

# Deck your holiday halls with festive flowers

Here are five top holiday decorating tips that will bring some festive floral flair to your home this season:

- Expecting houseguests? Decorate all of the rooms in your home with a few simple touches to create a cozy holiday sanctuary for you and your loved ones. Florals are the perfect way to welcome your guests. Place small vases of fresh flowers in bedrooms and bathrooms. Just a few blooms will do the trick and the thoughtful gesture won't go unnoticed.

- Adorning each of your holiday dining tables with a festive theme will make the delicious experience even more delightful. For a formal holiday dinner, a traditional centerpiece makes a statement of elegance. Teleflora, a

nationwide floral retailer, is a popular source for artfully arranged holiday centerpieces. Their vintage-style Silver Glow Centerpiece, which features a stylish mercury glass hurricane nestled in a bed of Christmas greens and red roses, will light up your holiday table. Add an extra special touch by tying your linen napkins with silver ribbon.

- When choosing holiday florals and decorative accents, experiment with color palettes. Add some unexpected color to traditional holiday hues of red, green, gold and silver. Lime or chartreuse combined with reds and greens will give your décor a modern twist. For a rich, upscale look, add shades of plum and aubergine to traditional burgundy and gold decor.

- Bring new life, color and fragrance to artificial green garlands, wreaths, and boughs from years past. Mixing your artificial elements with fresh stems like heather, magnolia and seeded eucalyptus will enhance the look of your décor and create a fragrant holiday scent that will evoke memories of merry times.

- Create your own special holiday decorating traditions. Save your favorite bowls, vases and keepsakes from your floral arrange-



ments and fill them with ornaments, candy or other festive goodies. Teleflora offers an extensive array of collectible floral containers that can be cherished and enjoyed for holidays to come.

This season, use holiday flowers and plants to fill your home with warmth and a festive spirit that will make your guests want to return every year. (StatePoint)



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# It's a wrap: Tips for making gifts look great all year long

A beautifully wrapped gift truly enhances the gift giving experience. If you're wrapping that birthday or anniversary gift in drab paper or (worse yet) the Sunday comics, it's time to rethink your wrapping techniques.

With a few simple tips, it's easy to create great-looking, personal gift wrapping that is as much fun to open as it is to receive.

### ■ Add flair with unexpected wrapping materials

Ribbons don't actually have to be made of ribbon. Go above and beyond traditional wrapping paper and bows by using non-traditional materials to wrap your gift. Delight the fashionistas in your life by using fun, colorful belts to keep boxes secure (and sneak them an extra accessory too). When giving cookware, wrap the package in new kitchen towels. For a going away party, wrap the gift in maps or images of the recipient's destination. Attending a high school graduation party? Stick the gift box shut with a fun bumper sticker from the grad's soon-to-be college or university. Make bows out of raffia, use leftover wallpaper instead of wrapping paper, or tie a scarf around the handles of a gift bag to add something extra special to your present.



### ■ Choose an alternative to clear tape

Amp up the style of your gift with printed packaging tape. A fun substitute for traditional clear tape, EZ Start packaging tape from Duck brand is available in nine decorative, trendy patterns - everything from a wild pink and black zebra print to a sophisticated black and white paisley - that are perfect for keeping wrapping paper in place while also adding an unexpected touch to gifts. Delight any birthday girl by adding the lime green and pink print over solid wrapping paper, or gear your gift for guys with a cool pattern featuring →

graffiti-style skulls.

■ **Create a one-of-a-kind container**

Forego wrapping paper entirely and decorate the box itself. Create a unique design using stickers, stencil a monogram or pattern on the top, or decoupage it with images that remind you of the recipient. Printed packaging tape can also help makeover your gift package - completely cover the box in tape, or use it to create stripes, chevron, checks or other patterns. To make the gift extra special, choose an unexpected item or shape to hold your present. Buckets, hat boxes, or (new) take-out containers can make for interesting packages. And, once it's been personalized, the container itself serves as an added element of the gift.



