

REAL SIMPLE

LIFE MADE EASIER

SPECIAL
DOUBLE
ISSUE

MORE JOY NOW!

Sparkly
drinks

Festive
food

Fancy
outfits

+
114 thoughtful
gifts for
everyone on
your list

DECEMBER 2023

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Secrets to Cheesecake Success

There's nothing like a perfect bite of PHILADELPHIA® cheesecake: It's smooth, creamy, and slightly tangy. Our editors have spent decades fine-tuning cheesecakes of all kinds, and we're letting you in on their best-kept secrets ahead of the holidays. Here's how you can make your most delicious one yet with help from PHILADELPHIA Cream Cheese.



Ingredient Quality Matters

Fresh fruits and vegetables just taste better, and the same goes for baked goods that are whipped up with flavorful, top-tier ingredients like **PHILADELPHIA Original Brick Cream Cheese**. It's made with five simple ingredients, including fresh milk and real cream, which gives it a thick, super-silky texture that can help transform your cheesecakes into creamy creations. Incorporate it into the filling for a smoother, richer outcome.

It's All in the (Delicious) Details

You've already mastered the basics, so it's time to hone your cheesecake-decorating skills. Keep it classic with sliced fruit and a dollop of homemade whipped cream, try your hand at making a Basque-style cheesecake with a crisp, caramelized exterior, or play around with different drizzles, from sweet-and-savory salted caramel sauce to zesty lemon glaze. During the holidays, add a festive flourish with candied nuts, sugared berries, or crushed peppermint. Rosemary sprigs, shaved chocolate curls, mint leaves, and citrus peels also make for striking garnishes year-round.

More Prep Means Less Stress

Baking and decorating a show-stopping cheesecake takes time. Instead of rushing the process on the morning of your next dinner party or holiday gathering, consider making your cheesecake a day or two in advance and storing it in the refrigerator until the special occasion. It's easy to do—and won't compromise the texture or flavor of your luscious confection. Once the cheesecake has cooled completely, cover it in plastic wrap before popping it into the refrigerator. Be sure to enjoy it within three to five days.



One Bite and You'll Know It's Philly

PHILADELPHIA Original Brick Cream Cheese is made with just five simple ingredients, including fresh milk and real cream, for a silky smooth, creamy texture you'll savor.

Scan the code with your phone to discover more PHILADELPHIA Cream Cheese cheesecake inspiration.



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A to Z



MORE JOY NOW!

december



92

2023 REAL SIMPLE Gift Guide

Dozens of great ideas—organized by price!—for your favorite cooks, gamers, hosts, and more

contents



126



136



110

features

110

Festive Feasts

Easy yet fancy recipes for your Hanukkah, Christmas, and New Year's gatherings

126

What to Wear Where

Stylish outfits and makeup looks to help you sparkle at all those holiday parties

136

Merry & Bright

A tour through a cozy Tudor home in chilly Minneapolis that's decked out for Christmas



chico's

AVAILABLE IN BOUTIQUES AND CHICOS.COM

contents



144

features

144

Out-of-the-Box Cookies

Unique treats to bundle and give to lucky loved ones

154

Oh, What Fun!

Next-level—but inexpensive and totally DIY—ways to holiday up your home



on the cover

Cover Photograph by Murray Hall

Prop Styling by Carla Gonzalez-Hart

Nostalgic Tiny Pink Heart Ornament, \$10, Purple and Blue Reflector Ornaments, \$78 for 6, and Turquoise and Pink Oval with Reflector, \$28; johnderian.com



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DAY 24

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DAY 28

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contents



78

stuff we love

21 Food Mix

A cool trick for chopping onions without crying, plus great baking gear

24 Clever Items

Little helpers to make your life a lot easier

26 The Books List

Top reads for book club and beyond

31 Your Personal Pro

At-home hair color tips and the new needle creams

32 Beauty Road Test

Look fab in pics with these product picks

34 Game Changers

Two TV stars improving the world off camera

36 Drinking with Jenna

Raise a glass to our champagne cocktails

40 Side Effects

The perks of giving and other smart health info

how to do things

43 Things Cooks Know

Pros share how to build a better cheese board

46 Organize This

Neatly store and display printed photos

48 Clean This

Wine stains! Pine needles! Glitter! Candle wax!

50 Health

Reap the benefits of “good” stress

54 Simple Twists

Use a few household items for a better baking session

56 Sweet Thing

Jelly doughnuts for Hanukkah (or anytime)

58 Beauty How-To

Rock a bold lip—and some unexpected scents

61 Pets

Meaningful ways to help animals in need

how we live

65 Travel

Avoid Jack Frost at these sunny spots

70 The Mindset

Is cultivating awe the key to happiness?

76 Modern Manners

Michelle Buteau’s savvy advice

78 Relating

Say no to social events (and to FOMO!)

82 Their Words

What holiday movies teach us about real life

86 Smart Money

Signs of a shady financial planner

90 Nerding Out

The science and culture of the winter solstice

what to cook

161 In Season

All about persimmons

162 7 Easy Dinners

Like carbonara pizza and dumpling soup!

174 Better for You

Veggie casserole



56



48

10 Editor’s Note 14 Contributors 16 REAL SIMPLE Everywhere
18 Your Words 176 Minor Issues, Major Opinions

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Oh! Joy!



LOW-KEY LOVE THE POST OFFICE. I like to go there and send stuff to people I care about. Somehow when I do, I feel so accomplished. Is that a low bar? Perhaps. But putting an outgoing card above our home's mailbox, where our carrier will certainly grab it, doesn't cut it. I want to visit the place, stand with the people, make small talk with the folks at the counter, and do what humans have done for centuries: pass a card, letter, parcel, whatever, into another's hands, knowing it will pass through many more and go wherever in the world I want it to. It's just so darned Norman Rockwell—even though, these days, I know it will first be scanned, its progress digitally tracked.

This is the kind of small joy I'll be leaning into this season, after another hard year for all of us here on earth. As I write this, the

news has been downright horrific. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by it. I keep a running list of worries in my mind, like a note on my phone, adding to it constantly and scrolling through it at inconvenient hours. (If you're awake at 2:30 a.m. ET, call me!) We worry for ourselves, for our children, for our country, our planet, humanity.

That's why we themed this issue "More joy now!" It sounds like an order. And maybe it is. Because our job as humans living in our flawed human world is to find the glimmers and celebrate them. And what better time to do that than the holidays?

I'm taking the mandate to heart. I'll find joy in making a festive meal (page 110) and sipping a pretty champagne cocktail (page 36) with my beloveds. Maybe I'll finally get a cookie-baking day on the books (page 144) so I can swap with the generous (and organized) people I know. I will definitely add cheery flourishes to my home and myself (pages 154 and 126, respectively).

These are small things. They're not going to end wars or stop climate change. They will, however, bring some much-needed sparkle to the world. Some joy. Wishing you a holiday season filled with it, from the entire REAL SIMPLE team.

Lauren Iannotti
EDITOR IN CHIEF

LET'S CONNECT!

Follow me on Instagram
at [@laurenianotti](#).

Some of My Gift Picks (Shh, don't tell.)



A BETTER HOST GIFT

This cognac-based coffee liqueur is so good, and so gifty. *Spirit of 1737 Chêne*, from \$36; [pourrichardsdistillery.com](#)



PALETTE FIT FOR A TEEN

My big one, a master makeup artist, will work magic with this. *Too Faced Pop-Tarts Brown Sugar Cinnamon Mini Palette*, \$27; [ulta.com](#)



COOL COOKWARE

Can Stanley Tucci's pots get my little sister to do more of the cooking? Let's find out! *GreenPan Stanley Tucci Ceramic Nonstick 11-Piece Cookware Set*, \$700; [williams-sonoma.com](#)

Artist Credit: Mother Nature

Natural Diamond
Halo Pendant



A DIAMOND IS FOREVER

REAL SIMPLE

What makes you feel most at home?



"I'm Team No Shoes in the House, and my feet get cold, so I've gotta say: a pair of cozy slippers. I've been known to pack some for an overnight at a friend's house."



"Jigsaw puzzles! During the holidays, my family and I love gathering around the living room table to work on one."



"Lilies. They were always in my childhood home because my mom loves them, so I associate them with comfort and happiness. That's partly why I named my daughter Lily."

Lauren Iannotti
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"My mom's homemade matzo ball soup. I may be biased, but it's the best! She's made it for every gathering as long as I can remember. She'll even freeze leftovers for my sister and me when we aren't around and bring them to us. It instantly gives me the warm feeling of home."



"Cuddling with my dog, Snowball. And family dinner at the kitchen table."





READY YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE

The Home Depot® has a stylish assortment of home accents and holiday essentials to help you complete your look before your company arrives. Visit [homedepot.com/decor](https://www.homedepot.com/decor) for your next purchase and get free and flexible delivery on over 10,000 items plus easy returns.



