

HOLIDAY *Entertaining*

bright ideas

Exterior decorating safety tips

*purr-fectly
festive celebrations*

Pet-friendly holiday decorating

*home for
the holidays*

Tips to make a home
more accommodating
for holiday guests



Classic touches to transform home interiors this holiday season



Painter Norman Rockwell was famous for his narrative paintings depicting the essence of American life in the mid-twentieth century. His works of art blended sentimentality with humor and realism and were featured on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* for decades. Some of his paintings portray the classic tableaux that evoke traditional feelings of the holiday season. Rockwell's classic paintings may inspire individuals to recreate that mid-century feel when decorating this holiday season. When transforming home interiors for the holidays, these classic touches can make moments more magical.

- **Embrace classic color palettes.** Christmas colors include, red, green, white, and gold. Utilizing these colors throughout a home will set a classic tone.
- **Utilize timeless ornaments.** Cherished ornaments collected through the years will add a classic touch to the Christmas tree. Family heirlooms and ornaments made from quality materials lend a touch of nostalgia.
- **Use cozy textiles.** Wrap the home in cozy touches, like plaid blankets and velvet ribbons. Plush throws and seasonal pillows also can add a traditional touch to interior spaces.
- **Decorate with classic figurines.** Nutcrackers and religious figurines lend a traditional touch to holiday decor.

- **Display a live tree.** Artificial trees can look realistic, but a fragrant live evergreen in front of the living room picture window calls to mind a classic Christmas setting.
- **Hang knit stockings.** Celebrants lucky enough to have a fireplace can hang knit stockings in classic holiday colors from the mantel.
- **Play classic tunes.** Holiday music crosses various genres, but the old standards from Bing Crosby or Andy Williams can set a classic feel when entertaining.

Evoking a classic feel at home for the holidays can make celebrations traditional and sentimental.



how to create new holiday traditions

Traditions are hallmarks of most holidays, but they're particularly prominent during celebrations that fall at the end of the year. The customs people hold dear are among the many factors that set the holiday season apart. It's why we eat turkey when giving thanks or kiss under the mistletoe.

Just because a holiday is associated with various established traditions doesn't mean individuals and families cannot come up with new customs. Here are some pointers for people seeking to establish new holiday traditions.



Get inspired

Although scouring social media can create feelings of inequality or even competition as everyone posts their holiday activities, such searching also can provide inspiration for innovative traditions. If something a friend is doing looks like it can be fun and rewarding, families can borrow the tradition and make it their own.

Communicate with others

Engage the entire family in discussions about traditions they may want to include in holiday celebrations as well as what ones they may not enjoy. For example, traditions that foster overconsumption or create unnecessary stress can be eliminated and replaced with customs that make everyone feel better.

Involve others

Part of the magic of the holidays is the chance to connect with others. Expand holiday traditions to include more people. If a home is not large enough to handle a crowd, think about renting a room at a VFW center or firehouse, where a greater number of people can get together to create wreaths or even watch holiday movies. The more, the merrier this time of year.

Holiday traditions can make the season enjoyable, but they are not set in stone. Families can modify existing customs and create new traditions to make the season even more meaningful.

Identify what you value

Values establish the foundation for holiday traditions. Maybe you aspire to give back to your community? Perhaps the goal is to spend more quality time with family? Once you've identified the values driving your motivation to start a new holiday tradition, you can then establish one that aligns with those values. For example, if you aspire to give back, then a day of service at a nearby soup kitchen can become a holiday tradition.

Expand on an existing tradition

New traditions do not have to be entirely unique; they could expand on things that families already do. If family baking sessions are an existing tradition, perhaps the efforts can be expanded to include more family members? Extra items can be packaged up and shared with elderly neighbors who may no longer have a lot of family visiting or can't bake on their own.

Reflect on childhood traditions

Perhaps there is something adults did during their own childhoods that can be incorporated into modern traditions? An adult who has fond memories of playing a game in between courses of the holiday dinner can engage in that same game to pass it on to another generation.



FAMOUS MARINADES
Sirloin Tips | Boneless Chicken
Boneless Pork | Wings & Thighs

MEATS
Full Line of Packaged
& Custom-Cut Meats



BEER & WINE
A Great Selection of Beer & Wine
to Complement Our Food Items

NEW SEASONED STEAKS
Seasoned With Montreal Seasoning
Available In All Cuts



PRODUCE
Expanded Produce Department

PREPARED FOODS
Salads | Soups | Quiche
Dips | Desserts

The **BUTCHERY**

The Difference is Delicious

DANVERS: 182 North Street, 978-777-3000 • NEWBURY: 2 Morgan Ave., 978-463-3001

LET US CATER YOUR NEXT FAMILY OR COMPANY PARTY

Enter To Win a Vermont Teddy Bear at our Danvers Location

Open 7 days a week
www.danversbutchery.com

Kid-crafted holiday decor ideas



Getting children in on the fun of decorating for the holiday season makes this time of year that much more special. Children who make their own ornaments and other items can proudly display them all season long.

There are plenty of handmade holiday crafts to keep little fingers occupied. Here are some ideas to spark imagination and hours of creative fun.

Easy snow globes

A visit to the craft store will uncover various items that can be turned into snow globes. Look for a plastic cookie jar-like container with a lid that screws on tightly; otherwise, choose glass mason jars. Use a general ratio of one cup of water, three teaspoons of glycerine or an oil like baby oil or mineral oil, and a few teaspoons of glitter. Glue a plastic Christmas tree or snowman figurine to the underside of the lid of the jar with a rubberized adhesive or another glue that will hold up to wet conditions. When dry, replace the lid, invert the jar and watch the snow fall.

