



Christmas Shopping Guide

2018

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Great holiday gifts for kids that help them learn and grow

It's time to think about stuffing stockings and fulfilling wish lists. But if you want your holiday gifts for kids to deliver fun long after the holidays, you may want to consider gifts that will help them learn and grow.

Here are some great gift ideas to enrich kids' lives in a number of ways.

* Boost Creativity

Art can inspire creativity, improve fine motor skills and even boost IQ. For beginners, art or crafting kits containing all the supplies they will need to create their own projects may be a great place to start. Thinking bigger? Consider helping your gift recipient create an artist's studio. A craft or art table, an easel and a project caddy make a great combination gift for kids.

* Spark Imagination

For toddlers, play time can be an extremely valuable opportunity to build skills and reach milestones -- with the right toys at hand. Maximize toddler fun with toys such as VTech's Go! Go! Smart Wheels playsets, which spark imagination and deliver multi-sensory learning,



teaching first words, letters and more.

The line-up includes the new Launch & Chase Police Tower, which lets kids serve and protect with Po the Police Car. They can launch Po from the dual launchers and chase the Getaway Car through the switch tracks, trap doors, and road obstacles, promoting important motor skills. Po responds to SmartPoint locations throughout the playset with lights, sounds and music, encouraging first words and imaginative play.

Another option from the line-up is the Tow & Go Garage, letting kids explore along with Trent the Tow Truck

as they exercise important motor skills with this multi-level interactive playset. They can give a friend a lift, go up the elevator to the repair platform, or race down the ramp and get a car wash while exploring SmartPoint locations. Lastly, the interactive Go! Go! Smart Wheels Take Flight Airport playset strengthens fine motor skills as kids fuel up at the gas station, spin the weather vane and check bags at the luggage belt. They can also launch Aaron the Airplane to take off for flight, spin around the clouds and use the ramp to make a safe landing.

* Encourage Movement

Habits formed in childhood can set the precedent for a lifetime. View gift-giving as an opportunity to encourage kids to engage in healthy hobbies. Whether it's a baseball glove and bat or a set of skates and protective gear, you can encourage kids to get active in a way that's fun, by outfitting them with all the equipment they need to play their favorite sports. This holiday season, make sure your gifts for kids go further to enrich, engage and educate. (StatePoint)

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A fitting, healthy snack for holiday festivities

When hosting for the holidays, it can be a challenge to accommodate all of your guests' favorite tastes while factoring in dietary preferences and restrictions. Building out a balanced menu, like other parts of hosting, starts with devising a thought-out plan.

To help accomplish this task without cooking up personal dishes for everybody in the house, consider these simple tips:

*** Request that guests RSVP.**

Assuming you have a basic understanding of which friends and family members adhere to special diets, knowing exactly who is coming can be a major help before heading to the store.

*** Think back to past festivities.** Try to remember which dishes were hits at last year's party.

*** Create dishes that fit (almost) everyone.** While you can't control guests' flavor preferences, it is possible to whip up snack trays, main courses, desserts and more that fit a multitude of dietary restrictions. For example, these Bacon, Baked Brie and Cranberry Holiday Melts



feature Crunchmaster Multi-Grain Crackers for a gluten-free, non-GMO, low-sugar, tasty crunch. Because they're made with wholesome ingredients, these simple snacks are crafted to fit nearly every healthy lifestyle. Plus, if multiple family members adhere to vegetarian lifestyles, you can simply omit the bacon.

*** Add "warning" labels.** Despite your best efforts, it can be nearly impossible to create foods every single person can enjoy. If you make a dish containing a common allergen, such as peanuts, simply place a card next to the bowl, tray, plate or pan that informs guests of the ingredients included.

For other recipes, coupons, tips and nutritional info, visit crunchmaster.com.

Bacon, Baked Brie and Cranberry Holiday Melts

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 5 minutes

Servings: 6

24 Crunchmaster Multi-Grain Crackers, Sea Salt flavor

24 small slices Brie cheese

1/4 cup prepared cranberry sauce

2 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled

Heat broiler to high and position rack in center of oven. Arrange crackers in single layer on foil-lined baking sheet.

Top each cracker with slice of Brie, 1/2 teaspoon cranberry sauce and sprinkle of bacon. Broil 1-2 minutes, or until cheese is melted.

Tip: For vegetarian option, substitute chopped hickory-smoked almonds or pecans for bacon. Nutritional information per serving: 200 calories; 13 g fat; 7 g saturated fat; 45 mg cholesterol; 350 mg sodium; 11 g carbohydrates; 1 g fiber; 4 g sugar; 10 g protein. (Family Features)

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Great holiday gift ideas for music lovers

Shopping for some music lovers this holiday season? Here are some great gift ideas to help your favorite musicians play and compose music.

*** Music Composition Tools**

Assist both aspiring and accomplished songwriters in their efforts with music composition tools. You can choose to go analog or digital, depending on the style of your gift recipient.

For traditionalists, consider a beautiful leather-bound music composition book. For a modern music maker, consider composition software that assists in the creation and sharing of music notation.

*** Instruments**

For both beginner or seasoned musicians, consider the gift of a portable keyboard to help hone their skills at home or on-the-go.

Wherever your gift recipients are on their musical journey, and no matter what budget you have to work with, you shouldn't have to compromise on sound quality. For instance, for a modest sum, you can gift the CT-X700 from Casio,



which features the AiX Sound Source, 600 life-like instrument tones, hundreds of built-in rhythms and effects for a full band sound, and a lesson system that displays proper fingering and notation. A six-track recorder allows musicians to capture their inspiration, a great feature for songwriters.

*** Rehearsal Time**

Know someone in a band? A soundproofed rehearsal space can be

a dream come true for musicians (and their neighbors). Gift your recipient a rehearsal space rental. Whether you pay for one session or several months' worth of rehearsal time, this is a thoughtful way to support a musician's efforts.

By gifting the instruments, tools and space needed to learn, write and practice music, you can show a musician you care this holiday season. (StatePoint)



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3 easy ways to illuminate your home for the holidays

'Tis the season of friends, family and entertaining! If you're planning on hosting guests -- whether for an entire week of family fun or a one-night celebration -- now's the time to get your home in the holiday spirit.

"Preparing a home for the holidays doesn't have to require adding extensive decorations or undergoing a total remodel to update favorite spaces," says Jennifer Kis, director of marketing communications for Progress Lighting. "Small changes through lighting can create a festive and



comfortable environment with minimal effort and investment."

Here are three easy tips to try:

Update Entryways and Foyers. Your entryway is your opportunity to make an exceptional first impression and set the tone for the rest of the interior. Add drama to your foyer with a grouping of striking, oversized pendant lights in lieu of a traditional chandelier.

