered sugar**

1. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, almond flour, salt, and cinnamon together. In a separate bowl, beat the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add in the egg yolks, vanilla extract and lemon zest and continue to beat until well incorporated.

2. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and continue to beat until just combined to form a dough. Divide the dough in half; pat each half into a disc, wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour.



3. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, and let it soften for about 5 minutes, until soft enough to roll. On a lightly floured surface, roll one disc of dough out to about ¼" thickness. Using a 3" cookie cutter, cut out cookies. Cut out a top for each cookie using a smaller cookie cutter to cut out the center. Transfer the cookies to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Gather the scrap dough, roll, and repeat.

4. Place the first batch of cut cookies in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to chill. Preheat the oven to 350 F and repeat the process with the second batch of dough.

5. Bake the chilled cookies for about 12 minutes or until just starting to turn golden around the edges. Let the cookies cool for a few minutes until transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely.

6. Once cooled, spread the bottom half of each cookie with some raspberry preserves, leaving a thin border around each cookie. Dust the tops of each cookie with powdered sugar and place on its corresponding bottom half. Use a spoon or piping bag to fill the cut-out center with a little more of the preserves.

**Preparation time:** 30 minutes

**Resting time:** 1 hour, 30 minutes

**Baking time:** 15 minutes

**Difficulty:** Easy



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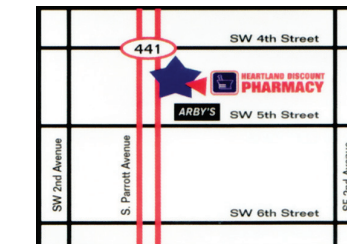
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Happy New Year**



# Festively chase away chills



Cooler temperatures have arrived to coincide with what many characterize as the most festive time of year. The period from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day is filled with major holidays and many opportunities for friends and family to gather together in good cheer.

Naturally, spending time indoors in close company with others increases the likelihood that people will encounter the sniffles and sneezes that are symptomatic of viral illnesses. Many people insist a hot toddy can help soothe the throat, open the nose and help a person get rest. There are various iterations of a hot toddy, but author Gustave Flaubert's "French Hot Toddy" delivers flavors that pair nicely with November and December events. It's so delicious that it can be served at any holiday

gathering, or just to feel better if the common cold is an unwanted visitor. Enjoy Flaubert's take, courtesy of "How to Drink Like a Writer" (Apollo Publishers) by Margaret Kaplan.

## **Gustave Flaubert's French Hot Toddy** Serves 1

4 ounces apple cider  
2 ounces calvados  
2 ounces apricot brandy  
2 ounces heavy cream  
Ground cinnamon for garnishing

In a small saucepan, heat apple cider until warm. Remove from heat. Add calvados and apricot brandy, stirring to combine. Pour into a heatproof glass. Pouring in a circular motion, slowly add cream, allowing it to settle on top. Garnish with the cinnamon.

# Take hot chocolate to the next level

People tend to think of sipping ice cream floats in the middle of summer when temperatures are soaring. Ice cream floating in a bubbling base of cola or root beer can be a welcome treat on a hot day. However, floats can be just as delicious when the weather chills, particularly when ice cream enhances rich and decadent hot chocolate.

For this "Hot Chocolate Float" from "Chocolate: Over 100 Temptingly-Tasty Dishes" (Love Food) by the Love Food editors, coconut- and chocolate-flavored scoops of ice cream bob and melt in creamy hot chocolate. Feel free to use your favorite flavors of ice cream to make this recipe your own, and you can even make this drink a boozy version with the inclusion of a shot of flavored vodka.

## **Hot Chocolate Float** Serves 4

2 cups milk  
8 ounces semisweet chocolate  
2 tablespoons superfine sugar  
8 scoops coconut ice cream  
8 scoops semisweet chocolate ice cream  
Whipped cream, to decorate

Pour the milk into a saucepan. Break the chocolate into



pieces and add to the saucepan with the sugar. Stir over low heat until the chocolate has melted, the sugar has dissolved and the mixture is smooth. Remove the saucepan from the heat.

Put 1 scoop of coconut ice cream into each of 4 heatproof glasses, top with a scoop of chocolate ice cream, then repeat the layers.

Pour the chocolate flavored milk into the glasses, top with whipped cream, and serve immediately.





## Gingerbread takes the cake

**P**lenty 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 delicious 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*

1 cup packed muscovado sugar (dark brown works great)  
 ½ cup plus 2 tablespoons butter, softened  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 2 eggs, room temperature  
 ¼ cup plain full-fat Greek or plain yogurt  
 1¾ cups all-purpose flour  
 1 teaspoon baking powder  
 ½ teaspoon kosher salt  
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon  
 ¼ teaspoon ground cloves  
 ¼ teaspoon ground ginger  
 ¼ teaspoon apple pie spice  
 1 cup hot water  
 ¾ cup molasses

### Garnishes

½ cup confectioners’ sugar  
 1 cup pomegranate arils

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

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.

