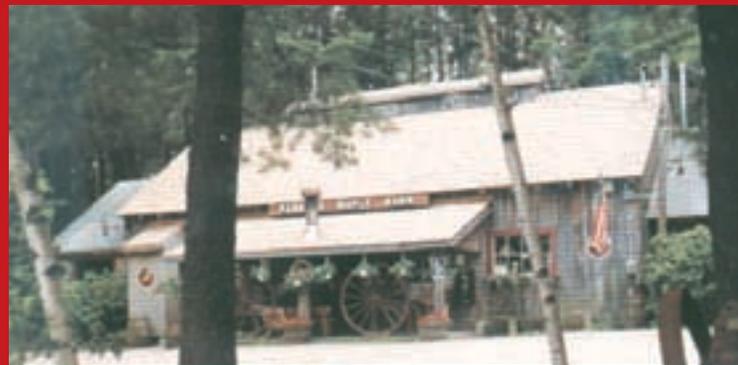


Christmas Shopping Guide

2016

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Parker's Maple Barn Restaurant closing for the season on December 18 at 4PM. Corn Crib Gift Shop open until December 24 at 2PM. Will re-open Wed., February 8, 2017 at 8:00AM. Online store always available. Also closed Thanksgiving Day!

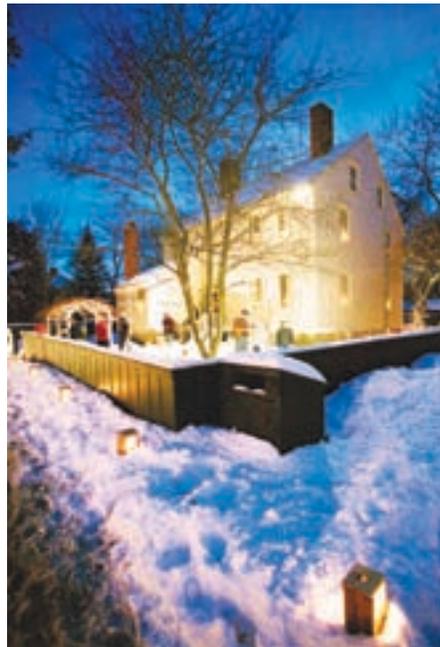


Candlelight Stroll, a 'Vintage Christmas in Portsmouth'

December 3, 4, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18
Saturdays, 5-9 pm. Sundays, 4-8 pm.
Friday December 16, 5-9 pm

Avoid lines by purchasing tickets in advance! Tickets can be purchased in advance in person at the Strawberry Banke Visitors Center at 14 Hancock Street up to the date of the event. Advance tickets may also be purchased online starting October 1. Tickets are \$25/adults, \$12.50/children (ages 5-17), and \$60/family. Group and corporate rates are available. \$5 off the ticket price on all tickets purchased by November 30, 2016.

Candlelight Stroll, an annual holiday tradition at Strawberry Banke since 1979 showcases 350 years of seasonal and holiday traditions against the backdrop of the Museum's furnished historic houses. On these weekend evenings, the Museum grounds glow with hundreds of lighted candle lanterns, the houses are adorned with thousands of hand-made decorations crafted from live greens and dried flowers and herbs collected from the Museum gardens, and the air is filled with the sound of holiday music and



scent of woodsmoke from the bonfire. Its authenticity is the foundation for the claim that the Vintage Christmas in Portsmouth holiday celebration, echoed

by Travel + Leisure magazine, makes Portsmouth 'the Christmas capital of North America.'

Visitors stroll from house to historic house, greeted by costumed role players and performers who recreate the traditions of times past, rediscovering the joys of simpler times. Mrs. Shapiro prepares a Hanukkah celebration in her 1919 Russian Jewish kitchen. Mrs. Goodwin, her family and servants prepare a Victorian Christmas. Father Christmas, the night watchman, "Mayor Frank Jones" and other role-players make their rounds along the dirt lanes; and the Abbotts await news of their soldier fighting in Europe in the Second World War. Carolers, chestnuts and holiday crafts bring all the sounds, scents and moments for family 'stopfulness' to this event that is a cherished New Hampshire tradition. Complimentary refreshments and hot apple cider are offered at the Cider Shed. Traditional hearth-cooking demonstrations, crafts demonstrations, and winter projects for kids provide interactive fun for multiple generations.

Peter Christian'sTM Tavern

A great place to gather with friends and family for the holidays.

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Clara's Dream, A Nutcracker Story set for Dec. 1-4



Live at Lebanon Opera House

Clara's Dream, A Nutcracker Story returns to the Lebanon Opera House on December 1-4, 2016. Reserved seating prices for all shows are Adult \$32/\$24/\$16 and Students \$16/\$12/\$8. Tickets can be purchased at Lebanon Opera House Box Office in person or via phone at 603.448.0400. Tickets can also be purchased online at www.lebanonoperahouse.org.

The crisp December air heralds the return of Clara's Dream, A Nutcracker Story, to the Lebanon Opera House stage. New choreography lends fairytale magic to our version of The Nutcracker, a timeless classic that brings the season's dreams to life. With ever-changing backdrops and costumes that shimmer with winter's crystalline beauty, you will find your heart dancing with the City Center Ballet performers as Clara and the Nutcracker Prince overcome obstacles on their way to the Land of Sweets. It's the perfect holiday entertainment for adults and children alike.

Clara's Tea. Make the day even more special by sitting down for a lite bite before Saturday's 1:00 or 4:00 performance or Sunday's 3:00 performance of Clara's Dream. Sample some of the many treats contributed by local bakers and other New Hampshire and Vermont-based food suppliers, including hot tea and delicious punch—all graciously served by the City Center Ballet Pastry Chefs. There will be visits from dancers in their costumes from Clara's Dream. Then, head over to the Lebanon Opera House for the performance immediately following your tea time, where a preferred section of seats will be held for all Clara's Tea ticket holders. The Opera House is a short walk from the ballet studio. Order your tickets early, as seating is limited and this is a popular event that sells out quickly.



