

Gainesville

LIVING

HOLIDAY 2021

A photograph of a woman and a man in festive winter attire. The woman, on the left, has grey hair, wears glasses, a white lace-trimmed headscarf, a white ribbed sweater, and red gloves. She is waving her right hand. The man, on the right, is dressed as Santa Claus in a red suit with white fur trim, a white beard, and a red hat with white fur. He is also wearing glasses and white gloves, and is speaking into a black microphone while waving his left hand. They are standing in front of a background of warm, out-of-focus lights, possibly from a stage or a holiday event. A large, glowing white and red tinsel decoration is in the foreground.

BUTTERFIELD STAGE

First musical in over a year set to debut in December

DEBUNKING COVID-19 MYTHS

HOLIDAY RECIPES

Holidays offer chance to enjoy friends, family with dishes



College Board National Honors

Eight GHS students earned academic honors from the College Board National Recognition Program. Colleges and scholarship programs use these honors to identify students from underrepresented groups through College Board's Student Search Service. These 8 students all have a GPA of 3.5 or higher and have excelled on the PSAT/NMSQT or PSAT 10, or earned a score of 3 or higher on two or more AP Exams. Congratulations Adrian Olvera, Desmond Pouncil, Ignacio Blas, Merlin Giles, Ana Rodriguez, Gabriel Martinez, Emanuel Vargas, and Jon Isaac.

Art Show Winner

Laurel Metcalf won the People's Choice Award in the Gainesville Area Visual Arts fall art show and contest. Pictured are GAVA President Joe Conner, Laurel, and GHS Art teacher Kim Panagiotakos.



Choir Advances!

Hayley Colwell, Drake Landrum, Desmond Pouncil, Jayelynn Graham, Samantha Holmes, and TJ Foss made the All-Region Band. In addition, Drake, Desmond, Hayley, and TJ advanced to the Pre-Area contest!



Redcoat Band earns superior rating and advances to Area!

GISD Gives Back

GISD staff came together and pledged a record-breaking total of \$15,069 to the Cooke County United Way. GISD is proud to be a pacesetter company! Thank you to our generous staff who give back to our community!



It's a great day to be a Leopard!



Medal of Honor Recipients Visit GHS

We look forward to welcoming them back into our schools in April!





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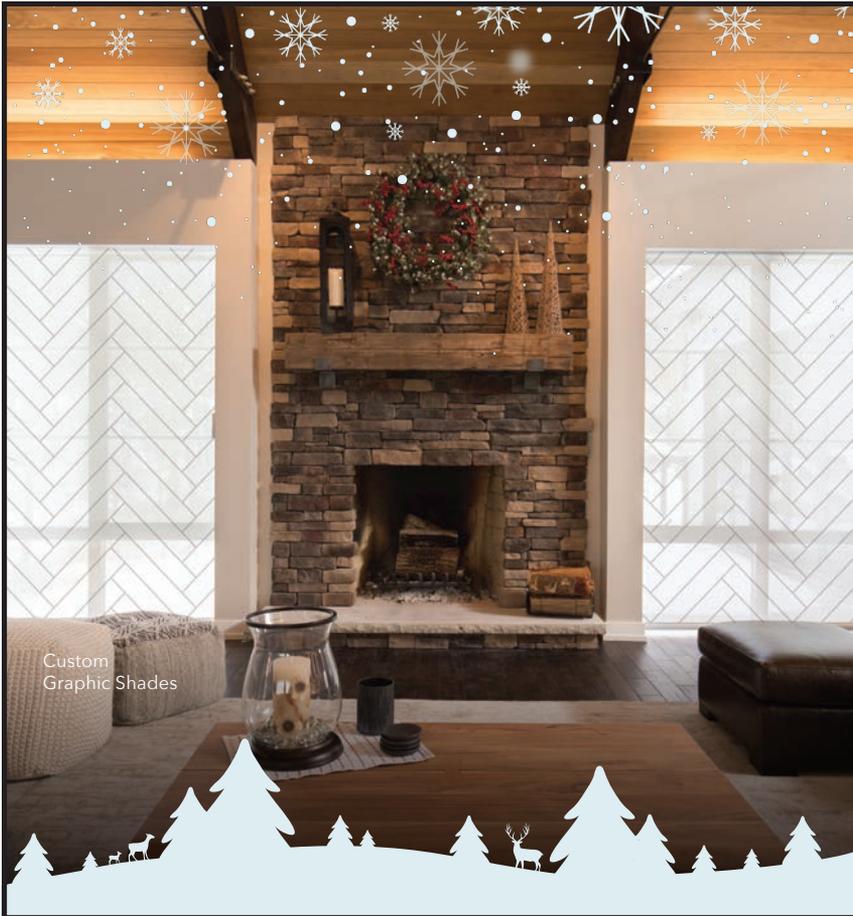
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THE MUSICAL

Book by Thomas Meehan and Bob Martin

Music by Matthew Sklar

Lyrics by David Berenbaum

Directed By Shannon Rivoire



Show Dates

Dec 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18 7:30PM

Dec 11, 12, 19 2:30PM

Tickets 940-665-1284 or butterfieldstage.org

Produced by special arrangement with Music Theatre International.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Santa and Mrs. Claus bade best holiday wishes to everyone who attended Gainesville's 2019 Christmas parade. The city will host Countdown to Christmas at The Farmer's Market on Dec. 18. Photo by Tony Avila.

Gainesville LIVING

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COVID-19 Vaccine Myths Busted

CCOVID-19 vaccines are overwhelmingly safe and highly effective at reducing the risk of severe disease, hospitalizations and death. Unfortunately, misinformation and pervasive myths continue to sow doubt, leaving many unprotected.