■ **Look to the occasion for inspiration**

Theme your gift wrapping around the special occasion or holiday that you're celebrating. Bridal shower? Use wedding traditions to inspire your wrapping - make sure it includes something borrowed

(perhaps a beautiful pin to tie the ribbon), something blue (tissue paper), something old (include a photo of you and the bride on the box) and something new (the gift). On birthdays, be inspired by the recipient's age - on a twelfth birthday, divide the gift into twelve small items, or wrap the present in an item that represents that number, like pages from a calendar. At graduations, wrap the package in the colors of the grad's new college or university.

■ **Make shipped items special**

Even when loved ones are far away, it's simple to make the outside of their package special and personal. Besides helping to glamorize gift wrapping or boxes, you can also use EZ Start packaging tape to ship items to loved ones away from home. Use the camo pattern to send a gift to a friend or family member away in the military, or inspire some relaxation in stressed-out college students with a care package wrapped with one of the other colorful patterns. It will make the package stand out and keep items safely secured. (BPT)

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# Save money this holiday season

Saving money while holiday shopping may sound impossible, but you don't need to be a Scrooge to budget. Here are some tips to give you a leg up on your New Year's financial resolutions:

■ **Just Say No**

When it comes to purchasing warranties, there are times you can just say no. Refusing extended warranties doesn't strip you of all protection. Reputable manufacturers will back products for three to six months and some credit cards extend or even double manufacturers' warranties. If you do purchase a warranty, be sure the terms are worth the cost.

■ **Avoid Layaway**

Layaway may sound great, but without discipline, it can be costly. If you're using a credit card to make small payments on your layaway purchase, and you don't pay your balance in full, you may ultimately pay both a layaway fee and interest on your credit card. And if you cancel the purchase, you could pay an additional fee too. Stick to buying what you can afford today.

■ **Manage Your Money**

If you have trouble sticking to your shopping budget, consider using tools to help

keep you honest. Traditional financial software programs, which help you set budgets and manage money, are now providing access from mobile devices. For example, Quicken 2013's free iPhone, iPad and Android apps allow you to securely manage your money, view up-to-date information about your accounts and check your budgets, encouraging you to make sound financial decisions in real-time.

"Consumers who go into debt from holiday shopping often do so because they are unaware of what they have in their bank accounts and are spending un mindfully," warns Aaron Patzer, VP of Innovation at Intuit. "Tracking your budgets and spending as you go will help you stay on track."

■ **Know the Refund Policy**

Not all stores offer refunds for returned items. When buying gifts, make sure you know a store's policy before your purchase. Ask for a gift receipt so your friends and family can make exchanges or get refunds if necessary.

■ **Use Gift Cards**

Retailers must now honor gift cards for five years from the date of issue. So find those old gift cards, and use them toward your gift purchases, even if they have "expired." The

company can send you a new card or issue the remaining balance in cash.

■ **DIY**

Showing your friends and family you care about them should not put you in debt. If the holidays will cause an unreasonable financial burden, consider making presents. From baking to knitting, to writing your loved ones poems and thoughtful letters, homemade presents can be more meaningful than the store-bought variety. More money management tips for the holidays can be found at [www.Quicken.com](http://www.Quicken.com). By planning ahead and making informed financial decisions this holiday shopping season, you can start 2013 on the right financial foot. (StatePoint)



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# Getting your home ready for the hosting season

Decorating your home for the holidays goes hand-in-hand with getting ready for guests - whether those visitors are planned or impromptu. So, as you start to consider your decor themes, think about updates that can be made around the house to make your guests feel even more at home. Keep this checklist in mind as you get started:

■ **Stock your pantry.** During every holiday this season, food will be a major focus. Be prepared for the biggest days by having all the ingredients you need in your pantry, freezer and - closer to the actual events - your refrigerator. From spices to stock to sweet treats, it's better to have everything on hand rather than risking the chance of the grocery store being closed or dealing with the long, hectic holiday lines. It's also a great opportunity to make sure that you have enough supplies on hand to feed guests who stay for a few days at a time, from breakfast to dinner and dessert.