Salt dough ornaments

Salt dough is a modeling dough made from two cups of all-purpose flour, one cup of salt, and about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water. Mix the ingredients together and knead until the dough is smooth and easy to work with. Add more flour if it's too sticky; more water if it's too dry. Kids can use cookie cutters to cut shapes from the rolled-out dough, or sculpt freehand. Remember to poke a hole through the top of the ornament to thread through string or ribbon later on. While the dough can be dried out by air in about a week, a faster method is to bake in an oven at 250 F for $1\frac{1}{2}$ to two hours, or until the dough is dry and hard. Kids can then paint the dried creations.



Paper gingerbread figures

Children may delight in making life-sized gingerbread girls and boys they can decorate and then hang up on the wall. A roll of brown postal paper will work, as will other embellishments like markers, paints, crayons, or ribbon. Kids take turns being traced while lying down on a piece of rolled-out paper. Then the general shape is cut out and decorated. Children can raise their arms, bend their legs, or vary their positions to give life to the gingerbread figures.

Winter wonderland

It can be fun to create a diorama or small winter landscape that can be set out with other decorations.

Craft stores will likely

sell small, plastic evergreen trees this time of year, or they may be available in the model train aisle of a local hobby shop. The trees can be given snowy boughs with a little acrylic paint. Include figures of bunnies, deer and whatever else kids can dream up. A thin strand of LED, battery-operated lights can add some illumination to the scene. Secure all items to a piece of cardboard or foam board for ease.

Children can make the most of their time crafting items for holiday decorating.

Christmas Eve fun for families

The day and evening before Christmas is a time of much anticipation for young children, particularly those awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus. What children do not realize is their parents have been working hard behind the scenes for many weeks to help maximize the holiday magic, and Christmas Eve often is the final push to get everything done before the big day (and man in red) arrives.

Keeping children happy and entertained on Christmas Eve can free up time for adults to check off their to-do lists and savor some of the holiday spirit themselves. Here are some traditions to explore on Christmas Eve that are entertaining for kids and adults.



• **Bake some cookies.** Santa is going to want a fresh batch of cookies to refuel for a long night of delivering presents. Therefore, having children prepare and bake some cookies can be a Christmas Eve tradition that keeps little ones occupied. When cooled, and after sampling one or two themselves, kids can feel pride placing a dish of cookies out for the jolly old elf.

• **Decorate gingerbread houses.** Christmas Eve is a great night to decorate gingerbread houses. Families who do not freshly bake the panels for the gingerbread houses can rely on pre-made kits available at various stores. It's a smart idea to have some extra icing available, especially if kids are anxious to "glue" on extra candy embellishments.

• **Attend evening services.** Most churches hold Christmas Eve services, with some offering a Midnight Mass for parishioners. Spending time at these services enables families to slow down and celebrate their faith.

• **Do a Christmas pajama reveal.** It's traditional in some families to buy matching PJs to wear to bed on Christmas Eve and then lounge around in them on Christmas

morning. Whoever is in charge of wrapping gifts can set apart the Christmas PJs by wrapping them in a different patterned paper. Then everyone opens the pajamas at the same time for the big reveal.

• **Leave out reindeer food.** Kids can have a fun time putting together a batch of special reindeer food. After all, Santa isn't the only one doing the heavy lifting delivering gifts; his reindeer probably get hungry, too. Reindeer food can be made using a few different ingredients, namely oatmeal, shredded carrots and glitter. Children can decide where to toss this reindeer food, with some opting to make a path along the front lawn leading toward the house.

• **Watch a holiday classic.** Choose a Christmas movie and gather the family around to watch it. Some options include "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," "Miracle on 34th Street," "Elf," or "A Christmas Story." Set up a popcorn bar nearby where everyone can customize their popcorn with different add-ins, like chocolate candies, cheese or seasonings. Christmas Eve traditions can be fun for kids and families as they anticipate all the festivities to come on Christmas morning.

Cities with notable holiday celebrations

Public holiday celebrations are popular affairs each December. Communities big and small come together during the holiday season, which is a big part of what makes the final month of the year such a special time. Travel enthusiasts who also happen to love the holiday season may want to take their festive outlook on the road and visit any of the many cities across North America with notable holiday celebrations.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

Given its namesake, it's perhaps no great surprise that this city in eastern Pennsylvania goes all out for the holiday season. Christkindlmarkt Bethlehem is a holiday market featuring live music, offerings from skilled artisans, collectibles from Germany (the country's holiday markets are inspiration for Christkindlmarkt Bethlehem), and more. More information about the celebration in Bethlehem can be found at steelstacks.org/festivals/christkindlmarkt-bethlehem/.

Asheville, North Carolina

A cherished locale for outdoor enthusiasts, Asheville also is a must-visit for those brimming with the holiday spirit. Tucked away in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Asheville hosts stunning holiday lighting displays like the Winter Lights at the North Carolina Arboretum. And Christmas at Biltmore, which features America's largest home fully decked out for the season, is a sight all holiday enthusiasts should experience at least once. More information is available at romanticasheville.com/holidays.htm.