Roughly 99% of deaths linked to COVID-19 in the latest wave — and the vast majority of cases involving severe symptoms that require hospitalization — were among patients who weren't fully vaccinated, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“With high levels of community spread of COVID-19, we're once again fighting a two-front war: against the virus and against rampant misinformation,” says American Medical Association president, Gerald E. Harmon, M.D.

Here are some of the top myths physicians are hearing and what you need to know:

Can COVID-19 vaccines impact fertility?

Risks to fertility or the ability to become pregnant after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine were disproven through clinical trials and real-world data points. While pregnant women weren't specifically targeted for vaccine trials, several participants became pregnant without issue during the trial duration and there's been no demonstrated real-world impact on fertility.

Moreover, COVID-19 itself carries significant risks for pregnant women, including higher risks of preterm labor and

stillbirth, and higher risks of hypertension and pneumonia for pregnant women. There's also no evidence showing that COVID-19 vaccines affect male fertility.

Can vaccinated people “shed” spike proteins, affecting those close to them?

Vaccine shedding can only occur when a vaccine contains a weakened version of the virus. None of the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States contain a live virus, so it's not biologically possible for a vaccinated person to affect an unvaccinated person by proxy or by “shedding” spike proteins.

I've already had COVID-19. Do I need the vaccine?

Yes, the data shows that unvaccinated individuals are more than twice as likely to be reinfected with COVID-19 than those who were fully vaccinated after initially contracting the virus. Getting the vaccine is the best way to protect yourself and those around you.

Why do I need the vaccine if breakthrough infections are possible?

Some fully vaccinated people will still get sick because no vaccine is 100% effective. However, data show that vaccination may make COVID-19 symptoms less severe. The vaccines have also been shown to provide substantial protection against death and hospitalization in cases of breakthrough infection.

I'm young and healthy. Do I really need the vaccine?

Many young, previously healthy people have gotten seriously ill or died from COVID-19, and those numbers are increasing with new, more transmissible variants. There's no way to predict how you'll respond to infection.

Additionally, vaccines help prevent you from carrying the virus and transmitting it to others. Reducing the number of unvaccinated people will mitigate transmission of the virus.

I have allergies. Should I be worried about a reaction to the vaccine?

There have been very rare (2.5-5 people per million) reports of severe (anaphylactic) allergic reactions to COVID-19 vaccines. Having severe allergic reactions to certain foods, bee stings or oral medications doesn't mean you will have an allergic reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccination sites are prepared to evaluate and handle these situations on individual bases.

More fact-based vaccine information can be found by visiting [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or [getvaccineanswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org).

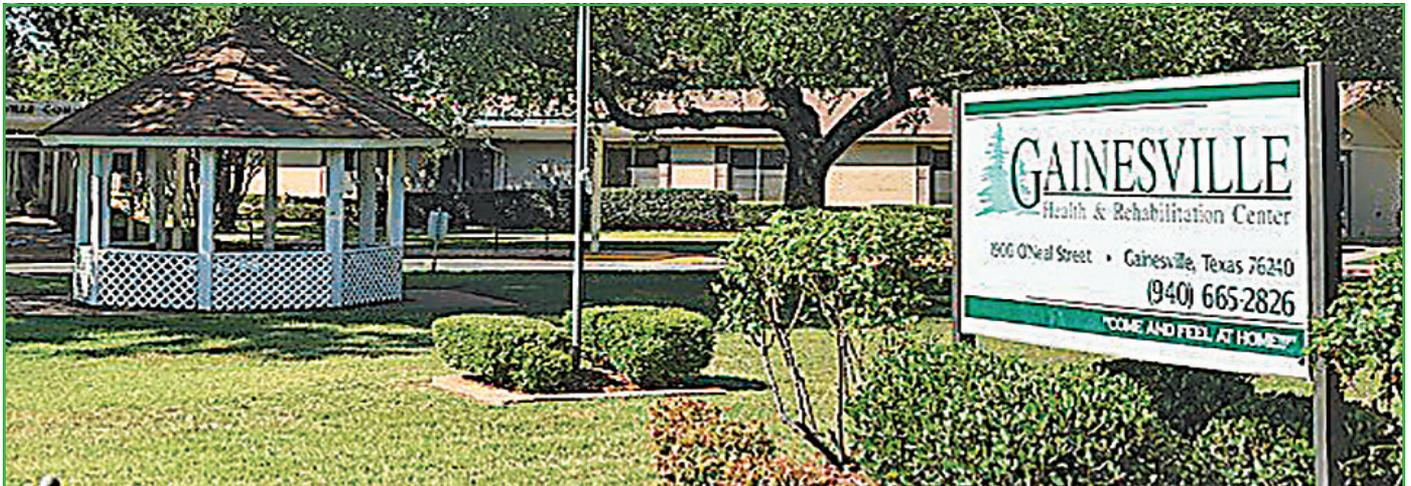
"The evidence around vaccinations is abundantly clear; they're safe, effective and will help protect you and your loved ones from severe COVID and death," says Dr. Harmon. "If you have questions about the vaccine, its safety, or effectiveness, please speak to your physician. We are here for you, eager to answer your questions, and get you protected from this virus."

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BUTTERFIELD STAGE

draws all kinds

First musical in over a year set to debut in December in Gainesville

STORY BY MIKE EADS, *Editor*

Live theater returns to the Butterfield Stage in downtown Gainesville in December. ‘Elf the Musical’ debuts Dec. 9 and a company of nearly three dozen performers and stage hands is busy getting ready for Opening Night.

The actors, directors and crew are buzzing with anticipation. They have been working weeknights and weekends since September to get ready for the show, the first musical staged at Butterfield since the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020. It’s an all-volunteer effort, as are the rest of the Butterfield productions, but none of them are there for a paycheck anyway.