Contributors Look Who Helped Us Make Our Magazine



Josie Portillo

ILLUSTRATOR

[@JOSIE_PORTILLO](#)

Josie lives in Los Angeles and drew the playful art for our story about handling all those holiday invitations (page 78).

The ideal sandwich:

It's simple! Burrata and anchovies stuffed in a baguette with a generous drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil. A glass of chilled Prosecco makes it even better.

Dream job as a kid:

I wanted to be an architect, then it morphed into fashion designer.

Your next big purchase:

I recently bought a La Marzocco espresso machine, so I don't think I'll be making any other big purchases soon!



Tricia Manzanero Stuedeman

RECIPE DEVELOPER [@TRISHMANZANERO](#)

This Birmingham, Alabama-based cookie wizard (who also creates recipes for our related brands) came up with the festive treats on page 144.

Where's your happy place?

Gathered around the table, surrounded by the people I love. I could not feel more at home than when I'm enjoying delicious food in great company.

Favorite trip so far:

Japan. All the food was incredible, the culture was beautiful, and the people were so kind. The efficiency of everything—transportation, Wi-Fi access—also really spoke to my organization-obsessed soul.



Meredith Jenks

LIFESTYLE & FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER [@MEREDITHJENKS](#)

Known for her cool vibes on set and stellar photos (duh!), Meredith shot the holiday outfits starting on page 126.

Childhood life goal:

I wanted to be a fashion designer with a red Mazda Miata and live in Paris.

Favorite plant:

My six-foot-tall rubber tree. I grew it from a small clipping and have had it for 10 years now!

Megan Hedgpeth

PROP STYLIST

[@HEDGEHEDGE](#)

Our gift guide picks (page 92) are stunning on their own, but Megan made them feel extra special during their close-ups.

Currently binge-watching:

Only Murders in the Building. It's so fun to watch and to look at. It has the best set design.

What inspires you?

Color! I love creating surprising color palettes.

Your best gift-wrapping trick:

A double-faced satin ribbon will make the most mundane object look amazing.



Mamie Onishi

NAIL TECHNICIAN
@NAILSBYMAMIE

When we do a fashion story (page 126), we go all out—with hair, makeup, etc.! Mamie was in charge of the manicures.

Where did you grow up?

Kobe, Japan—a mountainous and scenic city located 30 minutes outside of Osaka.

Favorite item at home:

All my scented candles. I want to be comfortable, and having a variety of aromas around helps my mood.

What's your motto?

Art is life—it's forever changing.



Lisa Freedman

REAL SIMPLE EXECUTIVE EDITOR @ITSMELISABETH

Normally, Lisa just edits the stories in our magazine. This month, she also wrote one, about spotting financial planners who are up to no good (page 86). She's got a thing for exclamation points!!!

Currently reading:

Rogues—a collection of articles about real-life grifters and crooks by journalist Patrick Radden Keefe. There's wine fraud, a black market arms merchant, and more. Crime doesn't pay, you guys!

Winter weekend plans:

A quick hike or antique shopping in the morning, lunch out, TV and cocktails, break to make dinner, then more TV with wine.



Hannah Howard

FREELANCE FOOD WRITER
@HANNAHMHOWARD

Hannah spent years writing copy for famed fromage shop Murray's Cheese, so we tapped her to write our cheese board how-to on page 43.

Something you nerd out over:

Olive oil! I'm a little obsessed with discovering producers I love and the freshest oil I can.

Hidden talent:

I can find an excellent place to have lunch in any city or town.

Favorite podcast:

I just binged *Scamanda*, a true-crime podcast about a woman in San Jose, California, who lied about having cancer. It was absolutely fascinating.



Eleni N. Gage

FREELANCE WRITER @ELENI_GAGE

An author and editor, Eleni found out how we can get more awe in our lives (page 70).

Everyday uniform:

I'm always wearing an evil eye somewhere on my person. Better safe than sorry, people.

Favorite recipe to make at home:

Vasilopita, the traditional Greek New Year's cake. You wrap a coin in foil and hide it in the cake, and whoever finds it is going to have good luck all year. Who doesn't love a magic cake?

How do you unwind?

I spend far too much time watching clips of *Say Yes to the Dress* on my phone.

REAL SIMPLE Everywhere Find Exclusive Ideas, Tips & Ways to Make Every Day Easier



IN YOUR KITCHEN

Be Your Own Barista

You *could* go to Starbucks in your pj's, but they're way more acceptable at home. This season, make nine red-cup-inspired drinks without piling into the car. Just roll up to realsimple.com/starbucks for the recipes. Don't forget to tip!



ON THE WEB

Presents for Pups

We know who tops your shopping list. That's why we have lots of fun finds for doggos and their humans (that's you!) in our holiday gift guide (page 92), plus even more ideas online at realsimple.com/doggifts.



IN YOUR WALLET

A Little Gift

Save 10% off the customizable spa headbands on page 94 by using the code REALSIMPLE at weezietowels.com. Offer valid from 11/14/23 through 1/18/24.



ON YOUR MIND

Healthy Holidays to You

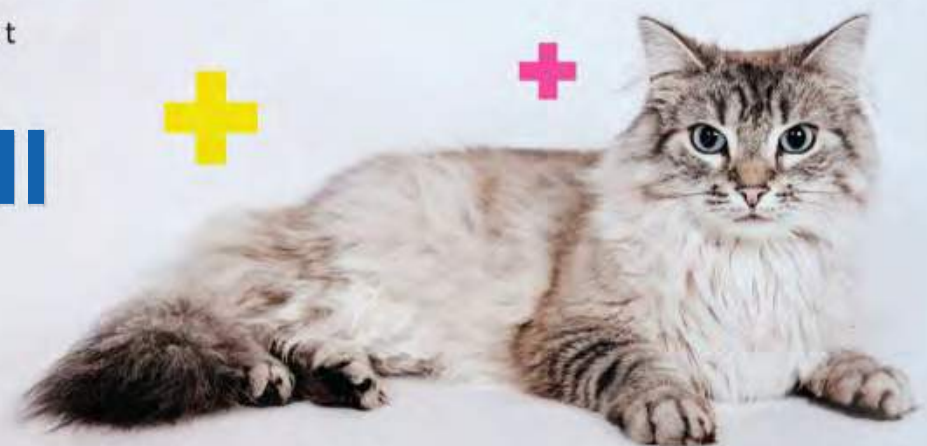
This time of year, you should be spreading cheer, not germs! So be a handwashing superhero, and navigate over to realsimple.com/healthyholiday for tips on keeping sniffles (and other symptoms) at bay.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: CAITLIN BENSEL; WINNIE AU; SUNNY ECKERLE; COURTESY OF MANUFACTURER

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Fresh Step know more.
worry less.

YOUR WORDS

What makes you feel most at home?

Sitting in front of the fireplace, reading a book, with my black Lab curled up next to me resting her head on my lap.

 @ANNVOIGT



Book stacks, my favorite candle scents, and **homely clutter**. It's how I make hotel rooms feel more like "my space" when I travel.

 @LIZBETHMARION

Good food, fine wine, and **fun conversations about whatever comes to mind**.

BARB LOWERY
MOUNT VERNON,
WASHINGTON

We have a set of **battery-operated wax candles on a timer**. They flicker on at dusk and set the tone to relax.

JACQUELINE SIMMONS
RIDGEVILLE,
SOUTH CAROLINA

My mom's freshly laundered towels when I visit her.

 @HAIKOODLES

A feeling in the air of comfort. The smell of something familiar. The lack of fussiness that comes from **the belief that things are just things and relationships matter**.

KELLY HAIDET
SANTA CLARITA,
CALIFORNIA

Cold weather with **homemade beef-vegetable soup on the stove** and my dog and three cats around me.

KAREN JONES
TERRELL, TEXAS

My own bed.

 @SCHRADER.URSULA

A comfortable chair in a tidy room with a footstool to plop on between chores.

Knowing my pets and family are nearby and safe, supper is planned or prepped, laundry is done, and chores are complete (or at least started). And knowing I can read a book, open my mail, or check in on my iPad in peace and quiet.

SUSAN FITCH
CHARLOTTE, NORTH
CAROLINA

Bookcases with books waiting to be read, a nice collection of mugs, and my craft supplies.

 @CRAFTYTYPYER

Taking my shoes off!

 @MRSJANET
ANDBLAKE

Whenever I return to San Francisco after traveling and step out of the airport terminal, I am struck by **the smell of eucalyptus, salty ocean water, and the mist of the fog**, and I instantly know I am home.

ELIZABETH RIDEOUT
SAN FRANCISCO

Our programmable coffee maker—we wake up to the scent of coffee. And then we drink it in bed.

ELISABETH SIMON
KINDERHOOK,
NEW YORK

Comfy leather couches and a fully lit fireplace.

CAROL DONOHOO
GEORGETOWN, OHIO

My husband, my chihuahua, and **feeling relaxed enough to take my bra off** with no judgment.

VICTORIA CHANDER
ST. PETERSBURG,
FLORIDA

A hot cup of coffee with a good friend.