Kennebunkport, Maine

Where else but Maine might visitors watch in awe as Santa Claus arrives in town via lobster boat? That unique tradition is just one of many events that make the Christmas Prelude in Kennebunkport a must-see for any holiday season enthusiast. And while fireworks might be most often associated with warm weather holidays like Independence Day, Kennebunkport hosts an annual Christmas Fireworks Display as well, making a December visit to this coastal town in southern Maine a truly unique experience. More information is available at Christmasprelude.com.

Québec City, Canada

Québec is a beautiful and historic city at any time of year, but it's especially magical during the holiday season, when the city's cobbled streets, numerous cafes and German Christmas market combine to make visitors feel as though they have stepped back in time. The Christmas Market is spread out across various locations throughout the city. Christmas choirs add to the throwback appeal, which might prove even greater if visitors are lucky enough to experience a little snowfall during their visit, a weather event that is not uncommon in Québec during the month of December. More information is available at quebec-cite.com/en/what-to-do-quebec-city/christmas.

These are just four of the many notable locales holiday enthusiasts may want to add their travel-inspired seasonal bucket lists.



Unique holiday traditions across the globe

The holiday season is a special time of year. Regardless of which holiday people celebrate in December, billions of people across the globe embrace chances to be a little more festive and spend additional time with family and friends over the final month of the year.

Tradition contributes to the special feeling felt in many communities each December. Holiday celebrants who can't get enough seasonal magic can take note of some of the many unique traditions across the globe that help make the month of December such a special time of year.

The Yule Lads, Iceland

In a tradition that might call to mind the seven dwarves who welcomed Snow White into their home in the classic fairy tale, the Yule Lads of Iceland are said to leave a small gift for children who leave a shoe on their windowsills before going to bed beginning on the night of December 11. The tradition continues through Christmas Day, with each night featuring a visit from a different Yule Lad.

Hiding Brooms, Norway

Norwegian folklore suggested evil spirits and witches awoke on Christmas Eve, and this unique tradition is rooted in efforts to keep those unwelcome holiday guests grounded and avoid lost brooms. On the night of Julaften (Christmas Eve), Norwegians hide their brooms in closets inside their homes to keep them from being stolen by ill-intentioned witches.

Night of the Radishes, Oaxaca, Mexico

Held annually on December 23, the Night of the Radishes is a local celebration in Oaxaca, Mexico. This unique event celebrates oversized radishes, which certainly merits the celebration's inclusion on any list of unusual holiday season celebrations. The event involves the carving of large radishes into figures, a tradition that began as a way to attract more customers to Oaxaca's Christmas market. A formal radish-carving competition was instituted in the late nineteenth century, and the Night of the Radishes continues to draw visitors today.

Krampus Parades, Austria

(various sites)
The holiday season might be a heartwarming time of year in many locales, but the various Krampus parades throughout Austria turn that notion on its head. Krampus is a horned anthropomorphic figure in central and eastern Alpine folklore. Krampus is something akin to Santa Claus's alter ego who's said to punish bad children rather than reward good ones with gifts. Legend says Krampus and his band of less-than-jovial elves roamed an area of the Alps and delighted in causing mayhem. Austrian Krampus parades take place at night and feature revelers dressed in scary costumes, making this a unique if not exactly lighthearted holiday season tradition.

Tradition figures prominently during the holiday season, and some customs stand out for their uniqueness.

Tips

for crafting a holiday meal for a crowd

Holiday meals typically involve a large number of people sitting around the table enjoying one another's company. AllRecipes estimates the average gathering size for a Thanksgiving dinner is eight people, while Pew Research Center data indicates a little more than a quarter of Americans invite six to 10 people for holiday feasts. Holiday hosts typically prepare food for larger than normal crowds, and that requires a few tweaks to typical cooking routines. The following tips can ensure that anyone can host a crowd and send them home

happy and well fed.

• **Plan ahead.** It is important to give thought to what you will be cooking several weeks in advance of the holiday meal. This enables you to decide on a menu, shop for ingredients at the best prices and accommodate any food intolerances or allergies.

• **Consider versatile dishes.** Choose foods that can be made in large quantities and easily adapted to different dietary needs. For example, offering a tray of roasted chicken enables guests to add sauces, cheese, vegetables, or enjoy it plain, depending

on their preferences.

• **Utilize bulk cooking.** Certain meals lend themselves to larger batches. Casseroles, baked pasta dishes, stews, and stir fry all can be increased in volume depending on how many guests will be attending. Purchase items in "family size" packages to save money and time.

• **Keep it simple.** Stick to dishes that you've previously cooked, and utilize slow cookers, air fryers or other tools to make things easier. Limit your meal to one main course and three sides. Think about making appetizers and dessert pot



luck, so that guests can contribute to reduce the amount of work you will need to do.

• **Be mindful of others.** Don't make food allergies or health needs a second thought. Try to have a separate main course that guests who adhere to vegetarian or gluten-free diets can eat safely.

• **Try to limit waste:** Even with careful calculations of guest-to-food ratios, there are bound to be leftovers. Plan ways to utilize leftovers if you choose specific types of food. For example, roasted chicken can be made into sandwiches or salads. Another idea is to have take-home containers at the ready so guests can

bring some leftovers home with them.

Feeding a crowd takes some advanced planning and preparation. Bulk-friendly meals that can be made ahead or in a timesaving kitchen appliance means that holiday hosts can enjoy the festivities with guests.



This holiday season,
may you **build** memories
that last a **lifetime.**

BEVERLY | NORTH READING | PLAISTOW, N.H.