>>> WHY THEATER?

Community theater attracts all kinds of people. Some dream of Hollywood or the Broadway stage, but most latch on to it for other reasons, like the thrill of performing for others or challenging themselves to do new things.

‘Elf’ Director Shannon Rivoire never thought twice about theater before stumbling

onto the Butterfield in the early 1990s. Thirty years later, she teaches classes and helps oversee the theater’s year-round curriculum.

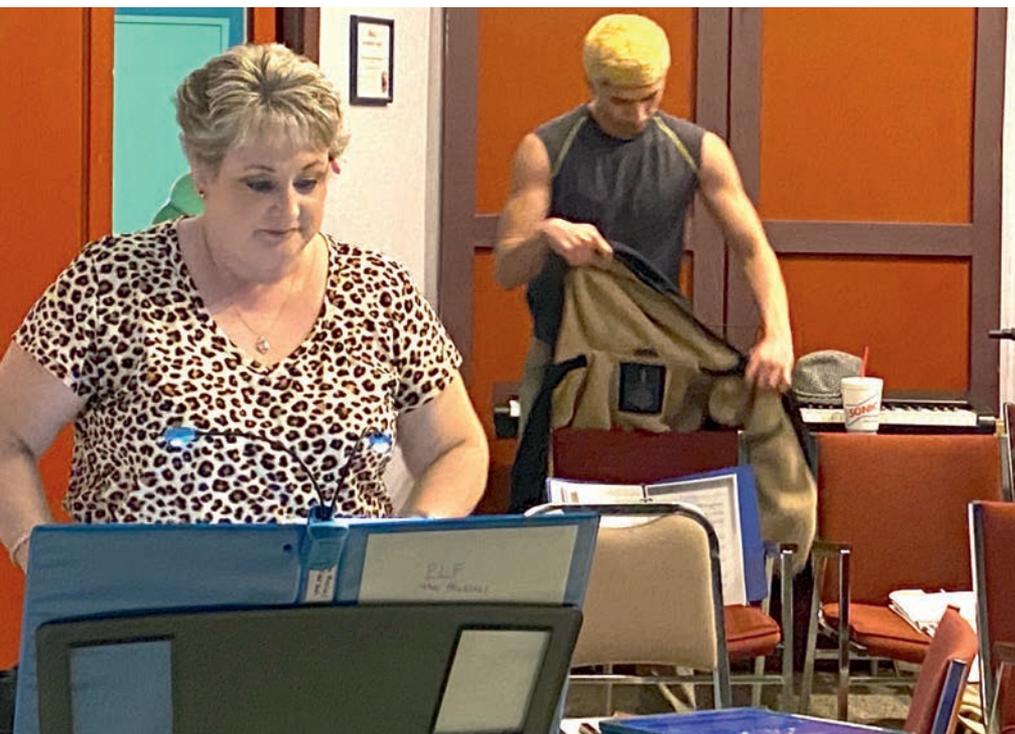
“A lot of people plant gardens, they draw, they read, they paint, they cook, they bake – we do theater,” Rivoire observed. “Theater is such an amazing thing because you get that instant feedback. You know, when you say a line and you say it in a way that makes the audience just bust out in laughter, there’s nothing like that. When you sing a song and you put all your emotion into it, and it brings the crowd to tears, you know, that’s what we do.”

That experience can spill over into daily life, too. Rivoire mastered in Special Education at the University of North Texas and works with autistic children.

“What I’m wanting to do is eventually teach children with autism social skills by using theater. Research has shown that it does work. That’s kind of my ultimate goal, trying to figure that out,” Rivoire said. “I’ve had several kids that are on the spectrum and you can really see a change in them. They start to understand,



Butterfield actors gather upstairs on the main stage in anticipation of a dance rehearsal for the upcoming production of *Elf*.



Musical Director Susan Higgins prepares at the piano to lead the actors through their warmup exercises at a November rehearsal for Butterfield's production of *Elf*.

because what they're doing is watching and then they get to participate and act it out ... in a social setting."

Susan Higgins is the Musical Director for 'Elf.' She, husband Mark and daughter Sarah came into the Butterfield's orbit about five years ago. She has applied her experience with the piano and choir music to the challenge of

musical theater.

"It generally takes a couple of months, at least two to three months to put on a full musical production," said Higgins, who works by day in the accounting department for Glen Polk Autoplex. "The music can be very challenging. Often some of the opening or closing numbers all have multiple parts

– singing parts and different melodies all happening at the same time. So you have to kind of break it apart and then put it back together when everybody learns what they're supposed to sing. And then there's also dancing to add to it."

So why volunteer so much time around the holidays?

"It's community involvement. Everyone is volunteer, so it's for fun,"

"Theater is such an amazing thing because you get that instant feedback. You know, when you say a line and you say it in a way that makes the audience just bust out in laughter, there's nothing like that. When you sing a song and you put all your emotion into it, and it brings the crowd to tears, you know, that's what we do."

– 'Elf' Director Shannon Rivoire

said Higgins. "The performers just like to perform. They'll come in, they'll give their time. It's amazing to think of everything that they sacrifice to make it happen. But here we are."

Performing isn't the only way to get involved. Stage crew help is always welcome.

"We have a wide variety of talent levels," said Higgins. "Some are novices and some are very experienced; but you make friends with each other. It's a lot



The Carnegie Library building was built in 1912 and is now home to the Butterfield Stage theater.

of fun, even though it is hard work. We kind of become like a family. You have that camaraderie with each other and it gets in your blood and it's hard to stop."

Justin Hinton headlines 'Elf' as Buddy, who comes to New York to find his father and, ultimately, save Christmas. He works part-time at Starbucks in order to subsidize his passion for acting and singing.

