

Holiday Traditions

Special supplement to the November 25 edition of Lake Okeechobee News

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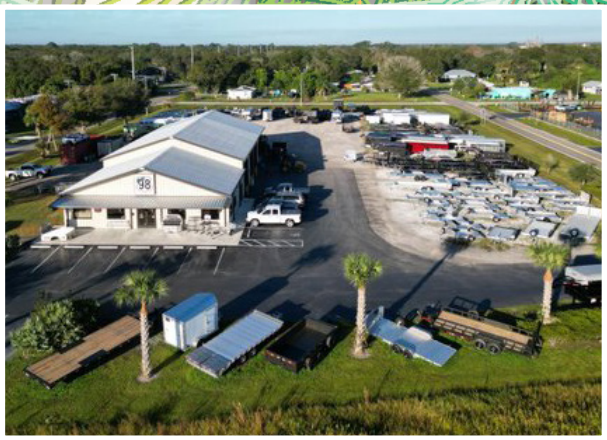

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HOW TO roll out the welcome mat for holiday guests

The most wonderful time of the year also tends to be one of the busiest. Between shopping for gifts, decorating and attending holiday-related school or work functions, families find themselves trying to fit many tasks into a relatively short period of time. Come November and December, hosting friends and family tends to be the norm. Many people have positive views of hosting overnight guests during the holidays. In fact, 61 percent of Americans like hosting, according to a OnePool survey commissioned by SertaSimmons Bedding. The poll also found 32 percent of respondents are both hosts and guests at some point during the holidays.

This holiday season, hosts can take these steps to roll out the welcome mat for loved ones staying the night.

• **Create a measure of privacy.** Creativity may be needed if you do not have a dedicated guest room. Some hosts will give up their own bedrooms to guests, while others may set aside a sleeper sofa in a home office or another space. The goal is to have an out-of-the-way area where guests can retire.

• **Invest in some upgrades.** While guests won't be expecting a five-star hotel experience, hosts can show they put some effort into making guests comfortable. Upgrading amenities by buying new bedding, redecorating and personalizing a space for guests are some ways hosts can enhance their homes for the holidays. Others may want to purchase a new mattress or an entirely new bed to make sure visitors sleep comfortably.

• **Deep clean the bathroom.** If possible, hosts should have a dedicated bathroom for guest use. That bathroom should be thoroughly cleaned and stocked with fresh linens and extra toiletries.

• **Clear luggage space.** Guests will arrive with their belongings, so hosts should plan where to stow the luggage. Also, offering a few drawers or a closet where guests can keep their clothing is another nice touch.

• **Remove clutter.** Hosts can take inventory of their spaces and remove personal items and excess furniture from the rooms where guests will be staying.

• **Make up a welcome basket.** It's a nice touch to place a small tray or basket on a nightstand. Place some bottled water, snacks, a phone charger, earplugs, and travel-sized toiletries on the tray. Guests also can be informed that they can help themselves to coffee, tea and anything they want in the refrigerator.

A warm and comfortable home can make holiday guests feel welcome.





HOW TO FIND THE right caterer for your holiday party

Hosting for the holidays is a big responsibility. Whether you're welcoming overnight guests or throwing a bash at home, hosting requires lots of preparation and work. The good news for holiday hosts is some of that work, including cooking duties, can be outsourced. Visions of families cooking together come the holiday season have endured for some time. But veteran holiday hosts know that cooking for a crowd is a tall order. Professional caterers can take a big responsibility off of holiday hosts' plates, and hosts can keep these tips in mind as they try to find the right pro to cater their next holiday party.

• **Know the parameters of your party.** Certain details of the party, including if it will include a sit-down meal and the total number of guests who will attend, are good to know before you begin looking for a caterer. Cost is an important variable when hiring a caterer, and it's hard to determine the full cost until hosts know how many guests will attend. Before interviewing caterers, identify the type of party you will be hosting and do your best to estimate the guest list, as such details can help caterers provide the most accurate estimates possible.

• **Resist the temptation to make price the most significant variable.** It's important to have a budget, but keep in mind that the least expensive option is not necessarily the best. Hosts who simply go with the lowest estimate may be disappointed by the food quality. And the same is true on the opposite end of the price spectrum, as the most expensive caterer will not necessarily make the best food. Price is important, but food quality is arguably the most significant variable when choosing a caterer. And that's the next tip to keep in mind when looking for a caterer for a holiday party.

• **Attend a tasting.** Caterers typically offer prospective clients a chance to taste their culinary creations before any contracts are signed. If a tasting is offered, take advantage of this opportunity. Tastings offer insight into the flavors as well as how each





caterer presents their food, and those are highly important variables that can make hosts' investment in a caterer worth every penny.

• **Inquire about staffing for the party.** Some catering companies stick to cooking, delivering and setting up food, while others may offer hosts a package that includes service staff during the party. Hosts who want to spend as much time as possible with their families and guests should inquire about service staff. Service staff take the pressure of serving off hosts' shoulders, and they can answer any questions guests might have regarding ingredients, which can reduce risk of allergic reactions or other issues related to dietary restrictions.