Pay Attention to Shared Spaces. Popular spaces where friends and family

are likely to gather most during the holidays include great rooms, living rooms and dining areas. A large statement chandelier in a common living space creates a focal point and also ensures there is enough illumination for card games, movies and coffee and cocoa by the fireside. Illuminate Walkways to Enhance Curb Appeal. Simple outdoor lighting techniques can improve a home's appearance and also offer functional features during the holidays and beyond. Added illumination will improve safety

and enhance security, while bringing a new bold look to the front of your home. To create instant curb appeal, hang a large lantern on either side of your front door, or install a post lantern at the front of your walkway. For more design inspiration and to view on-trend lighting collections, visit progresslighting.com. In a few easy steps, you can light up your home for a warm and welcoming holiday season. (StatePoint)



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Holiday hostess gifts that inspire comfort

(StatePoint) This year, rethink that bottle of wine and instead, give the gift of getting cozy and slowing down to truly enjoy everyday moments. Tap into glowing candlelight, cozy textiles, and celebrating simple pleasures when shopping for friends and family. In other words, give the gift of hygge. Pronounced "hoo-ga," this Danish way of life embraces a feeling of cozy contentment.

Here is a collection of gift ideas that will inspire those moments during winter, a hygge-high season, and all year long.

* Cozy Textiles

Textiles are hygge in the way that they keep us warm, conjure up memories, and make everyday life more beautiful. For example, a chunky throw adds warmth to a couch or the foot of a bed, while a Turkish hand towel is a fresh addition to any bathroom or kitchen for everyday use or when guests arrive. Sheepskins have been bringing warmth and coziness into homes for generations with their soft textures and natural beauty.



* Glow and Scent

Lighting and fresh scents are key elements of hygge, and candles are the perfect gift for any holiday hostess. In addition to sharing holiday cheer, guests' personal celebrations can sometimes leave behind a distinct smell. Made with essential oils and sourced from natural ingredients, consider a Cannabolish gift set that includes a candle and room sprays. The candles give the gift of glow while clearing away any leftover party odors. Cannabolish comes in chic packaging that can attractively hold court

in a guestroom or on the hall table for in-home odor control while guests are visiting. Developed by OMI Industries -- the world's authority on odor control -- both the spray and candles are designed to naturally eliminate the toughest household odors, including tobacco and cannabis smoke, delivering discreet confidence to those in legal cannabis markets.

* Sip and Savor

Give a set of tea, a handcrafted mug, and a book on hygge, such as "The Year of Living Danishly," by Helen Russell, to be read over the winter. Share teas that can be experienced throughout the day, such as a mid-afternoon pause or a calming toast before bedtime.

* Be Present

Finally, one of the most memorable gifts to give is to turn off the electronics, slow down, and be present in the small everyday moments when spending time with family and friends over the holidays. The best part? This gift fits any budget.



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Simple sides for holiday entertaining

(Family Features) Preparing side dishes can be time consuming. Save those precious minutes to enjoy the holidays by using refrigerated, never-frozen options like mashed potatoes, mashed sweet potatoes, baked apples and even macaroni and cheese that can be heated in the microwave and ready to serve in minutes. Find more ideas to make your holiday sides simply delicious at bobevansgrocery.com.

* Fancy Mac

Prep time: 20 minutes
Cook time: 20 minutes
Serves: 4
Nonstick cooking spray
1 package Bob Evans Macaroni and Cheese
1 package (10 ounces) frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
1 1/4 cups shredded Gouda cheese, divided
1 package Bob Evans Thick Sliced Hardwood Smoked Bacon, cooked and broken into pieces
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 eggs, lightly beaten
Heat oven to 400 F. Spray four ramekins with cooking spray.



Heat macaroni and cheese according to package directions. Once cooked, stir in spinach, 1 cup cheese, bacon, salt and pepper.
Let mixture stand 10-15 minutes to cool. Add eggs. Spoon evenly into ramekins. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.
Bake 20 minutes, or until centers are set.

* Sweet Potato Cookies

Prep time: 28-33 minutes
Cook time: 10-12 minutes
Serves: 36
3/4 cup vegetable shortening
3/4 cup brown sugar
1 large egg
1 cup Bob Evans Mashed Sweet Potatoes
2 cups all-purpose flour



1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
1 cup butter, unsalted
3 cups powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon maple extract
chopped honey roasted pecans (optional)
mini marshmallows (optional)
Heat oven to 350 F.
In large bowl, using hand mixer or paddle attachment, cream shortening and brown sugar. Add egg and sweet potatoes; mix until combined.
In small bowl, combine flour, baking soda, salt and pumpkin pie spice. With mixer on low speed, slowly add flour

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mixture to egg mixture until well mixed. Using small cookie scoop, drop rounds onto greased baking sheets.

Bake 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown. Cool completely before frosting.

In separate bowl, beat together butter, powdered sugar and maple extract until frosting is light and fluffy. Frost each cooled cookie with maple butter cream frosting.

Sprinkle with pecans and mini marshmallows, if desired. Carefully toast marshmallows with culinary torch, if desired, while avoiding melting frosting.

*** Mini Hash Brown Casseroles**

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Serves: 24

1 pound Bob Evans Original Roll Sausage

4 large eggs

1/2 cup milk



1 package (20 ounces) Simply Potatoes

Shredded Hash Browns

3 tablespoons butter, melted

1 cup ham, cubed

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

In skillet, cook sausage according to package directions.

Heat oven to 350 F. Lightly grease two 12-cup muffin tins.

In bowl, whisk eggs and milk. Add hash browns, butter, ham, black pepper and cheese; mix thoroughly. Fill muffin tins two-thirds full. Bake 27-30 minutes, or until toothpick or knife inserted in center comes out clean.

Substitution: For healthier alternative, substitute 1 cup AllWhites liquid egg whites instead of eggs.

*** Bacon-Wrapped Jalapeno Poppers**

Prep time: 30 minutes

Cook time: 30 minutes

Serves: 40

2 packages Bob Evans Thick Sliced

Hardwood Smoked Bacon, slices cut in half

1 package Bob Evans White Cheddar

Mashed Potatoes

1 package garlic herb cheese spread

20 jalapeno peppers, halved, seeded with membranes removed

1/4 cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper

Heat oven to 400 F. Set bacon out to thaw to room temperature so it is pliable.

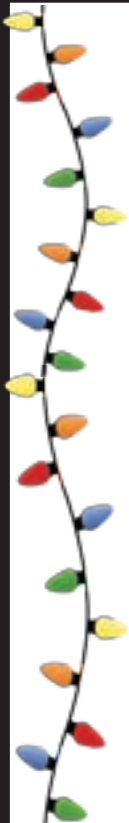
In mixing bowl, use rubber spatula to combine mashed potatoes and garlic herb cheese. Stir until incorporated. Spread 1 teaspoon mashed potato mixture in each jalapeno half; level each with butter knife or spatula. Wrap each jalapeno with bacon; use three half slices for large jalapenos or two halves for smaller sizes. Be sure bacon is wrapped sealing in mashed potato mixture tightly. In small mixing bowl, combine brown sugar and cayenne pepper. Generously sprinkle over bacon and pat gently to make it stick. Line cookie sheet with piece of parchment paper so sugar does not burn to pan. Bake until bacon reaches crispiness, around 25-35 minutes.