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

In a third bowl, mix the hot water and molasses together. Now mix the dry ingredients into the batter in 3 additions, alternating with the hot molasses water. Do not overmix.

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.



## Enjoy extra time with family thanks to this simple, flavorful appetizer



8 thick asparagus,  
woody ends removed  
8 slices roast beef, cold,  
trimmed of excess fat and  
gristle  
1 cup cottage cheese  
2 scallions, or spring  
onions, chopped  
Salt  
Freshly ground black pepper

1. Blanch the asparagus spears in a large saucepan of salted, boiling water for 2 to 3 minutes until tender to the bite.
2. Drain and refresh immediately in a large bowl of ice water. Remove from the water after 3 minutes and pat dry. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Spread the slices of roast beef with the cottage cheese. Place an asparagus spear at one end of the slice and roll into a cigar shape, enveloping the asparagus in the center.
4. Arrange on a platter and sprinkle with chopped scallion before serving.

**Preparation time:** 15 minutes  
**Total time:** 15 minutes  
**Difficulty:** Easy

**Green Asparagus  
Wrapped In Roast Beef**  
Makes 4 servings or 8  
appetizers

## Be your best brunch host this holiday season



olive oil  
2 cups chopped smoked  
sausage  
2 cups sliced mushrooms  
2 cloves of garlic, peeled  
and minced  
8 fresh eggs  
3 1/2 tablespoons heavy cream  
1 teaspoon fresh ground  
black pepper  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup cheddar cheese, grated

**M**uch is made about the main course during a holiday meal, and for good reason. Food features prominently during the holiday season, and many a lasting memory is made around the family dinner table each December. Though it's impossible to exaggerate the importance of the main course during a holiday celebration with family and friends, savvy hosts, especially those welcoming overnight guests into their homes, recognize that a sit-down dinner isn't the only opportunity to show off their culinary skills. When hosting overnight guests, a relaxing homemade brunch can make for the perfect way for hosts and their guests to ease into a day. Hosts looking to plan a simple, flavorful holiday brunch can utilize this recipe for "Mushroom Sausage Frittata" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

**Mushroom Sausage Frittata**  
Makes 4 to 6 servings

1 tablespoon good-quality

1. Preheat oven broiler.
2. Heat the oil in a 10-inch nonstick, ovenproof skillet. Add sausage and sauté until it begins to brown, about 3 minutes. Add mushrooms and sauté until golden, about 3 additional minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
3. Combine the eggs, heavy cream, salt, and pepper in a blender; process until frothy. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet with the sausage mixture and cook, undisturbed, until the sides and bottom are set but center is loose, about 4 minutes.
4. Sprinkle cheese over the top and place skillet under broiler and cook until mixture is just set on top and cooked through, about 3 to 4 minutes. Cool 2 minutes, slice and serve.

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes  
**Cooking time:** 15 minutes  
**Total time:** 25 minutes  
**Difficulty:** Easy



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## Merry Christmas

*May the Blessings of Christ  
be on you and your family  
this Holiday Season.*

*B*ehold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

*Matthew 1:23-25*





# 5 fun gift exchange ideas

**G**ift-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 it's 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



THE PEOPLE  
WALKING IN  
**DARKNESS**  
HAVE SEEN A  
**GREAT  
LIGHT.**

Isaiah 9:2 NIV



**I CAME FOR YOU**  
~ JESUS



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# Enjoy gooey waffles for breakfast or dessert

**W**affles can be enjoyed any time of the day. While traditionally breakfast fare, waffles can be a sweet or savory dessert as well.

When waffles are paired with the flavors of a traditional Banana Foster dessert, they can be a decadent breakfast or impressive evening treat. Enjoy this recipe for “Kentucky ‘Nanners Foster Waffles” from “Lord Honey Traditional Southern Recipes with a Country Bling Twist” (Pelican Publishing) by Chef Jason Smith.

## Kentucky ‘Nanner Foster Waffles

Serves 4 to 6

Nonstick cooking spray  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
¼ cup white sugar  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 eggs  
1½ cups milk, any variety  
½ cup butter, melted and cooled  
2 teaspoons vanilla  
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

### Topping:

¼ cup butter  
¼ cup brown sugar, packed  
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg  
2 bananas, sliced thick  
3 teaspoons bourbon  
Favorite vanilla ice cream

Preheat a waffle iron, and spray with nonstick cooking spray. Preheat oven to 170 F.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.