DIANNE RODERICK
YARMOUTH PORT,
MASSACHUSETTS

Being in my house clothes, which usually means a comfortable T-shirt or sweatshirt dress.

 @ALICIAAABDUL

The smell of good food cooking.

DEBI MINTON
STANDISH, MAINE

Clean linens. There is something so comforting about slipping into a freshly made bed.

DENISE PRATHER
BATON ROUGE,
LOUISIANA

Home for me is a **place where I feel safe to be myself.**

I've been married for 43 years, and home is wherever we are together. I truly believe we could be happy anywhere.

BRENDA BJURMAN
MAYLENE, ALABAMA

Something delicious in the slow cooker and a candle burning on the counter.

REBECCA TREADWELL
MADAWASKA, MAINE

Knowing where everything is!

SUZANNE MILBY
SEABROOK, TEXAS



READER OF THE MONTH

Tammie Ross, 48

FOUNDER AND CEO OF
A WOMAN-OWNED
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Simplest part of your life:

Spending quality time with my husband.

Who makes you laugh the most?

Kevin Hart! He is so funny, and it is always a good time watching his comedic talent.

Go-to karaoke song:

"Respect" by Aretha Franklin. It's such a fun and empowering song that gets the crowd on their feet and singing along.

Favorite family recipe:

My famous strawberry-banana pudding! When my kids were in elementary school, our family was having some financial difficulties. My sons and I would make individual servings and sell them at local beauty shops and car dealerships on the weekends. We'd sell out in a couple of hours—with orders for more! That extra money helped us buy school supplies and new clothes for the school year. Thinking back to how a recipe made with love bridged the financial gap for us puts a smile on my face more than a decade later!

NEXT QUESTION

What was your wildest animal encounter?

Send an email (and a photo, if you want!) to yourwords@realsimple.com and let us know your answer. Your response could appear on these pages.

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HOME**



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and join us for a holiday
experience like no other

This season, the editors from *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Southern Living*, *Real Simple*, *The Spruce*, *MyDomaine* and *Martha Stewart* are coming together for an immersive experience that will bring the best of our holiday expertise to life. Whether you're looking to spice up the festivities through unique recipes, deck the halls like a pro, or find the perfect gift for everyone on your list, our first-ever **Virtual Holiday Home** has something in store for you.

**Better Homes
& Gardens**

Southern Living

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**the
spruce**

MYDOMAINE

**martha
stewart**

stuff we love

FOR SELF-CARE, HOME CARE
& ALL YOUR OTHER CARES



FOOD MIX

HOLIDAY HELPERS

One brilliant tip and some
top-notch gear for all that cooking
and baking you're about to do

PROP STYLING BY MARINA BEVILACQUA

Photograph by Ted Cavanaugh

NEW!

SKIP THE MEAL PREP SCARIES WITH STOUFFER'S SIDES.



STUFF WE LOVE



LEARN A NEW TRICK

No More Tears

We found the best way to slice onions without welling up.

Chopping an onion can turn mundane meal prep into a sobfest in seconds flat. That's because when you slice into the onion's layers, its cells release a sulfur-containing vapor that floats up to your eyes and causes burning. This triggers tears—your eyes' attempt at self-defense. How can you support those peepers?

To find out, we sliced a boatload of onions, tested a bunch of supposed hacks, and cried our little eyes out.

The tricks that definitely did not work

Lighting a candle before chopping, microwaving the onion before slicing, and holding an unlit match between our teeth (weird, uncomfortable, *and* ineffective).

The simple trick that totally worked

Getting the onions to chill out. When we popped them into the fridge an hour before slicing (30 minutes for smaller bulbs), it slowed that cellular process, the irritating vapor took longer to waft out, and we could chop without a tingle. Even 10 minutes in the fridge helped. Just don't keep the onions in there indefinitely, as they'll soften and spoil faster.

—Lizzy Briskin

REAL SIMPLE SELECTS

Baking Gear

Testers at our Food Lab in Birmingham, Alabama, share their winning cookie-baking tools.



BREVILLE BAKERY CHEF STAND MIXER

Our testers raved about how well the beater reached the dry ingredients at the bottom of the bowl. \$400; [breville.com](https://www.breville.com)



OXO GOOD GRIPS 8-PIECE BAKING CONTAINER SET

Airtight lids kept all sorts of dry goods (flour, brown sugar, nuts) fresh for ages. \$104; [oxo.com](https://www.oxo.com)



NORDIC WARE NATURALS BAKERS HALF SHEET PAN

Cookies browned evenly on these lightweight, durable, easy-to-clean pans. Great for roasting veggies too! \$30 for 2; [nordicware.com](https://www.nordicware.com)



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JENNIFER CAUSEY: FOOD STYLING BY CHELSEA ZIMMER; PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN; PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

**WHEN DINNER DREAD
HITS, THE ANSWER IS
MEATYCHEESY.**

Stouffer's
HAPPYFULL





1

TRAY CHIC

Snuggle into the couch, then snuggle this sleek table up to you. It's got a wide surface for your laptop or, better yet, a book and big mug o' coffee.

C Side Table, \$125; theyamazakihome.com



2

LITTLE POINTERS

Tuck these machine-washable inserts into the toes of your precious pumps to maintain the shoes' shape and prevent creases. *Cool Denim Shoe Stuffer Inserts, \$15 for 2; protectmyshoes.com*



3

HUMBLE BAG

For those hoping to use less plastic in the kitchen, here's a better zip-top bag—plant based, shockingly sturdy, reusable, and destined for compost.

Compostable Zipseal Sandwich Bags, \$15 for 100; holdonbags.com

Clever Items Little Helpers to Make Your Life a Lot Easier

BY TEDDY WILLSON



4

GOOD COVER

Fact: There are germs on your toothbrush. Keep reading! Another fact: This little device kills up to 99.9% of 'em in three minutes. One charge can last an entire month. *Bril UV Toothbrush Sanitizer, \$30; getbril.com*



5

SUBLIME SLIME

Press this magical goo between the letters on your keyboard (or in your car's cup holders) to remove dust, crumbs, and schmutz. *Tech Taffey Dust-Devouring Compound, \$14; containerstore.com*



It comes in four sizes and eight cool colors!

6

SLIM PACKINGS

What has swivel wheels and a built-in lock and collapses flat when not in use? This hard-shell suitcase! The smallest version fits in overhead compartments, and all of them fit in tiny storage spaces. *Flex 360° Suitcase, from \$249; rollink.com*

14 Days to LOSE 10 POUNDS Before the Holidays

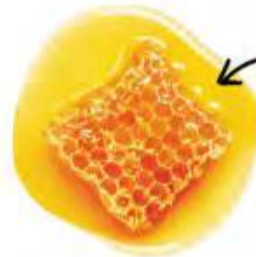
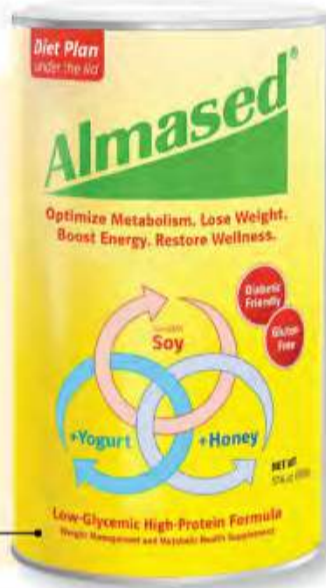
No exercise needed

Here's our take on the easiest and healthiest way to lose up to 10 pounds to look great for holiday parties (without resorting to weight loss injections). Start by replacing a few meals with tasty, all-natural Almased shakes. Then, add in some lean meals. No exercise is needed, but you know it's always a good idea! Almased and its naturally occurring bioactive peptides give your body the detox and boost it needs to burn calories faster. Yes, we all love biohacks!

Start here

1

DETOX YOUR LIVER: Day 1-3
Detox and unclog your liver and fix metabolism with Almased health & weight loss shakes.

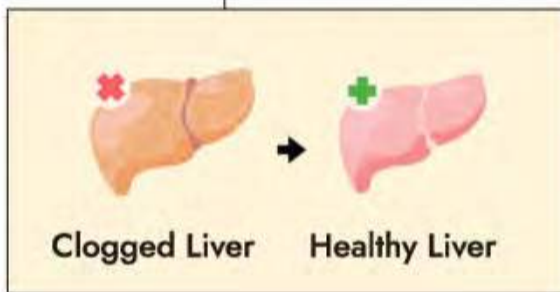


Raw Honey enzyme-rich

Almased's Powerful Clean Ingredients



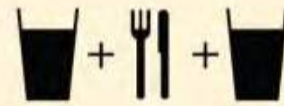
High-Quality Protein health-promoting bioactive peptides



2

REDUCE WEIGHT: Day 4-10

Almased will help you burn fat faster while keeping blood sugar in check.