MOYNIHANLUMBER.COM

HOLIDAY Open Studio Sale



2 RIVERS
CERAMICS STUDIO

Please come and join us for our
annual Holiday Sale offering
unique and beautifully handcrafted
pottery from the creative clay
artists in our ceramics studio.

Sat., Dec. 6th, 2025 9AM-5PM
Sun., Dec. 7th, 2025 10AM-4PM



For more information
and directions,
contact:
2Riversstudio@gmail.com

108 Middle Rd., Newbury, MA 01951 • 2RiversCeramics.com • (978) 618-1475



Pet-friendly holiday decorating

Decorating is one of the great joys of the holiday season. Stores adorn their front-facing windows with amazing displays and homeowners often deck out residences from top to bottom with all measures of holiday wonderment.



Approximately 94 million households in the United States feature a pet, according to the American Pet Products Association. Many of those households will be decorating for the holidays and must figure out ways to keep homes safe for all residents — including those covered in fur. These tips can ensure a pet-friendly season with lots of holiday decor.

- **Choose shatterproof decorations.** Select shatterproof ornaments and other decorative items that are durable and non-toxic. Items made from felt, fabric or wood tend to be safer than items that can break.
- **Pick pet-friendly plants.** Poinsettias and mistletoe may be traditional, but they can be toxic to pets. Additional options like Christmas cactus can be safer. Artificial plants are another alternative to consider.
- **Opt out of open flames.** It is best to avoid traditional candles when pets are around. Instead, there are plenty of those powered by LED lights that even mimic the flicker of real candles.
- **Avoid tinsel and ribbons.** Digestive issues or blockages can affect pets who ingest tinsel or ribbons. Select pet-safe ribbons or garlands, and skip the tinsel entirely.

- **Avoid edible decor.** Candy canes on trees or popcorn garlands are festive, but they may prove too tempting for pets to resist. Animals can get sick and may knock over the Christmas tree or other items to access the food.
 - **Secure decorative items.** Position the Christmas tree in an area that is not easily accessible. Avoid putting it near furniture that can be used as a jumping-off point. Make sure the tree stand is sturdy enough to prevent tipping, and consider using wire or string to tie the tree to a ceiling or wall anchor for further stability.
 - **Mind the scents.** Some fragrances can be overwhelming or irritating for pets, so use scented diffusers or plug-ins sparingly. A simmering pot of cloves, cinnamon sticks and orange rinds can create a welcoming, all-natural aroma.
 - **Create a sanctuary.** Try not to move too many of the pet's creature comforts, such as favorite toys or bedding. If you must move these items out of the way, gradually introduce the pet to his or her new area, which can be set away from the hustle of the main entertaining area.
- A pet-friendly holiday season involves being mindful of pets' safety while decorating.

did you
KNOW?



Advent calendars

are a common sight in many households each December, and some historians believe this unique tradition can be traced to a creative nineteenth century German housewife. Though Britannica notes the precise origins of Advent calendars are still debated, one theory behind the popular tradition suggests

a woman in Munich created the Advent calendar as a way for her young and impatient yet excited son to count down the days to December 25. Though details are fuzzy and difficult if not impossible to confirm, this legends suggests the crafty German mother filled 24 different small boxes with a baked treat, allowing her son to open one each day during Advent, the nearly monthlong period of preparation for Christmas that begins on the fourth Sunday before the holiday and ends by Christmas Eve. While this origin story connects Advent calendars with Christianity, and many Christians still make it part of their Christmas celebrations, many modern people with no such affiliation also incorporate the calendars into their holiday season routines.

Your Family Will Love Our
**Homemade Pies
& Real Cream
Pastry**



Stop in any day to enjoy our
home made pastries and
delicious coffee

Or just stop in anytime Wednesday.
Or Thanksgiving 'til Noon.
Our cases will be stocked for your last minute
needs.



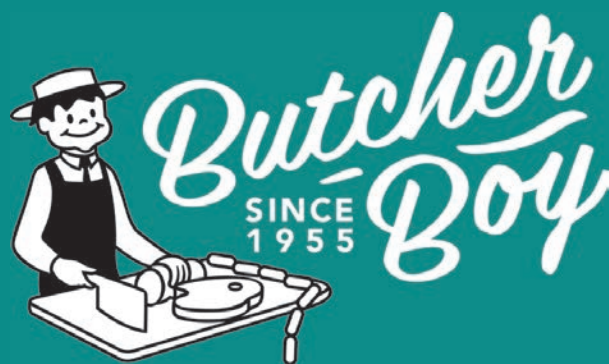
OPEN

Daily 5a.m.-11 p.m.
Thanksgiving 5a.m.-12 noon

978-744-0995

96 Bridge St., Rt. 1A, Salem

coffeetimebakeshop.net



MEATS, SPIRITS & KNOW HOW



Make Butcher Boy Your One Stop Shop for all your Holiday Entertaining!

THE FINEST MEATS • THE FRESHEST PRODUCE • FINE WINE & SPIRITS, CIDER AND BEER
DELI • BAKERY • READY TO EAT MOUTHWATERING MEALS & SIDES • CATERING
GIFT CARDS AVAILABLE

AVAILABLE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Fully Cooked Thanksgiving Dinners with all the fixings!