In a small bowl, whisk the eggs and milk. Add the butter, vanilla, and cinnamon, and whisk.

Add the wet mixture to the dry, and whisk until there are no lumps.

Scoop ½ cup batter onto the waffle iron, close the lid, and let cook until golden brown and crispy. Repeat until all the batter is gone.

Put the waffles on a sheet pan and place in preheated oven.

To make the topping, melt the butter in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the brown sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg, stir to combine, and cook for about 1 minute.

Add the sliced bananas and cook for a few seconds. Add the bourbon (or apple juice, instead), and cook 2 to 3 minutes, stirring often with a light hand so the bananas do not break up.

Meanwhile, place 1 to 2 waffles on a plate and top with a scoop of ice cream. Once banana sauce has thickened, spoon over ice cream and waffles. Repeat with remaining waffles.





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# Spinach all rolled up with flavor



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The good news is that spinach is a versatile ingredient and can be added to many dishes relatively easily. As an alternative to meat-based dishes, "Spinach Balls" serve up flavor in easy-to-portion style. Serve these with a dipping sauce as an appetizer, or place alongside pasta instead of meatballs. Enjoy this recipe courtesy of "It Just Happens to Be Gluten-Free" (Do Life Inspired Publishing) by Jen

Fiore.

## **Spinach Balls**

*Makes about a dozen*

1 10-ounce box frozen chopped spinach  
3 eggs, beaten  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese  
 $\frac{2}{3}$  cup gluten-free breadcrumbs  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper  
1 teaspoon dried parsley  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon garlic powder  
6 shakes Tabasco sauce (6 shakes more if you like it hotter!)

1. Place the spinach box in the microwave for 2-3 minutes until defrosted. Set aside to cool.

2. In a large bowl mix together the cheese, bread crumbs, salt, pepper, parsley, and garlic powder.

3. Squeeze excess water out of the spinach. Place the spinach into the cheese mixture. Mix.

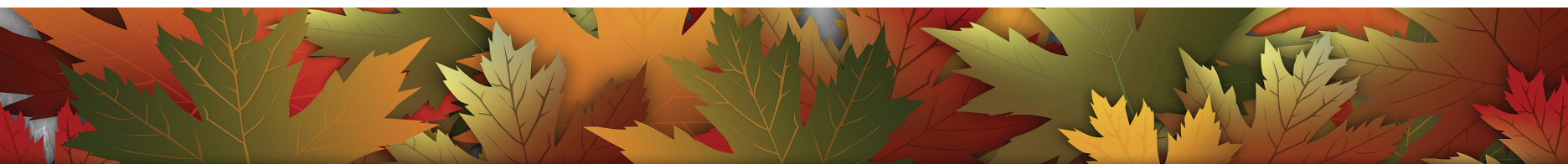
4. Add oil, eggs and Tabasco sauce.

5. Form into balls and place on a parchment-lined baking sheet.

6. Bake at 375 F for 18 to 22 minutes.

7. Serve with garlic aioli.

**I**ncluding more spinach in one's diet can be a healthy decision. Spinach is rich in iron, potassium, magnesium,



## *Warm Wishes From Our Family to Yours at Thanksgiving*

As we gather around with family and friends this holiday, we offer up thanks for the many blessings that make life meaningful. Gifts like friendship, love, health and prosperity make us especially grateful, and we hope you enjoy these same blessings in abundance at this special time of year and always.

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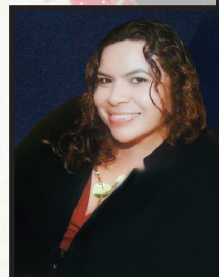
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# Lemon cupcakes are on the menu

**C**upcakes are handheld treats that can make any celebration even more spectacular. If guests expect the standard flavors of chocolate, vanilla or even red velvet, change things up with a sunny surprise: lemon!

Enjoy this recipe for “Lemon Drizzle Cupcakes” from “Jane’s Patisserie” (Sourcebooks) by Jane Dunn. Anything with sweet drizzle is a hit, and these cupcakes deliver plenty of lemony flavor in every bite.

Note: Imperial measurements were approximated from the metric and may not be exact. Using a food scale set to grams and weighing ingredients will produce the most authentic version of this recipe.

## Lemon Drizzle Cupcakes

Makes 12

### Cupcakes:

½ cup butter or baking spread  
½ cup caster sugar  
3 eggs  
1 cup self-raising flour  
Zest of 1 lemon

### Drizzle:

Juice of 2 lemons  
5½ tablespoons caster sugar

### Lemon Buttercream:

½ cup unsalted butter, at room temperature  
2¼ cups icing sugar  
Juice of ½ lemon  
Sprinkles  
Lemon zest

Preheat the oven to 180 C (350 F) and get 12 cupcake cases (liners) ready.