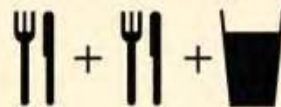


"After 14 days on Almased, I lost 12 lbs and could fit into my cocktail dress! And now I have so much energy!" - Harriet

3

FEEL YOUNG & ENERGETIC: Day 11-14

Dance it up in your holiday dress (Almased increases calorie burn, giving you lots of energy).



Get Started Today! Visit almased.com/realsimple or call Almased Nutritionists at 1-877-256-2733



The Books List Top Picks for Book Club & Beyond

BY KRISTYN KUSEK LEWIS



Inspiring Memoir

Ever been in the midst of an ordinary day and wondered what it might be like to reinvent yourself? When **Nikki Vargas** was 26, newly engaged, and working in advertising, she realized her life wasn't what she wanted. So she bought a plane ticket to Colombia. And then another one to Vietnam. And then another, and another. In her globe-trotting ***Call You When I Land***, she takes you along on her adventures as she meets love interests, learns tough truths about herself, and ultimately finds her purpose as a travel writer.

Dazzling Short Stories

Louise Kennedy's *The End of the World Is a Cul de Sac* is set in her native Ireland, where, in each story, a woman faces an unimaginable challenge. One is suspicious of her husband's relationship with a teenager; another has been abandoned in an unfinished housing development that may be haunted; another is touring the country with her mother-in-law to spread her husband's ashes. Brace for a tense and provocative examination of women's lives, and how perseverance can push you through the direst circumstances.

A Different Kind of War Story

It's 1945, and Japan has invaded British-colonized Malaya (now Malaysia). Cecily is distraught over the fate of her three children, in part because her own actions may have put them in danger. Ten years earlier, bored with her life as a housewife, she met a general and became a spy for the Japanese forces who are now assaulting her community. Inspired by the author's grandmother's stories, ***The Storm We Made*** by **Vanessa Chan** is a gripping novel that tackles the personal impact of war.

The Un-Hallmark Movie

In ***Welcome Home, Stranger*** by **Kate Christensen**, Rachel is an environmental journalist in D.C. Middle-aged, divorced, and childless, she has no desire to go home to Maine to be reminded that her family doesn't quite know how to handle her independence. But in the aftermath of her mother's death, she's forced to return, and her past—and all the people in it—can no longer be ignored. This snarky, vulnerable, complicated main character feels so real, you'll swear you actually know her.

Family Drama

Flores and Miss Paula by **Melissa Rivero** features 30-something Flores and her Peruvian immigrant mother, Paula, who mourn the recent death of Martín, their father and husband, every day. Without his mediating influence, the Brooklyn, New York, apartment they share is center stage for arguments about how each thinks the other should live. Then they find out they have to move, and potentially leave the neighborhood they've loved for decades, and their relationship evolves as they finally learn to understand each other.

Twisty Suspense

In ***The Other Mothers*** by **Katherine Faulkner**, Tash feels like an outcast in her posh London neighborhood, where she and her husband barely make the rent on their dingy basement apartment. With her son in a new playgroup, she has time to rev up her freelance journalism career, and she thinks she has a local story with big-break potential: the unexplained death of a young nanny. But when the fancy moms in the playgroup start inviting her to coffees and cocktails, she grows to suspect them of hiding a sinister connection to the case.

Riveting Escape

Part murder mystery, part historical fiction, **Ariel Lawhon's *The Frozen River*** takes place in New England in 1789. Martha, a midwife and healer, examines a local man's body after it's found frozen in ice. She knows he's one of two men accused of rape and is certain the events are related—so she turns to her treasured diary, with its careful record of daily events, to help her pursue justice. Based loosely on a real-life midwife from the 18th century, this novel has a gothic, wintry feel that makes it an ideal fireside read.

Feel-Good Fiction

Eugene "Geno" Miles is an elderly resident of an assisted living facility. His new nursing assistant, Angel, wouldn't call him the average patient: He's moody *and* he insists his life began in medieval Spain, where he lost the only love he's ever known. He claims he's spent the past 1,000 years looking for her. As the two spend time together, Angel wonders whether Geno's stories about his past lives might contain some truth. ***Again and Again*** by **Jonathan Evison** delivers a heartfelt message about loyalty in a wildly inventive package.

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THERE'S NO
THEM



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the world's most extraordinary wildlife.

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YOUR PERSONAL PRO

You Do Hue

When there's no time to see an expert, take your hair color into your own hands—just follow these tips from New York City salon owner Sharon Dorram.

DISGUISE UNWANTED GRAY

"If you're gray at the temples, use my go-to: Color Wow Root Cover Up," Dorram says, referring to a brush-on powder that looks like eye shadow and washes out. "It's easy to use—choose a color closest to your natural one. It covers well and even works on dark roots."

TRY: *Color Wow Root Cover Up*, \$34.50; [sephora.com](https://www.sephora.com)

MAKE ROOTS MOOT

"Wearing a high ponytail, slicked back with a great gel, will help hide roots and extend the life of hair color between sessions," she says.

TRY: *Gravity Defying Gel*, \$40; [philipb.com](https://www.philipb.com)

BRIGHTEN UP BLOND

The next best thing to a salon shine treatment for (real and not exactly natural) blond hair? "Use a clarifying shampoo weekly in place of your regular one," Dorram says, adding that blond hair can get drab from the chlorine and metals in some water.

TRY: *Refresh Purifying Shampoo*, \$32; [virtuelabs.com](https://www.virtuelabs.com)

ERASE DULLNESS

Dry hair can make any color seem blah, Dorram explains. "Revive split ends with a mask," she says. "A small amount leaves hair shiny and looking freshly colored."

TRY: *K18 Leave-In Molecular Repair Hair Mask*, \$29; [sephora.com](https://www.sephora.com)

EXPLAINED!

What's the Deal with "Needle" Face Creams?

Don't be alarmed: Needle creams don't contain actual needles. Rather, they're made with sharp, microscopic pieces of sea or freshwater sponges to create tiny punctures in the skin, helping to activate the organ's self-healing skills, increase collagen, and enhance the effectiveness of products, among other benefits. In fact, some of the results purportedly rival those of microneedling, which is when a pro uses a handheld roller with bitty needles to make similar but slightly painful punctures. That's right: Needle creams don't hurt. They tingle! We poked Dendy Engelman, MD, a dermatologist at Shafer Clinic in New York City, for her thoughts. "These creams are a great alternative to microneedling," she says. "They give you a smoother, glowing complexion and minimize the appearance of wrinkles." A bunch of brands—Beyond Miracles, Medi Lift, and Private Doctor—are launching new options that just might move the needle for you.

BEAUTY ROAD TEST

GOOD PICS

Say “Cheese!” and “Yes, please!” to these flashy finds that’ll have you looking your best in all those holiday photos.

BY HEATHER MUIR MAFFEI



BEST HIGHLIGHTER

Drunk Elephant B-Goldi Bright Drops

Give your face some extra life with this skin-care-makeup hybrid. Wear it under foundation for a lit-from-within glow, on cheekbones to catch the light, or alone all over for a healthy sheen. With 5% niacinamide, the serum also helps fade dark spots and acne marks and leaves your skin looking nourished even after you’ve washed it off. \$38; drunkelephant.com



BEST SETTING SPRAY

IT Cosmetics Your Skin but Better Setting Spray+

Spritz on this coconut-water-infused spray in an X shape at arm’s length from your face to lock in your look. \$30; ulta.com



BEST BASE

Gee Beauty Prime Skin

For the less-is-more makeup peeps: This silky skin tint (in nine shades) feels weightless but blurs imperfections and revs up radiance so your complexion looks great in every frame. \$58; geebeauty.com



BEST TEETH WHITENER

Go Smile On the Go Teeth Whitening Pen

Spruce up your smile with this handy hydrogen peroxide pen that brightens stains and freshens breath. Swipe and pose! \$20; gosmile.com



BEST PRIMER

Milk Makeup Hydro Grip Makeup Primer

If your makeup disappears over the course of the day, you need this gel. It prevents raccoon eyes and shiny skin and keeps makeup from settling into lines. \$38; sephora.com



BEST BLOTTERS

NYX Professional Makeup Blotting Paper

While toilet seat covers work in a pinch (fact!), this 100% pure pulpate paper mattifies makeup without messing it up. \$4 for 50 sheets; nyxcosmetics.com

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GAME CHANGERS

Stepping Up

These women saw an opportunity to make the world better, so they rolled up their sleeves and got to work.

BY KEYDRA MANNS



The Actor Advocating for Children

On the small screen, **Jen Lilley** is known as the affable and quirky lead in some of your favorite made-for-TV holiday movies (*Mingle All the Way*, *B&B Merry*, and others). Off camera, she's fighting for child welfare in the United States. When she learned that child abuse is reported every 10 seconds, and that 6% of U.S. children under 18 will enter the foster care system at some point, she wanted to help.

