HOLIDAY Entertaining



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Tips to plan an eclectic, delicious holiday menu

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These decorative items add a lot to holiday festivities

It's easy to recognize the holiday season has arrived. Holiday-centric sights and sounds abound this time of year. In fact, the arrival of decorations in stores seemingly comes earlier and earlier each year, perhaps to accommodate people's undying enthusiasm for the holiday season.

Decorating a home or business for the holidays involves some familiar items, but this is a time of year when people can truly make the holidays their own. With that in mind, here are some considerations for decorations and other trinkets that can add a lot of cheer to this already festive time of year.

• **Wreaths:** Wreaths are one of the simplest ways to dress up windows, doors or other areas of a home. These decorative items can be made from various materials. Evergreen boughs are one of the more traditional, but there's also colorful garlands, flowers or even ribbon that can be wrapped to make a wreath.

• **Lights:** Lights are integral parts of both Christian and Jewish holiday celebrations. Lights adorn homes to represent Christ being the Light of the World. In Judaism, the lighting of eight candles for Chanukah represents how a small amount of Temple oil miraculously burned for eight days and nights. Filling a home with artificial lights or candles adds a festive touch to dark winter evenings.

• **Advent calendar:** While it is called an advent calendar and traditionally ties into the time preceding Christmas, anyone can utilize an advent "countdown" calendar as they anticipate the arrival of Christmas Day. There are different iterations of advent calendars, from chocolate calendars to decorative ones featuring doors behind which there are whimsical figurines. Kids may even want to get involved in making homemade calendars.



• **Poinsettias:** Poinsettias come in a variety of colors, but red is the hue of choice for holiday decorating. Perhaps surprisingly. poinsettias are tropical plants. The "flowers" you see on the plants aren't flowers at all. They're modified leaves called bracts. If you take good care of poinsettias, they even can be planted outdoors for the summer.

• **Boughs and branches:** One of the easiest ways to add a festive touch to a home for the holidays is with items that likely can be scavenged from outdoors. Take a hike and gather some evergreen boughs, tree branches, pine cones, and holly sprigs, which can be turned into garlands, wreaths or centerpieces. With a little white speckle paint, you can give them a snow-covered look.

Decorating for the holidays is a popular tradition and one that can make spaces even more festive to enjoy. Various items can enhance the ambiance and set the scene for the joyous weeks to come.



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Classic holiday films
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Celebrants owe the joy of the holiday season to various components. Decor and gift-giving go a long way toward making December a joyous time of year. Holiday films also do their part to make the season so special.

Many people have their own favorite holiday films, and the following are some that can engage viewers who are young or simply young at heart.

"A Christmas Story"

Released in 1983, this warmly nostalgic, humorous film is a perennial favorite among families. It follows the story of Ralphie, who has his heart set on a very specific Christmas present: a Red Rider BB gun. Amidst wintry exploits and family drama, the true spirit of Christmas manages to shine through in this beloved film. Some of the subject matter can be off-color, and there are some bullying scenes. So this is a movie best watched with children who are mature enough to make it through without being scared.

"Little Women"

Based on the Louisa May Alcott novel of the same name, the 1994 telling of this classic follows the March sisters, who confront financial difficulties, romance and family tragedies in mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts. While it's not a traditional Christmas movie, the importance of spending time with family around Christmastime is a core theme in this coming-of-age tale.

"Klaus"

Perhaps not as well-known as other animated holiday flicks, "Klaus," released in 2019, has a personality all its own. Postman Jesper, who is not making the grade at the postal academy, is sent to work in a frozen town in the North, where he discovers a reclusive toy maker named Klaus. The unlikely duo ultimately team up to make and deliver toys and bring smiles to children's faces.

"Meet Me In St. Louis"

Starring the irreplaceable Judy Garland, this movie musical focuses on four sisters who are awaiting the 1904 World's Fair in their hometown, but learn that their father has accepted a new job and the family must move to New York beforehand. A Christmas miracle occurs and all is right in the end. Garland sings a memorable version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" in the film, solidifying this as a holiday classic.