• **Ask about the flexibility of the menu.** Speaking of dietary restrictions, when interviewing caterers be sure to ask if they prepare items for guests who might be on gluten- or nut-free diets or additional restrictions. A one-size-fits-all menu likely won't accommodate all guests in the 21st century, so shop around for a caterer with experience cooking for a diverse array of diners.

Catering a holiday party is a great way for hosts to ensure they have as much fun as their guests.









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HOLIDAY BAKING
can go beyond cookies

Baked goods and the holiday season go hand in hand. Many families incorporate baking into their holiday season traditions. There's no limit to the treats that can be baked come the holiday season, but families who want to offer something less traditional, but equally delicious, can try this recipe for "Pecan Brownies With Icing Sugar" from Lines+Angles.

Pecan Brownies With Icing Sugar

12 ounces plain dark chocolate, 70 percent cocoa solids
9 ounces butter
3 large eggs
9 ounces dark brown sugar
2 ounces flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
5 ounces chopped pecan nuts

To decorate:
Icing sugar

1. Heat the oven to 325 F. Grease a 7" x 11" rectangular baking dish and line the base with non-stick baking paper.

2. Put the chocolate and butter in a pan and heat gently, stirring until melted. Allow to cool slightly.

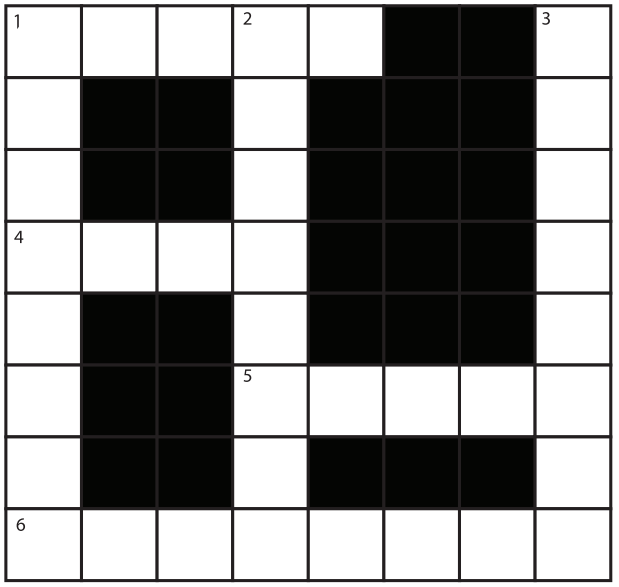
3. Whisk the eggs in a mixing bowl until pale and frothy, then add the sugar, a spoonful at a time, whisking until thick and glossy.

4. Gently fold in the melted chocolate mixture. Sift in the flour and baking powder and fold in with the pecan nuts.

5. Spoon the mixture into the baking dish, level with the back of a spoon and bake for 40 minutes, until the top has a cracked appearance and the center is still a little soft to the touch. Do not overbake, or you will lose the famous sticky brownie texture. Cool in the pan.

6. Cut into slices and sift over a little icing sugar. PC26B249

Santa's Visit Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS
1. Festive
4. Nothing
5. Brief stay
6. With care

DOWN
1. 12:00 A.M.
2. Delivered
3. Strongly shining



Answers: Across 1. Merry 4. None 5. Visit 6. Tenderly
Down 1. Midnight 2. Received 3. Brightly

The evolution of modern HOLIDAY TRADITIONS



Many winter celebrations, including Christmas and Chanukah, have connections to ancient winter solstice customs and religious observances. While tradition is a primary driver of holiday celebrations, customs have undergone an evolution in modern times. Perhaps powered by digital connectivity, shifting values and evolving consumer habits, modern traditions now blend sentimentality with technological convenience.

No longer are people beholden to the Norman Rockwell-inspired picture of holiday perfection. Here are some distinct ways that traditions have been adapted for modern life.

• **Video connectivity:** Families may no longer gather exclusively around a physical holiday table. Today, video calling platforms and social media enable long-distance families to host hybrid holiday meals and even open presents in real time regardless of everyone's physical location.

• **E-commerce dominates:** According to the National Retail Federation, online shopping consistently ranks as the primary means for holiday gift-buying. More than 55 percent of consumers choose online retailers over traditional brick-and-mortar stores for their seasonal purchases. The tradition of visiting stores on Black Friday or during the rest of the season has evolved into shopping on a device.

• **Digital wish lists:** Many people create shopping wish lists with links to stores where they may have "registered" for gifts. This can streamline the process of shopping.

• **Gift cards rule:** Wells Fargo reports between 60 and 68 percent of consumers prefer to receive cash or gift cards over traditional physical gifts during the holidays. Younger demographics and older adults alike favor them.

• **Sustainable celebrations:** Another modern trend is an environmental awareness that has reshaped how people deck the halls. Green initiatives promote an updated approach to gift wrap, decorations and even dining practices. This extends to Christmas trees. The American Christmas Tree Association says data shows an increasing share of consumers prioritize reusable, low-impact artifical options or locally sourced live trees to align with eco-friendly values.