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Spectacular Holiday Fair to feature local craftsmen

Are you searching for a unique gift for someone special, or perhaps just a day-long adventure to the beautiful seacoast town of Rye with friends and family? Either way, plan on visiting Webster at Rye's Holiday Fair in Rye, New Hampshire this year.

The event will be held in Webster's stunning new addition, decorated especially for the occasion, on Saturday, December 3rd, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. The Fair will feature one-of-a-kind local craftsmen and artisans, with gifts ranging from Isles of Shoals organic body products, hand-crafted chocolates, soaps, feathered headbands, jewelry, photography and more.

Twenty-five vendors will showcase unique products, many of which are hand-created.

Before or after shopping, plan on staying for lunch featuring lasagna, stew or chowder in our gracious dining café overlooking the patio and outdoor fireplace. A cookie-walk, bake table and raffle, featuring an overnight stay for two at the Wentworth by the Sea as well as



many other wonderful gifts, will make your visit a day to remember.

Webster at Rye Holiday Fair, located at 795 Washington Rd. Rye NH, is free

and open to the public and offers plenty of parking. Please call (603) 964-8144 or visit www.websteratrye.com for more information.



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**18 Highlawn Rd. Warner NH
(603) 456-2600 IndianMuseum.org**

Trans-Siberian-esque Wizards of Winter to perform

Plymouth, NH: Flying Monkey Performance Center presents Wizards of Winter on the Plymouth stage on Sunday, December 4th at 6:30pm. Anchored by three former Trans-Siberian Orchestra members, they have garnered legions of fans with their original album and holiday rock opera. Tickets for this concert start at \$29.

Envision Christmas season by enjoying progressive rock with a dash of metal? What about power ballads with a dash of theater? Well then experiencing Wizards of Winter might just be just the holiday experience for your family.

This is a holiday show extravaganza if there ever was one, blending a heavy metal, progressive rock vibe with the heartwarming sounds of the season, and the production theatrics that reminds one of TSO itself. A 12-member ensemble will perform music from their own rock opera, Tales Beneath a Northern Star, as well as



Trans Siberian Orchestra's greatest hits such as "Christmas Eve in Sarajevo", "Mad Russian", "Christmas in the Air", "Old City Bar" and "Queen of the Winter Night." Their unique style of musical intensity, soaring vocal harmonies and stage theatrics layered around a rich storyboard will create a most unique dazzling holiday spectacle.

Make no mistake: The Wizards of Winter is not a Trans-Siberian Orchestra tribute group, and they do not perform

a whole evening of their music but do perform some of their greatest hits as part of an original holiday rock opera. 2016's holiday tour features three former members of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra with the recent return of lead vocalist Guy LeMonnier, vocalist Peter Shaw, and narrator Tony Gaynor.

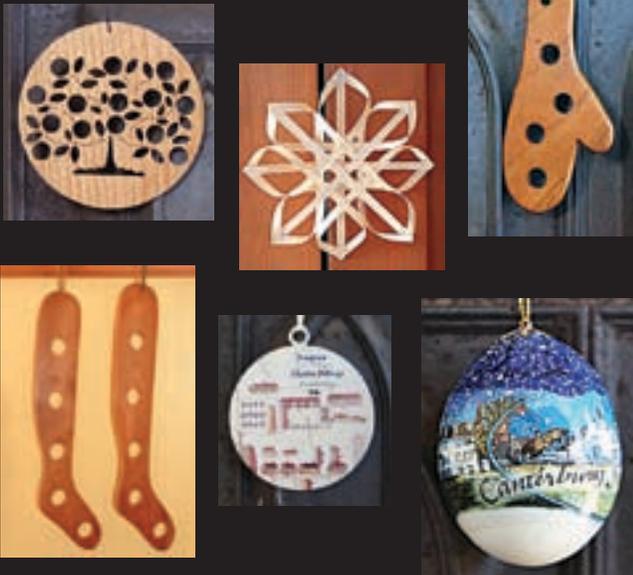
LeMonnier says, "I had the fortune of meeting them in 2013, and I found

a group of musicians and friends that quickly became family. The excitement on that stage for their craft and their love for the audience is awe-inspiring and I'm thrilled to be back with the pack to rock the nation this holiday season."

Tickets for Wizards of Winter are \$29, and \$39 for premier seating. For more information on upcoming shows or to purchase tickets call the box office at 603-536-2551 or go online at www.flyingmonkeyNH.com.

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Visit WebsteratRye.com



Pop, Fizz, Clink: ways to celebrate the Holidays with Champagne

To help you plan your festivities this holiday season, Vitalie Taittinger, artistic director of Champagne Taittinger -- one of the last few remaining family-owned and operated Champagne houses -- is offering her take on ways to add glamour and elegance to your at-home, year-end festivities.

Champagne-Inspired Décor

For those in the midst of planning a holiday party, Vitalie suggests using a bubbly bar as the centerpiece of the festivities. "Create a dedicated space for your bubbles, offering options such as Champagne Taittinger Brut La Française and Prestige Rosé, and allow guests to taste at their own leisure. It makes for a great spot to strike up conversation and leaves the host free to mingle with all of the other guests," says Vitalie.

In terms of the look for your bubbly bar, you don't have stick with traditional holiday colors. Instead, let Champagne Taittinger inspire your décor by using metallics like brushed gold, galvanized silver and rose gold, alongside lush holiday greens, for a more contemporary take on holiday spirit.



For bigger crowds, large-format bottles are sure to be a crowd-pleaser -- from a Magnum (two standard bottles), to a Methuselah (eight standard bottles). "Everyone loves a big bottle of Champagne, and it will save you tons of recycling space, as well!" says Vitalie.