■ **Give your decorations a checkup.** By pulling out your holiday decorations well ahead of time, you can save yourself the stress of last-minute surprises like broken platters or light strings with half the bulbs burnt out. If you find items that are broken or in disrepair,



don't throw them out - make a few quick fixes instead. Repair broken items with reliably tough adhesives like Gorilla, which come in a variety of formulas, from clear-drying epoxy to wood glue and more. Replace burnt out bulbs individually, rather than buying entire new strands.

■ **Freshen your linens.** Guest rooms often go dormant during the quieter seasons of the year, and need a bit of airing out before the hosting season. Keep a few sets of linens freshly laundered - one on each bed and a couple in the closet - to avoid stale smells. Make sure you also have a few extra blankets clean and ready to use as throws, and don't forget to vacuum or clean window treatments.



■ **Get in the spirit.** Add to your home's seasonal spirit by making a few crafts or gifts to decorate the main rooms, as well as guest rooms. Get creative with craft store items, or try 'upcycling' thrift store or yard sale finds into holiday decor that's uniquely yours. Visit [www.pinterest.com/gorillaglu](http://www.pinterest.com/gorillaglu) for project ideas.

■ **Be ready to entertain.** Being a good host means being prepared for last-minute fun. After the big meal is finished and everything is cleaned up, you and your guests will have time for some extra fun. Set out DVDs, board games and books that will keep guests of all ages entertained. One of the best parts of celebrating the season is the opportunity to spend time with loved ones. (BPT)



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*For more information visit [www.kearsargecharmber.org/Holiday2012](http://www.kearsargecharmber.org/Holiday2012)*

# 5 perfect presents make gift-giving easy

If you're stumped as to what to get that impossible-to-buy-for person, consider these ideas that are sure to brighten anyone's holiday:

## ■ 1. Gift your services

Rather than giving a tangible item, give your services; it's the perfectly practical gift for the person on your list who may be short on space, lacking financial resources or would just appreciate a little extra help. Love kids? Offer free child care so the recipient can enjoy an evening out on the town without worrying about the little ones. Have a knack for cooking? Gift a weeknight meal that you deliver to the recipient's doorstep. Known for your organization? Offer your skills to help the recipient organize a closet, office or other cluttered space.

## ■ 2. Make a miracle happen

Positively impacting others by giving a charitable gift in the recipient's name embraces the true meaning of the season. The new Give Miracles Holiday Catalog from national non-profit Children's Miracle Network Hospitals features in-demand pediatric items and services that local children's hospitals need- anything from comforting teddy bears (\$30) to a case of extra-small preemie diapers smaller than the palm of your hand (\$170). For high-impact



gifts like a physical therapy toy kit (\$375) or a pediatric wheelchair (\$970), funds can be collectively raised by numerous gift-givers. This option is ideal for extended families looking to do something more meaningful than the typical gift exchange. Browse the gift catalog at [www.GiveMiracles.org](http://www.GiveMiracles.org).

## ■ 3. Purchase a membership to a club

Rather than wasting money on a new gadget that will quickly be forgotten, give a gift that benefits the recipient all year long. Monthly clubs provide fun deliveries to a loved one's address, an ongoing reminder of your generosity. Monthly gift clubs are available for just about anything, from wine and beer, to jams and cheese, to bacon and fruit.

## ■ 4. Give a gift that grows

Potted plants are a fantastic gift idea because they represent how your love continues to grow for that special someone. Plus, plants are a wonderful addition to interior decor and help clean the air. With so many houseplants readily available, you're sure to find the perfect one for the person who has everything.