"The Santa Clause"

This Disney film came out in 1994 and remains a family favorite. When divorced dad Scott (Tim Allen) accidentally kills a man in a Santa suit, he magically becomes the next Santa. He must learn to cope with the ways the transformation to the man in red interrupts his normal life, eventually giving over to the magic of Christmas.

"Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas"

Though this 1977 Jim Henson production is a television special and not a full-length feature film, Generation X likely remembers the heartfelt tale of a poor otter family who sacrifice prized possessions to have what's needed to enter a talent contest. The goal is to win the prize money to buy special Christmas presents. Audiences get to enjoy narration by Kermit the Frog.

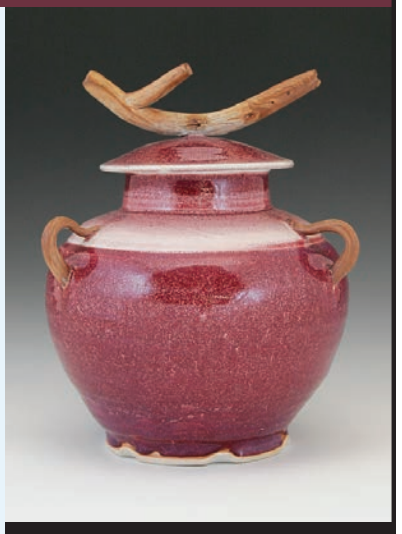
Films are a popular component that help to make the holiday season so special.

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Tips to plan an eclectic holiday menu

The holiday season is steeped in tradition. Though family traditions are part of what makes December such a special time of year, holiday hosts still have some wiggle room when welcoming loved ones into their homes.

If tradition governs how holiday hosts celebrate the season with their families, they may find some flexibility in the kitchen. This December, hosts can consider these ways to make their holiday menus a little more eclectic and unpredictable.

• **Embrace local ingredients.** Locally sourced foods have a tendency to taste more fresh than imported alternatives, which is reason enough to incorporate them into holiday menus. In addition, relying on locally sourced foods when preparing holiday meals can be a great way to introduce new dishes to a holiday dinner table. Guests may be impressed by a new flavor profile, and they'll surely be happy to learn they're supporting local businesses during a time of year when shopping local has gained greater popularity.

• **Offer a new twist on old favorites.** Celebrants, including hosts, have come to expect certain foods during the holiday season. For instance, some may shudder at the thought of a Thanksgiving dinner table without turkey. Though holiday season staples may need to make an appearance at dinnertime this December, hosts can offer a new twist on some old favorites. In lieu of roasting a turkey this year, offer a deep-fried alternative. Such a twist produces an entirely different flavor profile. When it comes time to serve dessert, offer apple crumb pie in place of traditional apple pie. Fall is peak apple-picking season, so come the holiday season hosts and guests may be happy to enjoy a unique twist on this beloved dessert.

• **Incorporate seasonal ingredients.** Another way to ensure freshness has a place at your holiday dinner table is to emphasize seasonal ingredients. Such items are those that are at their most fresh in late fall and early winter, and which foods you choose may depend on where you live, particularly if you're focused on providing locally sourced seasonal ingredients. Some simple tweaks to existing recipes can provide an entirely new flavor profile that will impress guests and leave them asking for another helping.

• **Prepare an ethnic dish.** Traditional holiday entrées like turkey and rib roast are not necessarily associated with any particular ethnic group or region of the world. Hosts who want to incorporate their heritage into holiday cooking, or simply include food from a favorite country they've visited or hope to visit, can prepare an ethnic dish as an appetizer, entrée or dessert. This unexpected addition to the menu can prompt engaging discussions and can serve as a great way for hosts to introduce their loved ones to a dish or style of cuisine they love.