"It allows me to kind of share something that otherwise would just be something for me," said Hinton. "The way I look at a script or the world of the characters gives me a way to kind of share them with people – and share the gifts that I have, as opposed to just kind of singing to myself in the shower, I suppose."

Hinton intends to stick with performing, be it on Broadway or at the Butterfield.

"Everyone wants to be on Broadway or in Chicago doing the thing. There's not enough roles for everybody. And it doesn't happen for a lot of people; even if you are good enough, sometimes it doesn't happen, Higgins said. "There has to be achievable step-by-step plan. For me, the end goal is to get my Master's degree in conducting; that way, I can teach at the collegiate level and conduct choirs. That's the plan for a day job – anything else that happens is just icing on the cake."

For others, the motivation is much simpler.

"It's just so much fun. You get to be whoever you want to be when you're on stage. You don't have to be yourself," said Tearsia Voyles, who attends Thackerville High School.

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Butterfield Stage actors stretch out before a November rehearsal for the holiday production of *Elf*, which debuts Dec. 9.

>>> CREATIVE OUTLET

Butterfield was dark for 15 months due to the coronavirus pandemic. Productions resumed in July of this year with “Red, White and Tuna,” a two-hander set in the fictional town of Tuna, Texas – the “third-smallest” town in the state.

The holiday play each year is typically a youth production, but Butterfield officials thought ‘Elf’ would be a good opportunity to mix in some of the adult performers who were shut out for over a year thanks to COVID-19.

“They’re some of the most creative people and you want to get that feedback. You want to make people laugh and entertain people. That’s what we are: we’re entertainers,” said Rivoire. “... I’ll tell you when we shut down because of COVID, artists all over the world were hurting, not just financially, but physically and mentally because you get so used to having this outlet all the time.”

Rivoire is overseeing the production. Auditions were held in August and re-

hearsals got underway in September. Cast and crew members stream in and out of the Butterfield most weeknights, and the actors are getting close to having to be “off-book” – know all of their lines, songs and choreography – with live performances starting in several days.

That pressure notwithstanding, they are just happy to get their outlet back.

“I’m a theater major at NCTC, and this is something that I have a calling and a passion for. And so I would spend any time on another show that I love, ... this is going to be my third show this year,” said Emma Stevens, who plays one of the leads. “I just finished one – ‘Rocky Horror Picture Show’ – and this is something that I just love to dedicate my time to, because I have such a passion and drive for it.”

And the outlets are ongoing.

“There’s all kinds of opportunities,” Rivoire noted. “If somebody wants to come and try acting, they can just go onto our website (<http://butterfieldstage.org>).



Elf Director Shannon Rivoire

org), we have auditions coming up for shows next year, and anyone is welcome to audition. You don’t have to have any prior experience. You don’t have to even ever set foot in here before. Everyone is welcome.”

>>> ‘ELF’ DEBUTS DEC. 9

For those of you who haven’t seen the musical or Will Farrell’s 2003 film, here’s a description provided on the theater’s website, <http://butterfieldstage.org>:

“Buddy, a young orphan, mistakenly crawls into Santa’s bag of gifts and is transported to the North Pole. The would-be elf is raised, unaware that he is actually a human until his enormous size and poor toy-making abilities cause him to face the truth.

“With Santa’s permission, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity. Faced with the harsh realities that his father is on the naughty list and his half-brother doesn’t even believe in Santa, Buddy is determined to win over his new family and help New York remember the true meaning of Christmas.”

Performances are scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Dec. 9-11 and 15-18, with 2:30 p.m. matinees Dec. 11-12 and 19. Tickets can be purchased online at www.butterfieldstage.org or by calling 940-665-1284.

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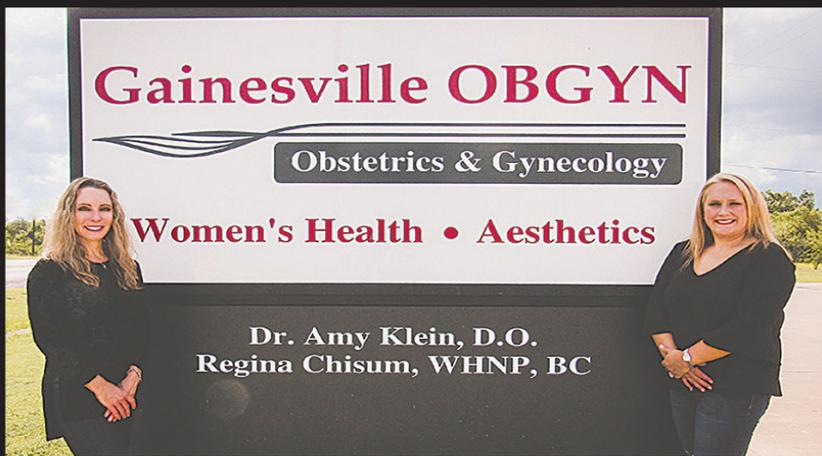
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MUST-HAVES FOR HOLIDAY BAKING & ENTERTAINING



Whether you're a beginning baker or an experienced entertainer, having the right tools can make the process of holiday party prep faster, easier, more festive – and ensure you can achieve expert-level results.

Here are a few must-haves to add to your holiday shopping list:

SPATULAS THAT MAKE YOU SMILE

From cookie batters to mashed potatoes, everyone needs a quality spatula to whip up their favorite holiday dishes. And now you can have

both fun and function with Tovolo Spatulart Spatulas featuring double-sided holiday designs and puns. With a nylon core, these high-quality spatulas provide strength for the heaviest mixing jobs, silicone edges that remain flexible for easy scraping, and an FSC-certified wood handle. They're the perfect environmentally conscious way to add a tremendous tool with a touch of whimsy to the kitchen roster.