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Holiday Pairing Perfection Festive flavors and seasonal sips

The holidays are the perfect time to gather with friends and family to celebrate the season. Take the stress out of hosting by shopping at a store like ALDI for your holiday must-haves, including everything from food and wine to holiday decor and even gifts for nearly anyone on your list, helping you to save time and money.

Toast to the holidays with an impressive appetizer spread, paired with award-winning wines, with recipes like Cranberry Shrimp Ceviche Cups paired with the creamy and tropical taste of William Wright Chardonnay. Or whip up quick and easy Party Poppers made with dates, Brie cheese and bacon to mesh with the fruit, vanilla and spicy fall notes of Peaks & Tides Cabernet Sauvignon.

Blue Cheese and Walnut Mousse provides a savory finish when matched with La Rue CÔtes de Provence RosÉ and its hints of lavender, rosemary and thyme. Finally, add a little something sweet to your spread by pairing the refreshingly ripe Landshut Riesling with a festive Gingerbread Trifle. Find more holiday recipes and shopping solutions at ALDI.us.

* Blue Cheese and Walnut Mousse

Recipe courtesy of Chef Scott,
ALDI Test Kitchen

Prep time: 5 minutes Cook
time: 15 minutes Yield: 10
servings

2 tablespoons Simply Nature
100% Pure Avocado Oil
3 large yellow onions, sliced
5 ounces Happy Farms

Preferred Blue Cheese Crumbles

8 ounces Happy Farms Cream Cheese
Stonemill Ground Black Pepper, to taste

1 cup Friendly Farms Heavy Whipping Cream

8 ounces Southern Grove Chopped Walnuts, divided

5 cucumbers, thinly sliced

In large pan, heat oil and saute onions until brown and caramelized. In food processor, combine blue cheese crumbles and cream cheese. Process until smooth. Season with pepper, to taste.

In medium bowl, using hand mixer, whisk cream until soft peaks form. Fold in cheese mixture and 4 ounces chopped walnuts.

Top cucumber slices with mousse, caramelized onions and remaining chopped walnuts. Finish by grinding black pepper over top for garnish.

Pair each serving with glass of La Rue Cotes de Provence RosÉ.

* Gingerbread Trifle

Recipe courtesy of the ALDI Test
Kitchen

Prep time: 20 minutes Yield: 12
servings

1 package (3.4 ounces) Baker's
Corner Vanilla Pudding

1 3/4 cups Specially Selected

Premium Eggnog

1/2 teaspoon Stonemill

Pumpkin Pie Spice

7 ounces Café Bistro Soft

Gingerbread, crumbled, divided

1 1/4 cups Friendly Farms Whipped Topping, divided



1 cup Berryhill Apple Butter, divided
 2 teaspoons Stonemill Ground Cinnamon
 Whisk vanilla pudding mix and eggnog. Add pumpkin pie spice and beat 2 minutes. Chill in refrigerator 10 minutes.
 In large glass bowl, layer one-third of gingerbread cookies, one-third of pudding, one-third of whipped topping and 1/2 cup apple butter; repeat two more times.
 The third layer will end with whipped topping. Garnish with cinnamon. Chill in refrigerator 2 hours.
 Pair each serving with glass of Landshut Riesling.

*** Party Poppers**

Recipe courtesy of Chef Alyssa, ALDI Test Kitchen
 Prep time: 25 minutes Cook time: 15 minutes Yield: 36 poppers



- 8 ounces Southern Grove Pitted Dates
- 4 ounces Specially Selected Brie Cheese Round
- 6 ounces Southern Grove Slivered Almonds
- 1 1/2 pounds Specially Selected Thick Sliced Hickory Bacon

2 teaspoons Stonemill Ground Black Pepper
 Heat oven to 375 F.
 Cut dates in half, lengthwise.
 Cut brie into bite-size pieces, about the size of peanuts.
 Place one piece of Brie and four almond pieces on each open date half. Place other half on top.
 Quarter bacon slices, wrap tightly around stuffed dates and secure with toothpicks. Sprinkle with pepper.
 Line baking sheet with foil and place wrapped dates on top. Bake 15 minutes, or until bacon is crispy. Serve warm.
 Pair each serving with glass of Peaks & Tides Cabernet Sauvignon.

*** Cranberry Shrimp Ceviche Cups**

Recipe courtesy of Chef Kates, ALDI Test Kitchen
 Prep time: 20 minutes, plus 1 hour chill time
 Cook time: 3 minutes
 Yield: 16 ceviche cups
 1 1/2 teaspoons Stonemill Iodized Salt, divided
 16 ounces Specially Selected Black Tiger Shrimp, thawed
 1 cup Southern Grove Dried Cranberries
 1/2 red onion, roughly chopped
 1/2 cup fresh parsley
 1/2 jalapeno, roughly chopped
 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
 1/4 teaspoon Stonemill Crushed Red Pepper or Black Pepper
 1 teaspoon Stonemill Oregano
 13 ounces Simply Nature Organic Tortilla Chips, for garnish
 2 limes, cut into wedges, for garnish
 fresh cranberries, for garnish (optional)

Bring medium pot of water to boil. Season with 1 teaspoon salt. Add shrimp and cook 3 minutes. Immediately plunge cooked shrimp into ice water bath. Peel shrimp and place in flat dish.

In food processor, combine dried cranberries, red onion, parsley and jalapeno. Pulse until finely chopped. Add cranberry mixture to shrimp. Add lemon juice, lime juice, remaining salt, pepper and oregano. Stir to combine thoroughly. Refrigerate 1 hour. To assemble: Spoon ceviche (about 4-5 shrimp each) into small clear cups or glasses. Garnish with tortilla chips, lime wedges and fresh cranberries, if desired. Pair each serving with glass of William Wright Chardonnay. (Family Features)



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8 Clever gift ideas for people who are hard to please

Whether shopping for an indecisive relative or your incredibly particular best friend, you can rest easy knowing you're covered with presents that appeal to everyone.

* 1. Tile

Perfect for those who can never find their car keys or constantly lose track of their phones, this Bluetooth tracker, paired with Tile's intuitive app, makes it easy to find everything. Gift it to your niece to keep tabs on her favorite stuffed animal or to a friend who always forgets where she parked.

* 2. "Good Housekeeping" Cookbook

Featuring 1,200 recipes, the newest edition of the "Good Housekeeping Cookbook" is great for every type of cook, from serious home chefs to kitchen novices. This culinary bible is one food guide friends and family will actually want to use... and maybe they'll test out their newly mastered recipes on you!