Tradition is a big part of the holiday season. This season, hosts can start a new tradition by taking steps to prepare a more eclectic menu for guests.

Tips *to* simplify holiday cooking



Food is an important component of the holiday season for millions of people across the globe. Many a holiday host has wrestled with what to serve for their gathering and how to prepare meals while still finding time to spend with loved ones. Sometimes simplicity is the way to go when hosting for the holidays. Just because certain dishes are less labor-intensive to prepare does not mean they lack flavor. Hosts can consider these tips to simplify holiday cooking this year.

• **Utilize shop-from-home services.** Supermarkets can be particularly busy this time of year. By shopping from the comfort of home, holiday hosts can sort through their lists and let someone else navigate crowded store aisles. The small fee involved for this service can be well worth the time saved.

• **Scale back the sides.** Some hosts feel an impressive dinner spread is one with plenty of options. Several side dishes requires a lot of time and money, and such foods may take away from the star of the table. Guests might fill up on rolls, potatoes and salads, leaving little room for the main course. Scaling back on sides creates more time for hosts to mingle with family and ensures everyone gets their fill of the main course.

• **Delegate some of the work.** Asking guests to bring a little something to the meal doesn't immediately turn it into a potluck. However, it can reduce some of the work the host has to do. Figure out who is bound to be an early arrival, and ask that person to bring an appetizer. Individuals who like to be fashionably late can bring side dishes or desserts. Delegating beverage detail also can be a time-saver.

• **Familiar is often fabulous.** A major holiday is seldom the right time to experiment with a new, labor-intensive dish. Rather than risk an epic fail, hosts should stick to meals they have prepared before. Also, familiar flavors may appeal to a greater number of guests.

• **Include some prepared foods.** While it is perfectly alright to cater the entire dinner, that can prove costly. If budget doesn't allow for a fully catered meal, supplement with some prepared dishes to help save time, particularly those recipes that can be complicated.

• **Make it a buffet.** Sit-down dinners require careful timing to ensure all foods are set out hot and ready-to-eat. A buffet-style meal involves preparing trays of food in advance, and then setting them to heat in chafing dishes until meal time. This involves far less strategizing with meal preparation and frees up time for hosts to spend with guests.

Holiday meals require a lot of effort, but some handy suggestions can ensure hosts have ample time to spend with loved ones.

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How to keep guests entertained *this holiday season*

Gatherings with loved ones are a big part of what makes the holiday season such a special time of year. As families grow and spread out across the map, they may not get too many chances to spend quality time with one another. But the holiday season is a time each year when families make a concerted effort to get together.

As families get together under the same roof during the holiday season, individuals tasked with hosting gatherings tend to have a lot on their plates. Memories tend to be made around the holiday dinner table, but the season also presents ample opportunities to create nights to remember outside the house as well. Hosts can keep the following ideas in mind as they look for ways to entertain guests this holiday season.

• Take a turn as a tour guide. Locals may not make the rounds of nearby tourist destinations too frequently, but the holiday season is a great opportunity for hosts to show guests what makes their towns so unique. Serve as a tour guide for guests on a sightseeing day with visits to local monuments or museums. Wrap the day up at a holiday bazaar where local small business owners have set up shop. This affords guests a chance to tour a new community or a hometown they haven't visited in awhile, and also makes for a great chance for all to squeeze in a little last-minute holiday shopping.

• Plan an ugly sweater bar crawl. If hosts and their guests are all of age, an ugly sweater bar crawl can make for a fun night out on the town. Encourage guests to wear an ugly holiday sweater and map out a route and schedule of visits to local bars and restaurants. Hosts must prioritize safety on these types of excursions, so arrange for a bus to take guests from one spot to the next if establishments are far away from one another. If Main Street has a local bar district, arrange for transportation downtown at the start of the crawl and home when the night ends.



