



# Holiday Gift Guide

**Holiday decorating tips,  
Holiday traditions,  
Holiday recipes,  
Gift ideas,  
& More!**

*Special Supplement to*  
 **THE REPORTER**



# Handcrafted for the Holidays

Unique DIY gift ideas to celebrate the season

*(Family Features)* If spending hours scouring store shelves or browsing countless websites for the perfect gift for everyone on your list seems like a daunting task, opt for a more personalized approach: a handmade gift.

DIY mason jar gifts can be easy and affordable solutions when gift lists are running long but time is running short. Plus, crafting something for loved ones this holiday season can show them just how much you care.

From canning and crafting to storage, drinkware and even gardening, Ball Honeybee Keepsake Jars can be used in a myriad of ways, including creating simple yet endearing homemade gifts. Designed to honor the unsung hero of the garden, the honeybee, the collector's edition canning jars feature a unique bee and honeycomb design and highlight the important role these pollinators play in growing foods people

love to preserve and enjoy.

Available in sets of four, the versatile, BPA-free jars come with bands and SureTight(tm) lids that seal for up to 18 months, making them perfect containers for hand-crafted holiday gifts like this Holiday Cookie Mix Jar which features all the ingredients needed to bake a batch of cookies even Santa couldn't resist. Or share the joy of the season with Handmade Holiday Snow Globes that allow the recipient to shake up a little Christmas spirit anytime he



or she desires.

Find more DIY holiday gift ideas at [ballmasonjars.com](http://ballmasonjars.com).

## Holiday Cookie Mix Jar

- 1 Ball Honeybee Keepsake Jar
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1 ¾ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- crushed walnuts
- crushed pecans
- white chocolate chips
- holiday-themed bow

In jar, layer granulated sugar and brown sugar.

In bowl, mix flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; add to jar on top of brown sugar. Then layer crushed walnuts, crushed pecans and white chocolate chips.

Seal jar. Wrap top of jar, just below lid, with holiday-themed bow.



## Homemade Holiday Snow Globes

- Ball Honeybee Keepsake Jars
- Hot glue gun
- Hot glue sticks
- Foam cubes
- Plastic holiday-themed figurines
- Glycerin
- Water
- Red, green or blue glitter

Remove lids from jars. Using hot glue gun, glue foam cube to inside of lids then glue figurines to foam cubes.

Place 1 tablespoon glycerin in jars then fill with water. Sprinkle glitter in jars.

Seal jars by placing lids over mouths of jars and screwing rings onto lids. Flip jars over so figurines are right side up. Shake for snow globe effect.

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# Snap a great Christmas card photo

Greeting cards are among the first signs that the holiday season has arrived. Mailboxes are filled with cards and email inboxes have new messages popping up each day wishing others well. Many of these greetings feature family photos.

A Shutterfly poll conducted by Ipsos in 2021 discovered that while traditional holiday messages are by far the most popular missives at 63%, younger age groups show more interest in other types of cards, such as photo cards (between 34 and 38%

depending on age group). Forty-one percent of people polled prefer to receive photo cards. That means holiday well-wishers may want to brush up on their photography skills.

- **Keep cards in the back of your mind.** While the Norman Rockwell-esque family tableau or a wintry Christmas scene is a go-to holiday card, any noteworthy moment throughout the year can suffice. Keep a lookout for ideas while vacationing or enjoying time together as a family.

- **Avoid busy prints.** Stick

to solid colors when posing for holiday photos; otherwise, recipients' eyes may not know where to look when viewing the photo. Photo subjects should coordinate, but wardrobes that completely match can seem contrived.

- **Plan around nap times.** If photos involve young children, schedule the photo shoot to occur when children are well-rested and fed. Now may be the time to offer kids treats they don't normally get in an effort to reward patience and happy smiles.

- **Avoid red eye.** Proper lighting can help avoid the occurrence of "red eye" in photographs, which happens when the flash bounces off a wide pupil. Asking subjects to look into bright light before the photo, or utilizing a camera that snaps a small burst of flash before the actual flash, can help alleviate this problem.

- **Embrace candid shots or mixups.** Some of the funniest and most memorable



photos are when things didn't go according to plan. A crying infant or a parent looking away from the lens may not be magazine worthy, but don't be so quick to discard those less-than-perfect snaps.

- **Zoom in tight and cropped.** Card recipients want to look at you and not the surroundings. Avoid landscape shots on holiday cards, and be sure to focus on the subjects' faces as much as possible.

- **Angle correctly for flattering photos.** Adjust your body posture to look your best. Turn the lower half of your body to the side and then adjust the upper half

to move slightly toward the camera to appear more svelte. Position the camera lens at eye level or above to avoid double chins in photos.

- **Show off your sense of humor.** You can show friends and family you like to laugh by posing in funny ways or by mimicking pop culture references in your photo cards. Recreate childhood photos of yore, or imitate photos from album covers or movie posters.

Relax and have fun with holiday greeting cards. Plan outfits, watch lighting and catch kids at the right time to create memorable cards.

## WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to the holidays.



S V F E E T I

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Answer: Festive

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# 6 Holiday Gifts for Teens and Young Adults They'll Actually Like

*(Family Features)* One of the best parts of the holidays is being together with those you love and for many families that time together involves the exchanging of gifts among loved ones young and old. Finding the

right gift for everyone can be a challenge, especially if teenagers and young adults are on your shopping list.