• **Redefining "family":** Even the definition of "family" has evolved for holiday gatherings. Gatherings held with close friends rather than biological relatives have grown. Friendsgiving and Friendsmas are popular celebratory events.

Modern holiday customs are about blending old and new and adapting to the changing times. The core spirit of the holidays remains alive even in the modern world.





OFFER SOMETHING NEW
at Thanksgiving dinner this year

Thanksgiving dinner offers a lot to look forward to. The unofficial kickoff to the holiday season, Thanksgiving is a chance for families and friends to get together, watch some football and, of course, share a delicious meal.

Food is a focal point on Thanksgiving. Turkey is the traditional centerpiece, but side dishes garner their share of the glory, too. Stuffing, mashed potatoes, vegetable casseroles, and more have a way of finding their ways onto the Thanksgiving menu. But hosts looking to offer something a little less traditional and more unique can look to this delicious recipe for "Stuffed Zucchini" from Lines+Angles.

Stuffed Zucchini
Makes 6 servings

- 6 medium zucchini, washed and ends trimmed
- 3 cups butter cracker crumbs, crumbled
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus extra to sprinkle
- 1 small onion, peeled and minced
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley, plus extra for garnish
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 15 ounces canned diced tomatoes, drained well

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Cut zucchini in half lengthwise; scoop pulp out with a spoon. Place zucchini shells in a large baking pan.
3. In a large bowl, combine zucchini pulp, cracker crumbs, cheese, onion, parsley, salt, pepper, and the beaten eggs. Fill zucchini shells with mixture; dot with butter and spoon tomatoes over the filling. Sprinkle with additional Parmesan cheese and bake for 30 to 35 minutes. Garnish with chopped parsley and serve.

PC26B251

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These reindeer cupcakes make for the perfect HOLIDAY TREAT



Baking is a holiday season tradition in many households. Memories are made and diets are compromised when families gather for holiday baking sessions. But a little confectionary overindulgence is a price worth paying come the holiday season. There's no wrong or right choice when preparing baked goods during the holiday season. But a finished product that lets everyone know it's the holiday season might be the ideal choice as families try to decide what to prepare. This recipe for "Chocolate Reindeer Cupcakes" courtesy of Lines+Angles leaves no doubt that holiday baking season has arrived.

Chocolate Reindeer Cupcakes

Makes 12 servings

For chocolate cupcakes:
⅔ cup butter, softened
¾ cup superfine sugar
3 eggs
1½ cups self-rising flour
2 tablespoons cocoa powder

For chocolate frosting:
¾ cup butter, softened
3⅓ cups confectioners' sugar
⅞ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 to 6 tablespoons milk

For decorations:
12 sets candy eyes
12 red gumdrops
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

For chocolate cupcakes:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Line muffin tin wells with 12 paper cupcake liners.

2. In a large mixing bowl, using an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. Gradually add flour and cocoa powder, mixing until all ingredients are incorporated.

3. Spoon the batter into the paper liners. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until tops are springy to the touch. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove cupcakes from pan and allow to cool completely before decorating.

For Chocolate Frosting:

1. In a large bowl, cream butter until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar, cocoa and vanilla. Add milk one tablespoon at a time until frosting reaches the desired consistency. Frost each cupcake using an offset spatula.

To Decorate:

1. Arrange candied eyes and gumdrop nose on frosted cupcake.

2. Melt semisweet chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Cool slightly, and transfer to a pastry bag fitted with small, plain round tip. Pipe antlers with chocolate on parchment or waxed paper; place in the refrigerator or freezer and allow to set.

3. Once the chocolate has set, carefully remove antlers from paper and insert in cupcake. Serve.





THIS PASTRY ADDS A LOT to a holiday season brunch

Millions of people host friends and family during the holiday season. Some of those guests stay the night, and hosts often find it's fun to wake up with a house full of friends and family.

It's customary to let guests sleep in, and that means it might make more sense to plan a brunch than offer a spread for breakfast. Tarts are a baked pastry that can be served during a holiday brunch, and these "Nutty Christmas Shortcrust Tarts With Raspberry Jam" from Lines+Angles are sure to impress overnight guests.