* 3. ME to WE Neema Necklace

The holidays are the season of giving, so consider selecting something that gives back to a bigger cause, like this necklace from ME to WE. Homemade by a woman in Kenya, your purchase gives healthcare access



to a mother or child in the same community where the necklace is made, helping them live full, healthy lives.

Whether it's for your friend who's constantly baking delicious -- but messy -- brownies, or your tech-obsessed uncle, this Moen faucet is the ideal present. Its touchless activation allows users to easily turn water on and off with the wave of a hand, providing added convenience and some serious cool factor in the kitchen.

* 5. Instant Pot

A smart choice for everyone from foodies to busy parents, this handy device does the work of nine common kitchen appliances

and can prepare almost anything, from cake to rice to yogurt. Plus, it cooks up to 70 percent quicker than other devices and its functions make mastering one-pot meals a breeze.

* 4. Arbor pull-down kitchen faucet with MotionSense Wave

Whether it's for your friend who's constantly baking delicious -- but messy -- brownies, or your tech-obsessed uncle, this Moen faucet is the ideal present. Its touchless activation allows users to easily turn water on and off with the wave of a hand, providing added convenience and some serious cool factor in the kitchen.

* 6. Nespresso Creatista Plus

A coffee lover's dream, the Creatista Plus not only makes stellar coffee, but comes with a milk frother, too (a non-negotiable for many java addicts). It brews everything from an espresso to a mocha cappuccino with the touch of a button.


* 7. Amazon Echo

For the techie who dreams of a connected smart home, the Amazon Echo is a perfect place to start. It can play music, make calls, set alarms and timers, start a digital shower and control smart home devices via voice command -- just ask Alexa.


* 8. Osmo Genius Kit


This award-winning game system aims to turn any 5- to 12-year-old into a genius. It transforms a tablet into a hands-on learning tool to foster social intelligence and creative thinking. Those kids spend so much time on their devices anyway, they may as well learn something!


(StatePoint)



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

Here are a few suggestions from local authors:



HOW TO BE A GOOD CREATURE: A MEMOIR IN THIRTEEN ANIMALS BY SY MONTGOMERY Hancock author Sy Montgomery reflects on the personalities and quirks of 13 animals—her friends—who have profoundly affected her in this stunning, poetic, and life-affirming memoir featuring illustrations by Rebecca Green.



BURY THE LEAD: A JOE GUNTHER NOVEL BY ARCHER MAYOR When the body of a young woman is found near a trail at a popular ski mountain, the case falls to Joe Gunther and his team at the Vermont Bureau of Investigation (VBI). They quickly have a suspect, Mick Durocher, and a confession, but not everyone on the team is convinced. Despite Mick's ready admission, investigators quickly sense there might be more going on than is immediately apparent.



NONE OF MY BUSINESS BY P.J. O'ROURKE After decades covering war and disaster, bestselling author and acclaimed satirist P. J. O'Rourke takes on his scariest subjects yet—business, investment, finance, and the political chicanery behind them.



THE HABIT OF TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN: OUR BELIEF IN PROPERTY AND THE COST OF THAT BELIEF BY HOWARD MANSFIELD While reporting on citizens fighting natural gas pipelines and transmission lines planned to cut right across their homes, Howard saw the emotional toll of these projects. "They got under the skin," he writes. "This was about more than kilowatts, powerlines, and pipelines. Something in this upheaval felt familiar. I began to realize that I was witnessing an essential American experience: the world turned upside down. And it all turned on one word: property."

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M-Sat. 10-6, Thurs. 10-8, Sun. 10-4
Corner of Main & Emerald St., Keene, NH, M-S 9-9, Sun. 10-6 • 352-8815 • www.toadbooks.com

Kids' holiday gift ideas that build social skills

For young children, social-emotional development is one of the most valuable aspects of school readiness. This holiday season, focus on toys and gifts for preschoolers that will build children's empathy, communication skills and the ability to resolve conflicts and navigate challenges.

Here are a few gift ideas that do just that.

*** Experiential Gifts**

A petting zoo can be a great place for kids to learn about compassion. A puppet show may teach important lessons about making new friends or learning how to navigate challenges. The gift of an experience will be an exciting life-long memory and a great opportunity for you to spend time together while kids hone important skills.

*** Interactive Toys**

Those who want to help children learn important lessons might consider putting Zoonicorn at the top of their holiday gift lists. Fun and engaging animated music videos, game apps, books and online activities capture children's imaginations while offering parents and children an



opportunity to work through and overcome obstacles together.

Kids can watch inspiring music videos like "Yes, You Can!" on YouTube and play

along with the soft and cuddly plush Zoonicorn, which are a combination of a unicorn and zebra. The new Wish Me Zoonicorn by Jay@Play have four touch points where children may interact with them. When kids kiss the Zoonicorn on the nose the horn glows and kids can make a wish. The animated videos stories focus on tools children can use to identify and solve problems for themselves through the comforting animal characters of the Zooniverse.

*** Board Games**

Playing age-appropriate card games and board games is a great way for kids to learn to follow rules, take turns, cooperate and be a good sport. Card games such as Uno and Go Fish make great stocking stuffers. As for board games, think classics like Candyland, checkers and Chutes and Ladders, or go for newer games designed specifically to familiarize kids with letters, shapes, numbers and colors.

This holiday season, consider how the gifts you give young children can help foster their social-emotional development. (StatePoint)

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3 easy ways to simplify your holidays

It can be easy to feel overwhelmed by the busyness of the holiday season – from perfecting your home décor to searching for gifts for everyone on your list to creating a delicious holiday menu.

To help simplify the holidays, Dollar General is offering easy tips, so you can spend more time enjoying the most magical time of the year.

*** Deck the Halls**

Get festive this season by creating a holiday wonderland in your home. Pick a color theme like red and green or blue and silver – whatever best fits your taste. Carry the theme throughout your home as you decorate the tree, holiday table, mantle and gifts. Consider adding a wreath to greet guests as soon as they arrive, as well as candles. With varieties like salted caramel and amber spice, those from Dollar General's private brand trueliving will capture the scents of the season. Small touches like a table runner or a floral centerpiece can also make your home feel like the perfect holiday escape during this busy season.

*** Holiday Meal Prep**

Cooking for a big crew can certainly be



stressful. This year, use digital recipes to help you plan for the big event. Holiday sweets are always a favorite, so consider gifting your favorite desserts. If you plan to spend a lot of time prepping for a big holiday party or just a special dinner for your family, don't forget the snacks to tide everyone over as you await the main course. For snacking you can feel great about, consider wholesome choices like roasted almonds or granola with less sugar.