It seems like social media feeds are constantly filled with a new tech item, style, pastime or trend, making

it more challenging to pick out gifts for the young ones on gift lists. This year, consider some on-trend gift ideas - like Jelly Belly Jelly Beans - to show appreciation for the Gen-Zers in your life with presents and stocking stuffers that can win them over.

## *New in Tech*

As one of the most popular categories of gifts for teens and one that's always evolving, deciding which devices and gadgets to gift can be hard. Consider your loved ones' hobbies and interests to make the job easier; for example if they're music lovers or podcast fanatics, wireless earbuds or headphones are a perfect option. If social butterflies are on your shopping list, portable phone chargers and smartphone accessories like a pop-out phone



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

grip can make sure they're one step ahead of their next photo or social post.

## *For Boba and Candy Lovers*

Many Gen-Zers love a good cup of bubble tea or boba swag, so feed their cravings with an option like Jelly Belly Boba Milk Tea jelly beans. With gift box-

es, snack bags and more, these delicious treats made for candy lovers provide a perfect balance of tea, tapioca and sweetness in five true-to-life milk tea flavors: mango, taro, Matcha, strawberry and Thai milk tea jelly beans. Find these treats at JellyBelly.com where you can purchase online or locate a store near you.

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### Cozy Comforts

For teens heading to college or young adults venturing out on their own, consider gifting items to spruce up their new spaces. You can give them a helping hand to start their next chapter with fun decor items like throw pillows and blankets or add life to their new homes with stylish wall art or flower subscriptions. For simple reminders of home, consider candles with their favorite scents or aromatherapy diffusers and essential oils to add a touch of calm to the chaos of heading out on their own.

### Play to Their Hobbies

Help them embrace their talents and favorite activities whether it's art, reading, cooking, gaming, playing sports or mastering instruments. New paint kits and

provide an upgrade for avid home chefs.

### The Gift of Music

Whether they have a favorite band or are up-and-coming musicians themselves (or both), give the gift of music with fun ways to enjoy their favorite songs. Record players and vinyl records are making a major comeback while portable speakers allow music lovers to take their favorite sounds wherever they go. A subscription to a streaming service can be perfect for casual listeners or, if you're looking to splurge, consider concert tickets.

### Outdoor Adventures

From jogging around the neighborhood to exploring nearby parks and trails, outdoor enthusiasts can never have enough gear. Runners are always searching for the latest sneaker launch or fitness tracker to keep on pace with their goals while more casual enjoyers of the outdoors may love a new water bottle, picnic blanket or beach bag.

supplies can help young Picasso's take their art to the next level while a new appliance or cookbook can



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# Festive facts about oft-misunderstood fruitcake

Certain sights and sounds are ingrained in the holiday season, from twinkling lights to carols piping over retailers' sound systems. Amid the shelves of holiday wares and delicacies, fruitcake makes its annual appearance.

Fruitcake, sometimes referred to as plum cake or Christmas cake, can be prepared in various ways. However, a dense bundt-type cake dotted with dried, candied fruit and often soaked in rum or brandy has become the standard. Loathed or loved, seldom anything in between, fruitcake is typically mocked as the ultimate regift. But just like Charlie Brown's scant Christmas tree, which was initially mocked, it's time to see fruitcake in a new light.

Consider these fruitcake fun facts.

- The texture of fruitcake can vary from cake-like to more of a sweet bread like brioche. Italians dig into panettone, Germans delight with stollen and Jamaicans serve black cake.
- The first fruitcakes weren't eaten. According to historians, fruit-



cakes were initially made by ancient Egyptians, who tucked the desserts into the tombs with their dead so a sweet treat could be enjoyed in the afterlife.

- Fruitcake gained popularity as military rations, as everyone from Roman soldiers to Crusaders found fruitcake provided a diverse array

of nutrients and an energy boost in battle. Fruitcake also stores well, which can be beneficial for military personnel in battle.

- Fruitcake seemingly is indestructible. While it likely cannot last forever, Tastemade says if a fruitcake is kept in an airtight container and stored in a dark, cool place, it could be reheated years after being baked. Starch crystals and dried fruit in the cake will release stored water when warmed, rehydrating the cake.

- Historical accounts indicate Romans were among the first people to eat fruitcake, which they might have enjoyed as early as 100 A.D. A version called "satura" was made by mixing stale bread with pine nuts, pomegranate seeds, raisins, and then soaking it in a barley mash and an alcoholic beverage brewed from honey.

- Fruitcake became a popular dish to serve at British royals' weddings. Queen Victoria, Princess Diana and Prince William served fruitcake at their receptions.

- The Smithsonian Air and Space

Museum in Washington, D.C. has a fruitcake on display. It traveled into space on Apollo 11 in 1969, but was never eaten.

- Seth Greenberg, who worked in his family's New York City bakery, attests that fruitcake is delicious when made with the right ingredients. The neon-colored, dry and overly sweet fruit that many bakers use is the problem with poor cakes. But proper ingredients like brandy, glace cherries, apricots, figs, and dates can make for a delicious fruitcake.

- The average fruitcake weighs between two and three pounds. However, the heaviest fruitcake on record, according to "The Guinness Book of World Records," came in at 9,596 pounds. Despite the hefty weight of this cake, it's only around 92 to 160 calories per serving.