Parisian Raw Bar

Take a moment from the hustle and bustle of the holidays and transport you and your guests to Paris with a French-style raw bar -- a crowd pleaser at any party and

for any season.

Move on to the perfect shrimp cocktail: the sweet flavor with just a squeeze of lemon is a natural fit with Champagne. Then, end with a bit of lobster or crab," says Vitalie.

For a new presentation, stagger footed cake stands at different heights to create areas where you can add additional design elements, such as winter greenery, flowers, candles and lights. Drape linen or other textured fabric for added texture and a touch of Paris. Voila!

Champagne Macarons

Chocolate delicacies and Champagne are a natural pairing, particularly when there is a secondary element of fruit in the chocolate, such as passion fruit, raspberry, coconut or hazelnut. And the outer shell, airy pillow, creamy center and soft chew of Macarons are a natural fit for Champagne, which is an equally ethereal experience. Available online at mrchocolate.com in Brut La Française, Bellini, Mimosa, and Rosé, Champagne Taittinger Macarons at Jacques Torres Chocolate can round out your dessert spread and provide a memorable conclusion to your meal. (StatePoint)

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Ways to make your family's holiday portraits shine

Take a look at your family. How many changes have crept in since last year? And one year from now, when it's time to send out holiday cards again, think about how much more they will have changed.

Sending a family photograph as your holiday card is one way to share with your friends and loved ones the joy and pride your family makes you feel. But more importantly, as the years pass, the holiday memories within these pictures will become more and more precious. Booking a session with a professional photographer will result in stunning cards that people will love to display and keep.

The advantage to using a professional photographer is that they have the skills and artistic ability to make beautiful images that you will cherish forever. In addition to that, they can partner with you to create a style and effect that matches your family's unique personality.

Classic

Simple yet timeless, this background is often neutral with the family sitting in formal poses. The photographer is less likely to use editing effects to alter the finished product. To



prepare for this, choose a color and style that is clean, uniform and classic - something that would be set off by a holiday-themed border when you're designing your card layout. In the end, the goal is to draw the eye to the face, which is what the classic style emphasizes more than anything.

Modern

This style ditches the formal posing and creates a relaxed, candid feel. You come as you are, perhaps using a setting that is familiar and comfortable to your family, such as building a snowman in your backyard or taking a hike through the winter woods. Whatever you

bring to the shoot, the idea is to showcase your family relaxed and happy together.

Eclectic

This style takes the modern approach to a highly specialized, highly individualized level and uses special effects and editing to convey humor or a sense of drama. For example, perhaps your holiday portrait could feature your family members forming a human ladder to place a star on the top of the tree. Look for a photographer with the savvy and technique to pull off these specific effects and dramatic images.

Vintage

What's old is once again new. What better way to call back to the family roots that tie your loved ones together? You can express this by pulling from your family heritage. For example, you could dress your daughter in your childhood velvet dress. Or include your grandfather's vintage toy train set as a prop. Some photographers specialize in black and white photography, as well as sepia effects. Of course, if you really want to try an authentic and timeless look, some photographers are experimenting with glass plate photography. Check out findaphotographer.com. (BPT)

The Toadstool Bookshops

We can help you find the perfect books, calendars, CDs and DVDs for everyone on your Christmas list

Here are a few suggestions:



SHEDS - by Howard Mansfield with photos by Joanna Eldredge Morrissey. This newly published book explores the different types of sheds found around New England and beyond: from the common connected farm sheds, to covered bridges, work sheds, worship sheds (meeting houses), bob houses, dream sheds and saunas and more. "A shed is," Howard writes, "the shortest line between need and shelter." Joanna's full color photos throughout beautifully illustrate these simple, useful structures.



CHASING SUMMITS: IN PURSUIT OF HIGH PLACES AND AN UNCONVENTIONAL LIFE - Author Garry Harrington recounts his hiking experiences from the trails of Monadnock to the summit of the Matterhorn, with climbs in the Rockies and the high peaks of Mexico along the way.



SANTA'S SLEIGH IS ON ITS WAY TO NEW HAMPSHIRE: A CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE - by Eric James with illustrations by Robert Dunn. It's a magical Christmas Eve, and all of the children in the towns across New Hampshire are sleeping. Well, all of the children but you. How could you possibly fall asleep when you know Santa and his sleigh are on their way?



PEREGRINE SPRING: A MASTER FALCONER'S EXTRAORDINARY LIFE WITH BIRDS OF PREY - Deering resident Nancy Cowan's memoir of 30 years living closely with raptors offers a new perspective on the relationship between humans and these "feathered monsters". After many years of working with the birds from breeders she agreed to rehabilitate an injured wild peregrine falcon and during this new phase as a falconer - a "peregrine spring" - the bird teaches her about the wild instinct of raptors. Nancy runs the New Hampshire School of Falconry.

Depot Square, Peterborough
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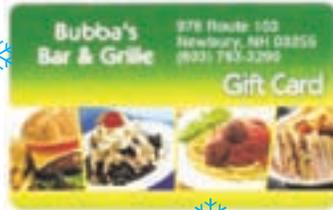
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Imaginative gift ideas for toddlers and preschoolers

(StatePoint) Some of the best holiday gifts for toddlers and preschoolers are those that inspire imaginative play. "Gift-giving for this age group should reflect the tremendous opportunity that play time offers for supporting early childhood development," says Dr. Lise Eliot, early brain development expert and member of the Expert Panel at VTech, a world leader in age-appropriate and developmental stage-based electronic learning products for children. With that in mind, here are some fun gift ideas that will add value to children's play time.

Arts and Crafts

Inspire creativity and foster fine motor skills with gifts for budding young artists. Watercolor sets, finger paint, stencils and markers are great age-appropriate selections. Just be sure any art supplies are non-toxic and washable. A great gift set idea? A blank smock and fabric paint – kids can design their own artist's smock, which will inspire them to do even more art projects in the future. Offer to hang or frame your children's favorite creations so they can proudly see them on display.