## ■ 5. Provide an experience

Think about what really interests the recipient or an activity they've had on their bucket list. Perhaps it's a hot air balloon ride or a white water rafting daytrip. If the person really loves to shop, hire a personal shopper for the day and let them see what it's like to live like a star. If the recipient loves gourmet food, purchase a spot in a class taught by your town's hottest chef. (BPT)

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Presents**

# *Hillsborough Olde Fashioned Christmas 2012*

## **Refreshments & Entertainment, Schedule of Events:**

- |                                                                                       |                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7am-10am: All You Can Eat DARE Breakfast, Masonic Lodge      | <input type="checkbox"/> 10:30: Puppet Show, Fuller Public Library             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-12pm: Cookie Walk, Smith Memorial Church                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 12pm-1pm: Christmas Luncheon, United Methodist Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-1pm: White Elephant Sale & Baked Goods St. Mary's Church | <input type="checkbox"/> 1pm-4pm: Christmas Concert, Smith Memorial Church     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-1pm: Artisans Holiday Sale, Heritage Museum              | <input type="checkbox"/> 2pm-4pm: Free Photos with Santa, Valley Bible Chapel  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-1pm: Vendors Sale, Moose Club                            | <input type="checkbox"/> 2pm-4pm: Girls Scout Kid's Crafts                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-2pm: Christmas Fair, United Methodist Church             | <input type="checkbox"/> 4pm-4:30pm: Free Hot Cider & Munchkins, Butler Park   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-4pm: Christmas Tree Sales, Lions Club, Main St.          | <input type="checkbox"/> 4pm-4:30pm: Christmas Caroling, Butler Park           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-1pm: Free Pet Photo, Hillsboro Agway                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 4:30pm: Santa's Parade & Tree Lighting, Butler Park   |

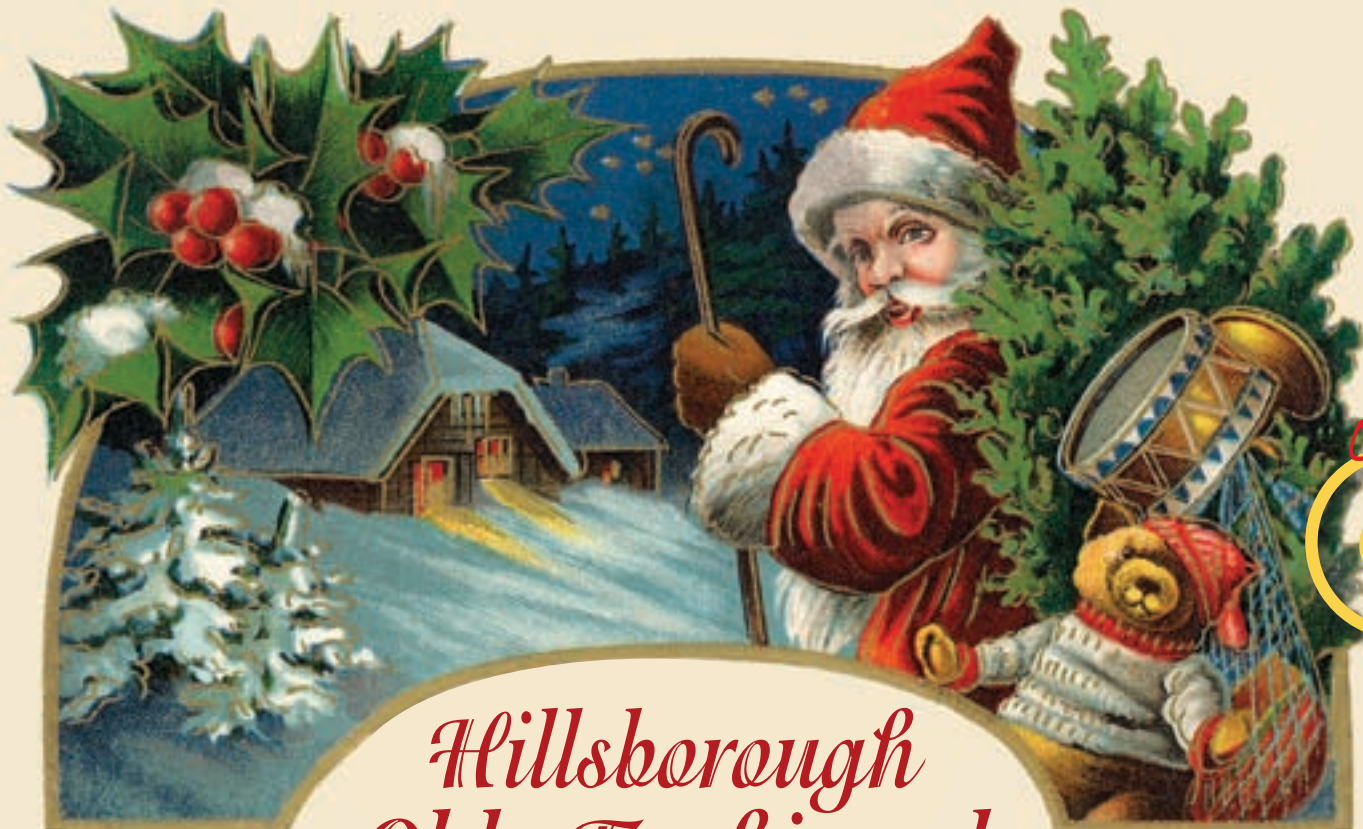
**Attend at least (5) venues and be eligible for Dinner for Two at Tooky Mills**