MIX WITHOUT THE MESS

A quality set of mixing bowls is a must for any baking, cooking, prep or

storage. While there are many types of bowl sets, stainless steel is ideal for its durability and lightweight design. Choose a set that offers nesting, for easy and efficient cupboard storage; lids to keep foods fresh; deep sides to avoid messes; and a rolled lip for easy pouring.

BASICS FOR BETTER BAKING

Move over parchment paper—serious bakers know the key to perfect baked goods is a quality baking mat. In addition to insulating your pan for even cooking and baking, baking mats protect your pans from baked-on food and grime and prevent sticking, without any paper waste. Additionally, they can double as a work surface featuring grid lines for cookie sizing and spacing, while also offering easy clean-up—just drop them in the dishwasher.

CLASSY CONTAINERS FOR CLEAN UP

Speaking of clean-up, disinfecting wipes have become a staple in most kitchens. Luckily, you can now store your wipes in style with Spectrum Decorative Disinfecting Wipe Containers. Available in four fashionable finishes to fit in with any décor, the rust-resistant containers fit 35- to 75-80-count wipes packages and feature a push-button lid and non-slip bottom for easy one-handed access.

SHAPE UP YOUR COCKTAILS

Once your food menu is set, don't forget the beverages. Create memorable cocktails and mocktails everyone will be talking about with uniquely shaped craft ice. Tovolo offers a variety of craft ice molds—from spheres and sports balls to novelty and holiday shapes. Requiring minimal prep, the easy-to-use molds stack in your freezer to save space and will make you look like a master mixologist.

Having the right tools makes all the difference when you're whipping up culinary creations. Be sure to equip yourself right for a season of easy and festive holiday prep.



Entertain for Less This Holiday Season

The holiday season brings an abundance of feelings that may include joy, comfort, gratitude, and unfortunately, stress. Don't let the task of entertaining friends and family break the bank or your back.

Instead, create memorable gatherings with loved ones while saving time and money in the process using these hosting tips from Dollar General

DELICATE DÉCOR

Creating the right ambiance in your space is key to holiday decorating success. Begin by decluttering the areas of your home where you plan to enter-

tain. Fill the extra spaces with seasonal decorations.

Remember, elaborate, expensive items aren't always needed to make a home look amazing. Decorations like small figurines, bowls filled with holiday candy or simple wreaths and garlands can do the trick of transforming your home into a winter wonderland!

FRUITFUL FOOD

With more guests comes more food, but it doesn't have to mean spending more money. Shopping at discount retailers for essentials such as milk, eggs, bread and cheese can help stretch your budget.

You can also make the switch to

private brand items and save even more when buying foods for overnight guests, such as granola bars, cereal and snacks.

SUPPLIES STOCK-UP

Of course, to entertain, you will need supplies. Stocking up on cleaning essentials, everyday cooking ingredients and entertaining basics early in the season is a great way to have everything needed before the party begins. Consider adding items such as trash bags, cutlery, paper products, other decorations and even small gifts.

By using smart shopping strategies, you can entertain during the holidays with ease instead of stress.



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Left to right standing is Caroline
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 Price-legal assistant; Sue
 Comer- office coordinator
 and sitting Derrell L. Comer –
 Attorney.

**Derrell L.
 Comer**
 ATTORNEY AT LAW





MAKE YOUR HOME MORE INVITING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON BY TAKING THESE STEPS

While you may primarily associate insect invasions with warmer weather, bugs are liable to make themselves at home in your living spaces during all four seasons.

In fact, it is actually common to see an uptick in spider activity in your home during the colder months around their mating season. What's more, most bugs are far more resilient than you may realize, and can survive on little food and under strange conditions. A cockroach can live for an entire week without its head!

To make your holiday guests' stay more pleasant, banish these unwanted visitors by taking the following steps:

CLEAN UP

The holiday season means more meats, crumbly sweets and sugary treats around the house. But most bugs don't need much food to survive. In fact, a cockroach can survive for months on a single crumb of food! After cooking and baking, be sure to wipe down surfaces and sweep up crumbs thoroughly. You should also shake out carpets and vacuum rugs in your dining room or anywhere crumbly cookies and cakes are enjoyed.

DEFEND ENTRY POINTS

Did you know that many of the steps you can take to improve energy efficiency in cool weather have the added benefit of helping to keep bugs out of your home? Keep entry points of your home sealed, such as the garage door, and caulk small cracks in your home's foundation and siding. These measures will go a long way toward regulating the temperature in your home, and also toward preventing insect infestation.

BANISH BUGS WITHOUT HESITATION

While many traditional bug sprays direct you to clear the room during and after use, there are effective alternatives that allow you to spray and stay that won't disrupt your holiday festivities. Zevo, a brand of nature-inspired insect control products, has sprays for spiders, ants, wasps and whatever other critters are hunkered down in your house this season. Zevo is made of essential oils, targets and shuts down biological pathways found in bugs. It's safe for use around people and pets when used as directed. For more information, visit www.zevoinsect.com.

MIND FIREWOOD

Everyone loves a roaring fire during the holidays. However, bugs can commonly make their way into your home via firewood. Store firewood outdoors under a tarp to keep it dry (moist firewood attracts bugs) and don't bring it inside until you plan to burn it.

While the holiday season is all about welcoming guests, you don't need to extend that invitation to pests. Make your home more inviting to your friends and family by taking steps to keep bugs at bay.



Five Tips to Ease the Pain of Holiday Shipping

Holiday plans may look different again this year. Some families will choose to host small gatherings, while others may celebrate from the comfort of home instead of traveling.

If you won't be spending the holidays with loved ones—and if this season is anything like 2020—you'll likely be shipping gifts.