Beat the butter with the sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, self-raising flour and lemon zest and mix until combined. Spoon the mix evenly into the cupcake cases (liners) and bake for 18 to 22 minutes until they are baked through and springy to the touch.

Mix together the lemon juice and sugar for the drizzle in a bowl. Once the cupcakes are out of the oven, carefully spoon the drizzle over the cupcakes, then leave them to cool fully on a wire rack while you make the buttercream.

Beat the butter until smooth; this can take a couple of minutes. Add the icing sugar in two batches, beating well after each addition, then add the lemon juice and beat again.

Pipe or spread the buttercream onto your cupcakes, then sprinkle each one with some sprinkles and lemon zest.





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# No-bake cookies make dessert a breeze



## Peanut Butter No-Bake Cookies

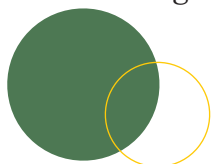
Makes 32 to 34 cookies

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into tablespoon-size pieces  
 1¾ cups granulated sugar  
 ½ cup whole milk  
 ¾ cup creamy peanut butter  
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
 3¼ cups quick-cooking oats

1. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats and set aside.
2. Place the unsalted butter, granulated sugar and milk in a saucepan and heat over medium heat, making sure to stir often until the butter is melted and the ingredients are well combined. Bring the mixture to a rolling boil and allow to boil for 1 minute without stirring.
3. Remove from the heat, and stir in the peanut butter and vanilla extract until fully combined. Stir in the quick oats and mix until all the oats are coated with the mixture.
4. Using a 1½-tablespoon cookie scoop, drop scoops of the mixture onto the prepared baking sheets, and gently press them down to flatten them slightly. Allow to cool for 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until the cookies have firmed up. The cookies will continue to firm up the longer they cool.
5. Store the cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

**T**hanks to their portability and diverse flavor profiles, cookies remain a favorite treat to enjoy at home or bring to parties at others' homes. Cookies also frequently are go-to offerings at bake sales and school functions.

Although cookies are relatively easy to make, people sometimes find the end products does not turn out as expected. No-bake cookies, including this recipe for "Peanut Butter No-Bake Cookies" courtesy of "Live Well, Bake Cookies" (Rock Point) by Danielle Rye, are a perfect workaround for those who have previously had mixed results when baking cookies.



# Add a new offering to your Christmas cookie lineup



## Santa's Whiskers

Makes 20 to 24 cookies

1½ cups confectioner's sugar  
 1 cup butter, softened  
 1 12-ounce jar pitted maraschino cherries, strained and stemmed  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 ½ teaspoon almond extract  
 ½ teaspoon kosher salt  
 1½ cups all-purpose flour  
 2 cups sweetened shredded coconut

In a stand mixer, with a hand mixer, or by hand, cream the sugar and butter until light and fluffy.

Add the cherries, vanilla, almond extract, and salt. Mix thoroughly. Fold into the flour and mix until it forms a crumbly but moist dough.

Lay a 16-inch sheet of parchment paper onto the counter. Sprinkle 1 cup of the coconut on the center in a loose rectangle, making sure it does not reach the edge of the parchment. Place the cookie dough on top, flattening a bit with your fingers, and sprinkle the remaining coconut over the top of the dough.

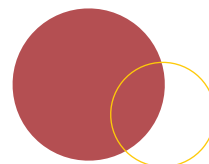
Form the dough into a 12- to 14-inch log, about 3 inches thick. Evenly press the coconut around the log and roll to make the log an even cylinder.

Roll the parchment up with the dough inside and twist the ends. Chill for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice cookies in ¼- to ½-inch rounds, place on the prepared baking sheet, about 2 inches apart, and bake 12 to 15 minutes. Allow to cool before serving. Store in an airtight container.

**T**he holiday season doubles as cookie season. Indeed, there's no shortage of baking opportunities in December. Various cookies make the rounds, and if you are tasked with bringing cookies to a function, you might be interested in something a little different.

"Santa's Whiskers" likely get their name from the coconut on these cookies, which resemble Santa's beard. Maraschino cherries add some jolly red to the cookies as well, making them perfect for Christmas. Try this recipe from "Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy" (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.





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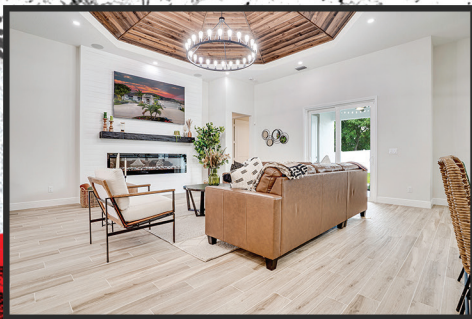
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