*** Gift-Giving**

The holidays are the perfect time to gather with friends and loved ones to exchange presents in celebration of the season. If you're worried about finding

something affordable for everyone, consider shopping at a discount retailer, like Dollar General. With deals throughout the store on picture frames, books, candles, coffee mugs and more, you can treat everyone on your list without breaking the bank. Plus, they are offering an instant 25 percent savings on any qualifying toy purchase of \$75 or more through December 24, 2018. By downloading the store's app, you can access DG Digital coupons. New customers automatically receive a digital coupon for \$1 off their first purchase of \$1.01 or more.

Don't forget the giftwrap! Get creative with your gift trimmings by choosing a unique theme for each person on your list. With so many wrapping paper, gift bag and ribbon options, you can make every gift as special as the person receiving it.

This season, keep your sights on the essentials. Simplify your shopping by creating a signature theme for home décor, finding deals on gifts for everyone on your list, and baking up something easy and delicious for the whole crew. Plan ahead this year and enjoy the extra time celebrating the season with friends and family. (StatePoint)

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In it's 15th year, the villages of Contoocook and Hopkinton will host Starry Starry Weekend, Nov. 30th, December 1st, and 2nd. With a tag line of "one weekend, two villages, and three days of unique holiday shopping and events," Starry Starry Weekend tries to enchant visitors of all ages. This is the Hopkinton area business's annual holiday weekend with over 20 destinations to choose from. Each day is filled with festive shopping,

dining and exciting events.

The villages will be sporting several holiday themed pop-up shops. The Contoocook Train Depot and St. Andrews Church will both have goods from talented local artisans. On Saturday Contoocook United Methodist Church will feature a cookie walk and a pantry table with homemade food & gift items. Local artisans and crafters will be selling many handcrafted articles at several locations throughout the villages.

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Shopping for the holidays? Book ideas for everyone on your list

No matter who you're shopping for this holiday season, books can make great gifts. Here are five engaging volumes to consider.

• "Writers: Their Lives and Works" features more than 100 biographies of the world's greatest writers, from Shakespeare to Toni Morrison. Biographical entries trace the friendships, loves and rivalries that influenced each writer, while placing their works into historical context.

Illustrated with portraits, photographs and paintings of writers' homes, studios and personal artifacts, along with pages from original manuscripts, first editions and correspondence, this book introduces the key themes and literary techniques of its subjects, revealing the imaginations and personalities behind some of the world's greatest novels, short stories, poems, and plays.

* From its origins at court and the first national ballet companies, to the contemporary scene and the extraordinary venues that stage productions, "Ballet: The Definitive Illustrated Story" provides an invaluable overview of the history of ballet.

Readers can discover more than 70 of the most famous ballet dances, learn the stories



behind renowned companies, explore the lives and achievements of dancers across centuries, and meet composers and choreographers. Filled with rarely seen photographs, this book is well-suited for ballet enthusiasts.

* "Flora: Inside the Secret World of Plants" invites you to explore the plant kingdom from the ground up, and from root to leaf tip. This elegant introduction to botany from DK is packed with photos and illustrations explaining the mechanics of photosynthesis, why leaves change color, how cacti store water, and how seeds know when to grow. Filled with fascinating stories of how plant roots and leaves communicate with their neighbors and how flowers use

color and scent to interact with the creatures around them, this is an introduction to the mysterious inner workings of the plant world.

* For children who can't get enough wildlife, consider "An Anthology of Intriguing Animals," a compendium of the facts, stories and myths behind more than 200 of their favorite animals. Whether it's how the koala got its name or which animal the ancient Egyptians thought rolled the sun across the sky, readers can learn fun facts while poring over photographs, including detailed close-ups.

* "Robot," a book for kids, covers artificial intelligence (AI) throughout history, including automata created by Leonardo Da Vinci all the way through to modern-day androids. Discover cutting edge robotics, where science, technology, mechanical engineering and computing meet. Bright graphics and photography help readers learn how robots work, how they are made, and how they help and hinder modern society.

This holiday season, stock the shelves of those you adore with fascinating books on topics they love. (StatePoint)

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How to create a holiday atmosphere at home

Creating festive cheer at home for the holidays is easy and fun. Here are some great ways to transform your space into a winter wonderland.

*** Get cozy:** During the chilly holiday season, decorate with comfort in mind. Light the fireplace. Add throw pillows to sofas. Turn off overhead lamps and use soft lighting instead. Consider how texture and warmth can contribute to your holiday decorating scheme.

*** Screen festive flicks:** From "It's a Wonderful Life" to "Home Alone," keep your favorite holiday films playing all the time to create a festive holiday atmosphere, or host a special movie night and select a few classics. With the right projector, you can turn any room of the house into a home theater experience. Select a portable projector for the holiday season that will sense ambient light in the room and automatically adjust the projection accordingly, so you won't need to blow out candles or unplug holiday lights. Those from Casio's SLIM Series are lightweight and portable, combining a laser and LED light source to create a high-brightness mercury-free projector that uses



half the amount of power per unit than its traditional lamp-based counterparts.

*** Fire up the oven:** There's no better time of year to roll up your sleeves and knead out some dough. One of the best ways to create a holiday atmosphere is with scent, and the aroma of baking cookies, cakes and other holiday desserts will do the trick. If you're worried about having all those extra sweet treats around the house just before kicking off your New Year's resolutions, consider volunteering to bring dessert to potluck and parties you attend this season or donating the product of your labors to a holiday bake sale raising money for a charitable cause.

*** Make music:** Get the holiday cheer going in your home by making music. Now you can get the sound of a 9-foot concert grand piano with the Privia PX-160, a portable digital piano, making it easy to gather round for a sing-a-long of all your favorite seasonal tunes in any room of the house. Its 88-key Tri-Sensor Scaled Hammer Action keyboard simulates ebony and ivory-textured keys and its speaker system opens to the front but is also ported to the back, to deliver a big projected sound to all your holiday celebrants.

*** Add some flora:** Holly, poinsettias, mistletoe -- decking the halls with traditional holiday plants adds color and vitality to side tables, mantels, dining areas and staircases and more. Those with pets and small children should take heed, as certain plant species are toxic -- so avoid these plants or be sure they are displayed well out of reach of curious children and animals.

Preparing your home for the holiday season takes a little thought and energy, but the end result is a cheerful and warm atmosphere to make memories while spending time with loved ones. (StatePoint)

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Party prep pointers for stress-free holiday entertaining

Thoughts of hosting and entertaining during one of the busiest seasons of the year can be stressful. With so much party preparation for the holidays, from decor to drinks and appetizers to activities, it's easy to see how even the most experienced hosts can get a little flustered.

One way to make sure you get to enjoy this year's festivities is to streamline preparation without sacrificing flavor, quality or appearance. By limiting the number of drinks and dishes you serve, you can wow your guests with both your culinary expertise and your smile.