Nutty Christmas Shortcrust Tarts With Raspberry Jam

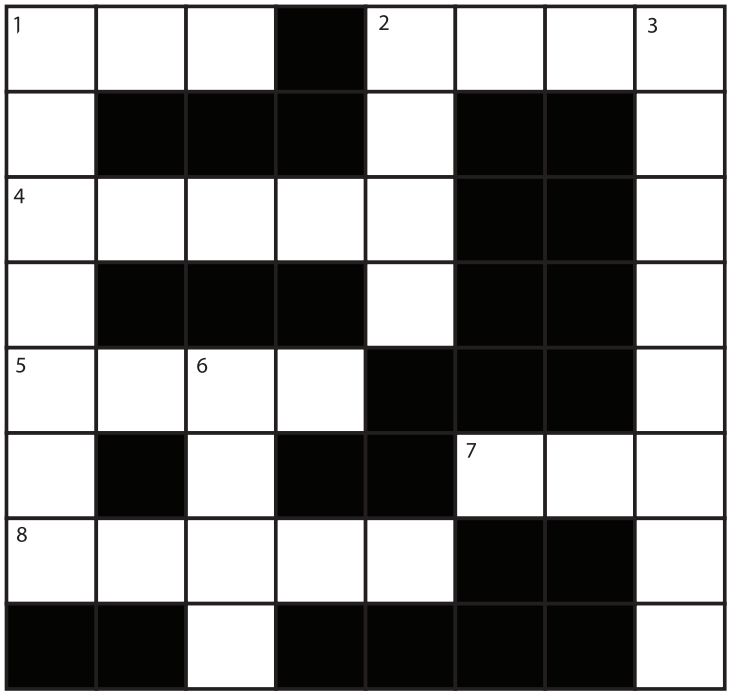
Makes 12 servings

2 ⅓	cups flour, plus extra for dusting
½	teaspoon salt
¼	teaspoon gluten-free baking powder
½	cup ground almonds
1	cup cold unsalted butter, cubed
½	cup granulated sugar
2	medium eggs
¾	cup raspberry jam
	Powdered sugar, for dusting

1. Pulse together the flour, salt, baking powder, ground almonds, butter, and sugar until the mixture resembles rough breadcrumbs.
2. Crack in the eggs and pulse until a dough forms around the blades of the processor; if needed, add a splash of ice cold water to help bring it together.
3. Turn out and shape into a disc. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for at least 4 hours.
4. After chilling, preheat the oven to 325 F. Grease and line the base and sides of an 8-inch springform cake pan with parchment paper.
5. Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured surface and divide in half. Roll out one piece into a ½-inch thick square, approximately 8" by 8" in dimension.
6. Shape into the base of the prepared cake pan, trimming the edges to fit as needed. Prick all over with a fork.
7. Top with the raspberry jam, spreading it out evenly with a damp offset spatula or the back of a tablespoon. Cover and chill until needed.
8. Roll out the other piece of pastry into a ½-inch thick square, approximately 8" by 8" in dimension.
9. Cut out ½-inch wide strips from the dough and drape them over the raspberry filling, overlapping them in a lattice pattern to cover the jam.
10. Bake the tart for about 35 to 45 minutes until golden-brown on top. Remove the pan to a wire rack to cool.
11. Once cool, carefully turn out the tart and cut it into four smaller tarts with a serrated knife. Dust with powdered sugar before serving. PC26C324



Hanukkah Crossword Puzzle



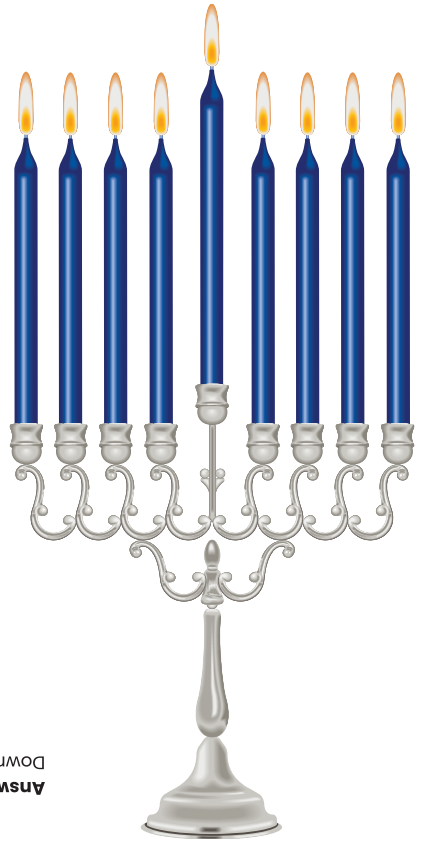
ACROSS

1. Gear teeth
2. Unit of measure
4. Long book
5. Adore
7. Fuel or cooking fat
8. Enjoy with others

DOWN

1. Wax lights
2. Money
3. Unexplained events
6. Small cylinder





Answers: Across 1. Cog 2. Gram 4. Novel 5. Love 7. Oil 8. Share
Down 1. Candles 2. Gelt 3. Miracles 6. Vial

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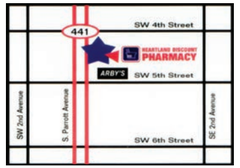

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HOMEMADE GINGERBREAD HOUSES

embody the holiday spirit

The holiday season features ample opportunities for families to bond and make memories that last a lifetime. Many families take to the kitchen together come the holiday season, where everything from time-tested family recipes to cookies for Santa Claus are whipped up over a few laughs.

Gingerbread houses are another crafty concoction that families can make together this holiday season. This colorful and edible "Gingerbread House" courtesy of Lines+Angles makes for a perfect family project, and one that can be enjoyed with a cup of hot cocoa once the finished product has been photographed for the family memory book.