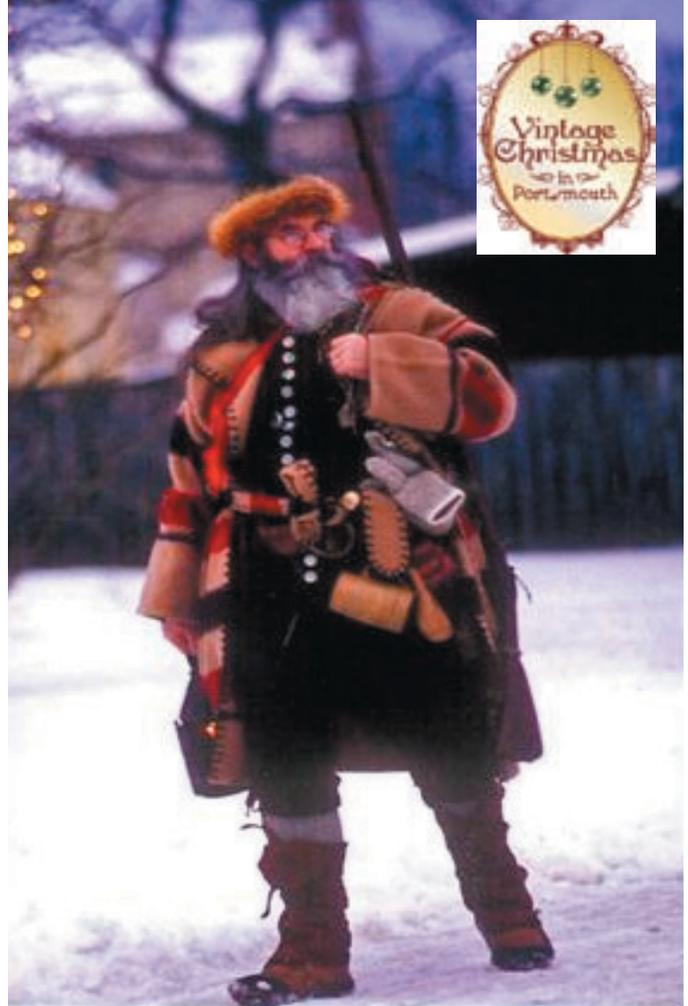
Thoughtful Toys

Choose toys that are safe, fun and engaging. For example, the Go! Go! Smart line of toys from VTech features its innovative technologies that bring the toys to life, letting children explore cause and effect relationships while teaching first words, letters and more. Consider the Go! Go! Smart Wheels Treasure Mountain Train Adventure, which allows kids to discover spatial play by building train tracks, and features its first motorized train that can climb hills on its own. When the train is placed over one of the nine "SmartPoint" locations on the playset, it will respond with lights, sounds and music. Toddlers can create a whole kingdom featuring princesses, princes, fairies and unicorns with Go! Go! Smart Friends playsets, encouraging children to discover through imaginative play while building motor and language skills. Even more stimulating activity is encouraged with the turning telescope, swinging hammock, and secret trap door found in the Go! Go! Smart Animals Happy Paws Playland. For more information, visit vtechkids.com. "The vehicles, animals and characters spark children's imaginations while keeping them engaged, promoting listening skills and encouraging their fine motor and cognitive development," says Dr. Eliot.

Learning Experiences

The big wide world offers plenty of opportunities for fun and learning, so consider gifting an experience. Whether it's a puppet show, a day of exploration at the zoo or aquarium, or hands-on learning workshop at a children's museum, the experience will not soon be forgotten!

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Holiday travel made easy: Is your tech ready?

As families prepare for the holiday season, they also prepare to make big family trips, so make sure not to leave home without the proper tech reinforcements this year! These tips will ensure you can savor the sweet moments and avoid potential hiccups!

Drive smarter. Hitting the road? Apps like Waze, a community-based traffic and navigation guide, offer immediate information and alternate routes that save time when everyone is heading out of town. Other apps, like GasBuddy, compare pricing for nearby gas stations so you can fuel up economically, making the drive convenient and worry-free.

Beat boredom en route. Even in the air, there are ways to keep the family entertained. Inflight internet services, like Gogo, allow for texting and surfing the web, so kids can keep up with their Candy Crush game and mom and dad can hop online to research travel activities. And if you are a T-Mobile customer, you get a free hour of Wi-Fi on every domestic flight! Take connectivity to the next level by plugging into a portable charger to ensure all your devices are fully charged for the duration of your flight and after you land.

Find your travel Zen. Ever been on



a long train ride with an unhappy baby or snoring fellow rider? Drown out unwelcome disruptions by turning up the volume, and streaming unlimited music from services like Spotify, Apple Music and Pandora with Music Freedom from T-Mobile.

Pro tip: Noise-cancelling headphones help too! Seek out a comfortable pair designed to fit the unique contour of your ears – they are ideal for lengthy trips.

Make the most of travel downtime. Dealing with a delay or adjusting to a different time zone? Use the unplanned time to catch up on your favorite shows. You can stream services like Netflix, Hulu and YouTube on your phone with T-Mobile's Binge On and not only will you get through the series cliffhanger,

none of your streaming will count against your high-speed data! Happy holidays indeed!

Stay connected even when abroad.

Google's 2016 travel trends show that 85 percent of leisure travelers decide on activities to do from their mobile phone after they've arrived at their travel destination. You can avoid roaming charges while you wander out of the country with services like Simple Global from T-Mobile. It provides unlimited data and texting in more than 140 countries around the globe. For the 50 percent of Americans who regularly travel to Mexico or Canada, a travel offering that spans an entire continent, like Mobile Without Borders, will be welcome news. It ensures you can text and post photos of guacamole and poutine all day with no (data) consequences.