• Take in some local entertainment. Whether it's a holiday lighting display show or a local theater performance of a classic holiday tale like Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol," a night of local live entertainment is a great way for hosts and their guests to get out of the house. Hosts can even book a reservation for a pre-show meal at a local restaurant so they can be free of cooking and give guests their undivided attention.

Hosts can lead a tour of their towns to entertain overnight guests during the holiday season.



• Host a holiday movie night. Weary travelers who want to stay in may appreciate a holiday movie double feature. Hosts can let guests pick a pair of holiday films and then host a double feature, complete with traditional movie fare like popcorn and candy. Hosts can even offer adult guests a glass of homemade eggnog during the films to up the holiday ante even further.

Holiday hosts can embrace various ways to entertain guests during a time of year when there's no shortage of fun ways to spend a night.



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Maximize outdoor spaces *this holiday season*



The holiday season comes at a time when the weather can be anywhere from cool to frigid. But even if the weather outside is somewhat frightful, holiday entertaining in outdoor spaces can still be delightful. Making the most of outdoor spaces during the holidays and the rest of the winter can enable guests to spread out, which should make things more comfortable for them. With that goal in mind, the following are some tips for putting outdoor areas to good use when hosting loved ones this holiday season.

• **Decorate first.** An easy way to make outdoor entertaining spaces more welcoming is to coordinate the decor with the interior of the home. Greenery wrapped with lights around railings and fencing can create the perfect ambiance. Candles, wreaths and small, decorated Christmas trees can finish the effect.

• **Consider a fire or heating element.** Unless you live in a temperate climate, you'll need some way to keep guests warm. Center the outdoor entertaining space around a fire pit, outdoor fireplace or an outdoor heater. Make sure to illuminate the outdoor area so that guests can find their way around with ease.

• **Host an early gathering.** The sun sets early in fall and winter, so it may not only get colder, but also darker at a time when guests typically arrive. Think about moving up the start time of your holiday event if you'll be having an outdoor area, so guests can see one another and stay a little warmer.

• **Use the grill.** Keep foods warm by using the grill or an outdoor griddle; otherwise, set up the food buffet-style inside so guests can make their plates and gravitate where they feel comfortable.

• **Provide blankets or fleeces.** In addition to warming elements around your entertaining space, stock a large basket with cozy throws, blankets or fleece jackets that guests can use to warm up. Hats and scarves also may be appreciated.

• **Invest in waterproof furniture.** Upgrade your exterior seating with plush outdoor couches and lounges that are decked out in weather-resistant fabrics. Make them more comfortable with throw pillows that coordinate with a holiday entertaining theme.

• **Set up two drink stations.** Set up beverages both inside and outside the home so guests can easily refill their drinks wherever they are relaxing. Think about having some warm drinks outside, such as mulled cider or hot chocolate, so guests can be warmed from the inside as well.

• **Use a wireless speaker.** A Bluetooth-enabled wireless speaker placed outside allows guests to listen to holiday tunes while they are enjoying themselves.

Using well-equipped outdoor areas for entertaining can expand the possibilities and guest list for holiday gatherings.





These colorful cookies *are tailor-made for* family baking sessions

Baking during the holiday season is a tradition in many households across the globe. Family baking sessions provide a perfect holiday season bonding activity, and the payoff is both cherished family time and delicious, indulgent foods once the items are ready to eat.

Holiday hosts know they'll need to feed their guests over the course of their stay, and that includes snacks. This holiday season, hosts can involve their guests in family baking sessions and whip up a batch of these delicious and colorful "Christmas Biscuits" from Lines+Angles.