(Compliments of The Messenger)

Have a host initial your attendance at each venue and turn in at the Tree Lighting

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_





## Hillsborough Olde Fashioned Christmas 2012

### Merchants Open Houses:

- |                                                                                                        |                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6am-2pm: Sweet Endings Bakery, Free Refreshments                              | <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-1pm: Hillsboro Agway, 20% Off Pet Toys                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8am-1pm: Sanel Auto Parts, 20% Off All Tools                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-3pm: Sausage Source, 10% Off Store Products                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8am-5pm: Sweet Expressions, 15% Off All Christmas Items                       | <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-3pm: Stella's Corner, Free Refreshments, 5% Off All Items                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-1pm: Shaws, Free Refreshments                                             | <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-5pm: Central Square Emporium, Free Refreshments, 10% Off Quilted Jackets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-1pm: Premiere Printing & Embroidery, Monogram your article while you wait | <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-5pm: Windsor Cottage, 20% Off Most Items                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-2pm: Generations Florist, Free Refreshments, 10% Off Purchases            | <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-5pm: Bullfrogs & Butterflies, 50% Off Books & Movies, \$2 Off Jewelry    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-2pm: Petals & Stems Florist, Free Refreshments                            | <input type="checkbox"/> 10am-5pm: The Other Arc, 10-25% Off All Items in the Store                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-6pm: Heat Is On, 10% Off Anything in the Store                            | <input type="checkbox"/> 11am-2pm: Hillsboro Diner, 10% Off Club Sandwiches                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-6pm: Radio Shack, 10% Off Toys, Batteries & Microbus with in store demo   | <input type="checkbox"/> 11:30-10pm: Tooky Mills Pub, 10% Off Entree or Sandwich                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9am-6pm: Fireplace Village, 10% Off Anything in the Store thru Dec. 24        | <input type="checkbox"/> 12pm-10pm: Stone Arch Tavern, 1 Free Dessert w/purchase of Meal               |

**Attend at least (5) venues and be eligible for Dinner for Two at Tooky Mills**

(Compliments of The Messenger)

Have a host initial your attendance at each venue and turn in at the Tree Lighting

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

# Deck your halls with innovative tips and techniques

The holiday season doesn't have to always involve the same old, same old when it comes to decorating your home.