Regardless of its unfavorable reputation, fruitcake remains an unwavering holiday tradition. The website Serious Eats reports that more than two million fruitcakes are sold each year.

## Holiday Gifts for Creative Home Cooks



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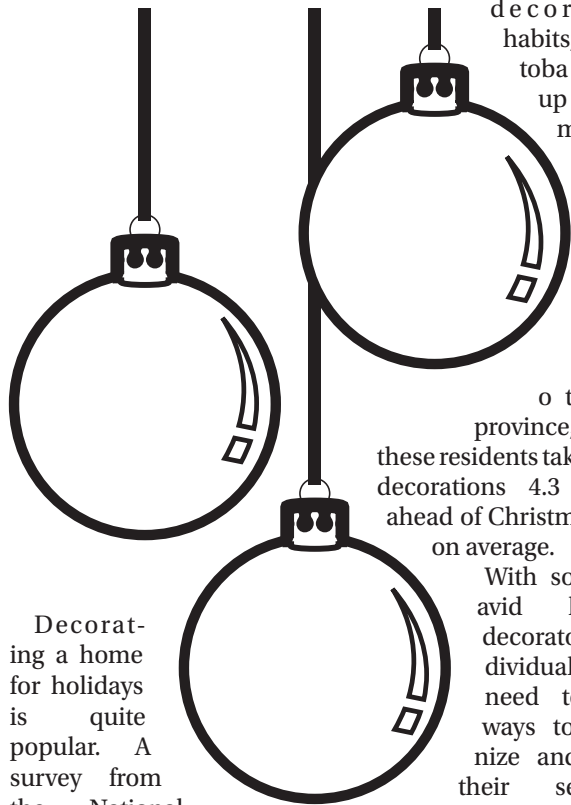
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# 7 ways to organize and store holiday decorations



Decorating a home for holidays is quite popular. A survey from the National Retail Federation found that 53 percent of respondents said they were planning to decorate their home or yard for Halloween in 2023. Lombardo Homes polled 1,000 Americans in 2021 and 94 percent said they celebrate Christmas in at least some way, and 84 percent said they decorate. According to Time2Play, which surveyed 1,000 Canadians about their holiday

decorating habits, Manitoba puts up Christmas decorations earlier than any other province, with these residents taking out decorations 4.3 weeks ahead of Christmas Day on average.

With so many avid holiday decorators, individuals will need to find ways to organize and store their seasonal items. Holiday decor comes in many different sizes — from the smallest tree ornaments to illuminated statues for the yard or inflatable items. Figuring out a storage plan can take a little effort. These seven tips can help.

**1. Purchase clear, similarly sized** storage bins and shelving racks, hanging them where you plan to keep the decorations. Most people prefer an out-of-

the-way spot, such as in the garage, attic or basement. Label each bin by holiday and put the bins in chronological order to make finding items more convenient. Uniform bin sizes make it easier to stack and store.

**2. Store smaller items inside larger decor items.** Decorative baskets or wrapped boxes brought out for Christmas or Chanukah are ideal places to keep smaller tchotchkes like ceramics, dreidels, candlestick holders, or mantel hooks. Delicate items can be tucked into Christmas stockings or wrapped and stored in a fluffy tree skirt. Egg cartons can be used to keep small items safe as well.

**3. Label everything** so you will not need to dig through boxes or bins to know what is inside. This might be a good year to ask for a label maker for the holidays!

**4. Use overhead or wall storage** for holiday decor. Overhead spaces in the garage or basement walls

can be good spaces to keep holiday decorations. Always keep bins and boxes off the floor so they are not vulnerable to damage related to leaks or floods.

**5. Garment bags can protect larger decorations,** such as wreaths, artificial trees or signs. If you have a large number of mechanical, illuminated or inflatable lawn ornaments, consider investing in a small shed where these items can be safely kept. Wrap the extension cords and any bracing stakes or strings used with the decorations so it's easy to find.

**6. Utilize pieces of cardboard** as well as toilet paper or paper towel tubes to keep lights and wires tidy. Tuck cords into the toilet paper tubes, and wrap lights around the cardboard to avoid tangles.

**7. Each year, take inventory** of your decoration collection and toss out anything that is damaged or has seen better days.

Storing holiday decorations will take some time,



but once you establish a system, things will be simple year after year.



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## Did you know?

It's not uncommon to encounter eggnog at some point during the holiday season. A popular holiday beverage that typically contains milk, cream, sugar, egg yolks, and rum, brandy or bourbon, eggnog tends to be high in calories, fat, saturated fat, and sugar. Anyone looking to indulge in a little



holiday cheer without consuming so many calories may want to consider vegan eggnog. According to Consumer Reports, vegan eggnog tends to be lower in calories than its more traditional alternative. CR also reports that many vegan eggnogs examined were lower in added sugars than those made with dairy.

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## A full menu of festive holiday flavor

*(Family Features)* Cooking up a successful holiday gathering calls for everyone's favorite recipes. From the centerpiece main dish to fresh salads and appetizers, roasted sides and baked sweets, you can take seasonal get-togethers up a notch by mixing traditional classics with newfound favorites.