* Stick to one or two signature cocktails so you won't have to stock the bar (which can be expensive) or take drink orders and play bartender all night. Save even more time by serving make-ahead cocktails that simply require adding soda when ready to drink. Add white and red wine options, and offer seltzer and cranberry or pomegranate juice for mocktails.

* Make a festive centerpiece that's also edible, such as this Wreath Centerpiece



olives, breads, crackers, nuts and fruits. Arrange on a large platter, board or tray then garnish with rosemary sprigs and scatter with pomegranate seeds for a festive finish in a flash.

For more easy entertaining recipes, visit Kaukaunacheese.com.
Edible Wreath Centerpiece
 1 Kaukauna Port Wine Cheddar Cheese Ball†(10 ounces)
 1 container (11.3 ounces) Kaukauna Sharp Cheddar Cheese Spread

from Kaukauna Cheese. Assemble it the day before or the morning of the party, eliminating last-minute stress. It's simple to make and appropriate for nearly any holiday gathering. Plus, the 'No-Artificial-Anything' Cheese Ball, with no additives or artificial ingredients, can appeal to the taste buds of hungry guests.

* Let your hors d'oeuvres serve double duty as both appetizer and party decor. To make it nearly effortless, head to your local grocery store's deli section. Pick up cured meats, cheeses, pickled vegetables, assorted

sesame seeds or poppy seeds
 bacon bits or chopped walnuts

10-12 small pretzel sticks
 rosemary, for garnish (optional)

Place cheese ball in center of large, round platter.

To make mini cheese balls, shape 1-2 tablespoons of cheese spread into balls. Roll lightly in seeds and bacon bits or walnuts.

Insert pretzel sticks into mini cheese balls up to 1 hour prior to serving. Store in refrigerator. Remove from refrigerator about 15 minutes before serving. Garnish with rosemary sprigs, if desired. (Family Features)



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Giving the gift of music this holiday season

What's your favorite song? Are you thinking of it now? How does it make you feel? Music is powerful. It can encourage, inspire, motivate and bring joy. There is even scientific evidence that music can ease anxiety, improve cardiovascular health and contribute to mental acuity.

There are some crazy great benefits to be had from something that almost everyone already enjoys. This holiday season consider some creative ways to share these incredible benefits. Give the gift of music.

Here are a few thoughtful holiday gift ideas to bring music, joy and much more into someone's life this season.

*** Make Music**

Considering all the great things music can do for someone, why not help them make their own? Give the gift of music lessons from a local studio or teacher. Buy an affordable instrument like a ukulele or a cajón (drum box) for a beginner. For a guitarist, some cool picks or new strings are always welcome gifts.



*** Big Sound, Small Package**

For a fun, whimsical, portable and powerful way to listen to music anywhere your gift recipient goes, consider the My Audio Pet speaker. There are 17 designs, from unicorns to pug puppies to pandas to monkeys and owls, there is something for everyone. At just larger than a golf ball, these Bluetooth animal shaped speakers are small enough to be the perfect stocking stuffer with a big enough sound to power the party.

Their wireless Bluetooth technology works with iPad, iPod, Samsung, tablets,

Apple, Android and more and features a built-in mic so you can take calls through them hands-free. The speaker will also work as a selfie remote when paired with your phone. They even come with a downloadable app, Hide & Speak, a ridiculously fun interactive family game.

*** Hear it Live**

Concert tickets to see a favorite band or artist, can provide a lifetime of memories and be the highlight of the year.

*** Their Faves**

A gift card or subscription to a music streaming service can allow the music lover in your life to pick and keep their favorite tunes. With a resurgence of musicals like "La La Land" and "The Greatest Showman," or classics like the "Sound of Music" or "Mary Poppins," a DVD that features awesome music makes for a fantastic gift. The holiday season is the perfect time of year to show you care, and what better way to do that than with a gift that can add so much to life? Give the gift of music this year and share all the benefits it has to offer. (StatePoint)



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A host's guide to holiday gatherings

Gearing up for a big crowd at your holiday festivities can provide moments of excitement, stress, fun and plenty of other emotions as the big dinner draws near. This year, avoid any nagging feelings of doubt with this step-by-step guide to prepare for large gatherings.

Plan in advance. Even if you're typically the last-minute type, the hectic holiday season is no time to wait until a few days ahead of the celebration to throw meals and more together. Instead, be sure to put together a guest list and send invites at least a few weeks out. Take inventory of supplies like silverware, plates, serving dishes and any accessories you'd like to feature at the table. Make an outline of the food each guest is bringing, or, if you'll supply all the food, ensure there will be plenty for everyone - don't forget to take into account special diets or allergies.

Make a list. Planning only takes you so far if you don't write everything down. Once the menu is determined, list out what you'll need to make the magic happen. Don't forget to jot down easily overlooked items that can be picked up the day of, such as ice.

Remember to thaw. One surefire way to make the big day a big disaster is to forget to



thaw your main course. If you're planning to roast a turkey - perhaps the most common centerpiece - remember it takes around a day to thaw for every two pounds of meat. So, for example, it could take close to a week for a 14-pound turkey to fully thaw prior to cooking.

Prep the day before. There are many tasks (big and small) that can be taken care of the day before guests arrive, making the holiday less stressful for hosts. From whipping up simple appetizers like dips to giving the house a thorough cleaning, there's plenty of pressure that can be taken off your shoulders 24 hours in advance. If you really want to make the big day a breeze, consider cooking your main dish, slicing the meat and placing it in reheating



pans one day prior.

Create a schedule. No matter how far in advance you plan or how much prep you complete prior to the festivities, there will always be day-of work to be done. With guests coming in and out, it can be helpful to lay out what's known as a "fire list," which details times chronologically for when things need done, such as starting the oven to warm the turkey or simply remembering to lay out dessert following the meal.

Find more holiday hosting tips and meal solutions at omahasteaks.com.

*** Butcher's Butter Filet Mignon Roast Garnish**

1/4 cup salted butter ▶

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Filet Mignon Roast.

*** Roasted Grape Gastrique**

- Roasted Grapes:
- 4 cups assorted grapes (picked, washed and dried)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 cinnamon stick
- nonstick cooking spray
- Gastrique:
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1/2 cup sugar

- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch mixed with 4 tablespoons water

To make Roasted Grapes: Heat oven to 350 F.

In bowl, combine grapes, olive oil, salt, pepper and cinnamon stick.

Lightly spray baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Pour grape mixture onto baking sheet. Bake 15 minutes. Remove from oven and pour into bowl.

To make Gastrique: In small saucepan, combine water and sugar. Bring to boil over medium-high heat, 5-7 minutes, until sugar starts to brown.

Remove from heat and slowly add vinegar. Return to heat and stir until combined. Add cornstarch and water mixture; bring to boil. Remove from heat.

Pour Gastrique mixture over Roasted Grapes.