Take a few ideas from John Griffith. As the lead visual merchandiser for Replacements, Ltd., he spends the entire year scouting and developing innovative tips and techniques to deck the halls and trim the perfect tree. "So many people settle for simply hanging ornaments on their trees, but there is so much more you can do by adding fillers that really reflect your own personal taste and style," says Griffith. "Mixing in ribbons, fabrics, florals, feathers and other natural elements create flair and personality." Griffith says the hot colors for holiday 2012 range from soft pastels to rich jewel tones. Popular ornaments this season reflect the Victorian era, with glittering gemstones and rhinestones being extremely popular.

And don't be afraid to forgo the traditional tree topper. Instead, consider using twigs or other natural elements arranged out of the top of your tree. Griffith literally has thousands of ornaments at his fingertips. While most people know Replacements as the world's largest retailer of old and new china, crystal, silver and collectibles, the company has a vast selection of ornaments from around the globe.



"As individuals, we chose ornaments for so many different reasons. Decisions may be driven by color or theme, but many choices are shaped by past and future traditions," says Keith Winkler, the company's product marketing manager. "Many people reach back to ornaments that remind them of their childhood, while others are looking to start their own traditions with annual collectible ornaments."

Winkler says popular dinnerware manufacturers including Lenox, Wedgwood and Waterford all offer ornament lines. For those looking for popular blown glass, he suggests the Merck Family's Old World Christmas line. Those ornaments run the gamut from traditional figures, to birds, sports teams, and pretty much any theme you can imagine. (BPT)





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***Happy Holidays and a Wonderful New Year!***

# Vintage Christmas in Portsmouth entire month of December 2012

Portsmouth - It's time to make plans now for the perfect holiday visit during Vintage Christmas in Portsmouth throughout the entire month of December 2012. Presented by cultural anchors Strawberry Banke Museum and The Music Hall, it's a month of Strolls, Shows and Stayovers in the historic working seaport of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Listed as "one of the Top Ten Things not to miss in New England" (Boston Globe), Vintage Christmas in Portsmouth has people returning year after year to the small city that Travel Guide of America calls "the crowning glory of the New Hampshire Seacoast."

Now in its eighth year, Vintage Christmas in Portsmouth will once again offer the irresistible Candlelight Stroll that Strawberry Banke Museum has created for 32 years, the live holiday shows, opera broadcasts and films in The Music Hall's landmark Historic Theater and the intimate Music Hall Loft on Congress Street. Get ready to cuddle up with a free trolley ride through red-bricked Market Square, stroll through the snowflakes to the many eclectic shops, step back in time through living history

at the festively decorated Strawberry Banke Museum, sample Portsmouth's famous culinary specialties, or enjoy a first-class show at The Music Hall. Back by popular demand - the free Vintage Christmas Trolley shuttles patrons around the historic seaport each Saturday and Sunday for the first three weekends in December. Website: [www.vintagechristmasnh.org](http://www.vintagechristmasnh.org)

## VINTAGE CHRISTMAS 2012 SCHEDULE

### Friday, November 30

5:30 Mary Flynn Trio - Vintage Christmas kickoff - Loft

### Saturday, December 1

1:30-10:30pm Vintage Christmas Trolley 20 min. route

1pm Met@The Music Hall: La Clemenza di Tito (Mozart)

5pm Holiday Tree Lighting, Market Square

6pm Illuminated Holiday Parade

5-9pm Candlelight Stroll, Strawberry Banke

7pm Wuthering Heights - film at Loft

### Sunday, December 2

1:30-10:30pm Vintage Christmas Trolley 20 min. route

2pm, 7pm Natalie MacMaster, Music Hall

4-8pm Candlelight Stroll, Strawberry Banke

### Monday, December 3

5:30pm Historical Tour, Music Hall

**Thursday, December 6** 7:30pm Deepak Chopra, Music Hall

### Saturday, December 8

1pm Met@The Music Hall: Un Ballo in Maschera (Verdi)