Consider this full-fledged menu of flavor to give guests a memorable holiday experience from beginning to end and find more festive recipe ideas at Culinary.net.

### Fresh Flavors for Holiday Festivities

With the festive season arriving, bring together family and friends for a delicious feast you can feel good about serving. One standout recipe is this Cornish Game Hen with Kale Sweet Potato Salad that pairs fresh, leafy kale with roasted sweet potatoes and tender Cornish game hens for a truly elegant meal.



### Cornish Game Hen with Kale Sweet Potato Salad

Prep time: 20 minutes  
Cook time: 1 hour, 10 minutes

Servings: 4

- 1 package (6 ounces) Stovetop stuffing
  - 2 cups chopped apples, divided
  - 4 Cornish game hens (20 ounces each)
  - ½ cup butter
  - 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning, divided
  - 1 teaspoon paprika
  - 1 teaspoon salt, plus additional, to taste, divided
  - ½ teaspoon garlic powder
  - ¼ teaspoon black pepper
  - 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes
  - 2 tablespoons olive oil
  - 1 package (10.9 ounces) Fresh Express Sweet Kale Chopped Kit
- Heat oven to 350 F.  
Prepare stuffing according to package directions. Add 1 cup apples and fluff stuffing with fork; cool 15 minutes.  
Remove anything inside hens, rinse cavity with cold water and pat dry.

In small saucepan, melt butter over low heat. Add 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning, paprika, 1 teaspoon salt, garlic powder and pepper; mix well. Remove from heat.

Fill cavity of each hen with apple stuffing.

Place hens in 13-by-9-by-2-inch baking dish. Tie legs together and tuck wings under. Baste with butter mixture.

Bake 50-60 minutes, or until thermometer inserted in thickest part of thigh reads 165 F and stuffing temperature reads 165 F. Baste with butter mixture every 15-20 minutes.

In bowl, toss sweet potatoes with remaining Italian seasoning and olive oil. Arrange in single layer on sheet pan. Sprinkle with salt, to taste.

Bake with hens 25 minutes, or until tender. Remove from oven and cool. Tent hens with foil and let rest 10 minutes.

Place greens from salad kit in large bowl. Add remaining apples and sweet potatoes; mix well. Toss with salad dressing. Add toppings; toss to combine.

Serve Cornish game hens with sweet potato kale salad.



## A festive, everyday side dish

While the busy holiday season can be loads of fun, you still need to get dinner on the table between parties. When you find your-

self in a pinch this holiday season, squeezed for time and searching for a quick solution for dinner, turn to an easy side dish that can appease everyone. Potatoes are a nearly unanimous favorite.

Ideal for this recipe, little potatoes are a tasty, fresh

whole food that you can feel good about serving. Ready in half an hour with minimal prep and a few simple ingredients, it's a perfect side dish for any occasion.

Visit [littlepotatoes.com](http://littlepotatoes.com) for more information and holiday inspiration.



### Perfect Roasted Little Potatoes

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

1 ½ pounds The Little Potato Company Little Potatoes

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon pepper

1-2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped

Preheat oven to 400 F.

In large bowl, toss little potatoes with oil, salt and pepper until coated.

Spread potatoes in single layer on rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper.

Bake 30 minutes, or until tender.

Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

Tip: For extra holiday flavor, add paprika, garlic and fresh herbs.

## WORD SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters to spell something pertaining to holiday decorating.

N G L E A



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Answer: Angel

9

NOVEMBER 22, 2023



THE REPORTER HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

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## Get creative with delicious, decorative cookies

A decadent holiday meal isn't complete without a sweet dessert to cap off the evening. When in doubt, go with a traditional treat that's

perfect for sharing: cookies. These ornament cookies can be shaped any way you like to celebrate the holidays. The royal icing adorning these festive favorites is made with powdered sugar and meringue powder; just use food coloring to add a personal touch.

For more than 120 years,

Domino Sugar has helped millions bake special recipes like these cookies made with non-GMO, vegan, kosher and gluten-free Golden Sugar that's free flowing and easy to scoop, spoon and pour. The sugar retains a hint of molasses flavor, giving it a golden color and providing a perfect way to add less processed sweetness to your loved ones' favorite desserts.

Find holiday recipes, baking tips and more at [dominosugar.com](http://dominosugar.com).

### Ornament Cookies

Prep time: 25 minutes  
plus 1 hour to decorate  
Cook time: 20 minutes  
Yield: 2 dozen cookies

#### Cookies:

1 ½ cups (3 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1 cup Domino Golden Sugar  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1 large egg  
3 ½ cups all-purpose flour  
¼ teaspoon salt

#### Royal Icing:

4 cups Domino Powdered Sugar



3 tablespoons meringue powder  
⅓ cup, plus 2-3 tablespoons, warm water, divided  
desired food coloring

**To prepare cookies:** In large bowl, beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add vanilla and egg; beat until well combined. Scrape sides of bowl as needed. Add flour and salt; beat until just combined.

Dump mixture onto lightly floured surface and divide in half. Shape each half into disks and wrap with plastic wrap. Refrigerate 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

Working on lightly floured surface, roll dough to ½-inch thick. Cut cookies using ornament-shaped cookie cutter. Place cookies on prepared pans and bake 18-20 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from oven and cool at room tempera-

ture.  
**To make royal icing:** In large mixing bowl, combine powdered sugar, meringue powder and ⅓ cup water. Beat on low speed until combined. Increase speed to medium-high and beat 8-10 minutes, adding 2-3 tablespoons warm water, as necessary. Icing should be stiff enough to hold peak when tested.