Gingerbread House

Makes 8 servings or 1 house

For the house:

3¼ cups all-purpose flour, plus extra as needed
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1 tablespoon ground ginger
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¾ teaspoon salt
1 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾ cup molasses, warmed
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the frosting:

2 cups confectioners' sugar, plus extra as needed
1½ tablespoons meringue powder
1 to 2 tablespoons warm water

To decorate:

Assorted colorful candies, sugared chocolate candies, round peppermint candies, candy canes, etc.

1. For the gingerbread: Combine the flour, cornstarch, spices, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Stir well and set aside.

2. Beat the softened butter with the molasses and vanilla in a separate mixing bowl until pale and creamy, about 2 to 3 minutes.

3. Beat in the flour mixture in 4 additions, mixing well between additions until you have a rough dough; add more flour as needed to form a stiff dough.

4. Turn out and knead briefly. Shape into a round, wrap in parchment paper, and chill for 2 hours.

5. After chilling, preheat the oven to 325 F. Grease and line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper.

6. Remove the dough from the refrigerator. Roll out to about 0.333" thickness on a lightly floured surface.

7. Cut out two rectangles approximately 4.5" x 4" for the roof. Cut out 2 pointed rectangles approximately 5" at their tallest points and 3.5" wide at the base; these will be the front and back of the house as per the image. Make sure that one side has a round window cut out.

8. Using some of the remaining dough, cut out the 2 rectangles to be the sides of the house, approximately 3" x 4" in diameter. Use the remaining dough to cut out 4 even rectangles, approximately 2" x 1.5", to shape the chimney.

9. Arrange the pieces across the baking sheets. Bake for about 25 minutes until browned and dry to the touch. Remove to cooling racks to cool.

10. For the frosting: Combine the confectioners' sugar, meringue powder and 2 tablespoons warm water in a large mixing bowl.

11. Beat with an electric mixer until the frosting is thick and glossy, about 4 to 5 minutes; beat in more confectioners' sugar if too thin and more water if too thick.

12. Spoon into a piping bag fitted with a thin, round nozzle. Chill for 15 minutes.

13. To decorate: Using the frosting as 'glue,' assemble the chimney using the 4 even rectangles of gingerbread. Let dry and set.

14. Start to assemble the rest of the house by glueing the pieces together as per the image, attaching the front and back of the house to the sides before attaching the roof in place. Let set dry and set at each building interval.

15. Once the sections are dry, pipe more frosting onto the edges of the roof and down their sides, shaped as icicles.

16. When the chimney is set, attach it to the top, cutting the pieces to fit if necessary, and decorating the outside with frosting.

17. To decorate: Attach the assorted candies to the house, decorating the roof with a tiled pattern using the frosting.

18. Let the house dry and set until ready to serve.

TIPS:

Some of the gingerbread pieces will bake more quickly than others depending on their size; keep an eye on them and remove from the oven when ready.
Meringue powder is available online or from specialty cookware stores.





A POPULAR APP to serve at your next party

Whether you're hosting family for the holidays or inviting friends over for the big game, food figures to feature prominently when welcoming people into your home. Entrées may garner a lot of the culinary glory, but appetizers can start a gathering off with a bang.

There's no shortage of appetizer options when planning a menu for a gathering at home. But it's important to consider potential food allergies before settling on the menu. It's generally best to avoid foods with nuts, and shellfish also might be off-limits for many guests. Potatoes are a popular comfort food that also can be incorporated into the pre-meal menu. With that in mind, hosts can consider this Lines+Angles recipe for "Baked Potato Skins With Bacon and Spring Onions."

Baked Potato Skins With Bacon and Spring Onions

Makes 4 Portions

6 large russet potatoes, scrubbed
Vegetable oil
4 finely chopped strips of bacon
4 chopped spring onions
8 ounces grated cheddar cheese

1. Heat the oven to 400°F.
2. Rub the potatoes with a little oil and bake in the oven for one hour or until soft and tender.
3. While the potatoes are cooking, gently fry the bacon in a little oil until lightly browned.
4. Cut the potatoes in half, scoop out the flesh and brush the insides of the skins with a little oil. Place the potato skins on a baking sheet and add the bacon, spring onions and cheese.
5. Bake in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes and serve immediately. PC26C329



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

Solve the code to discover words related to presents.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 6 = E)

A. 5 17 3 16
Clue: Cover in paper

B. 9 3 19 10 6 15
Clue: Woven container

C. 16 17 6 19 6 13 15
Clue: Gift

D. 17 7 9 9 14 13
Clue: Decorative string

Answers: A. wrap B. basket C. present D. ribbon



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

Solve the code to discover words related to cold weather.
Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 10 = I)

A. 2 8 7 16
Clue: Frozen precipitation

B. 10 24 10 24 4 12
Clue: Made from frozen drips

C. 2 4 12 14 14 10 8 3
Clue: Downhill on snow

D. 11 10 20 20 12 8 2
Clue: Warms hands

Answers: A. snow B. icicle C. sledding D. mittens



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3 FUN IDEAS to decorate your lawn this holiday season



Holiday celebrants have taken decorating for the season up several notches in recent years. Lavish decorations have become the norm, a phenomenon that might have a lot to do with the popularity of the social media platform Instagram, where users can post photos of their holiday decor for all the world to see.