Be the all-star family photographer.

Essential for capturing photos throughout the holidays, selfie sticks are this year's unexpected travel necessity. Various types—compact, waterproof and Bluetooth enabled—are available at a range of prices. Whether you are headed on a morning hike or prepping the holiday feast, you'll capture memories the family will love for years to come. (StatePoint)

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FEBRUARY 15-26



How to add a unique twist to your holiday décor

We all love our holiday traditions, and that includes the way we deck the halls -- from special ornaments to favorite festive wreaths. However, you may be looking for ways to revamp the tried-and-true look, especially when entertaining friends and family. Here are some unique ideas for adding a twist to your usual holiday decorating routine.

Mix and Match

Add dynamism and vitality to your home by infusing older, vintage elements that you've had and enjoyed for years with more modern pieces that speak to you today. You can also breathe new life into these items by using them differently this year -- for example, moving your favorite garland from the bannister to the mantel, or hanging a wreath on a wall instead of a door.

Think Scent

When many people plan their holiday decorations, they start with visuals. Why not try mixing it up by focusing on fragrance first? Scent is closely associated with memory, so adding holiday fragrances to your home allows you to both build new memories for future seasons and reflect on happy times in the past. For inspiration, draw on the vibrant



spirit and brisk weather that the holidays bring. Use candles to add a finishing touch to a holiday gathering. They also make for a great host or hostess gift. Check out the new holiday fragrance lineup from Yankee Candle, which offers both classic favorites, as well as new modern takes on traditional themes. Fragrances include "All is Bright," a blend of citrus on warm musk, "Bubbly Pomegranate," a mix of juicy berries, pomegranate and citrus, "Alpine Martini," a tart concoction spiked with mountain berries and fresh snipped pine,

and "Christmas Thyme," a lemongrass and thyme scent that's mingled with sandalwood and musk. For holiday inspiration, visit www.YankeeCandle.com.

Get Cozy

Incorporate wintry throw pillows, quilts and blankets into living areas. Fabrics like table runners and tapestries can also add warmth around the house. Crank up the fireplace. Be sure that all your efforts work to combat the brisk season with a touch of coziness.

Beautiful Tablescapes

When hosting guests, don't just set the table, create an impressive and unforgettable tablescape. One sleek and modern way to do so is to add candles, tumblers, vases, ornamental table toppers, fresh greens and seasonal flowers. Tumbler candles, such as those from Yankee Candle, come in various sizes and designs, so you can stagger the heights for eye-catching appeal. Consider using their Pure Radiance candles that feature a crackling LumiWick, creating a soothing sound that evokes a fireside.

This season, add fragrance, beauty, and brightness to your home with unique twists on traditional holiday themes. (StatePoint)

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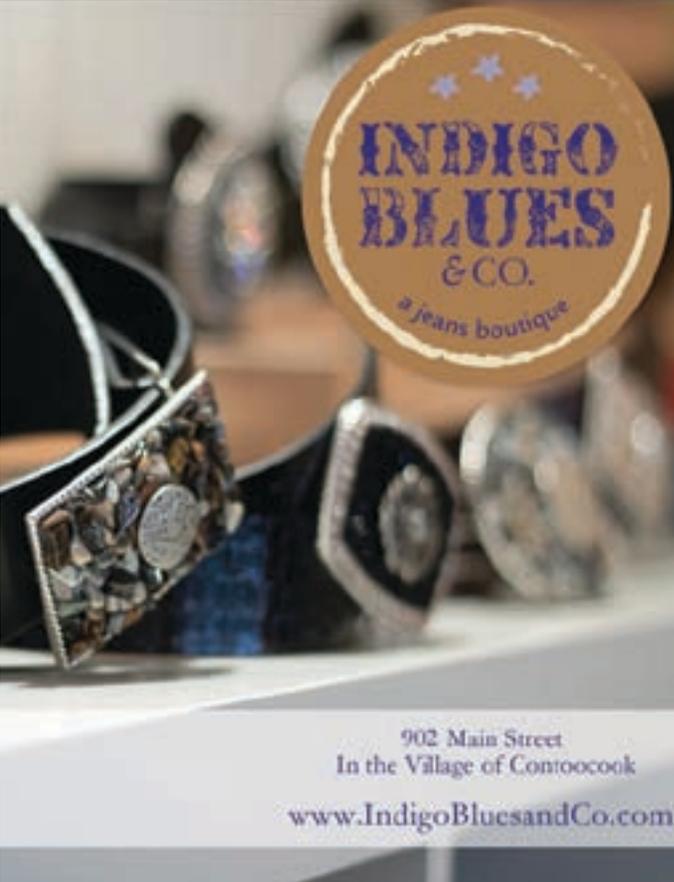
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Black Friday Raffle
Stop by 11.25 to enter! Prizes include a HOBLO wallet & Simon Pearce bowl

Starry, Starry Weekend
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Entertaining tips guaranteed to help hosts impress guests

The holiday season is packed with social events big and small. What makes some more memorable than others? The extra thought and special touches from the host or hostess.

Cookbook author and entertaining expert Gaby Dalkin recently teamed up with the Paper & Packaging - How Life Unfolds campaign to share how you can make a big statement this season with surprisingly little effort. These five entertaining tips are guaranteed to help you create a one-of-kind party, leaving guests impressed and full of holiday spirit.

Conquer holiday stress with to-do lists

To reduce stress, stay organized and ensure you maintain a merry attitude, use printed templates to create handwritten holiday party to-do lists.

"I start my to-do lists weeks before the celebration and break them down by day," Dalkin says. "A few days before the big event, I stock up on beverages. Two days before I buy all the shelf-stable ingredients. The day before, all the produce goes into the fridge, and I make any sauces or appetizers that can rest in the fridge overnight without being



affected. And then, the day of the party is broken down by the hour. If you're making a roast, start it in the morning. A salad can be prepped ahead of time and dressed before serving."