*** Whole Basted Turkey**

1 Omaha Steaks Whole Basted Turkey (10 pounds)

Thaw turkey completely in refrigerator 3-4 days or, keeping turkey in vacuum-sealed packaging, place in sink full of cold water 5-7 hours, changing water approximately every 30 minutes.

Heat oven to 350 F. Remove turkey from vacuum-sealed bag. Place turkey in bag provided; secure bag with twist tie. Place bag in deep roasting pan. Using fork, puncture 6-8 holes in top of bag. For extra browning or crispness, slit top of bag for final 20-30 minutes of roasting.

Roast turkey 2 hours, 45 minutes- 3 hours. Turkey is done when internal temperature measured with kitchen thermometer reaches 165 F. (Family Features)

- 1/4 cup duck fat
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh rosemary, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 anchovy filet, minced
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 prepared Omaha Steaks Filet

Mignon Roast

In small saucepan, combine butter, duck fat, rosemary, thyme, garlic, anchovy filet and black pepper. Heat on low 3-5 minutes until fragrant. Remove from heat and serve over

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3 ways to give back this holiday season

Want to give back this holiday season? There are many ways to get into the charitable spirit. And if you need some inspiration for how to go about benefitting those in your local and global community, consider the following ideas.

Serve a Holiday Meal

Food is one of the most fundamental ways to show you care, and, delicious food and the holidays go hand-in-hand. Consider serving a warm holiday meal to someone who needs it.

There are many ways to do this, such as preparing a meal at home and delivering it to a sick or elderly neighbor, inviting a colleague or friend who doesn't have family in the area to your home for a holiday meal, or volunteering in a food pantry to serve a meal to other members of your community. If these efforts are not possible, look for a canned food drive near you and pick up some extra groceries to donate when shopping.

* Give Access to Safe Water

Give a gift to a loved one this season that's not only thoughtful for him or her, but also benefits the community at large.



One great way to do that is through the gift of water. Due to microplastics and other common water contaminants, safe drinking water is not necessarily a given these days. However, you can provide someone you love with at-home and on-the-go access to safe drinking water with a LifeStraw water filtration product.

Helping to reduce plastic waste by providing an alternative to single-use bottles, you'll be making a global difference. What's more, for every LifeStraw product purchased, including LifeStraw Go 2-Stage Special Edition, LifeStraw Universal and LifeStraw Play, one child in a community

in need receives safe drinking water for an entire school year. LifeStraw provided its one millionth child with safe drinking water in Kenya in 2018. And new special edition bottles benefit the Conservation Alliance, a public lands conservation organization, and LifeStraw's Safe Water Fund, which supports natural disaster victims by providing them with safe drinking water.

* Give Life

Did you know that the simple act of donating blood can save a life? Indeed, one pint of blood is all that's needed to save three lives, according to America's Blood Centers. Make an appointment at a local blood bank. It takes just about 10 minutes, and afterwards you can feel good about the potential difference you've made.

Another way you can be a life saver is by ensuring you are a registered organ donor. Use the holiday season as an opportunity to add your name to the National Donate Life Registry.

Before stringing lights or adding tinsel to the tree, you can truly get into the holiday spirit by finding meaningful ways to give back. (StatePoint)

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Holiday tips for houseguests and hosts this season

Planning for the holiday season? Whether you're a guest or a host, there are easy ways to ensure that everyone enjoys their time with family and friends. Check out these tips for a joyful holiday season:

*** A Helping Hand**

Holiday hosts are often bogged down by tasks and chores. Make yourself useful. Keep areas you are using clean and offer to help around the house. If you're the host, don't be shy about delegating simple tasks to your guests. Most guests will appreciate the opportunity to make their stay less stressful on you.

*** Comfort is Key**

When extended family or friends get together for the holidays, ensure everyone has a comfortable place to sleep. A must-have for both travelers and hosts is a high-quality air mattress that's compact and easy to inflate, and these days, some brands have elevated their offerings to luxury standards, helping to create a more comfortable night's rest.

For example, Intex offers a range of



comfortable airbeds with impressive features, such as a headboard, raised bed height (up to 24 inches), built-in USB chargers, a plush dual air pillowtop system, various sizes and supports to choose from and more. Their airbeds provide enough comfort and luxury that guests may even consider extending their stay. Worried about the time and energy of set-up? With internal electric air pumps, these high-quality, durable airbeds take just minutes to inflate and deflate, saving families both time and energy. That means more time spent enjoying each other's company and

making memories. And they're super easy to stock up on, available online or in-store at most major big box retailers.

*** Snack Time**

Beyond the main holiday meal, there are breakfasts, snacks and other meals to consider. Guests and hosts should work together on this one to ensure that there are foods and beverages on hand that meet everyone's dietary needs and restrictions. Hosts should ask their guests in advance if there are any allergies, sensitivities or particular foods to avoid. Children can be particular about food, so knowing if there are any favorites to stock the fridge and pantry with can also be helpful. As a guest, consider packing your own snacks to take with you. You can also help your hosts by letting them know of any issues in advance: from peanut allergies to medical restrictions. Whether you are traveling or staying put, with a bit of preparation you can make sure everyone feels comfortable, so that you can focus on what the holidays are all about -- making great memories together. (StatePoint)

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Savor simplicity, holiday recipes worth sharing

Most great holiday gatherings start with great food and end with quality time spent with loved ones. This holiday season, rely on simple recipes that let you spend less time in the kitchen and more time celebrating special moments with family and friends.

Find more simple recipes to enjoy during the holidays at Bertolli.com.

Rustic Minestrone

- 3 tablespoons Bertolli Extra Virgin Olive Oil, divided
- 1 small zucchini, sliced in 1/2-inch half moons
- 2 cups tightly packed, thinly sliced Tuscan kale leaves
- 1 jar (23 ounces) Bertolli Rustic Cut Three Cheese with Aged Asiago, Romano and Parmesan Sauce
- 1 carton (32 ounces) vegetable broth
- 1 can (15 ounces) cannellini beans, rinsed
- 1/3 cup shaved Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

In 6-quart pot over medium-high heat, heat 2 teaspoons oil. Add zucchini and kale; cook, stirring frequently, about 1-2 minutes, or until kale begins to wilt. Reduce heat to medium; add sauce, broth and beans. Simmer 5-7 minutes, or until heated. Top with shaved cheese before serving.



Tips: Substitute garbanzo beans, kidney beans, pinto beans or tri-bean blend for cannellini beans. For heartier soup, add 3 cups (9 ounces) refrigerated tortellini pasta with broth and beans. Simmer soup 8-10 minutes more, or until pasta is cooked through.