1:30-10:30pm Vintage Christmas Trolley 20 min. route

5-9pm Candlelight Stroll, Strawberry Banke

### Sunday, December 9

1:30-10:30pm Vintage Christmas Trolley 20 min. route

4-8pm Candlelight Stroll at Strawberry Banke

### Friday, December 14

Great Bay Academy of Dance: Nutcracker, Music Hall

### Saturday December 15

1:30-10:30pm Vintage Christmas Trolley 20 min. route

5-9pm Candlelight Stroll, Strawberry Banke

Great Bay Academy of Dance: Nutcracker, Music Hall

### Sunday, December 16

1:30-10:30pm Vintage Christmas Trolley 20 min. route

4-8pm Candlelight Stroll, Strawberry Banke

7pm Ragpickers Dream, Music Hall Loft

Great Bay Academy of Dance: Nutcracker, Music Hall

### Monday December 17

5:30pm Historical Tour, Music Hall

7:30pm Ragpickers Dream, Music Hall Loft

**Tuesday, December 18** 7:30pm Messiah Sing, Music Hall

### Friday December 21

8pm Merry Funny N.E. Christmas, Music Hall

### Saturday, December 22

12pm Met@The Music Hall: Aida (Verdi)

### December 26-30

Holiday House Tours, Strawberry Banke

### Saturday, December 29

HD broadcast: Barrymore (with Christopher Plummer)

**Monday, December 31** First Night Portsmouth



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## Three gourmet cheese plate pairings guaranteed to impress

If you're in a rush on the day of your gathering, a cheese plate is easy to put together in minutes - no cooking necessary. Just plan to include three to five cheeses per platter - estimate about 3 to 4 ounces of cheese per person - and arrange your choices on a pretty dish or tray.

There are infinite ways to create a cheese plate that will be the talk of your party. Consider these simple suggestions for a bit of inspiration:

■ **Play with variety and contrast.**

Include cheeses in a range of textures, from soft to semi-hard to crumbly or hard, that have a range of flavor profiles. Consider combinations like a soft and creamy brie, a harder aged cheese like Stella Sharp Provolone and a crumbly Salemville blue cheese.

■ **Start mild and move to strong.**

Give your guests a tastebud tour of the many



different flavors fine cheeses have to offer. Present a trio of options with varied intensity of flavor including an appealingly tangy chevre like Organic Creamery goat cheese, a buttery Gouda and a bold cheese like Black Creek Extra Sharp Cheddar.

■ **Shake it up with unusual cheeses.**

Give guests the opportunity to try cheeses they might not have had before. It's the perfect way for them to sample something that could become a new favorite. Look for

cheeses with unique ingredients, like Great Midwest Mango Fire Cheddar, which has habanero pepper and the rich sweetness of mango.

It's a great idea to set out some other small food items that pair nicely with cheese, like Kalamata olives, sun-dried tomatoes, Marcona almonds, grilled vegetables, sliced fruit or even chocolate.

Cheese and wine famously go together, so offering your guests samples from a few bottles will make the tasting experience even more fun. Keep these wine-and-cheese pairing principles in mind:

- For hard, stronger-flavored cheeses (e.g. Gruyere or aged Cheddar): Medium-bodied reds (e.g. Pinot Noir)
- For soft, young cheeses (e.g. goat cheese): Young wines like sauvignon blanc
- For stronger blue cheeses (e.g. gorgonzola, Danish Blue): Sweet/dessert wines
- For mild, buttery or creamy cheeses (e.g. triple-creme bries): Sparkling wines
- Semi-soft cheeses (e.g. camembert): Chardonnays and full cabernets

Parties should be just as much fun for the hostess as they are for guests. Opting for easy-to-create gourmet cheese plates will save time and allow you to enjoy the tasting experience with friends and family. (BPT)

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