The increasingly public nature of holiday decorating has compelled many celebrants to take their lawn decorations to the next level. Celebrants who want to join the decorating festivities can consider these three fun ideas for their front lawns.

1. GO WITH A MOVIE THEME.

A yard that pays homage to a favorite holiday movie is a great way to decorate a front lawn and get everyone in the holiday spirit. Movies like "A Christmas Story" and "Miracle on 34th Street" can be incorporated into your lawn decor. Recreate one of the more memorable and funny images from "A Christmas Story" by posing a Santa Claus figure sitting in a lawn chair and placing his foot on the forehead of the film's protagonist "Ralphie." Homeowners unafraid of something more risqué can incorporate the film's infamous leg lamp into their front yard decor. If "Miracle on 34th Street" is more your thing, recreate the famous courtroom scene where Kris Kringle asserts that he is Santa Claus.

2. LOAD UP ON INFLATABLES.

The inflatables craze continues uninterrupted, and there's no shortage of holiday inflatables at local home stores. A yard filled with inflatables of Santa Claus, Frosty the Snowman, Santa's elves, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, and a Christmas tree sets a festive tone and creates a space kids will be excited to see no matter how many times they pass a home.

3. CREATE A HOLIDAY COMMUNITY MADE OF SNOW.

In regions where the first snow falls in time for the holiday season, a front yard featuring a miniature town made from snow and decorated with holiday lights can make for a heartwarming scene. Particularly skilled snow builders can design buildings to mimic the classic Victorian Christmas, or fans of Dr. Seuss can do their best to recreate Whoville from the holiday classic "How The Grinch Stole Christmas." Those with less time or experience can make forts out of snow and decorate with lights for a unique decor that's sure to stand out from other properties.



MINI PASTRIES make a perfect appetizer for a large meal



A main course and its accompanying side dishes all comprise a delicious and impressive meal. But it's still customary to serve some bites to hold back hunger pangs until all have arrived for Sunday dinners with family or large gatherings with friends. In such instances, a smaller appetizer that doesn't fill everyone up too much can be just what the doctor ordered. These "Mini Puff Pastry Pies" from Lines+Angles are a lighter bite, but one that's still long on flavor.

Mini Puff Pastry Pies
Makes 12 pieces

For the pastry:
1¾ cup flour
1 pinch salt
8 ounces unsalted butter
8 tablespoons cold water
Dash lemon juice
For the filling:
4 slices bacon
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
11 ounces chopped mushrooms
5 tablespoons heavy cream
1 egg, beaten
Pepper
Salt

To glaze:
1 egg, lightly beaten

To garnish:
Thyme

1. Sift together the flour and the salt into a mixing bowl.
2. Work the butter with a knife until it is soft. Cut 2 ounces butter into the flour and salt.
3. Add the water and lemon juice and mix to a fairly soft elastic dough.
4. Knead lightly on a floured surface until smooth.
5. Roll out the dough into an oblong, 3 times as long as it is wide.
6. Dice the remaining butter and put 1Ú4 of it over the top 2Ú3 of dough. Fold the bottom third up and the top third down and give it a half turn, so that the folds are now at the sides. Seal the edges by pressing with a rolling pin.
7. Repeat the rolling and folding process until all the butter is used.
8. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and chill for at least 30 minutes before using.
9. Heat the oven to 400¡F. Grease 12 deep muffin tins.
10. Roll out the pastry on a floured surface and cut out 12 rounds larger than the tins. Line the tins, leaving an overhang of pastry. Prick the bases with a fork and bake for about 5 minutes until just golden. Press down the bases and set aside to cool.
11. Cook the bacon in a dry frying pan until lightly golden. Remove from the pan and chop the bacon.
12. Heat the butter in the frying pan and cook the mushrooms for about 5 minutes until soft. Mix with the bacon and set aside to cool slightly.
13. Beat together the cream and egg. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
14. Divide the mushroom mixture between the pies, then divide the cream mixture between the pies.
15. Fold in the edges around the filling, pleating them (as in the photo). Brush the pastry edges with beaten egg.
16. Bake for about 15 to 20 minutes until the pastry is golden. Serve hot garnished with thyme. PC26C330

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GUESS WHO?

In Italian folklore, I am a witch-like old woman who rides a broomstick and delivers gifts to children on the eve of the Epiphany.

Answer: La Befana

GUESS WHO?

We are two prominent sages who debated the proper way to light the menorah to celebrate the Chanukah miracle.

Answer: Hillel and Shammai

GUESS WHO?