Here's how to ensure a timely, damage-free arrival:

Be Aware of Shipping Deadlines

Each year, the United States Postal Service and other major shipping companies release deadlines to help people plan timely delivery of packages during their busiest season of the year. Whether you'll manually ship gifts or order them online, prioritizing these deadlines is key. Give yourself ample time. Aim to have packages shipped about 10-12 days before the holiday. The USPS recommends no later than December 15, 2021 for ground shipping.

Invest in a Quality Box

While it may be tempting to use any old box you have hanging out in the garage, worn-down boxes are much more likely to crumple in-transit. Additionally,

if the package is too big for its contents, you risk things rolling or shaking; if it's too small, you risk tearing and breaking.

With this in mind, consider investing in new, quality boxes, like Duck Brand Kraft Box. They are cost-effective, made from recycled, durable materials, and are available in a variety of sizes, all of which meet postal regulations, so you can pick the best fit that protects from damage, while keeping shipping costs down.

Pick Proper Packing Tape

If you're going to invest in shipping supplies, don't forget to include a strong, easy-to-use packing tape. Lower-quality options may lead to splitting or tearing, which is a recipe for disaster when shipping holiday presents (or even for storing décor until next year). Duck Max Strength Packing Tape offers premium quality and tough adhesion, to keep boxes and packages secure during shipping. Stronger and more durable than ordinary tapes, this packing tape is designed to seal even the heaviest boxes safely and securely to help prevent items inside from being damaged during delivery.

Add an Extra Layer of Protection

Handle fragile packages with extra

care by including the all-important layer of bubble cushioning. It easily conforms around treasured objects and helps prevent shifts and damage during shipping, so items stay put. For best protection, make sure the bubbles are facing your gift to cushion impact.

Personalize the Package

If you prefer a greener option, Flourish Brand Kraft Paper is protective, versatile and sustainable. Made from 100% recycled material, the shipping paper can be easily added to standard curbside recycling bins.

Plus, it makes it easy to wrap up and ship out large boxes, and can be used to fill packaging voids, so items stay in place. Or, as a fun indoor activity throughout winter, kids may enjoy using Kraft Paper to create customized, DIY wrapping paper. Other special touches to your long-distance holiday delivery could be including a thoughtful note or adding a drop of essential oil to the ribbon.

The holidays can be stressful. When you plan ahead and have the proper supplies on-hand, you'll be able to quickly cross "ship holiday gifts" off your to-do list and enjoy the magic of the season.



Tips for a Smart Holiday Shopping Game Plan

Health and safety, shipping delays and a constrained budget -- these are just some of the concerns that may be amplifying your shopping stress this holiday season.

A new consumer sentiment survey centered on the holiday season can help you know what to expect in the coming weeks so you can make a smart shopping game plan. The Sensormatic Solutions survey finds that more people plan to shop in-store this year over last and plan to get started earlier.

Indeed, while 63% of U.S. consumers are concerned about shopping in-store, this isn't stopping them from taking advantage of annual deal days or visiting enclosed malls. In fact, 50% of U.S. consumers still plan to shop in-store during Black Friday weekend and 50% will start their holiday shopping before November, compared to 43% in winter 2020.

Despite many consumers indicating that they plan to hold fast to the traditional

shopping experience, the survey also finds that a growing number of consumers are adopting newer shopping methods. This is in part because of the convenience these services offer.

For example, 42% of those surveyed say they'll use buy online, pick-up in store (BOPIS) services for their holiday shopping, a 9% increase from 2020, and 44% say they'll use curbside pickup, a 12% increase from 2020. Popularized during the pandemic to help people adhere to social distancing guidelines, these fulfillment options are great alternatives to brick-and-mortar shopping.

"We expect more contactless checkouts and unified commerce services like BOPIS and curbside pickup this holiday season because health and safety is paramount," says Kim Melvin, global leader of marketing, Sensormatic Solutions.

As you check all your items off your holiday shopping list, consider the following tips:

➤ Avoid busy stores and crowds by starting your shopping early.

➤ Take advantage of annual deal days without navigating in-store traffic or risking online shipping delays by using unified commerce services like BOPIS and curbside pickup.

➤ Forty-five percent of U.S. consumers said store occupancy limits preventing overcrowding would make them feel more confident shopping in-store this holiday season. If that describes you, take your business to stores adhering to occupancy limits and practicing other safety measures. The good news is that businesses have a lot of tools in their toolbox. New technologies are helping retailers understand expected shopper patterns so they can implement in-store strategies to better service their customers.

As we enter the second holiday season of the pandemic, smart strategies can help you get your shopping done safely and with ease.



STEER CLEAR OF KNOCK-OFF TOYS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



In the scramble to get your hands on the toys your children want this holiday season, experts warn that you should prioritize safety by sticking to age-appropriate toys and by avoiding counterfeit alternatives at all costs.

“Illicit sellers of counterfeit toys may dupe parents into thinking they’re buying the real thing, or entice them with lower prices or the promise of getting the ‘hot toy’ of the holiday season,” says Joan Lawrence, The Toy Association’s “Toy Safety Mom” and senior vice president of standards and regulatory affairs. “What’s scary is that these illegitimate

sellers are actually peddling fake and unsafe products that oftentimes don’t comply with product safety laws. That’s why we always urge parents to shop from reputable brands and sellers whose toys have been tested for compliance with over 100 different safety standards and tests required by law.”

With the shipping crisis predicted to have widespread impacts on the availability of this holiday season’s most popular toys, counterfeits are likely to be even more enticing. And new research conducted by OnePoll on behalf of The Toy Association suggests that

consumers are not always as vigilant as they should be, with 65% of parents saying they would purchase knock-off/counterfeit toys if they couldn’t get their hands on the original item and 63% indicating they would buy counterfeits if they were cheaper. Indeed one in 10 parents are not even aware that counterfeit toys can be dangerous for kids to play with.