"Adoption is important to me because of my faith," Lilley says, recalling Bible verses that inspired her to get involved. In 2011 she became a mentor to kids in foster care, volunteering through the child abuse prevention nonprofit Childhelp, and in 2016 she and her husband started fostering a baby boy. They eventually adopted him and his little brother, now ages 7 and 5. She has also lobbied Congress about the importance of avoiding premature reunification (when a child is placed back home too quickly) and helped launch *Christmas Is Not Cancelled*, a fundraising company that helps procure school supplies and holiday gifts for kids in need. Can't foster or mentor? Lilley says anyone and everyone can help in their own way. "Whether you're a hairdresser or a mechanic, foster kids and their families need your services," says Lilley, who uses careportal.org to connect with local families. "Do small things with great love—that's how you change the world."



The Inclusive Fashion Designer

It was that time of year again for **Nina Parker**. The Emmy-nominated TV host and journalist was covering the red carpet for E! and needed to find a dress, which, as any plus-size woman knows, is no small challenge given the limited range on most racks. For Parker, the struggle had been a constant throughout her career. "We reached out to a couple of major designers who had dressed plus-size women before, but we just didn't hear back," she says. So she teamed up with a stylist and dress-maker to design her own gown. On Oscar night, Parker tweeted a photo of herself wearing a stunning midnight blue ball-gown, captioned "I'll create a lane of my own. You CAN have couture AND curves!" It went viral, and a year later, she started collaborating with Macy's on her eponymous line. "We all want to look good and feel good in our clothes," Parker says. "Some days I want to be girly, and some days I want a casual look. It's shocking how you can't even find the right joggers or T-shirt." Now Parker creates the clothes she always wanted to buy: bodysuits, jeans, colorful work sets, and more. Unlike brands that simply make scaled-up versions of standard sizes (often with unflattering results), Parker designs for fuller bodies. "Our models have rolls in the back and the front. They have belly and hip dips," she says. "I want somebody who puts on one of my pieces to know I made it for them."




Skinny Vanilla Latte

Add 2 Tbsp. Torani Sugar Free French Vanilla to 2 shots espresso (or 1/2 cup strong brewed coffee) and 1 cup frothed oat milk.



Keto Coffee

Blend 2 Tbsp. Torani Sugar Free French Vanilla Syrup with 1 cup coffee, 1 Tbsp. grass fed butter, and 1 Tbsp. MCT oil.




Skinny Vanilla Protein Shake

Blend 2 Tbsp Torani Sugar Free French Vanilla Syrup, 1 cup unsweetened almond milk, 1 scoop protein powder, and 1 cup ice.



Zero Carb Whipped Cream

Whip 2 Tbsp. Torani Sugar Free French Vanilla Syrup with 1 pint heavy whipping cream until peaks form.



Torani Candied Lemon Drop

Pour 2 Tbsp. Torani Sugar Free French Vanilla Syrup, 1/2 cup seltzer water, 1/4 cup pineapple juice, and 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice over ice & stir.



Vanilla Matcha Tea Latte

Add 2 tbsps. Torani Sugar Free French Vanilla Syrup to 1 cup brewed matcha, and 1/2 cup skim milk.



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DRINKING WITH JENNA

BRING ON THE BUBBLES

Add more sparkle to your next holiday bash with these delightful champagne cocktails.

BY JENNA HELWIG

Champagne
Cocktail No. 1

Una Buena
Noche

FOOD STYLING BY CHELSEA ZIMMER; PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN



**Bekaa
Highball**



**Plaza
Champagne
Punch**



**Gold
Rush**



I DON'T KNOW what it is about a pretty glass filled with a fizzy pink or golden liquid that says, "This is going to be a lovely party," but that's definitely the message! During the holidays, I like to broadcast that idea nice and loud by mixing the sparkling stuff into cocktails—a double whammy of flair, if you will. This year, thirsty for new-to-me options, I gathered up five special recipes from bars and restaurants across the country.

P.S. I'm calling these drinks "champagne cocktails," but you don't have to use actual Champagne, which (you know the deal) is made in the Champagne region of France. A dry Italian Prosecco, Spanish Cava, French crémant, German Sekt, or American sparkling wine do the job just fine.

P.P.S. There's a literal Champagne cocktail that involves lemon, bitters, and a sugar cube. These aren't that. Moving on, let's get bubbling!



BEKAA HIGHBALL

ACTIVE TIME **5 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **5 MINUTES**
MAKES **1 COCKTAIL**

This fruit-forward but still dry cocktail uses frozen grapes instead of ice (cool!) and is adapted from Chez Zou, a cocktail lounge in New York City.

Frozen grapes (preferably Cotton Candy)
2 oz. (¼ cup) white grape juice
1 oz. (2 Tbsp.) Lillet Blanc
¾ oz. (1½ Tbsp.) apple brandy (such as Calvados)
1½ oz. (3 Tbsp.) tonic water
1 oz. (2 Tbsp.) Champagne

FILL a highball glass halfway with frozen grapes. Add remaining ingredients in the order listed. Stir gently to combine.

**About Jenna**

REAL SIMPLE's food director and the author of five cookbooks, Jenna is an enthusiastic eater, drinker, and home cook. Her go-to cocktail is a Negroni, and her wine of choice is anything bubbly. Cheers!

CHAMPAGNE COCKTAIL NO. 1

ACTIVE TIME **10 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 20 MINUTES**
MAKES **1 COCKTAIL**

I love a pretty pink drink! This cocktail is adapted from Juliet, a modern Parisian restaurant in Los Angeles. Make sure the liquids are chilled before mixing because you don't shake it or serve it over ice.

1 cup (about 5 oz.) raspberries
½ tangerine, peeled and segmented, plus tangerine peel for garnish (optional)
2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
2 oz. (¼ cup) Lillet Rosé, chilled
3 oz. (about ⅓ cup) Champagne, chilled

PLACE raspberries in a tall glass or jar. Gently crush with the end of a wooden spoon. Add tangerine segments and sugar. Stir to combine, mashing fruit well. Let sit for 10 minutes. Strain into a jar through a fine-mesh sieve, pressing down on solids to extract as much liquid as possible. (Makes a scant ½ cup syrup.) Refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 2 days.

COMBINE Lillet, Champagne, and 1½ teaspoons raspberry-tangerine syrup in a flute or coupe glass. Stir gently to combine. Garnish with tangerine peel, if desired.

UNA BUENA NOCHE

ACTIVE TIME **5 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **5 MINUTES**
MAKES **1 COCKTAIL**

It'll be a good night indeed when you mix up this delicious drink, adapted from the popular Spanish restaurant Ernesto's in New York City. The Lambrusco, a sparkling Italian red, adds drama (and is also chef's-kiss with pizza).

1½ oz. (3 Tbsp.) tequila blanco
¾ oz. (1½ Tbsp.) fresh lime juice (from 2 limes)
¾ oz. (1½ Tbsp.) apricot liqueur (such as Luxardo) or peach schnapps
¼ oz. (½ Tbsp.) honey syrup (see recipe below)
¼ oz. (½ Tbsp.) ginger syrup (such as Torani, or see recipe below)
1 oz. (2 Tbsp.) Lambrusco

ADD tequila, lime juice, apricot liqueur, honey syrup, and ginger syrup to a shaker with ice. Shake and strain into an ice-filled rocks glass. Top with Lambrusco.

Honey Syrup Stir together ¼ cup honey and 2 Tbsp. water in a small pot over medium. Stir until honey and water are combined. Do not simmer. Makes about ¼ cup. Refrigerate for up to 7 days.

Ginger Syrup Stir together ¼ cup water, ¼ cup granulated sugar, and 3 or 4 (¼-in.-thick) slices ginger (no need to peel) in a small pot over medium-high. Simmer, stirring to dissolve sugar, for 2 minutes. Let sit for 10 minutes. Remove ginger slices. Makes about ¼ cup. Refrigerate for up to 7 days.

Simple Syrup Stir together ¼ cup granulated sugar and ¼ cup water in a small pot over medium-high. Simmer, stirring, until sugar dissolves, about 1 minute. Makes about ¼ cup. Refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

PLAZA CHAMPAGNE PUNCH

ACTIVE TIME **10 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **4 HOURS, 10 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

The iconic Plaza Hotel in New York City serves this twist on the classic French 75 cocktail at its swanky Champagne Bar.

8 oz. (1 cup) gin
4 oz. (½ cup) fresh lemon juice (from 4 lemons)
4 oz. (½ cup) simple syrup (see recipe below)
4 oz. (½ cup) brewed tropical tea (such as Tazo Passion)
8 to 16 oz. (1 to 2 cups) rosé Champagne
Strawberries and lemon wheels, for garnish (optional)

COMBINE gin, lemon juice, simple syrup, and tea in a pitcher or other container. Refrigerate until cold, at least 4 hours and up to 1 day.

TRANSFER punch to a serving pitcher or punch bowl. Top with Champagne. Garnish with strawberries and lemon wheels, if desired.

GOLD RUSH

ACTIVE TIME **5 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **5 MINUTES**
MAKES **1 COCKTAIL**

Pops for Champagne is a 40-year-old Chicago institution that offers more than 100 varieties of bubbly, plus a dozen sparkling cocktails, including this one.