Christmas Biscuits

Makes approximately 24 cookies

For the dough:

1 ½ cups all-purpose flour, sifted, plus extra for dusting
1 ⅓ cups confectioner's sugar, plus extra for dusting
¾ cup almond meal
1 cup unsalted butter, cold and cubed
1 large egg yolk
1 tablespoon cold water
½ teaspoon fine salt

For the icing and decoration:

4 cups confectioner's sugar
3 tablespoons meringue powder
7 tablespoons warm water, combined with 1 teaspoon vanilla extract, assorted food color (e. g., red, pink and turquoise), assorted colored sugar crystals (e. g., red, pink and white)

1. For the dough: Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease and line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

2. Combine flour, confectioner's sugar and almond meal in a large mixing bowl. Stir well to mix.

3. Add butter, egg yolk, water, and salt, and mix well with an electric mixer with spiral attachments until mixture starts to come together as a dough.

4. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead briefly until even. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

5. After chilling, roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to approximately 0.25" thickness.

6. Use assorted star-shaped cookie cutters to cut out approximately 23 variably sized star shapes. Arrange between prepared sheets, spaced apart.

7. From remaining dough, cut out one teardrop and two semi-circles of dough, using appropriate cutters or working freehand with a paring knife. Arrange on one of the baking sheets.

8. Bake cookies for 12 to 15 minutes, until golden and dry to the touch. Remove to cooling racks to cool.

9. For the icing and decoration: Thoroughly stir together confectioner's sugar and meringue powder in a large mixing bowl.

10. Gradually beat in warm water and vanilla extract mixture using an electric mixer until icing is smooth and of a flooding consistency; you may not need all of the water.

11. Divide icing between three bowls. Color two bowls pink and red, respectively, by beating in enough pink and red coloring to achieve uniform colors. Leave the third bowl uncolored.

12. Spoon pink and red icing into separate piping bags fitted with small, round-tip nozzles.

13. To ice the cookies, pipe around their perimeters with the icings to create borders. Fill in middle of cookies with more icing; you can use a damp, warm offset palette knife to spread out icing to an even finish.

14. Carefully transfer iced cookies to cooling racks, decorating with the sugar crystals in festive patterns.

15. Using same technique as in steps 13 and 14, ice teardrop cookie with red and white icing for Santa's hat and beard, respectively. Ice the two semi-circle cookies with white icing.

16. Before icings have set, carefully attach semi-circle cookies to teardrop cookie to fashion Santa's mustache. Color any remaining white icing with turquoise coloring and then dab onto teardrop cookie for Santa's eyes. Pipe some pink icing below eyes for his nose.

17. Let cookies set and harden before serving.

Tip: Flooding consistency should be similar to the consistency of toothpaste. If your icing is too thick, thin it out with some warm water, mixing it into the icing in drops

Preparation time:
1 hour, 20 minutes
Cooling time: 30 minutes



Show guests this much maligned staple *is a tasty treat*

Few foods garner the types of responses generated by the mere mention of fruitcake, which drives many holiday celebrants to run for the hills. But fruitcake may not deserve its reputation, particularly when individuals brave enough to prepare it serve it covered in a sugary glaze. Such is the case with this recipe for "Gluten-Free Fruitcake With Sugar Glaze" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Gluten-Free Fruitcake With Sugar Glaze

For the cake:

4 ounces golden raisins
2 ounces chopped candied orange peel
8 ounces candied cherries, quartered
6 ounces raisins
3 ½ tablespoons sherry
4 ounces butter
1 cup sugar
1 pinch salt
1 pinch grated nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground mixed spice
3 eggs, beaten
1 cup self-raising gluten-free flour
6 ounces chopped almonds, blanched

For the icing:

1 cup confectioner's sugar
3 tablespoons water

1. For the cake: Place all the fruit in a bowl with the sherry, stir well, cover and leave to stand overnight.

2. Heat the oven to 325 F. Grease a loaf pan and line the base with parchment paper.

3. Beat the butter with the sugar, salt and spices in a mixing bowl until light and creamy, then gradually beat in the eggs.