As you go about looking to snag a hot toy this holiday season, steer clear of counterfeit toys that are not safe or appropriate for your child by following these tips from PlaySafe.org:

SHOP ONLY FROM REPUTABLE BRANDS AND SELLERS

Their toys have been tested for compliance with over 100 different safety standards and tests required by law. Can’t find a toy on your child’s wish list? Wait for a trusted retailer to restock the product. Buying fake or cheaper alternatives is just not worth the risk. If a product’s reviews are negative, or if there aren’t many, it’s a clue the product could be a fake.

MAKE SURE THE BRAND HAS A PROFESSIONAL-LOOKING WEBSITE

Can’t find a website? That may be a red flag that you are dealing with an illicit seller. Poorly photoshopped pictures, typos, or spelling mistakes in the online description or packaging are other clues that the product could be illegitimate, and therefore unsafe.

SHOP FOR AGE-APPROPRIATE TOYS

According to The Toy Association survey, 76% of parents read age recommendations on toy packaging before purchasing. However, 40% admitted they view age labels on toys as suggestions instead of a warning, and 68% would give their child a toy recommended for older children. Be sure to follow age recommendations on toy packaging, which are not mere suggestions but firm recommendations made by safety experts that are based on childhood developmental stages.

HOLIDAY RECIPES

Holidays offer chance to enjoy friends, family with dishes

From formal dinners to relaxed come-as-you are get-togethers, holiday season is here again. Seemingly, parties of all sorts occur at a greater frequency during the last couple of months of the year and in attendance may be family, friends, neighbors, or co-workers. Do we wind up as the year winds down? It is best to be prepared, whether hosting or as a guest.

RUM AND COLA HOLIDAY HAM

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose

Prep time: 30 minutes

Cook time: 80 minutes

Servings: 10-12



HAM:

- 1 Omaha Steaks Spiral-Sliced Ham (8 pounds)

GLAZE:

- 1 cup cherry fruit spread
- 3/4 cup dark spiced rum
- 3/4 cup cola
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Thaw frozen ham in refrigerator 24-48 hours.
2. Remove from refrigerator and let ham come to room temperature, about 30-45 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 325 F. Remove ham from foil and film. Return ham to foil wrapping and place in oven-safe roasting pan. Roll foil down leaving 2 inches of foil around bottom of ham.
4. Place roasting pan with ham in oven on lower rack and heat uncovered 60-75 minutes, until ham starts to brown. While ham cooks, make glaze.
5. To make glaze: In medium saucepot, whisk fruit spread, rum, cola, Worcestershire sauce, Dijon mustard and salt until well incorporated. Bring to boil then reduce heat to medium. Simmer over medium heat 10 minutes then remove from heat. Cool to room temperature.
6. During last 15 minutes of cooking, glaze ham every 5 minutes.



SWEET CRANBERRY SAUCE

Prep time: 2 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 ounces cranberries
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 1/2 tablespoons ginger paste
- 1/8 tablespoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons orange zest
- vanilla ice cream (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In large skillet over medium heat, combine cranberries, sugar, orange juice, water, ginger paste, salt, ground cinnamon and orange zest.
2. Bring to simmer. Stir until thickened to desired consistency, 15 minutes.
3. Cool 30 minutes. Transfer to bowl. Cover and refrigerate 30 minutes. Serve alone or over vanilla ice cream, if desired.



SPINACH-HAM DIP

While your loved ones wait patiently for the main course to be served, hearty appetizers like bread bowls can keep appetites at bay. This Spinach-Ham Dip is the perfect combination of comforting and satisfying when served with bread cubes, crackers or tortilla chips for a warming snack ahead of the big meal.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups ricotta cheese
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 1/4 pound ham, cubed
- 3/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 round bread loaf (16 ounces), unsliced

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350 F.
2. In medium bowl, blend ricotta cheese and sour cream until smooth. Add spinach, ham, Parmesan cheese and green onions; mix until blended.
3. Cut 1-2-inch diameter circle out of top of bread loaf. Reserve top. Remove bread inside loaf, leaving about 1 inch along sides. Pour cheese mixture into bread bowl. Replace top. Cover bread loaf in aluminum foil and bake 60 minutes, or until warmed through.
4. Take bread removed from inside bread bowl and cut into dipping sized chunks.
5. Remove bread from aluminum foil and place on platter. Scatter bread chunks around bread bowl to use for dunking in cheese sauce.



PUMPKIN SPICE SCALLOPED LITTLE POTATOES

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour

Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 1 1/2 pounds Terrific Trio Little Potatoes, 1/8-inch sliced, kept in water until ready to use
- 5 slices thick-cut bacon, sliced, cooked until crisp and drained
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 1 1/2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons water
- 1 cup pecans, rough chopped

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.
2. In pot over medium heat, melt butter. Add flour and cook 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low then slowly add milk gradually, ensuring it is incorporated before adding more. Turn heat to medium-high and cook until thickened, stirring continuously. Remove from heat and set aside.
3. In bowl, add drained potatoes, sauce, bacon, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and cloves. Season with salt and pepper, to taste; mix well.
4. In greased 8-by-11-inch baking dish, line potatoes on sides in desired pattern. Stuff extra bacon between potatoes from remains left in bowl. Pour extra sauce over potatoes.
5. Bake 60 minutes.
6. In small pot over medium-high heat, add brown sugar and water. Cook to melt sugar and allow to bubble, about 5 minutes. Add pecans; stir 2 minutes. Lay on parchment-lined baking sheet and allow to cool. Once cool, chop into pieces.
7. Remove potatoes from oven and sprinkle pecans over top.