1 oz. (2 Tbsp.) bourbon
¾ oz. (1½ Tbsp.) pineapple liqueur (such as Fruitful)
¾ oz. (1½ Tbsp.) fresh lemon juice (from 1 lemon), plus lemon peel for garnish
½ oz. (1 Tbsp.) honey syrup (see recipe below)
Edible glitter (optional)
1 to 2 oz. Prosecco

PLACE bourbon, pineapple liqueur, lemon juice, and honey syrup in an ice-filled shaker. Shake until chilled and combined.


ADD a couple of pinches of edible glitter (if desired) to a rocks glass. Pour contents of shaker, including ice, into glass. Top with Prosecco and garnish with lemon peel.

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SIDE EFFECTS

Do Good, Feel Good

The best gift you can give yourself? Believe it or not, it's *not* a cashmere cardi! It's the gift of giving to others. According to a study in the journal *Science*, people who donated to charity were happier afterward than those who spent money on themselves. "Prosocial spending" (on family, friends, or strangers in need) has a range of health benefits, including lower blood pressure, increased happiness, and activation of brain areas associated with pleasure. Additionally: "The neural pathways we create through giving can overcome destructive emotions, such as hostility and bitterness," says Stephen G. Post, PhD, director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University. (Giving is cashmere for the soul!) For ideas, go to charitynavigator.org, where the independent nonprofit Charity Navigator lists worthy options.

HEADS-UP

Prescription for Safer Meds

These days, we're buying everything online—including our medications. In 2021, almost half of Americans filled prescriptions through virtual pharmacies, possibly because the meds were hard to find locally. (The U.S. has been experiencing shortages of more than 300 drugs—for cancer, asthma, ADHD, and more—due to supply chain problems and other issues.) But buying online can be risky. According to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP), an estimated 95% of online pharmacies are operating illegally, warns Libby Baney, senior adviser for the global nonprofit Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies. "Most consumers think that if a pharmacy is near the top of the search results, it must be legitimate," she says. "But that's just the algorithm working." Illegal pharmacies are selling unapproved meds, which means you can't be sure what's in them, how they're stored, or how long they've been on the shelf. They could be ineffective or, even scarier, laced with foreign substances, like the potentially deadly synthetic opioid fentanyl. Before you buy online, go to safe.pharmacy and enter the pharmacy's URL to check whether it's verified by the NABP. And if you're having trouble finding needed medications, talk to your doctor or pharmacist, who may be able to recommend a substitute.

95%

Estimated percentage of online pharmacies operating illegally



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Love on display

Designed by independent artists, this holiday card collection was created in celebration of love and its many faces.

Share your seasonal wishes with a design that uniquely embodies your wedding-journey bliss, from the photo and greeting down to the card shape and artisanal customizations.

Clockwise from upper left: Joy is All Around by Jackie Crawford, Petite Botanicals by Susan Moyal, Classic Border by Wendy Chung, Winter Folk Floral by Julie Murray

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THINGS COOKS KNOW

BOARD GAMES

Pros share advice for assembling a crowd-pleasing selection of cheeses.

BY HANNAH HOWARD

Photographs by Fred Hardy

FOOD STYLING BY EMILY NABORS HALL; PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN

ISN'T IT LOVELY when something you serve is universally beloved and also exceptionally simple to prep? Cheese boards are such MVPs that you could fan slices of cheddar on a plate with run-of-the-mill crackers and people would be pumped. But it's the holidays, and pizzazz is always invited to the party! So we asked some experts to chime in with their best tips.

Choose the Cheeses

Odd numbers of cheeses are standard on a board, says John Montez, assistant manager of education at Murray's Cheese in New York City. (That's probably due to the visually pleasing asymmetry of it all.) "I usually feature three or five varieties, depending on the size of my get-together."

When creating a group, Montez finds it helpful to think about texture. "For a three-cheese board, I'll always include a soft, a hard, and a blue. A five-cheese board could have a soft fresh cheese, like chèvre; a soft, bloomy rind cheese, like Brie; a semisoft washed rind cheese, like Taleggio; a firm cheddar; and a blue cheese."

Janet Fletcher, an award-winning food writer, a cheese class instructor, and the founder of the blog *Planet Cheese*, also aims for diversity. "I try to include a variety of milk types or shapes," she says. "I might choose a wedge, a pyramid, and a round."

On the other hand, sometimes similarity can be the point. You might want to highlight, say, three sheep's milk cheeses. Or you could go with a geographic theme, doing an all-California board or an all-French board.

Consider your audience too, adds Tia Keenan, author of *The Art of the Cheese Plate*. "If I'm serving cheese newbies, I make sure the cheeses are really approachable by choosing one or two that even the pickiest eaters



will enjoy." A decadent triple cream (such as Brillat-Savarin), an aged cheddar-style cheese (like Dubliner by Kerrygold), and Parmigiano-Reggiano are pretty sure bets. If you're hosting cheese snobs (they exist!), try more esoteric finds, like Camembert dell'Alta Langa, an Italian cheese made with goat's, sheep's, and cow's milk, or Uplands Cheese Rush Creek Reserve, a fall-and-winter specialty from Wisconsin with a gooey texture and woody funk.

Lucky enough to have a local cheese shop? Ask the monger (that's the official title) for suggestions, Keenan says. They'll have some ideas, and they'll also know what's at peak deliciousness. Plus, they'll probably give you a taste or three!

Pick a Surface

There's no need to buy anything special to serve as your cheese board. Instead, shop your kitchen. "I love slate, wood, and marble boards, but I have also used plates and cutting boards that look gorgeous when they're covered with cheese and accompaniments," Montez says. If you don't have a large enough board around, cluster smaller plates or trays, Keenan says. "Create depth and add visual interest by putting them on cake stands so you have different levels." Extra little snacks (see options below) can go directly on the board or in pretty bowls or ramekins.

Play with Pairings

Traditional cheese board accompaniments are classics because they work. Sweets like jam, honey, and dried fruit bring out cheese's savory notes, while salty snacks like pickles, olives, and salami pique our appetites at the start of a meal.

Just know you don't *have* to stick with the tried and true, says Carlos Yescas, founder of Cheese Spelunker Tours, a travel company that hosts multiday cheese-tasting tours internationally. "Some of the most unique pairings work well because they're a bit shocking—like Harbison cheese, from Jasper Hill in Vermont, and potato chips," he says. "We're not 'supposed to' eat chips with nice cheese, but it's a great pairing. I also love kimchi and cheddar."

Keenan likes serving familiar accompaniments alongside more unusual ones, like wasabi peas, pesto, and even caramel corn. In fact, she says, half the fun is experimenting. "If you'd want to eat cheese with some specific nibble, then give it a try!"

Make It Pretty

Staring at a blank board can feel intimidating. Use your cheeses as anchors by arranging them first, then add the other stuff. And be creative, Montez says. "Place things in organic shapes rather than geometric ones, and try to avoid symmetry," he suggests. "A beautiful cheese board has a sense of rhythm to it. Get abstract and have a little fun."

As for those packed-to-the-gills boards we all ogle on Instagram, it's a look! And one you should feel free to pursue if you'd like, but Fletcher recommends not overcrowding. Leave enough space to place a knife by each cheese so people can comfortably slice portions, she says.

Like Fletcher, Keenan prefers to let guests at a small party slice the cheeses themselves. "But if you're serving eight or more people, proportioning cheeses is more practical and less messy," she says.

Plan on two to four ounces of cheese per person—less if it's part of a spread, more if the cheese is the belle of the ball.

Whatever you do, skip the cubes, Montez advises: "Triangles and rectangles will often have a piece of rind, giving the guests a natural handle, whereas cubes create more waste since you'll need to put out toothpicks." (Plus, they look a little old-fashioned.)

The cheese will usually tell you how it wants to be served, Montez says. "If it keeps crumbling as you try to slice it, let it crumble—it will be beautiful!" And don't bother struggling to cut a softer cheese, like Camembert. It's fine to leave it be and let your guests cut a wedge or scoop up a schmear when they want some. They'll figure it out!

Time It Right

Assemble the board anytime the day of your event. Wrap the whole thing tightly in plastic or beeswax and stash it in the fridge. "Cheese performs better when it starts out a little colder on a cheese board, because it will be out for a long time," Yescas says. So leave it in the fridge until your party starts. Add the crackers and bread, which might get soggy in the refrigerator, just before serving.

If your guests devour the cheese and the party is still going strong, top off the board with a few more bits of hard cheese or a backup wheel or wedge, and refill accompaniments. But if the night is winding down, Montez suggests condensing what's already out rather than refilling. Just push the remainders closer together to fill in any giant gaps. "Of course, if it's a fantastic cheese board, it's often the first food to disappear at a party," he says. "And for good reason." ■

SLICE IT NICE



BREAK UP crumbly cheeses, like Parmigiano-Reggiano, feta, and some blues. Again, if it wants to crumble, let it!



CUT firm and semifirm wedges, like Gouda and Manchego, into triangles, leaving the rind attached at one end.