4. Gently fold in the flour, followed by the soaked fruits and almonds, stirring well.

5. Spoon into the pan and bake for 2 to 2 ¼ hours until cooked through. Leave to cool in the pan.

6. For the icing: Mix the sugar with a little water, adding a little at a time, until it is thick and smooth.

7. Spread the icing on top of the cake, allowing it to run down the sides. Leave to set.

Preparation & Cooking time: 2 hours and 45 minutes
Resting time: 12 hours

7 ideas for a festive holiday fête





The holiday season has arrived

and with it comes many opportunities to socialize. With so many events on people's calendars, holiday party hosts may wonder what they can do to set their gatherings apart from others to make them memorable. Read on for seven festive ideas that can set a holiday season party apart from the rest.

1. Cook ahead. Being able to mingle with guests and guide conversation or activities is the key to being an excellent holiday host. By cooking foods that can feed crowds ahead of time, you won't be stuck in the kitchen when you should be out and about. Casseroles, stews, soups, and quiches can be cooked in advance and then warmed (or set in a slow cooker) to bring to temperature

2. Choose a color scheme. Choose a color scheme that really pops and sets a festive tone. For a holiday cocktail party, consider bold reds and pinks and add a burst of gold for that contrast of color that adds impact.

3. Hire some entertainment. Conversation and reminiscing can fill some time, but allot some of the party budget to entertainment. Perhaps hire a DJ who can keep the music flowing, or a karaoke professional who will have guests up and singing holiday (or non-holiday) tunes?



4. Create a signature cocktail. An open bar can be expensive, especially if you want to stock it with top-shelf offerings. Wine and beer is more affordable, and hosts who want to offer something a little different can create a signature cocktail for the party. Tie in seasonal flavors, whether you go sweet with a chocolate cream liqueur and mint or something more tart like a cranberry-based drink.

5. Rearrange the furniture. If the music is playing and guests are fired up, you'll need a spot where they can dance. Move large furnishings out of the main gathering space to create room to cut a rug; otherwise, create an outdoor gathering area complete with stringed lights so guests can take the fun outside, if necessary.

6. Plan for prizes. Guests always appreciate some sort of takeaway. Gifting is commonplace this time of year, but perhaps have guests work a little to reap the rewards? Simple trivia games or a scavenger hunt can increase the fun and make it possible for guests to walk away with some swag.

7. Have at least one unexpected item. This can be anything from a very clever and cute dessert to a special guest to an over-the-top decorative item that gets people talking and ensures the party is one no one will forget.

Throwing a festive holiday party is easier than one may think. With some creativity, hosts can plan a party to remember.

Tips to make guest rooms *more welcoming*



Millions of celebrants welcome family and friends into their home as overnight guests each holiday season. Hosting loved ones during the holiday season is a selfless act that enables families to create the kind of lasting memories that make December such a special time of year.

As hosts prepare their homes for loved ones this holiday season, they can consider these tips to make guests rooms as welcoming as possible for friends and family.

• **Check the bedding and replace, if necessary.** It's easy to overlook the comfort of bedding in a guest room, particularly since hosts may never sleep in their own guest rooms. When furnishing a guest room, it's not unheard of to repurpose an existing mattress from an owner's suite or another room and use for guest room bedding. Though that's acceptable, it's necessary to periodically inspect a guest room mattress to make sure it's still comfortable and supportive. If not, replace the mattress. A mattress topper, a new comforter and a new set of soft sheets also can make guest room bedding more comfortable.

• **Clear out the clutter.** Guest rooms can easily become depositories for old furniture and other items, which can create a cluttered and less than welcoming atmosphere in a space. Give each guest room a thorough once-over before guests arrive, removing pieces that might be creating a claustrophobic vibe. Keep in mind that guests will bring luggage, so a less cluttered space with ample room for their bags can make it easier to settle in.