Elevate gifting with personalized presentation

Nearly half of Americans feel that gift presentation enhances the gift they give or receive, according to a Paper and Packaging

Board survey. That means if you want to impress, don't skimp on gift presentation.

"I grab a few rolls of brown kraft paper and make it special," Dalkin says. "If I'm sending a present to someone who loves food, I'll grab some stamps with fun food on them and stamp the paper so it's customized for that individual. If it's my younger niece, I'll stamp it with some hearts. These small gestures make a big impact." ▶

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Use a creative approach to assigned seating

Assigned seating is particularly helpful when entertaining large groups. It takes the guesswork out of sitting down to dinner and keeps the evening flowing smoothly. It's also an easy way to add festive style to the tabletop.

"If I'm entertaining for more than 10, I'll

make little fold-over name tags out of cute cardstock," says Dalkin. "I'll punch a hole in the paper name tag and weave in a bit of rosemary, paper ribbon or a fresh flower to give it an extra pop."

Add pizzazz with a Champagne bar

The survey also found that for approximately half of Americans, a cocktail bar stands out as a key component for an

unforgettable holiday party.

Add an easy yet elegant touch to any holiday gathering by setting up a Champagne bar. Simply chill a few bottles, place on a bar cart and add bowls of fresh berries and carafes of fresh squeezed juices. Include handwritten cardstock labels near each ingredient so your guests can mix and match to their hearts' content.

This no-fuss station encourages guests to make their own cocktails at their leisure, giving the host extra time to catch up. Plus, Dalkin adds, "I've found that Champagne bars are often one of the most photographed elements of the night."

Send guests home with a little something homemade

Frozen cookie dough is one of the trendiest homemade gifts of the year. Just whip up your favorite batch of dough, tightly wrap it in parchment paper and freeze. Then add some holiday ribbons, a personalized paper label and handwritten baking instructions.

"Recipients can slice and bake at their leisure and file the recipe card for years to come," says Dalkin. "You can make the same thing for everyone, or perhaps a few different batches to suit any sweet tooth. I think of it as a gift that keeps giving." (BPT)

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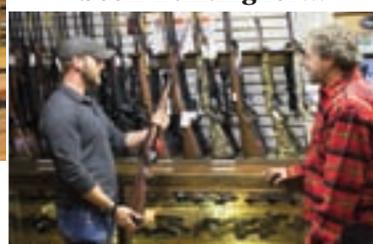


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Books for everyone on your list this holiday season

Great books make for great gifts. Here are titles to consider giving knowledge-seekers to enjoy during the season:

Gem Lovers

Produced in association with the Smithsonian Institution, "Gem" is a visual guide to precious and semiprecious stones, organic gems, and precious metals, and features over 1,000 specially commissioned images. "Gem" reveals the science, natural history, mythology, and true stories behind the most celebrated gems and jewel-laden artifacts, including the Hope Diamond and Queen Elizabeth's pelican brooch.

Star Gazers

Chart the wonders of the cosmos with "The Stars." Packed with three-dimensional artworks of each constellation and new imagery from the Hubble Space Telescope, ground-based observatories and more, this guide features fascinating objects like glittering star-birth nebulae and supermassive black holes. The position, size and color of every night-sky object are revealed and a three-dimensional model of the celestial sphere that surrounds Earth charts all 88 constellations.



Automotive Enthusiasts

Classic car collectors and enthusiasts will enjoy "Classic Car," a visual guide created in association with the Smithsonian Institution. Featuring the most iconic classics of every decade from the 1940s to the 1980s from the Aston Martin DB5 to the Chevrolet Corvette, the book offers detailed profiles of trademark models, as well as the famous designers and manufacturers behind them, featuring more than 1,300 photographs and two prints suitable for framing.

Inventors

Readers can build and explore 28 kid-safe experiments, crafts and activities with "Maker Lab." Created in association with the

Smithsonian Institution and supporting STEAM education initiatives, the book will get young inventors' wheels turning, making science fun. Explaining science through photographs, facts and real-world examples, each activity is appropriate for kids ages 8-12 years old.

Budding Builders

Encourage builders to look at their LEGO bricks in new, creative ways with "365 Things to do with LEGO Bricks," an interactive book featuring imaginative play and building ideas, from projects that take just a few minutes to those that keep one occupied for hours. Activities include building a LEGO pet, challenging friends to make the tallest tower while working against the clock, and organizing a LEGO bricks treasure hunt.

American Girl Fans

Offer American Girl fans a treasured bookshelf addition with "American Girl: Ultimate Visual Guide," which includes images of every BeForever and Girl of the Year doll, an expanded section on the TrulyMe dolls and a detailed timeline of the company. Readers can learn about dolls, historical eras, outfits, pets, accessories and more. (StatePoint)



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4 tips for extravagant, festive holiday desserts

Extravagant desserts can be a reality without being a hassle. Follow these four tips to create holiday happiness in the form of sweets for all and make moments you and your guests won't soon forget.

Keep Cookies On Hand

The easiest way to spread dessert joy with visitors is to have cookies at the ready. Bake a batch of shortbread cookies and store in airtight containers. Add a slice of white bread to allow the cookies to absorb moisture without adding an odd taste.

You can also freeze cookies so they stay fresh for a few months. Pull the treats out a couple of hours prior to desired eating time and once loved ones arrive, they'll taste freshly baked.

Rethink the Dessert Spread

Instead of offering different types of desserts, consider impressing guests with a fondue bar. As an alternate to time-consuming double boiler recipes, use a high-performance blender, such as a Vitamix Professional Series 750, to create a delicious sauce in about 15 minutes.

To add a seasonal twist, make a chocolate orange fondue. Serve it in a pot with skewers



of marshmallows, pound cake and fresh fruit.