CUT logs, like Bûcheron and other goat cheeses, into coins.



SLICE small wheels of Brie or Camembert into wedges, or just leave whole and serve with a spreader.



SLICE blocks of firm cheese, like Gruyère, into rectangles, leaving the rind attached at one end if there is one.

ORGANIZE THIS

Photo Fix-Up

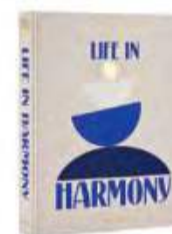
These finds can help you develop (ha!) a better system for your precious prints.

BY TEDDY WILLSON



ALL BOXED UP

Shoe boxes make for fine storage, but these sleek, glossy upgrades are display-worthy. Fill them with photos (and postcards and other keepsakes) and stack them on a low shelf for quick access when you feel like reminiscing. They have a magnetic closure and come in three sizes and eight fun colors. *Hay Color Storage Boxes*, from \$15; store.moma.org



BOOK SMART

An album that looks like a coffee table book! Inside the cloth cover are 30 pages of acid-free photo paper, which won't fade your memories. *Photo Album*, \$59; printworksmarket.us



FRAME OF MIND

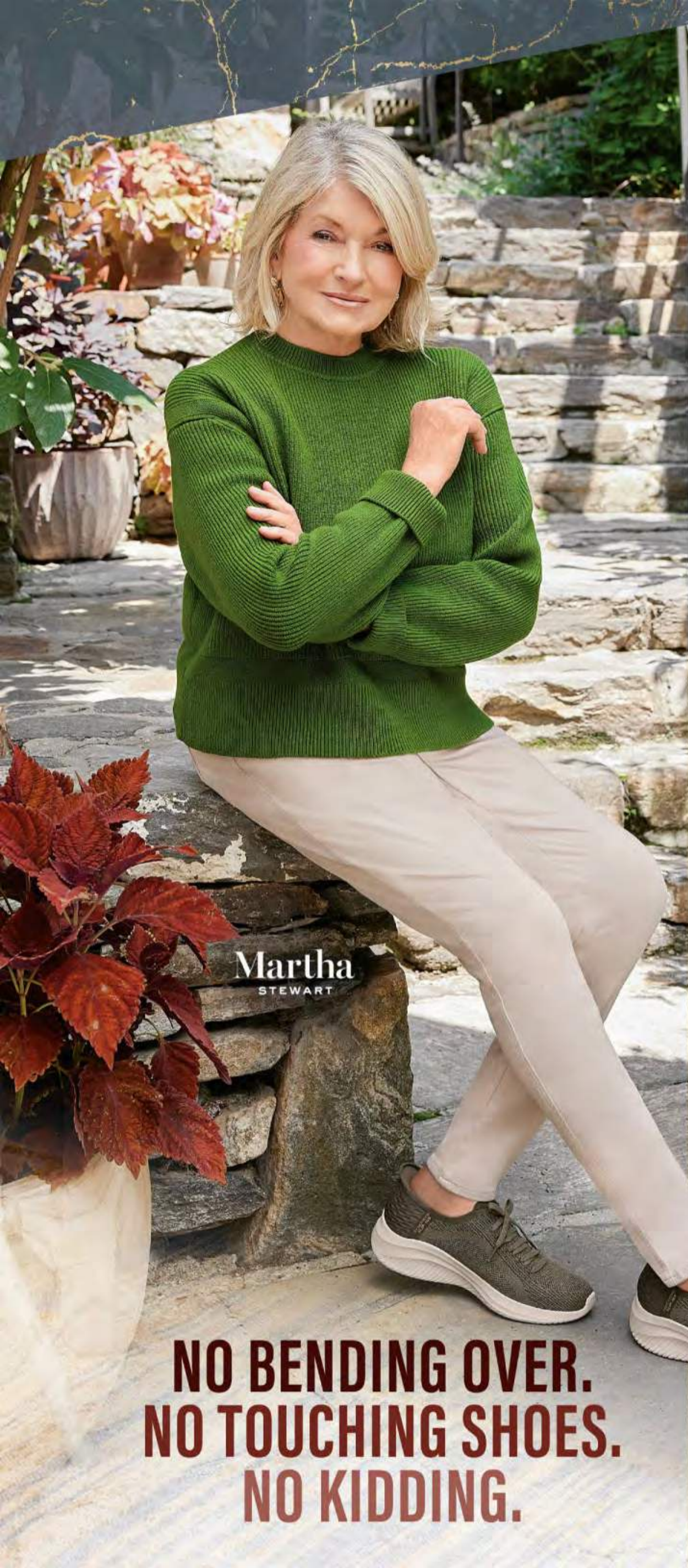
Slide today's favorite print in the front and stow up to 50 others in the back. Rotate based on your mood. *Brass & Wood Display Boxes*, from \$44; artifactuprising.com



SAFE KEEPING

This silicone-coated fiberglass filler is water resistant and can withstand temps up to 2,000°F, to keep what's inside nice and secure. *Fireproof Box*, \$40; engpow.com

PROP. STYLING BY MARINA BEVILACQUA; PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS



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CLEAN THIS

HOLIDAY MESS

'Tis the season to be cleaning. That's how the song goes, right? We'll help you take care of some seasonal stuff that might make your spirits *not* so bright.

BY ERICA FINAMORE

Remove Wine Stains

If you (or, ahem, someone else) spilled vino on anything wool or silk, take the item to a pro ASAP. If you're dealing with pretty much any other material, then stop, drop, and blot! Dab up as much wine as possible with a microfiber cloth, starting at the edge of the stain and working inward. Your next step: salt. Sprinkle a bit on the stain and leave it there for at least five minutes. It should absorb even more liquid. Now it's time for an official stain remover. Experts suggest Folex (see right), OxyClean Max Force Laundry Stain Remover (\$4.50; amazon.com), or this DIY mixture: half a teaspoon of liquid laundry detergent, a quarter cup of white vinegar, and a quarter cup of cool water. Apply your stain remover to the spot and let it sit for a few minutes so the cleaning agents have time to break up the stain. After that, launder as normal. If the offending mark is *still* there after a wash, don't put the item in the dryer (the heat will set the stain!). Instead, take it to a professional and let them have a go. For wine stains on carpet, use the same routine minus the salt (which can get stuck in deep fibers), and flush the spot with cool water to rinse out your stain remover.

Gather All Those Fallen Needles

Live Christmas trees are so lovely... until they start shedding on your floor. Your first instinct might be to bust out the vacuum, but hold off, because needles can jam the roller. First sweep up what you can with a broom and dustpan. Once the easy stuff is gone, turn to a wet-dry vac, which was made to suck up larger pieces. (Don't have one? Use the hose

attachment on your regular vac.) To clean any sap residue, add a few drops of an oil-based soap, like Murphy Oil Soap (right), to a microfiber cloth and rub the floor until it's no longer sticky.

Lift Melted Candle Wax

Wax-idents happen! For messes on a sealed counter and most other non-porous surfaces, spray some WD-40 Multi-Use Product (\$7; homedepot.com) on the wax and it should pop right off with some light nudging. For droplets that fall on wood surfaces, add a dab of Murphy Oil Soap to a microfiber cloth and rub. (Test on a small area first to make sure it doesn't discolor the wood.) For tablecloths, scrape off as much as you can with your fingers—gently, so as not to damage the material. Then get out your iron: Sandwich the tablecloth between two paper shopping bags or paper towels. Place your iron, on the lowest setting, on top for a few seconds. The wax should peel away easily.

Banish Glitter

It starts with a single well-meaning holiday card. A day later, you've got itty-bitty sparkles everywhere. When they're scattered here and there all over your house, there's not a ton you can do other than practice acceptance. To grab pieces that have gotten between your floorboards, use a small grout brush, then go over the grooves with the hose attachment on your vacuum. When the sparkles are clustered in one spot? A lint roller is your new best friend. It'll pick up the bulk of the shimmery bits and give you the greatest instant gratification of all time. ■

A few other supplies to have on hand, just in case: extra trash bags, paper towels, and aspirin!

Tools of the Trade



MURPHY OIL SOAP

\$5; homedepot.com



FOLEX INSTANT CARPET SPOT REMOVER

\$7; homedepot.com



SCOTCH-BRITE LINT ROLLER VALUE PACK

\$8; target.com

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HEALTH

The Good Kind of Stress

Make your body a little uncomfortable (or a lot!). Experts say putting yourself through the wringer can be good for you—if you do it right. Here’s what you need to know about the upside of adding a small burst of physical stress to your day.

BY JESSICA MIGALA

By gently subjecting the body to mild discomfort, we can promote resilience, metabolic health, and longevity.