I am an African American activist, author and professor of Africana studies. I created the week-long holiday of Kwanzaa, which is celebrated annually at the end of December.

Answer: Dr. Maulana Karenga

GUESS WHO?

I am Charlie Brown's best friend. I often have words of wisdom that help Charlie see things in a different light. I told Charlie that the Christmas tree he chose wasn't so bad and only needed, "a little love."

Answer: Linus Van Pelt

CRYPTO FUN

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

Solve the code to discover words related to the holiday season. Each number corresponds to a letter.
(Hint: 17 = A)

A. 16 26 17 18 5 21 9 3 19 3 18 9
Clue: "Turkey Day"

B. 18 10 20 7 10 17 11 21
Clue: Ball drop

C. 22 26 11 3 21 16 24 17 21
Clue: Santa comes

D. 22 26 17 18 25 5 17 26
Clue: 8-day miracle

Answers: A. Thanksgiving B. New Years C. Christmas D. Chanukah



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HOLIDAY CRAFT PROJECTS
for the entire family



Decorating for the holiday season is an activity entire families can get behind. It may fill a few days or be channeled into one day of frenzied activity, outfitting the home from top to bottom with lights, wreaths and other decorations. Many people decorate for the winter holidays, and a 2020 survey from YouGov found 27 percent of people put up their Christmas decorations even before Thanksgiving.

Although many holiday decorations are store-bought, creating your own decorations to display or even give to loved ones can add to the joy of the season. Families looking to fill chilly days with boredom-busting projects can consider these holiday craft projects.

• **Seaglass trees:** Many people aspire to be at the beach all year long. Whether you're celebrating the holidays in a warm climate or just dreaming of a coastal Christmas, making crafts that call to mind days walking the shoreline can be a fun project. Purchase (or collect) seaglass throughout the year. Then attach your collection with hot glue to a styrofoam tree-shaped cone. Embellish as desired.

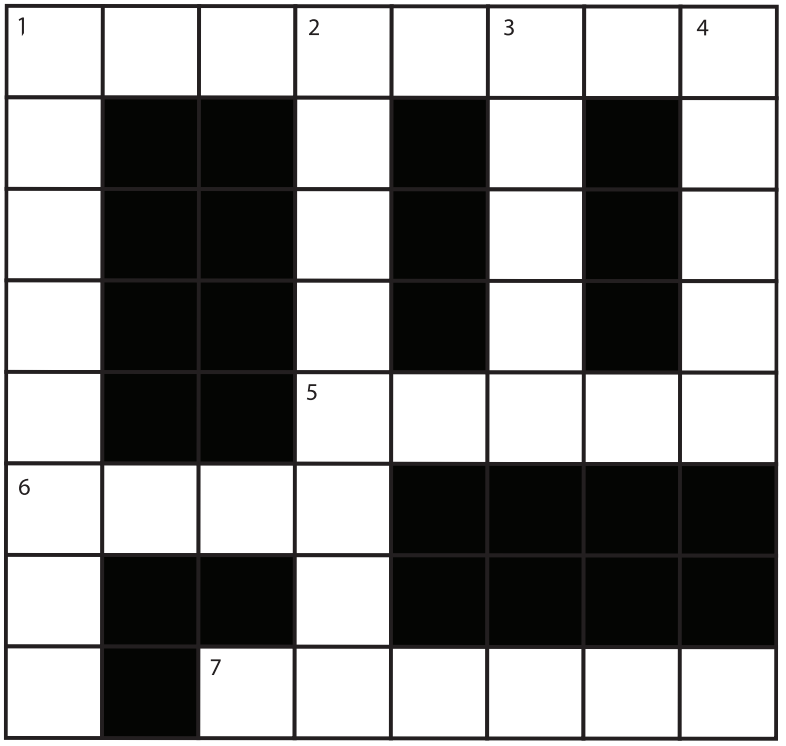
• **Memento ornaments:** Call back to the days of school-sanctioned holiday crafts by making some at home. Have everyone in the family find a baby picture or photo from early childhood. Attach it to a piece of colorful card stock. Then paint small elbow macaroni or shell macaroni with gold or silver craft paint. Allow to dry before gluing the macaroni on the stock to frame the photo. Punch a hole and insert ribbon to make a hanging loop to place the photo ornament on the tree.

• **Pinecone skier:** Gather a rounded pine cone, popsicle sticks and wood ball to serve as a face, and wooden toothpicks. Paint the popsicle sticks, which will become the skis. Glue the pinecone "body" to the skis and the wooden ball on top for the head. Use a thin marker to make a face. Fashion arms and hands out of cardboard and attach the wooden toothpicks as the ski poles. A small knit hat finishes the look.

• **Candy cane reindeer:** This cute and easy craft is perfect for youngsters. All you need is a candy cane, brown pipe cleaner, a piece of ribbon, small googly eyes, and a small red pompom. Attach the pompom to the short curved end of the candy cane for the nose. Place the eyes above. Twist the brown pipe cleaner above the eyes to form antlers. Then tie a ribbon around the middle of the longer end of the candy cane to make it festive.