Cooked Whole Turkeys

Cooked Bone-In Turkey Breast

An Assortment of Freshly Baked Pies

TURKEYS

Farm fresh turkeys • Bone-in turkey breast • Boneless turkey breast

LAMB

All American Boneless, Rolled leg of lamb • Semi Boneless leg of lamb

Boneless, Stuffed leg of lamb *with Imported Prosciutto & Cheese*

Boneless, Seasoned leg of lamb *with Mediterranean Seasoning*

PORK

CROWN ROAST OF PORK • Boneless Center Cut PORK roast

Bone-In Center Cut pork roast

Boneless center cut stuffed PORK roast *Stuffed with Imported Prosciutto & Cheese*

BEEF

All Of Our BEEF is CERTIFIED Top of the Line!!

ROAST TENDERLOIN OF BEEF • Butcher Boy Famous holiday short cut rump steak roast

Boneless or Bone-in prime rib Oven Ready • NY Strip steak roast

HAM

Made Especially for Butcher Boy!

Our Famous Hams Never Too Fatty or Salty • Not Injected With Solution.

Our Own Lean & Fancy Spiral Cut or Non-Spiral Skinless and Shankless

1077 OSGOOD STREET • RTE 125 • NORTH ANDOVER • 978-688-1511
WWW.BUTCHERBOYMARKET.COM



THANKSGIVING CATERING

ORDER YOUR THANKSGIVING CATERING TODAY!



SCAN TO ORDER

TUSCAN MARKET SALEM | 9 VIA TOSCANA

Blue Shutters Beachside Inn



Located on **GOOD HARBOR BEACH**

Perfect for singles, couples, families and groups sweeping ocean views from our uniquely decorated rooms, suites, and efficiencies.

Just minutes from downtown Gloucester and Rockport



OPEN YEAR ROUND



**1 Nautilus Road
978-283-1198**

www.blueshuttersbeachside.com

Dance Prism Ballet

The

Nutcracker

43rd Season

*Celebrate the holidays
with this magical tradition!*

Andover Performances

The Collins Center

Dec 20, 2:30. 6:30

Dec 21, 2:30

Other MA Performances

Fall River Nov 30

Sudbury Dec 7

Littleton Dec 13

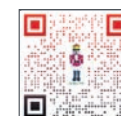
Worcester Dec 14



*Free Photo Op
with Clara, Sugarplum Fairy,
more, all performances!*

Tickets on sale now.

Group rates • Special programs for youth groups
DancePrismInformation@gmail.com • Tickets at danceprism.com





Kid-friendly holiday traditions

Tradition is a big part of the holiday season. Families lean into tradition each December, and perhaps no people participate in holiday customs with more enthusiasm than children. Whether it's decorating the family Christmas tree or baking cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve, children look forward to various holiday season traditions once the calendar turns from November to December.

Parents of young children can make this unique time of year even more special by engaging in various kid-friendly traditions that are sure to produce lots of fun and even more lasting memories.

• **Advent calendars:** The precise origins of Advent calendars are unknown, but historians believe the tradition was started by German Lutherans in the nineteenth century. More than a century later, roughly 50 million Advent calendars are sold across the globe each year, according to Marketplace.org. Advent is a nearly monthlong period of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ on December 25. Each day during Advent, children open a flap, window or door and find a small gift, poem, candy, or another item that adds to the excitement of the season.

• **Matching pajamas:** Though the tradition of wearing matching holiday pajamas may not have the same lengthy history as Advent calendars, it's nonetheless a very fun custom for families. Parents can decide how frequently their families dress up in matching pajamas at bedtime during the holiday season, but doing so on Christmas Eve is a popular way to make a fun day even more special.



Another idea is to host weekly holiday movie nights during the season, which presents a perfect opportunity to don matching PJs.

• **Holiday lights tour:** Holiday lighting displays have come a long way in recent decades. Whereas it might once have been popular to string a few strands of lights around the exterior of a house, many holiday celebrants now beckon their inner Clark Griswold and turn their properties into areas with enough illumination to land a small plane. Holiday inflatables for the yard add to the awe of such displays. Kids tend to be especially fond of these types of displays, so parents can make a point to pick a night each holiday season to go on a tour of their neighborhoods and towns to see this year's offerings.

• **Christmas dance party:** Sweets are another staple of the holiday season, and what better way for kids to burn off some of that extra sugar than to dance it away to a holiday music playlist curated by Mom and Dad? Cue up some holiday classics but let kids dance to a few of their own favorites as well.

Holiday traditions help to make the season a special time of year. Families can embrace various kid-friendly traditions to ensure children have even more fun this December.

Significant traditions of popular December holidays

December is a festive time of year, and that jovial atmosphere is thanks in no small part to the many holidays that dot the calendar over the twelfth and final month of the year.

December holidays are unique from one another, and each boasts its own meaningful traditions that can make celebrations even more special.



• **Chanukah:** The eight-day Festival of Lights is steeped in tradition. Oil plays a prominent role in the miracle at the center of the holiday, so one Chanukah tradition involves eating foods prepared in oil, including latkes (potato pancakes). The lighting of a different candle of the menorah each night during the festival is a symbolic tradition, and many adherents to the Jewish faith place their menorahs in a prominent location in their homes, such as a front bay window. Children may play with a dreidel at various times during the festival of Chanukah, and gift exchanges are a common tradition as well.



• **Christmas:** Many families have their own unique Christmas traditions, but there's also many that transcend family ties. Christmas trees are a focal point of holiday decor, and many families make it a point to choose a live tree together each year and then return home and decorate the tree in each other's company. Families who prefer artificial trees also may decorate their trees together. And just like a menorah may be displayed in a front bay window, many Christmas celebrants place their Christmas trees in a spot where the evergreen, artificial or not, can be seen from the street. Baking together as a family, writing letters to Santa Claus, using Advent calendars to count down to the birthday of Jesus Christ, and gift exchanges with loved ones are some other notable Christmas traditions.