Sprinkle Homemade Sugar

One ingredient that isn't a pantry staple but appears in a lot of holiday baking and decorating is powdered sugar. If you find a recipe calls for it and you don't have any handy, you don't need to run to the busy

store. Simply blend granulated sugar and a bit of cornstarch to make powdered sugar in 30 seconds. Then, sprinkle it on top of that gorgeous chocolate cake or mix frosting for decorating gingerbread houses.

Festive Drinks

Not all desserts come in cake and cookie form. Mix after-dinner cocktails with a festive twist to surprise your guests. The best part is drinks are quick and easy to make.

Create a dessert cocktail, such as the Brandy Alexander. Blend brandy, chocolate ice cream, chocolate milk and ice cubes until the drink meets your desired consistency.

For the younger crowd, peppermint hot chocolate will do the trick. Ditch the powder packets and make a quick, homemade recipe. Use a high-performance blender, such as a Vitamix, to crush peppermint sticks, then add chocolate chips, cocoa powder and milk. Blend until steaming. Top both off with a dollop of whipped cream.

Satisfy your sweet tooth with these quick dessert tricks. Best of all, you won't have to spend all day in the kitchen, which will leave more time for making great memories with family and friends. (StatePoint)

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Practical holiday gifts for gardeners of all levels

The holiday season is a great opportunity to give those with green thumbs the tools they need to support their hobby. Here are a few thoughtful gift ideas to make the holidays brighter for the gardeners you love.

Handy Items

Every gardener needs top-notch tools to make regular tasks more comfortable and convenient. For example, pruning is no fun with shears that are rusted or hard to handle. To upgrade your gift recipient's gardening tool box, look for a rust-resistant stainless steel blade and a no-slip rubber grip. For safety, the shears should be able to lock into place when not in use.

Gifts that Keep on Giving

When there's a chill in the air, consider focusing your attention on gardening gifts that can be used indoors. One unique gift for a gardener of any level is an indoor garden kit, such as those from the Miracle-Gro



AeroGarden line of gardens.

Hydroponic gardens like the AeroGarden grow fresh herbs, vegetables, and flowers in water, not soil. And they actually grow five times faster than soil gardens. Automated LED lights and reminders to add water make growing fun for seasoned gardeners and easy for even those with no gardening experience. Well-suited for a kitchen countertop --

this is a safe, healthy and easy way to grow fresh herbs and vegetables year-round. To learn more visit AeroGarden.com.

Enjoy the Results

Half the fun of gardening is reaping the benefits of one's labor. Help gardeners turn their harvest into something delicious. An herb chopper makes a great stocking stuffer. To speed up herb preparation and help gardeners avoid bruising the leaves they worked so hard to grow, look for one with multiple rounded blades.

Another great gift for herb and vegetable gardeners is a salad dressing maker that has pre-marked settings for oil, vinegar and herbs, which can take the guess work out of meal preparation during busy week nights.

With a few creative ideas, it's easy to make a gardener smile this holiday season. (StatePoint)



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Fire and fireplace safety tips for the holiday season

The holiday season is full of family, friendship and good cheer, but it's important to keep in mind that this time of year can also pose specific safety risks, particularly around the use of candles, fire and heating products.

In 2015, one home structure fire was reported every 86 seconds, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Unfortunately, the hustle and bustle associated with this time of year may mean you are paying less attention to safety precautions. To protect your family and home, check out these tips.

Safety Devices

Double check all of your home's safety devices, including carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms for functionality and to ensure batteries are still working.

Doing so will offer you greater peace of mind during a time of year with additional fire risks.

Fireplaces

Nothing beats the charm and warmth of a fireplace, particularly around the holidays when the family is gathered together. Heatilator, a leader in fireplace safety and the number one fireplace brand used by



homebuilders, began including safety screens as standard equipment more than a decade before rules required the use of this equipment in new fireplace installations. As a pioneer in the field of fireplace safety, they offer these tips:

- Ensure gas fireplaces are outfitted with safety screens. Check out Heatilator, which offers retrofit safety screens.
- Never leave children or pets unattended near a lit fireplace or one that was recently turned off. Safety screens are meant to protect against contact with hot glass, but remember that the metal can also heat up, and your heating equipment -- fireplaces, stoves, inserts

and their surrounding material -- will remain hot for some time after use.

- Ensure gifts, trees, and holiday décor are all placed a safe distance away from the fireplace.
- Consider annual maintenance for both wood-burning and gas fireplaces, as recommended by experts.
- Learn more by visiting heatilator.com for additional fireplace safety tips and to learn about safety screens.

Candles

Candles can be a feast for the senses, but they are also a major cause of accidents and house fires, especially when your home is decked out with extra combustible décor. Don't burn candles near curtains, trees and other flammable objects.

Never leave candles unattended. Ensure all flames are extinguished before leaving a room and before going to sleep. If you have pets or children, make sure any open flames are well out of their reach and consider alternatives such as candle warmers. The greatest holiday gift you can give this season is the gift of safety. While decking the halls, take steps to make home safer, too. (StatePoint)

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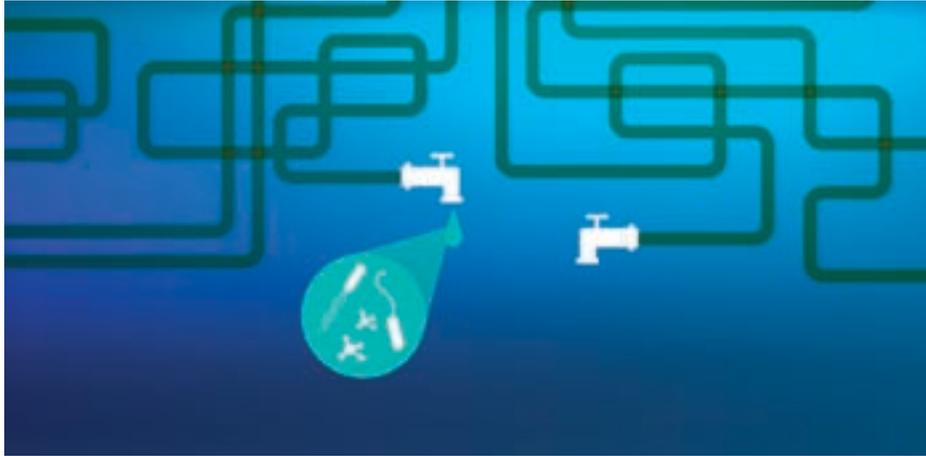
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Giving the gift of safe water this Christmas

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Cryptosporidium), while reducing chlorine, organic chemical matter, bad taste, and muddiness.