• **Take a cue from hotels.** Hotels ensure guests have ample creature comforts at their fingertips. Holiday hosts can do the same when welcoming loved ones into their homes. Provide ample bed and bath linens, ensure the room has ample lighting so guests can read at bedtime and get dressed in plenty of light in the morning. A foldable luggage rack is another nice touch that can keep guests from having to dig through their suitcases on the floor.

• **Add an armchair where possible.** A spacious guest room allows hosts to provide some extra creature comforts. If the room allows, place a comfortable armchair and side table in the space so guests can read a book or catch up on the news on a tablet or smartphone. A comfortable, quiet and secluded place to sit provides guests a respite from the hustle and bustle of a home filled with holiday guests.

• **Install window coverings, if necessary.** A feeling of privacy is another important creature comfort guests will appreciate. Replace existing window treatments if they do not provide adequate privacy or if they do not keep the elements out in the morning. For example, a room that is sun-soaked by early morning each day may make it hard for guests to get sufficient sleep. Some blackout curtains or a new set of blinds allows guests to determine the amount of natural light that will greet them each morning.

Some simple tips can help holiday hosts turn their guest rooms into welcoming spaces for their loved ones.

Get creative *with* holiday decor

The end of the year is upon us and that often involves decorating a home in its holiday finest. According to Today's Homeowner, nearly 70 percent of Americans plan to display outdoor holiday decorations. Among those choosing to decorate, 34 percent will do so before Thanksgiving.

Everyone has a different vision of a well-appointed holiday home, but there's always room to make things more unique and creative. These ideas can add a little extra to holiday displays.

Decorate other rooms

Who says holiday decorating is exclusive to living and dining areas? Think about decorating unexpected places, like swapping out everyday towels and shower curtains with something festive. Swags of greenery wrapped in lights can be added to bed frames.

Coordinate the ornaments

Identify a color theme and then showcase it with ornaments. Think about matching the ornaments to the presents wrapped under the tree as well. Purchase white package paper and color or paint the paper to be the same hues as the ornaments on the tree boughs.

It's hip to be square

While round wreaths are traditional, make your own wreaths in a different geometric shape by using wire or another material as the frame. Square wreaths may be unexpected, and you also can turn the square on its side for a diamond shape.

Add a spot of color

Certain holidays are known for their particular color palettes, such as red and green for Christmas. But you also can do something unexpected. Whether using a lighter shade of the same color family or adding an accent color like purple or blue, you can change things up in a creative way.

Make an unexpected bouquet

Swap flowers for pine cones, berries and greenery in unique vessels. For example, arrange your centerpiece in a tall fountain glass or even a cocktail shaker.



Try a different accent tree

Use a styrofoam cone as the base of a tree for a centerpiece or sideboard. Attach poinsettia branches for a vibrant red tree, or stacked lemons or oranges filled with greenery for a fresh-smelling citrus creation.

Suspend belief

Instead of attaching a tree topper to the tallest bough, hang one from the ceiling just above the tree to add even more whimsy.

Mix and match

When it comes to a holiday table, mix and match table settings for an eclectic tableau.

Shift into neutral

Instead of a large holiday display in familiar colors, rely on neutral, wintry tones that will blend in with the home but add a festive touch. Natural wood, whites and creams, and muted greens can fill spaces.

Unique holiday decorations and schemes can be a great way to add new life to a home this December.



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Set the tone for a holiday party *with this* beloved seasonal beverage

Holiday season celebrations have a reputation for being especially jovial. The spirit of the season undoubtedly has something to do with that, as people from all faiths and backgrounds tend to have an extra hop in their step and a slightly wider smile on their faces each December.