Color royal icing with food coloring and decorate cookies.

## Did you know?

Christmas trees appear to date back to the middle ages in what is now modern-day Germany.



# Holiday wreath dos and don'ts

No greenery is more recognized during the holiday season than Christmas trees. However, wreaths likely take a close second to towering evergreens when it comes to green holiday decor.

It is important to treat wreaths with care in order to maximize their longevity and beauty. The following tips can help ensure wreaths remain fresh and festive throughout the month of December.

- **Choose the right design.** Select a wreath that is not too busy nor too boring. It is important to strike the right balance. A good wreath has a focal point, which may be a festive bow or another decorative piece. Keep in mind this is a wreath which should have lots of greenery on display, rather than flowers that characterize other seasonal wreaths.

- **Weigh your wreath.** Take a moment to ask a salesman how heavy the wreath is when you purchase it. Knowing the weight of the wreath will help you identify the proper hanging mechanism, as hooks are generally characterized by the weight they can hold. A less than sturdy hook can increase the chances the

wreath falls down and ends up damaged.

- **Determine your hanging method.** Once you know the weight of the wreath, you can figure out how to secure it to a door or window without having to drill holes into any structures. Removable adhesive strips are one option, provided you attach something like cardboard or another material to the back of the wreath upon which the adhesive strips can be stuck. Otherwise, over-the-door wreath hangers are wise investments that can support large, heavy wreaths.

- **Consider the safety of pets.** When decorating with plant material, it is important to know what is safe for pets in the household. According to the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, most holiday plants cause irritation of the mouth. Pine trees produce oils that can cause gastrointestinal issues.

- **Exercise caution with storm doors.** If you hang a wreath between a glass storm door and your front door, the air around the wreath will heat up and cause the wreath to turn brown.

- **Choose a cool spot.** In addition to avoiding heat that builds up between doors, you should select a cool spot out of the hot sun. Many pine trees, like balsam fir, react more favorably to cooler temperatures and will keep their vibrant green color and fragrance more readily.

- **Go artificial.** If you want to hang a wreath indoors, opt for an artificial one. Prolonged warm temperatures inside may prematurely dry out a fresh wreath, ultimately turning it into a fire hazard.

A few pointers can ensure wreaths remain a beautiful component of holiday decor throughout the season.



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# Fireplace safety during the holiday season

Gatherings with family and friends are an integral component of the holiday season. Certain rooms in the house are on display more than others, with kitchens, dining rooms and living areas serving as pop-

ular places to congregate. Of course, fireplaces also serve as popular gathering spots in homes that feature them.

Lighting a fire in the hearth can make any space more cozy, but doing so

comes with some hazards. Consider these fireplace safety tips in advance of the holiday entertaining season.

- **Have the fireplace inspected and swept professionally.** Prior to lighting the first fire of the season, ensure that a professional inspects the fireplace, chimney and venting to ensure everything is in good condition. The chimney also should be swept to remove excess debris and buildup that could pose a fire hazard.

- **Keep items away from the fireplace.** Wrapping paper, rugs, clothing, magazines, and the like should be kept at least three feet away from the flames, suggests the American Red Cross. Also, make sure decorations are hung securely and a safe distance away from the fire.

- **Check your smoke alarms.** Be sure the home has working smoke alarms on every level of the house. And keep a fire extinguisher close to the fireplace.

- **Never burn wrapping**



**paper.** Wrapping paper contains additives, like dyes, that make it burn extremely hot. Do not think of discarding wrapping paper by burning it in the fireplace.

- **Keep the tree a safe distance away.** Although it makes for the perfect Christmas photo backdrop, Christmas trees and fireplaces should not be near each other. Also, the Christmas tree is not safe to burn in the fireplace after the season, as the wood has not been properly dried or seasoned.

- **Use a screen on the fireplace.** Make sure the fireplace is properly covered by a screen to stop embers

from escaping when the wood pops and sparks. The screen also can help keep decorations and other objects from falling into the fire.

- **Keep the fireplace clean.** Promptly remove any ash and debris from the fireplace after it has cooled to improve indoor air quality and provide greater control over the next fire when it is burned, advises the American Society of Home Inspectors.

Fireplaces bring warmth and add ambiance to a home, particularly during the holidays. But safety must prevail when lighting fireplaces.

## Did you know?

Tinsel was invented in 1610 in Germany and was once made of real silver. Many people put tinsel on Christmas trees as extra decoration.

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# Traditions associated with Chanukah celebrations



Come December, the holiday season has hit full swing. Celebrants of various faiths and backgrounds participate in holiday celebrations, which are unique to each faith.

Although Chanukah is a relatively minor holiday on the Jewish religious calendar, it has enjoyed a greater share of fanfare in recent years. That popularity is perhaps due to the proximity of Chanukah to another major December celebration featuring a bearded fellow in a red suit. Chanukah isn't mandated by the Torah, and isn't even mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, it was created by the ancient rab-

bis.