• **Kwanzaa:** A celebration of African American culture and heritage, Kwanzaa is a weeklong commemoration that features many meaningful traditions. Each day during Kwanzaa, celebrants light a candle in the Kinara, a candleholder unique to the holiday. Each candle symbolizes one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa, which the National Museum of African American History & Culture notes include Umoja (Unity), Ujima (collective work and responsibility) and Ujamaa (cooperative economics). Decorating is a popular holiday season tradition, and celebrants of Kwanzaa engage with this custom by decorating their homes with African and African American works of art and by displaying a Ghanaian textile known as kente.

• **New Year's Eve:** The month of



December ends with a celebration of the previous 12 months and excitement for the year ahead. New Year's Eve traditions include staying up late until midnight and counting down the final seconds of the year. Some do so publicly at bars and restaurants or in notable locales like Times Square, where revelers count down to the new year as the famed ball begins its descent over the final 60 seconds of the year. Champagne for adult celebrants and sparkling cider for youngsters may be hoisted in a toast to the year past and in celebration of what's to come.



a brief history of Christmas trees

Towering evergreen trees adorned in lights and other trinkets are a focal point of the holiday season. Christmas trees are placed in prominent locations in homes, typically in front of a large picture window or in the corners of large entryways. These awe-inspiring trees beckon people to inspect all of the ornaments and often are the first thing people envision when thinking of holiday decor. The tradition of the Christmas tree is believed to have begun in Germany in the sixteenth century. However, the National Christmas Tree Association says there may be earlier references to Christmas trees in other parts of the world as well. The first written record of

a decorated Christmas tree comes from Riga, Latvia, in 1510. Men of a local merchant's guild decorated the tree with roses and then set fire to it. The rose was considered a symbol of the Virgin Mary. In the sixteenth century in Alsace, France, trees were sold in the marketplace and brought home and set up undecorated. Laws limited the size to "eight shoe lengths" or slightly more than four feet. Early German Christmas trees were adorned with apples, a holdover from earlier traditions when evergreen boughs hung with apples were used as props in miracle plays. These plays took place in churches on December 24, which was Adam & Eve's Day in the early Christian calendar. Evergreens have long been symbolic of life during the cold months of winter, calling

to mind the promise of spring to come. Various cultures, including early Christians, featured trees during winter solstice celebrations. Some historians believe Martin Luther, a Protestant reformer who might have been inspired by stars in the night, was responsible for adding lighted candles to the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was introduced to the United States by German settlers in the 1800s. Soon after those settlers' arrival, trees began to be sold commercially. President Franklin Pierce is credited with having the first Christmas tree at the White House. Today, Christmas trees are wildly popular, with the American Christmas Tree Association reporting that 94 percent of U.S. consumers plan to display one.

The Eagle-Tribune

ET insider

Look For These Great Upcoming Special Sections!

Subscribing has its benefits.
Be the first to see these upcoming special sections!

For more information call 978-946-2200

**Holiday
DIY**

**Nov
27**



**Holiday
Guide**

**Dec
3**



NORTHof BOSTON MEDIA GROUP

Tips for *first-time* holiday hosts



The holiday season is a busy time of year. From holiday shopping to readying the home for guests, there's no shortage of things to accomplish in a relatively brief amount of time. Seasoned holiday enthusiasts may be ready to put their game faces on and tackle tasks with ease. But for first-time holiday hosts, the prospect of crossing items off to-do lists may require a little extra assistance.

According to Dr. Vanessa Kennedy, a clinical psychologist at Driftwood Recovery, holiday hosting can "lead to the pressure to curate picture-perfect moments, creating stress and anxiety." The following are pointers those new to holiday hosting can employ to simplify the process and enjoy the holidays a little more.

- **Do as much prep work in advance as possible.** Giving yourself extra time to get things done can help immensely. Grocery shop one day, prepare food the next, clean the house one day, and set the table or arrange decor on another. Minor task can be left for the morning of the day guests arrive.

- **Cook and freeze items.** Utilize recipes that enable you to cook in bulk and then store foods until you need them. Casseroles, baked pasta dishes, freezable soups, and ready-to-bake cookie doughs made in advance will save a lot of time closer to the holidays.

- **Stock the pantry.** If holiday hosting involves overnight guests, be sure to keep easy items on hand so guests can help themselves. Dry goods or pre-packaged muffins for breakfast, chips or pretzels for late-night snacks, granola bars, or store made croissants can fit the bill. Put everything in a dedicated



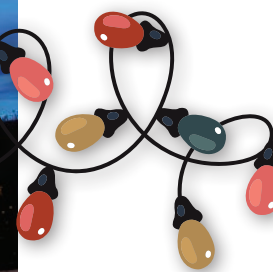
basket so guests can grab items as needed. Stock the refrigerator with water, seltzer, iced teas, and sodas, and make a full pot of coffee in the morning so guests can pour their own.

- **Avoid complicated cocktails.** You don't want to be stuck mixing drinks all evening. Instead, make it simple for guests to help themselves. Wine, beer, premade punches, or even one specialty drink are ideal.

- **Consider hiring a caterer.** If the idea of a homecooked meal feels like climbing Mount Everest, swap out some items for store-bought alternatives, or work with a favorite restaurant or caterer to secure foods that only need to be reheated and served.