FRESH GINGER COOKIES

Servings: 24

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup salted butter, softened
- 1 cup, plus 3 tablespoons, sugar, divided
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup grated fresh ginger

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350 F.
2. In medium bowl, whisk flour, baking soda, ground ginger, cinnamon and salt. Set aside
3. In stand mixer, beat butter, 1 cup sugar and brown sugar until fluffy. Add egg and fresh ginger; beat until combined. Gradually add dry ingredients to mixer until combined.
4. In small bowl, add remaining sugar. Using spoon, portion out dough, roll into balls then roll in sugar. Arrange balls on baking sheet at least 1 inch apart.
5. Bake 14 minutes, or until edges are golden brown. Transfer cookies to cooling rack and cool completely.

Source: Culinary.net



HOT MULLED (SHERRIED) APPLE CIDER

When hosting on nights when the mercury has dropped, a warm beverage can heat up guests in a matter of minutes.

Serves 16

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 gallon apple cider
- 1 orange, unpeeled, cut into slices
- 1/4 cup whole cloves
- 4 sticks cinnamon
- 1/4 cup honey, preferably cranberry honey
- 1 cup sherry (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine the cider, orange slices, cloves, cinnamon, and honey in a large pot over medium heat. If you are picky about things floating in your cider, make a little bundle out of cheesecloth and place the cinnamon and cloves inside before adding to the cider. I like to chew on cloves, so I just toss everything in. Bring to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer over low heat for an hour or so to spread these lovely winter aromas around your home.
2. If you're serving it to adults, add the sherry. It might make everyone want to go sledding!



TIPS AND TRICKS FOR CUTTING OUT COOKIES

Baking is a holiday tradition in many households. The aroma of freshly baked cakes, pies and cookies wafts through the air of many homes this time of year, and that makes the holiday season even more special.

Cookies are a tradition passed down through the ages. In medieval Europe, small, spiced cookies were exchanged as treats, and people still bake and share gingerbread cookies today.

Cut cookies are some of the most popular cookies to make during the holiday season. Some families may have their share of favorite cookie cutter shapes and dough recipes. Certain techniques can make holiday baking sessions easier and ensure consistent results.

- Work on a lightly floured, cool surface, such as a cutting board or stone counter top. Never work on a warm surface, which can cause dough to spread and stick.

- Roll out the dough between two sheets of baking or parchment paper. Betty Crocker recommends a thickness of about 1/8 inch,



unless noted in the recipe. This prevents the dough from sticking, and parchment enables you to easily transfer rolled-out dough to a refrigerator or elsewhere.

- When rolling out dough, portion it out into a few smaller amounts to roll out more easily. This will also help it to chill more readily.

- Cookies cut most easily when the dough is chilled. Refrigerate the dough for as long as possible, ideally an hour or more — even overnight. The more chilled, the firmer the

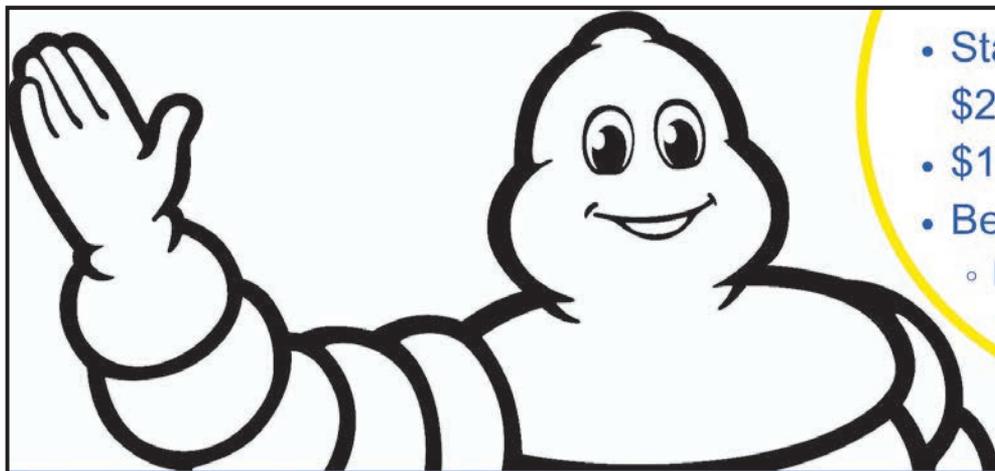
dough will be.

- Rubber rolling pin rings that slip onto each side of the rolling pin can help ensure that the dough is being rolled out to a uniform thickness.

- Dip cookie cutters into flour with each cut. Work from the center and move out to the edges when cutting out your designs. Try to maximize space and avoid scraps and rerolling.

- Some expert bakers say that metal cookie cutters cut cleaner than plastic ones. Whichever cutter you use, cut the cookie by pressing straight down; try not to twist or jiggle the cookie cutter when using it. Doughs with a high butter content can help, as the extra grease helps separate the dough from the cutters.

- If cut cookies have gotten warmer, place them in the freezer for a few minutes to firm up again and then cook. This will guarantee the cookies will not spread or distort while baking.



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APPLE PIE

Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 40 minutes
Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 prepared 9-inch double-crust pie pastry, divided
- 3/4 cup Domino Light Brown Sugar
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 2 pounds apples, cored, quartered and sliced
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Line 9-inch pie pan with half pastry then prick bottom and sides with fork.
2. In large saucepot, combine brown sugar, flour, butter, cinnamon, nutmeg, salt, lemon juice and lemon zest. Add apples and toss to coat evenly. Slowly heat over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar dissolves and apples begin to soften and cook down to about 6 cups.
3. Turn apple mixture into lined pie plate. Top with remaining pastry. Trim and flute edges with fork. Slit top crust to allow steam to escape.
4. Bake 35-40 minutes, or until crust is golden.

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