Judaism is one of the world's oldest and most influential religions. World Population Review estimates there were approximately 15.2 million Jews worldwide in 2021. Many likely will participate in Chanukah celebrations. Chanukah begins on the 25th day of Kislev each year. In 2023, Chanukah begins at sundown on Dec. 7 and ends on the evening of Friday, Dec. 15. Here are some Chanukah traditions.

## Lighting the menorah

Participants will light a special nine-pronged menorah, sometimes called a hanukkiyah. It is practice to light one candle per night to recall the miracle of the sacred lamp oil that lasted for eight days during the rededication of the Temple. The ninth candle (shammash) is used to light the others. Lighting the menorah has been a primary ritual for at least 1,800 years. Lit menorahs are placed in prominent locations, including front windows in homes.

## Playing dreidel

There are various stories about the origins of the

dreidel, but historians say the first mention in Jewish writings did not occur until the 18th century. The four sides of the dreidel are marked with different letters, which in German are G "ganz" (all), H "halb" (half), N "nisch" (nothing) and S "schick" (put). This dictates whether the player who spun the dreidel gets all, half or nothing in the collective coin pot, or has to put in his own. Yiddish is quite similar to German, and the letters on the dreidel also correspond to the first letters of the Yiddish phrase "nes gadol haya sham," which translates to "a great miracle happened here," a reference to the Chanukah miracle.

## Time at home

Unlike other Jewish holidays, Chanukah is celebrated primarily at home rather than in a synagogue. This means that family time is a big component of Chanukah celebrations, which include singing songs, praying and cooking foods.

## Fried dishes

Eating dishes cooked in oil is another commemoration of the miracle of the oil. Potato pancakes called latkes and jelly doughnuts may be served during Chanukah celebrations.

## Giving gelt & gifts

Gelt was the gift of coin that would be given out to independent workers come Chanukah as an end-of-year

gratuity. Later it became a way to offer small tokens to children. Today's gelt is typically discs of chocolate wrapped in foil to resemble coins.

Many families also give gifts during Chanukah, particularly on the sixth night. But Chanukah gift-giving generally is not to the extent of gift-giving in other religions. Gifts may be monetary but also can include gifts of time.

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# Simple tricks to disentangle holiday lights

The joyous holiday season is enhanced by the beautiful and festive decorations that adorn homes and businesses during this special time of year. Twinkling lights are part of the holiday decorating equation. However, tangled lights in storage bins

and boxes can sap anyone's holiday spirit.

Christmas lights can turn into a tangled mess no matter how hard people work to avoid such an outcome. Christmas lights get tangled partly because of their design. There is a metal wire

inside the cord to help with the packaging of the lights, which gives the cord a natural curve. Furthermore, most light cords are made from twisted or braided wires that have spaces throughout. The lights themselves can get snagged



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in these pockets between the wires.

Although it can be frustrating to deal with tangled lights that look like balls of yarn in a knitting basket, there are ways to disentangle them with relative ease — and then pack them in a way that can reduce further tangles.

Begin by plugging all lights into the outlet to see if they work. If most of the bulbs are burnt out or the lights do not go on at all, discard the strand. There's no point untangling lights only to learn they don't work.

Start slowly, beginning on the plug end, when untangling the lights. Keep the strand you're working on separate from the other lights so they do not inadvertently become entangled. Tackle this job in a space with a lot of room. Lay the lights out on a large table or sit on the floor to do the untangling.

Utilize a pen or pencil to fish out more stubborn snags. This can help you loosen any knots and make it easier to pull snags through.

Lay the untangled strands out in a safe area away from your working space as you

work through each strand.

One of the ways to avoid the hassle of tangled lights is to remember to store the lights in ways that will reduce their propensity for tangling in the first place.

- Rather than wrap lights around your hand or arm to condense the strand, use something else. A piece of cardboard, a hanger and some PVC tubing can keep lights from becoming tangled.

- Store lights in a zip-top bag to keep them from tangling with other strands stored together.

- Save the original boxes and return the lights to them after each use.

- Icicle lights have hanging strands of lights on longer strands, which can compound tangling issues. Use a rubber band to gather the hanging "icicles" together, or use some plastic wrap for the same purpose.

- Invest in a cord reel, similar to what you might use for a garden hose. Longer light strands or wires are stored on such reels, and they can be used with Christmas lights.

Patience and care can prevent holiday lights from becoming tangled.



# Brightening the Holiday Season for the Military Community



(c) USO Photos

(StatePoint) As we enter the holiday season and Americans across the country look forward to spending time with family, thousands of service members deployed overseas – many to the Middle East in response to the Israel-Hamas war – will not have that luxury and will be spending the holidays far away from loved ones.

Here is how USO Holidays programming delivers a piece of home to them, along with ideas for how you can get involved:

**1. Care packages:** A care package might seem small in light of the challenges of deployment, but for many service members, they're a reminder that they're not forgotten by Americans back home. Aside from standard USO Care Packages, which contain snacks or toiletries, USO Holidays Care Packages have festive treats and goodies, such as holiday candies, cozy socks and a warm beanie, that help bridge the gap between home and the frontlines. This year, the USO will deliver 50,000 holiday packages to over 250 locations globally.