- **Free up closet and room space.** Guests will be coming with a lot of stuff, particularly if you live in a cold climate. Make room in the entry closet for guests' coats and boots. Be sure you can accommodate suitcases or overnight bags. Set aside an area where guests can deposit their wrapped gifts.

Holiday hosting can be a whirlwind of activity, but novice hosts can quickly get into the swing of things.



Exterior decorating safety tips

Decorating the exterior of a home for the holiday season is a beloved tradition in countless households. In the movie "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," Clark Griswold had "250 strands of imported Italian twinkle lights," each with 100 bulbs per strand. His grand total of 25,000 lights caused a temporary blackout. While driving around to take in holiday lighting displays, many people may see some that emulate Clark Griswold's vision and be inspired to create their own designs.

Lights are just one type of home decoration. Wreaths, inflatables, metal or wooden structures, and much more are part of holiday displays as well. While decorating can be fun and festive, it's also important to ensure that it is done safely. The following tips, courtesy of Travelers Risk Consultants and Meyer Landscaping & Design, can keep family and friends safe during this wonderful time of year.

- **Plan ahead.** Determine how many electrical outlets you have and plan the display around the accessibility of those outlets. Be sure to calculate the maximum amount of wattage allowed so you do not overload the electrical system. Never exceed the maximum number of strings or devices that may be linked together. Lighting packaging should provide such information. Also, plug all outdoor lights and decorations into ground-fault circuit interrupters to reduce the risk of electric shock.

- **Test the lights.** Only purchase lights that have been tested for safety. Look for a certification mark from UL, ETL, CSA, or another nationally recognized laboratory.

- **Go with LED.** Light emitting diode string lights run cooler, last longer and use less energy than incandescent lights.

- **Inspect decorations.** Make sure all the lights, electrical cords, lighted

holiday decor, and inflatables are in good condition before use. Dispose of anything that has frayed wiring or is broken.

- **Use only outdoor-rated products.** Be sure the extension cords and any other products are rated for the outdoors. Electrical connections should be kept clean and dry before plugging things in, and an extra step of wrapping plug connections with electrical tape can further reduce moisture.

- **Practice ladder safety.** Ladders are often utilized when adding lights or other decor to homes. Always be safe on and around ladders. It's essential to maintain three points of contact while on the ladder. Don't risk leaning too hard to one side while on the ladder, and always have a spotter. Use wooden or fiberglass ladders when stringing electrical decor and lights, as metal ladders conduct electricity.

- **Identify where power lines are located.** Be mindful of power lines when decorating outdoors. Keep oneself and decorations at least 10 feet away from power lines.

- **Skip staples and nails.** Nails and staples should not be used when decorating. Nails and staples can puncture the protective layers of a home, allowing moisture to get in and break down the structure of the home. A nail or staple also may accidentally puncture an electrical cord, increasing the risk of electrocution. Use hooks and other attachment devices specially designed for holiday decor.

- **Avoid items that can contribute to roof damage.** Heavy items on the roof can cause unnecessary stress to shingles and result in damage. Only use lightweight and appropriately anchored items on the roof.

- **Dress appropriately.** Before hanging holiday decorations and lights, assess the conditions and wear the proper clothing for the weather. If the weather is especially rough, skip decorating for a safer day.

Decorating safety is of the utmost importance and should be a priority this holiday season.



Tips to make a home more accommodating for holiday guests

Millions of people host family and friends during the holiday season. According to a recent report from the travel and finance experts at Upgraded Points, 57 percent of adults surveyed planned to host a holiday gathering in 2024, while 70 percent of respondents indicated they planned to attend such celebrations.

Hosting is a significant responsibility, but it's also a fun way to catch up with loved ones in a laid back environment. Chances to catch up are even stronger when hosting overnight guests, whose comfort should be a priority as hosts ready their homes for holiday celebrations. Hosts preparing to welcome loved ones into their homes this holiday season can take various steps to make their homes as accommodating as possible for overnight guests.

- **Offer a secluded spot to sleep.** The holiday season can be hectic, and it can be hard to keep things calm and quiet when returning home. That's especially true in homes with young children. Overnight guests who might be a little

weary from traveling will undoubtedly appreciate a place away from the hustle and bustle to rest their heads. Though hosts must make due with the space they have, make a concerted effort to ensure residents remain quiet around guest rooms or other areas where overnight guests will be sleeping. If possible, choose a secluded spot away from areas of the home that tend to be noisy, such as the kitchen and living room/game room.

- **Offer some in-room entertainment.** Access to the internet and streaming services is nonstop in the modern world, and it can be a nice gesture to ensure overnight guests can stream their favorite content and stay connected during their stay. Hosts can outfit guest rooms with a smart TV for as little as \$100 and load it up with popular streaming apps so guests can watch an episode or two of their favorite show in private before calling it a night.

- **Offer kid-friendly creature comforts.** Adults may be accustomed to sleeping outside their own homes, but younger



guests might not be as familiar or comfortable sleeping somewhere other than their own bedrooms. If young children will be staying overnight, hosts can consider putting them up in the same bedrooms as their own children, which can be especially fun when kids are roughly the same age. Additional kid-friendly creature comforts include a stuffed animal or two, an in-room night light and some storybooks on a bedside nightstand.

- **Include guests in fun traditions.** Tradition is a big part of the appeal of

the holiday season, and hosts can make guests feel more welcome by inviting them to participate in their own family traditions. Expand family baking sessions to include overnight guests, encourage willing loved ones to pitch in when preparing family meals and let guests pick their favorite holiday film for a family movie night.