As an added bonus, if you're thinking charitably this holiday season, consider that giving the gift of safer water to a friend or family member can have a global impact, too. One in 10 people globally lack access

Sometimes the best gift you can give and receive is peace of mind. And, at a time when safe tap water is not necessarily a given, the gift of safer water could make for a happy holiday and a healthier New Year.

Consider giving people you care about an easy-to-use and maintain water filtration system that can be used at-home or on-the-go to improve water quality.

For example, LifeStraw, first introduced

for people in developing countries without access to safe water and for victims following natural disasters, now makes a range of water filters and purifiers designed for uses like emergency preparedness, outdoor recreation, travel and everyday hydration.

The refillable LifeStraw Go water bottle features a built-in filter, and removes 99.9999 percent of waterborne bacteria (including E.coli and salmonella) and 99.9 percent of waterborne protozoa (including Giardia and

to safe water, according to the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Through the "Follow the Liters" humanitarian program, for each LifeStraw purchased, one school child in a developing community in Africa receives safe drinking water for an entire school year. For more information, visit lifestraw.com

To learn more about drinking water quality, visit the US Environmental Protection Agency at epa.gov. (StatePoint)

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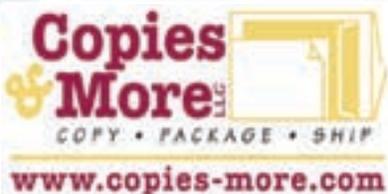
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'Tis the time to save during the holiday season

It's easy to get the entire house ready for the holiday this season and celebrate one of the most wonderful times of the year without spending a fortune.

From simple decorating ideas to affordable party planning inspiration, getting into the holiday spirit has never been so easy with these tips from the discount experts at Dollar General.

Holiday Decorating

Decorate in style, but affordably, by purchasing inexpensive holiday table runners, ornaments and holiday pillows. Local Dollar General stores have these items, as well as ornaments available for as low as \$1.

Consider repurposing existing household items into your holiday arrangements. For example, use cake stands and baskets to display decorations.

Add charm, versatility and holiday cheer to your home by incorporating new, trendy décor with vintage and traditional



decorations from your childhood.

Holiday Recipe Essentials

Decorating is only half the fun. Bring family and friends together by filling the house with the smell of delicious holiday food. Stock up on fresh milk, eggs, bread, sugar, baking mixes, spices and other cooking essentials at a discount retailer.

Find simple and affordable holiday recipes like casseroles, cookies and holiday

drinks online by checking out Dollar General Easy Meals.

Host a Potluck

Creating many dishes for a crowd is not only time-consuming, but it can be costly as well. Share the expense with friends and family by hosting a potluck. Each guest can bring their favorite holiday dish. Ask guests in advance what they plan to bring, so you don't end up with repeats.

Seasonal Shopping

Great deals are always on the table during the holiday season. Save even more by

shopping at Dollar General, which offers everyday low prices as well as digital coupons. Create a DG Digital Coupon account at dollargeneral.com/coupons, through the DG mobile app for Android and iPhone smartphones, or by texting "JOIN" to 34898. Messaging rates may apply. Enjoy the most wonderful time of the year without over-spending. Happy Holidays! (StatePoint)

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How to add a touch of elegance to your traditional thanksgiving meal

(StatePoint) Thanksgiving is a quintessential example of American tradition, and the food and drink on your holiday table is undoubtedly the centerpiece of the holiday.

“While staples like turkey and stuffing will always have a place at the table, don’t be shy about taking a cue from classic French dishes and dining style to add a touch of elegance to your entertaining,” says Frederic Barnier, of Maison Louis Jadot, one of the most trusted wine houses in Burgundy.



Barnier

recommends pairing your turkey dinner with Maison Louis Jadot’s Beaujolais-Villages 2014 and Chablis 2015, and serving it alongside this recipe for Pain d’Epices – a French spiced bread, traditional in Burgundy – which pairs perfectly with Maison Louis Jadot Beaujolais 2015.

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- A pinch of salt
- 1 tsp. green aniseed
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 tbsp. softened butter
- 3 tbsp. skim milk

Preparation:

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F
- Using a rolling pin, crush the aniseed
- Place the flour, baking soda and salt in a bowl and mix
- Transfer the dry ingredients into the bowl of a stand mixer. Add the aniseed, sugar and honey
- Add the butter and milk, using the whisk attachment, mix for 5 minutes
- Line a loaf pan with parchment paper, then pour in the batter. Spread evenly and press down with a fork; bake for 55 minutes
- Test for doneness; the tip of a knife inserted into the center should come out clean

- Cool on a rack, then transfer to a serving platter

Another delightful French twist to your Thanksgiving feast is Chestnut stuffing. Simply add roasted and chopped chestnuts to your usual stuffing recipe for an elegant French touch. Your turkey and stuffing pairs well with Pinot Noir.

Remember that setting, as much as flavor, can elevate your feast. Use seasonal fall flowers and fresh sprigs of herb to lend your table a festive, elegant vibe.

This year, offer your guests something special. Look to French food and wine and infuse traditional Thanksgiving dishes with sophisticated flavors.

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