Holiday crafts can add even more fun to the season, and keep families busy spending time together.

Winter Storm Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

1. Warm coverings
5. Thin corridor
6. Long time
7. Base of fireplace

DOWN

1. Strong snowstorm
2. Annoyance
3. Same in size
4. Blizzard-like



Answers: Across 1. Blankets 5. Alley 6. Aeon 7. Hearth
Down 1. Blizzard 2. Nuisance 3. Equal 4. Snowy

CLASSIC SONGS TO play this holiday season



Music is a big part of the holiday season. In fact, music often signals the start of this joyous time of year, as shoppers know it's officially holiday season the first time they hear Johnny Mathis, Burl Ives, Bing Crosby, and others belting out holiday hits when entering grocery stores, shopping centers and restaurants.

Music is such a staple of the season that no get-together is truly worthy of the label "holiday party" without some classic songs that have long since become part of the fabric of this special time of year. Whether you're hosting loved ones for a holiday party or spending this special season at home with your immediate family, you can set the right tone with these classic songs.

- "Holly Jolly Christmas," by Burl Ives
- "Jingle Bell Rock," by Bobby Helms
- "The Christmas Song (Merry Christmas To You)," by Nat King Cole
- "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," by Brenda Lee
- "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," by Andy Williams
- "White Christmas," by Bing Crosby
- "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," by Gene Autry
- "It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas," by Johnny Mathis
- "Sleigh Ride," by The Ronettes
- "Blue Christmas," by Elvis Presley
- "Happy Holidays/The Holiday Season," by Andy Williams
- "Here Comes Santa Claus," by Elvis Presley
- "Santa Baby," by Eartha Kitt
- "Christmas Time Is Here," by the Vince Guaraldi Trio
- "Run Rudolph Run," by Chuck Berry
- "All I Want For Christmas Is You," by Mariah Carey
- "(There's No Place Like) Home for the Holidays," by Perry Como
- "Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town," by Bruce Springsteen
- "The Little Drummer Boy," by Ray Coniff
- "Frosty the Snowman," by Jimmy Durante
- "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," by Frank Sinatra
- "Let It Snow! Let it Snow! Let It Snow!," by Dean Martin
- "Deck the Halls," by Nat King Cole
- "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus," by The Jackson 5
- "O Tannenbaum," by Nat King Cole
- "Mele Kalikimaka (Merry Christmas)," by Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters
- "Silent Night," by Nat King Cole
- "O Come, All Ye Faithful," by The Mormon Tabernacle Choir
- "I'll Be Home For Christmas," by Frank Sinatra
- "Winter Wonderland," by Johnny Mathis
- "Silver Bells," by Andy Williams
- "Do You Hear What I Hear?," by Bing Crosby
- "O Holy Night," by Josh Groban
- "Jingle Bells," by Frank Sinatra

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Dear Santa,
I've been good
a bike and a
toys a lot! If
fun and I thin
gifts fro
Sincerely,

RINGING IN the new year with kids



New Year's Eve might be famous for late-night champagne toasts and watching a crystal-clad ball drop in Times Square, but for families with young children, the likelihood of making it to midnight without a meltdown may be slim. Fortunately, families don't have to sacrifice the festive spirit just because the youngest guests have an early bedtime. With a few clever twists, children can enjoy New Year's Eve just as much as older celebrants.

MOVE THE CLOCK

A big hurdle of celebrating NYE with kids is the midnight countdown. Instead of fighting kids' natural circadian rhythms, parents can change the time zone. A "Noon Year's Eve" celebration at 12:00 p.m. or a countdown from a foreign country (like France for those in North America) can offer the fun of counting down without requiring youngsters to stay up late. This way, "midnight" arrives at a reasonable hour.

GET CRAFTY WITH A TRACKER

Celebrants can create a countdown wall to help keep energy levels steady and give children something to look forward to. Set up baskets or bags with each hour on them, beginning at the start of the party. When the clock strikes that hour, kids can pull a slip of paper from inside the bag or basket that details a quick activity. One hour might be a dance party, the next a board game tournament, followed by an ice cream sundae bar. This can keep kids focused and help to combat boredom.

SET UP A DRESS-UP STATION

Part of the fun of NYE is the glitz and glam. Invite the kids to put on their fanciest outfits — whether that means sparkly dresses, clip-on ties, or superhero capes paired with party hats. The party host can have a DIY photo booth with a backdrop and props, like hats and sunglasses. Taking silly pictures will help children feel like VIPs at an exclusive gala.

MAKE MIDNIGHT SENSORY-FRIENDLY

When the time to count down and celebrate arrives, it's possible to turn up the fun without making things too loud for sensitive ears. Hosts can pass out bubble wrap for kids to jump on. Plastic cups filled with sparkling apple cider or ginger ale will serve as a fancy toast, and confetti poppers offer just enough bang without being too frightening.

Families can shift the timeline and focus on interactive, kid-specific activities to make New Year's Eve a joyful family tradition.





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