Chocolate Chunk Banana Bread

- Recipe courtesy of Justin Schuble on behalf of Bertolli Olive Oil
- 3/4 cup Bertolli Olive Oil, plus additional for coating pan
- 3 ripe medium bananas, divided



- 1/2 cup applesauce
 - 1 large egg
 - 1 large egg white
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 - 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 - 1 cup sugar
 - 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 - 1/2 cup semi-sweet chocolate chunks or chips
 - 1/4 cup nut spread
- Heat oven to 350 F. ▶

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reaches pourable consistency. Swirl spread into top of batter. Thinly slice long, flat strips of banana. Add slices to top of batter for decoration. Place loaf pan in oven and bake 1 hour. Remove bread and cool before slicing.

2 cups fresh cranberries, slightly crushed, divided
 1 turkey (16 pounds), giblet package removed
 ice water, for covering turkey
 1/2 cup Bertolli Mild Olive Oil
 salt, to taste
 pepper, to taste

In pot, bring water, bay leaves, peppercorns, mustard seeds and kosher salt to boil. Stir until salt is dissolved. Cool to room temperature. Pour brine into 5-gallon stock pot or container. Pour in wine then add one shallot, garlic, thyme (reserving some for stuffing turkey) and 1 cup cranberries. Slowly lower in turkey.

Pour ice water into pot to cover turkey. Place lid on pot and refrigerate at least 24 hours. Heat oven to 500 F. Remove turkey from brine, pat dry and stuff with reserved shallot, thyme and cranberries.

Place turkey in roasting pan. Generously massage olive oil into skin of turkey. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, to taste. Use kitchen twine to tie legs together so turkey will keep its shape. Place in roasting pan and roast 20 minutes. Lightly brush skin again with olive oil, reduce heat to 350 F and roast until internal temperature reaches 155-160 F on meat thermometer. Allow turkey to rest, loosely covered with foil, 30 minutes before carving. (Family Features)

Cranberry Riesling Brined Turkey

- 1 quart water
- 6 bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons whole black peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon mustard seeds
- 1 1/2 cups kosher salt
- 1 bottle (750 milliliters) Riesling wine
- 2 large shallots, thinly sliced, divided
- 8 cloves garlic, crushed but left in skins
- 1 bunch fresh thyme, divided

Coat 9-by-5-inch loaf pan with olive oil. In mixing bowl, mash 2 bananas. Add applesauce, egg, egg white and vanilla to bananas and whisk. In separate bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. Slowly add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and mix. Add olive oil slowly and mix until combined. Fold in chocolate chunks. Pour batter into loaf pan. Heat nut spread in microwave until it



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Meaningful ways to connect different generations during the holidays

If you're looking for thoughtful ways to connect all generations of your family, from the youngest to the oldest, and bypass divisive topics these smart ideas will inspire.

* Passing down trades and traditions

Older generations have wisdom, experience and many traditions to share with those willing to learn. Talk with loved ones about their favorite traditions and then ask which they could teach to family. You might be surprised what older generations cherish as traditions. For example, consider organizing a time for everyone to bake a time-honored recipe together. Perhaps it's learning a holiday tradition that provides a cultural experience that younger generations have never done. It also could even be teaching a classic skill such as woodworking, knitting or calligraphy. Keeping an open mind and trying something new together is guaranteed to be a bonding experience.

* Storytelling and archiving

One of the most meaningful ways people of different generations can connect is through sharing stories. Sometimes you just need a little help getting the conversation

started. That's why Atria Senior Living, inspired by its residents, created Atria StoryWise, a curated collection of cards featuring thoughtfully selected topics and cues designed to spark memories and fuel conversation.

You can spur conversation with loved ones in a similar manner with the Atria StoryWise companion app, available free to everyone. Instantly access intriguing topics to encourage meaningful conversation, plus the app allows you to record, share and keep the stories - and voices - of family and friends forever.

* A few conversation starter examples from the app:

- * What you wanted to be when you were little.
- * The secret to a long life.
- * Your idea of a perfect day.
- * A value you'd like to pass on to future generations.

Learn more at AtriaStoryWise.com.

* Plan a game or movie night

Games and movies are timeless activities that appeal as much to Grandma as they do to your 5-year-old. By planning a game or movie night, you'll bring everyone together for a good time. Consider finding a board game or movie that was popular when you or your parents were kids so everyone enjoys their

time together.

To make the day even more special, shop for old-fashioned candy and snacks that spark nostalgia. You may have to order some items online, but it's worth the effort because everyone will think it's fun to sample the treats that were popular during different decades.

* Flip through photo albums and scrapbooks

There's nothing like a nostalgic image to get people talking. Whether it's a photo featuring childhood friends, a school portrait or wedding images, a picture is truly worth a thousand words. Dig out those old photo albums and flip through them with the entire family.

Another worthwhile activity that brings generations together is making a scrapbook. You can use old images or focus on recent pictures, but collaborating on a craft is time well spent. If you prefer, use a digital scrapbook program to organize photos. Whatever path you choose, take notes of who is in the image and any fun stories that go along with them. This is what turns a typical photo album into a cherished keepsake. Use these ideas to transform your next holiday into one filled with memories. You'll inspire new connections between family members as you laugh, love and live life to the fullest. (BPT)



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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

How to stretch holiday budget by saving on mobile devices

(StatePoint) With this year's holiday spending expected to rise over last year, according to the National Retail Federation estimates, you may be planning to spend more on décor, gift-giving and travel. If your seasonal plans also include upgrading mobile devices for yourself or for loved ones, keep in mind that you can make room in your budget for those other holiday expenditures by not paying the price for a brand-new model.



previously owned device.

If you do go this route this holiday season, be sure to stick with reputable sources where you can trust the device to be in fully functional condition and opt for the longest guarantee available, at least 90 days. For example, those from MyWit undergo an extensive 65+ point inspection of cosmetics, functionality and connectivity to ensure optimal performance. Tests verify every function that a customer can use (camera,

The alternative? A refurbished device. Experts say the idea that all refurbished devices were broken or had problems in a past life is a misconception.

"Whether you're bargain hunting or you're looking to go green and reduce electronic waste, you're in luck," says David Conti, senior director of eCommerce at MyWit. "In today's market it is very easy to find affordable, high-quality refurbished

devices."

Indeed, many mobile phones, tablets and accessories that come from trade-in and upgrade programs were perfectly good devices that owners traded in for newer models. With so many consumers out there reliably seeking the latest, such trade-ins and sales are becoming more popular, making it easier to navigate the market for a

audio, SIM, WiFi, Bluetooth, etc.) is in 100 percent working order and connectivity tests ensure wireless devices deliver a consistent quality of connection and do not drop available signals.

When it comes to mobile upgrades, replacements and tech gifts, you can make this holiday season merrier and more affordable with refurbished devices.

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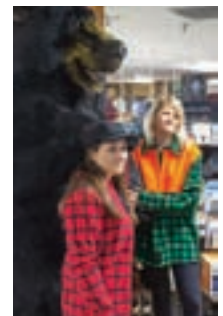
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