**2. Holiday traditions:** Giving up treasured family traditions can be difficult. That's why USO Centers and USO

Mobile teams host holiday meals for service members and their families, complete with special treats ranging from pumpkin and sweet potato pie to hot cocoa bars. Each December, USO Holidays Cookie Week celebrates the time-honored tradition of baking and decorating cookies, putting service members and military families in the holiday spirit wherever they are located. Other seasonal programming can include tree decorating, arts and crafts, holiday-themed movie nights and ugly sweater competitions. Through these activities, service members stationed far from home can still make holiday memories.

**3. Connections to home:** Staying connected to family during the holidays can be difficult for service members stationed overseas, particularly for those in or near regions in conflict such as Eastern Europe or the Middle East. The USO Reading Program enables deployed service members to record themselves reading a book to their child. Then, the recording and a copy of the book are sent to that service member's family.

**4. Happy travels:** As most people know, holiday travel can be especially tax-

ing. Thousands of service members and trainees from military installations across the country participate in the Holiday Block Leave period, many traveling through some of the busiest airports in the United States to be with their families during the holidays. USO airport centers can alleviate some of that stress for service members and trainees by providing a place to relax and unwind

before the next leg of their journey, along with all the comfort items they need.

To learn more about these programs and how to support them, and for ideas on how to reach out to the military community to express your thanks during the holidays and throughout the year, visit [uso.org/campaign/holidays](http://uso.org/campaign/holidays).

The holiday season can look very different for service members and military families who must celebrate while separated from loved ones and home in all corners of the world. Bringing everyone together on special days fosters camaraderie and positivity, and provides a welcome break from the demands of military life.

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# 5 Tips for Getting Kids Involved in Holiday Traditions

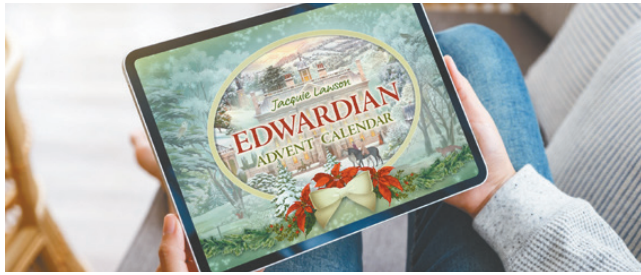
(StatePoint) The holiday season is a magical time of year filled with cherished traditions that bring families together. And while gift-giving is one of the most beloved customs (especially for children), it can sometimes overshadow the true spirit of the season. Here are a few festive winter activities that focus on quality time together and spreading joy.

**1. Spread Joy with Kid-Created Cards.** According to a recent survey from AmericanGreetings.com, nearly 90% of Americans say that season's greetings bring them joy; and 92% say they specifically enjoy kids' homemade cards. This year,

eliminate the stress of planning holiday cards—and teach kids about spreading cheer—with the Creatacard app for iPad.

The easy-to-use app from American Greetings allows kids to create, color and customize cards using virtual tools, including markers, photo frames, stamps and and stickers. Once complete, the greeting can be sent via email, text, or on social media. It's a simple, cost-effective and personalized way to teach them about bringing joy to others.

**2. Quality Time in the Kitchen.** Kids love sweet treats, so start involving them with baking and deco-



(c) Farknot Architect / Jacquie Lawson

rating traditional holiday goodies. In addition to being an excellent way to spend time together as a family, the tradition teaches them cooking basics, like reading recipes and measuring ingredients. Be sure to make it fun with plenty of frosting and sprinkles, or even add some competition with a decorating contest. You can also pair this activity with a cozy movie night or deliver treats to neighbors and family members to teach the importance of kindness and giving.

**3. Deck the Halls.** A perfect holiday tradition for the whole family to get involved in is the Christmas tree. Whether it's a trip to pick out a real tree, or setting up an artificial one, you

can make it an adventure from set-up to decoration. Plus, crafting homemade ornaments each year is the perfect kid contribution. Not only will they take pride in their creations, but each year will spark a bit of holiday nostalgia.

**4. Interactive Christmas Countdown.** According to a recent survey, what do 94% of Americans say increases the excitement of the holiday season? Advent calendars. But this year, skip the paper versions and get the whole family engaged with the interactive Jacquie Lawson Advent Calendar. The unique virtual calendar offers breathtaking illustrations of a fictional English country estate with exciting features unlocked daily in

December. From a scavenger hunt to music, daily gifts, animated stories, books, games, creative activities, puzzles, and so much more, there, there's something for everyone to enjoy and look forward to each day of the season.

**5. Teach the Spirit of Giving.** While it can sometimes be easier to do the holiday shopping yourself, involving kids in gift-giving can teach them the thoughtfulness behind selecting meaningful gifts. If you have a large family, consider a Secret Santa where everyone shops for one specific family member. This is also a good opportunity to help kids make homemade gifts with more sentimental value. For an added lesson, explain how to follow a budget and count money when at the store.

By incorporating these tips into your holiday traditions, you will create lasting memories, instill valuable lessons and celebrate the joy of giving with your family.

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# Age-based guidelines for buying toys and gifts

The holiday season involves making holiday gift lists and checking them twice, or even more frequently to ensure that gift-givers find the best fit for recipients. While age may only be a number in certain instances, when it comes to gifting, age should be a consideration — particularly when kids are involved.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that an estimated 86,000 children treated for toy-related injuries each year are younger than five. Toy-related injuries are preventable, and prevention often comes

down to choosing age-appropriate toys for kids.