Holiday hosts also do much to promote the festive spirit of the season. Hosts often go to great lengths to ensure holiday guests enjoy their visits, and that even extends to the food and drinks they serve the people they welcome into their homes. Many celebrants would insist no holiday season get-together is complete without eggnog, a classic beverage that's most popular in December. This holiday season, hosts can treat their guests to this recipe for "Eggnog" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Eggnog

Makes 2 Servings

- 2 ounces brandy or cognac
- 2 ounces dark rum, plus more for sugar rim
- 1 cup eggnog, prepared
- ⅛ teaspoon nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon light brown sugar
- 2 sticks cinnamon, for garnish (optional)
- 2 pods star anise, for garnish (optional)
- Shortbread or gingerbread cookies, for garnish (optional)

1. In a cocktail shaker with ice, add the brandy, rum and eggnog together, cover and shake.
2. Add the nutmeg, cinnamon and sugar to a small plate and stir around to combine. Wet the rims of 2 glasses with rum. Roll the rims of the glasses in the spices to coat.
3. Strain the eggnog mixture into the two glasses. Garnish with cinnamon sticks, star anise pods and festive shortbread cookies, if desired.

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Embrace a crowd pleaser to feed loved ones *this holiday season*

Holiday hosts recognize it's not always so easy to feed a crowd. That pressure may be even more notable come the holiday season, when food is such an integral component of gatherings with family and friends.

It may be impossible to please everyone all of the time, but few can resist a hearty comfort food like baked ziti. That makes the dish an ideal option for holiday hosts tasked with feeding a crowd. This holiday season, hosts welcoming loved ones into their homes can consider this easily prepared recipe for "Baked Ziti with Chicken and Cheese" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Baked Ziti With Chicken and Cheese

Makes 4 to 6 servings

16 ounces dry ziti pasta
1 large onion, peeled and chopped
1 pound ground chicken
8 cups spaghetti sauce
Butter, for pan
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded
½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
Salt, to taste

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add ziti pasta, and cook according to package instructions until al dente, about 8 minutes; drain well.

2. In a large skillet, brown chopped onion and ground chicken over medium heat. Add spaghetti sauce, and simmer for about 15 minutes.

3. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Coat a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with butter. Drizzle sauce in the bottom of the baking dish and arrange the ziti on top. Ladle remaining sauce over the ziti. Top with mozzarella cheese. Gently toss to completely coat the ziti with sauce and cheese. Sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese over the top.

4. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the cheese melts and the pasta is heated through.

Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 55 minutes





Give this beloved side a tasty twist *this holiday season*

Hosts have free rein when it comes to planning a holiday menu. Despite that freedom, many hosts feel obligated to prepare some holiday season staples their guests will surely expect when they sit down at the dinner table.

Stuffing is a dish many celebrants can't wait to see on the holiday dinner table. For hosts trusted with preparing holiday meals, the beauty of stuffing lies in its versatility. A host of unique ingredients can be added to holiday stuffing without adversely affecting the popularity of this beloved side dish. In fact, adding some unique ingredients can make people love stuffing even more. Such could be the case with this recipe for "Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing" from Lines+Angles.

Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing

Makes 8 servings

» 1 loaf crusty white or wheat bread, cut into ¾-inch cubes
» 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus extra for baking dish
» 1 medium yellow onion, peeled and diced
» 2 large celery stalks, rinsed, trimmed and diced
» 4 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped
» 1 cup packed dried tart cherries
» 1 cup roughly chopped toasted pecans
» 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage leaves
» 1 tablespoon crushed fennel seed
» Coarse salt, to taste
» Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
» ¼ cup fresh chopped parsley
» 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
» 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Position oven racks in the middle and lower third of the oven. Arrange bread in a single layer on two rimmed baking sheets. Toast until dry and golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool.

2. Lightly butter a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion, celery and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until onion and celery are softened, about 7 minutes. Add cherries, pecans, sage, and fennel seed; cook, stirring for 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl and season with salt and pepper.

3. Add parsley, eggs and bread to the cherry mixture; stir to combine. Add broth in two additions, stirring until absorbed. Season generously with salt and pepper; transfer stuffing to butter baking dish. Bake on middle rack until the top is deep golden brown, about 25 to 30 minutes. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 50 minutes
Resting time: 5 minutes







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