Millions of people will host overnight guests this holiday season. Hosts can employ various strategies to ensure overnight guests feel welcome and comfortable during their stay.

A dessert to satisfy your holiday season *sweet tooth*



Baking is a popular activity come the holiday season. Families may designate entire weekend afternoons to baking holiday goodies, and those efforts are much appreciated by the beneficiaries of all that time spent in the kitchen elbows deep in flour and confectioners' sugar.

Cookies tend to be a go-to holiday treat, particularly in households with young children who want to leave out something homemade for the jolly old elf on Christmas Eve. But there's also plenty of room to expand your horizons during holiday baking sessions with the family. A finished product like these "Toffee Cheesecake Bars" from "Taste of Home Healthy Cooking Cookbook" (RDA Enthusiast Brands) by the Taste of Home/Reader's Digest Kitchens can delight guests and might even compel the man in the red suit to smile even wider come the night before Christmas.

Toffee Cheesecake Bars

Makes 2 ½ dozen

1 cup all-purpose flour
¾ cup confectioners' sugar
⅓ cup baking cocoa
½ cup cold butter
1 8-ounce package reduced-fat cream cheese
1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 ¼ cups milk chocolate English toffee bits, divided

1. In a small bowl, combine the flour, confectioners' sugar, cocoa, and baking soda. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press in the bottom of an ungreased 13-inch x 9-inch baking dish. Bake at 350 F for 12 to 15 minutes or until set.
2. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Add the milk, eggs and vanilla; beat until smooth. Stir in ¾ cup toffee bits. Pour over crust. Bake 18 to 22 minutes longer or until center is almost set.
3. Cool on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining toffee bits; cool completely. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours overnight.

The perfect treat to indulge in *this holiday season*

There's much to look forward to come the holiday season. Celebrations with family and friends, awe-inspiring lighting displays and opportunities to see loved ones' eyes light up after opening the perfect gift are just some of the many things that excite holiday celebrants each December.

Foodies also have much to look forward to come the end of the year. Beginning on Thanksgiving and continuing through the new year, food figures prominently in holiday season celebrations. Indeed, everything from tasty appetizers to main courses to dessert excites holiday celebrants. Dessert is particularly appealing come the holiday season, when many people relax their dietary restrictions and indulge in some treats they tend to avoid during the rest of the year. Holiday hosts who want to ensure guests get as much indulgence as they can handle can try this recipe for "Chocolate Crumble Pie" courtesy of "Chocolate" (Love Food) by the editors at Parragon Books Ltd.

Chocolate Crumble Pie

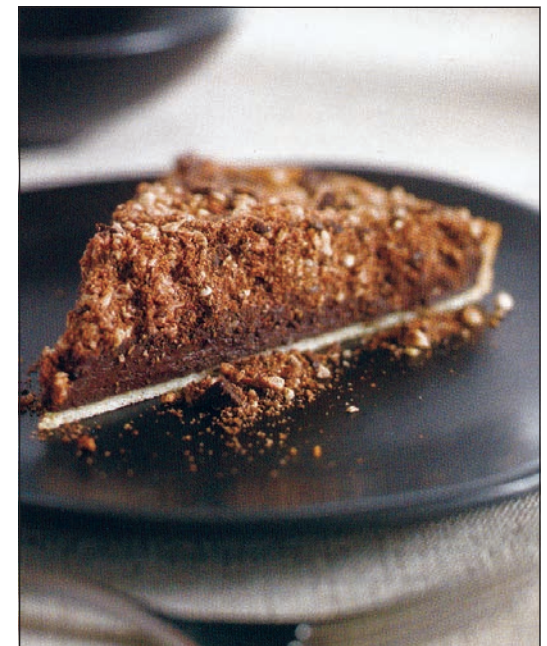
Serves 8

Pie Dough

Scant 1 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ cup unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
¼ cup superfine sugar
1 egg yolk
1 to 2 teaspoons cold water

Filling

⅔ cup heavy cream
⅔ cup milk
8 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
2 eggs



Crumble Topping

½ cup packed brown sugar
¾ cup toasted pecans
4 ounces semisweet chocolate
3 ounces amaretti cookies
1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa

To make the pie dough, sift the flour and baking powder into a large bowl, rub in the butter, and stir in the sugar, then add the egg and a little water to bring the dough together. Turn the dough out, and knead briefly. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let chill in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Roll out the pie dough and use to line a 9-inch loose-button tart pan. Prick the pastry shell with a fork. Line with parchment paper and fill with dried beans or baking beans. Bake in the oven for 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and take out the paper and beans. Reduce the oven temperature to 350 F.

To make the filling, bring the cream and milk to a boil in a saucepan, immediately remove from the heat, and add the chocolate. Stir until melted and smooth. Beat the eggs and add to the chocolate mixture, mix thoroughly and pour into the shell. Bake for 15 minutes, remove from the oven, and let rest for 1 hour.

When you are ready to serve the pie, place the topping ingredients in a food processor and pulse to chop. (If you do not have a processor, place the sugar in a large bowl, chop the nuts and chocolate with a large knife, and crush the cookies, then add to the bowl with the cocoa and mix well.) Sprinkle over the pie, then serve it in slices.



STARTS IN JANUARY!

BINGO

WIN \$\$\$ in our **INSIDER BINGO GAME!**
To receive great local news and sports coverage please call our Customer Service Team at (800) 836-7800

5 Ways to Win!