Toys can be choking hazards when small toys or those with small pieces are given to children who are too young to use them safely. Kids are curious and often put items in their mouths. Choking is the fourth-leading cause of unintentional death in children under age five, indicates The Emergency Center. Falls, eye injuries, drowning, and motor accidents are leading causes of gift-related injuries. Here's how to select age-appropriate gifts.

- **Read the packaging carefully.** Most toys and other children's products will come with an age range recommendation. While some kids may be mature beyond their years, it's best to choose gifts that fall within the recommended range. This is particularly the case for infants, toddlers and any child under the age of five.

- **Avoid fad gifts.** Children often want the latest and greatest gadgets and toys for gifts even if they are not the smartest choices for their ages. Resist the urge to buy something just to be the "cool parent or grandparent," especially if it isn't age-appropriate. Mermaid tails became popular in recent years, and likely will see increased presence thanks to the home-viewing release of a popular live-action mermaid movie. However, they limit movement and can make swimming more difficult, potentially increasing risk of drowning.

- **Provide safety gear.** As children age, they may be more interested in gifts



that appeal to hobbies and abilities. Scooters, bicycles, skates, and other items are popular among older children. These gifts should only be purchased for those with proven ability, and even then, accompanied with the appropriate safety gear. This can include helmets, knee pads and eye protection.

- **Consider waiting before gifting certain electronics.** Although children may be able to use devices safely, there are many who advocate for waiting to give young children smartphones and tablets due to

the consequences of excessive screen time. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry says children ages two to five should limit non-educational screen time to about one hour per weekday and three hours on weekend days. Children should be encouraged to pursue healthy habits that limit use of screens, so gift-givers can look for gifts that help to this end.

Age-appropriate gifts ensure safety for the youngest people on holiday gift lists.

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# 3 Ways to Take the Stress Out of Holiday Hosting

(StatePoint) The holiday season is one of the best times of the year! Between cooking, cleaning and keeping guests entertained, it can also be pretty demanding on your time and energy.

In fact, during the holiday season, adults are five times more likely to say the level of stress in their life increases rather than decreases, according to the American Psychiatric Institute.

This year, make life easier for yourself with these stress-reducing holiday entertaining tips:

## Meal Prep

Getting ahead on meal prep can mean more time spent with friends and family. If you're tasked with serving a big holiday meal, prep the main dishes a day or two ahead of time so you can just pop them into the oven the day of your holiday feast. You can also brine and season turkey, prepare your glaze and score the ham, chop veggies and pre-mix salad dressings the



night before. Festive beverages can be batched in advance so guests can easily serve themselves, helping you stay calm and collected during your party. And of course, don't feel shy about asking friends and family to contribute a dish.

## Have Dessert Ready

Whether you're throwing a holiday bash or expecting overnight guests, you'll

be the host with the most if you have delicious desserts on hand. Fortunately, serving baked goods made with care and quality ingredients is easier than you think! Stick with the classics like Entenmann's – a 125-year-old brand with many delicious options to choose from. Powdered Pop'ettes will satisfy your guests' sweet cravings, Pop'ems Glazed Donut Holes are great for bite-sized snack-

ing, and Baker's Delights Mini Crumb Cake has a rich and delicious homemade taste. Convenient choices such as these can keep you prepared for the night ahead should the doorbell surprise you with carolers or other visitors. They can also round out a buffet spread, help you end a multi-course feast on a sweet note or simplify breakfast for overnight guests. All you'll need to do is put the coffee on!

## Plan a Game Night

If your overnight guests will be spending more than a night or two at your home, you can

keep them happy and entertained with some activities that require very little planning but are a lot of fun. For example, you can organize a game night, which is a nice way to maximize your time together. Pick a few games that are well-suited for the size of the crowd and the age of the players. Remember, the best choices for a party are games that inspire conversations, teamwork and creativity. Or plan a movie marathon, picking some holiday themed crowd favorites in advance. You can simplify feeding your guests during these low-key activities by putting out some finger foods like crudité, popcorn, pretzels and donut holes.

With a few tips and strategies, you can ensure holiday entertaining goes as smoothly as possible.



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# Nutritional Workshops Available in your Community

## New! Ten Tips For Adults

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#### Budgeting

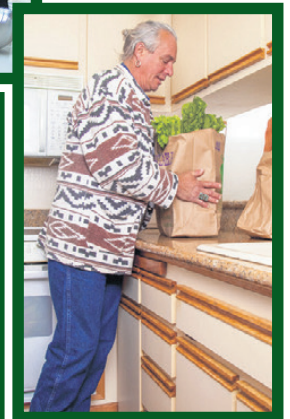
- Plan meals ahead
- Shop for best prices

#### My Plate

- Eat foods from every food group

#### Activity

- Add physical activity to your daily routine



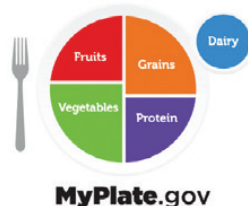
***Call Us to Plan a Workshop Near You!***

**Delaware County Office for the Aging**

Call the SNAP-Ed Coordinator at

**607-832-5750**

**DelCoEatHealthy@gmail.com**



***Happy  
Holidays  
to All!***

SNAP-Ed is funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.