FOR MOST OF US, the word “stress” brings to mind the teeth-grinding agita that overtakes us in a traffic jam or during a panicky day at the office. We consider it our health enemy, right along with smoking, sitting, and sugar. But stress can be positive, say some wellness-minded types who embrace “hormetic stress.” Hor-what? It’s basically a way to push yourself out of your comfort zone in order to get stronger, biologically speaking. (Hormesis, from the Greek word for “excite,” refers to a process in which a small dose of something harmful may have a beneficial effect.) By gently subjecting the body to mild discomfort—cold, heat, spurts of intense activity, limited fasting—followed by recovery, we can promote resilience, metabolic health, and longevity. The idea is gaining popularity, which is why you may have seen Harry Styles sitting in an ice bath on Instagram.

Though the practice might sound a bit out there, the science seems promising, says Ryo Sanabria, PhD, assistant professor of gerontology at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, who studies the link between stress and aging. “Researchers have started to see that low-grade stress that’s not damaging to the body can be beneficial,” he says. “It causes an adaptive response of cells and organisms.”

How it works: Among other physiological changes, encountering stressors activates the secretion of cortisol and adrenaline, which leads to increased heart rate and blood pressure. In cases of chronic stress (the kind that simmers inside us long-term), a prolonged bodily response can be harmful. With hormetic stress, however, we rest and recover quickly, leaving us potentially

more resilient to future stress and at less risk of disease. Think of what happens when you lift weights: You get tiny tears in your muscles that might not feel so good the next day, but when they eventually heal, you’re ready for heavier dumbbells.

While research into the practice is in its early days, it might be worth trying, as a way to help improve your immunity. (Just talk to your doctor first, especially if you have a heart condition or other chronic medical issues.) Here, four ways to get stressed-out.

Cold Water Exposure

WHAT IT IS Yikes! If you’ve ever unintentionally stepped into a chilly shower, you may have gotten an unpleasant shock. Well, some people are doing this on purpose—putting not only their toes but their entire bodies in water that’s below 60°F, with experienced bathers going as low as 40°F. Cold showers, polar bear plunges, and icy swims are among the most popular ways to trigger good stress right now. For a real flex, you can even have a cold tub installed in your house or yard: Some humble models that look like gigantic buckets cost \$100 or less.

POTENTIAL PERKS Exposing the body to cold activates our thermoregulation as we try to maintain our internal temperature, explains Molly Maloof, MD, author of *The Spark Factor: The Secret to Supercharging Energy, Becoming Resilient, and Feeling Better Than Ever*.

“In the process, we release certain hormones and proteins that help improve cardiovascular function, immune response, and cellular repair,” she says. “It also enhances circulation and metabolism.”

And though an ice bath might not sound like a postworkout treat, it can help with joint and muscle recovery, says Thomas M. Holland, MD, a clinician and researcher at the Rush Institute for Healthy Aging in Chicago. “Cold decreases inflammation and causes vasoconstriction,” a narrowing of the blood vessels that may help the body rid itself of lactic acid and other waste products that contribute to muscle soreness. An ice plunge may also be a mood booster, flooding your body with “happy” chemicals, like dopamine and serotonin. One Czech study found that subjects immersed in a 57°F bath enjoyed a 250% increase in dopamine.

TRY IT Start with 30-second cold spurts in your shower, working your way up to two minutes, Maloof recommends. If you want to try an ice bath, the water should be between 50°F and 59°F (a baby-bath thermometer comes in handy here). It’s fine if a 30-second dip is all you can handle at first, though the ideal soak time is between 2 and 10 minutes, Holland says. Cautionary note: Cold immersion causes your heart rate and blood pressure to increase rapidly (and potentially dangerously), so again, check with your doctor first. And start slow.

Heat Therapy

WHAT IT IS You've probably already done this one, if you've ever soaked in a hot tub or sat in a sauna or steam room. You may have felt relaxed, but your body was actually undergoing hormetic stress.

POTENTIAL PERKS Heat therapy works much like cold therapy—just in reverse. As your thermoregulation system cools down your core temperature, you experience vasodilation, an expansion of the blood vessels, increasing circulation, Holland explains. The greater blood flow provides a rush of oxygen and nutrients to tissues, soothing sore or stiff joints, he says. Your heart also has to work harder to support this extra blood flow (more good stress).

Heat therapy is currently being considered for treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's, Sanabria adds. "When cells get stressed, certain genes turn on like switches," he says. So if you're hot on a 100°F day, genes that protect the body from heat will turn on. Surprisingly, the switches that relieve heat stress may also help the brain clear away proteins that harm its cells.

TRY IT Sit in a sauna or steam room for 20 minutes a few days a week, Maloof says. Or soak in a hot tub. No access? Crank your shower to its hottest setting, put a rolled towel under the bathroom door to trap heat, and enjoy a DIY steam. Saunas and hot tubs can bring down your blood pressure, so if yours is already low, ask your doc if this is OK to try. And drink plenty



of water before, during, and after to replenish the fluids you lost with all that sweating. If you feel any weirdness—dizziness, confusion, tunnel vision—move to room temp immediately or get medical care.

High-Intensity Interval Training

WHAT IT IS Known as HIIT, these workouts alternate short bursts of intense exercise with periods of rest. It's associated with the jock crowd, but any routine, like walking or biking, can become a HIIT workout.

POTENTIAL PERKS The fast-and-slow process is great for muscle strength and endurance—possibly better than traditional cardio, suggests a recent meta-analysis of 19 studies in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. "HIIT stresses the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems, leading to adaptations that improve endurance, strength,

and metabolic efficiency," Maloof says. The intensity of HIIT also sends your heart rate soaring and burns through your blood sugar, Holland notes.

TRY IT Start slow, with a 1:3 ratio of bursts and breaks (for instance, 15 seconds of intense activity followed by 45 seconds of rest) for 15 or 20 minutes total, Holland says. The intense activity can be walking extra briskly, as long as you get your heart pumping. Incorporate HIIT into your routine once a week, Maloof says. Any more can be too much for a beginner's body. Talk to your doctor if you're taking medications that affect blood pressure or heart rate, Holland says. And pay attention to your body: Breathing hard is one thing, but feeling close to passing out is another.



“My cats absolutely loved this food!”
-Krystal*

“They went crazy for it! Highly recommend!”
-Aleae*

Intermittent Fasting

WHAT IT IS This eating strategy, called IF for short, involves limiting your daily food intake to a specific window of time. While there are many ways to do IF, the 16:8 model is a popular one. You fast for 16 hours (you’re ideally sleeping for about half of that time anyway) and eat your meals and snacks during the remaining eight. You can choose whatever eight-hour window you prefer; many people skip breakfast and eat lunch around noon, finishing dinner by 8 p.m.

POTENTIAL PERKS IF can help with weight loss, if that’s your goal, but it has other benefits too, like lowering insulin resistance and reducing blood pressure and cholesterol levels, says Krista Varady, PhD, professor of nutrition at the University of Illinois Chicago. It’s also said to help quash inflammation, which could help reduce your risk of chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease, but more studies need to be done.

TRY IT Ease into IF by doing it for a day or two. No one wants to be hangry, so to stay satiated during your fasting period, your best bet is to go low-carb and consume plenty of fat and protein during your eight-hour eating window. If you have a history of an eating disorder, IF is likely not safe for you. And anyone with diabetes should check with their doctor to see if they need to adjust their medication schedule. Lastly, as always, don’t forget to stay hydrated. Water can help with that chronic stress too! ■



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SIMPLE TWISTS

5 Tricks for a Merrier Baking Season

Joy to the world—or at least to you, as you mix up tons of holiday treats.

BY SASHA WAYMAN & TEDDY WILLSON



USE
A Warm Glass
TO
Soften Butter

Need room-temperature butter stat? Grab a tall glass, fill it with hot water (as hot as your faucet will go), and let it sit for about five minutes, getting nice and toasty. Then dump the water, stand a stick of butter on its end on a plate, and place the warmed glass over it, upside down. This will create a steamy, saunalike situation, softening your butter in just a few minutes.



USE
Oil
TO
Make Measuring Easier

Certain sticky ingredients (looking at you, honey and molasses!) can be tough to remove from measuring cups. To avoid having to get in there with a spatula (or, ahem, your finger), coat the cup with a bit of oil first. If your recipe calls for oil, simply dole that out *before* the sticky stuff. If it doesn't, spritz the cup with cooking spray, then measure your honey. It will run right out of the cup and into your mixing bowl. Don't worry—your treats won't taste any different!



USE
A Tall Glass
TO
Fill a Piping Bag

The struggle with piping bags is *real*. The next time you need to fill one, place the tip in, then slide the bag into a tall glass and fold the plastic down around the rim. Scoop in your homemade or store-bought (we won't tell!) frosting with a spatula. If you make a mess, all good—any errant frosting will be on the inside of the bag when you twist it up. On with the cookie decorating!



USE
A Spatula
TO
Bake Flat Cakes

The telltale sign of a pro-level cake: flat, even layers. While you could trim the domes once they're out of the oven, we have an easier way. Pour your batter into the pans and give them a shake to release air bubbles. Then dip a spatula into the center to make a divot, and swoop and swirl the batter until it's concave in the middle. Pop your pans into the oven and bake according to the recipe. When you take them out, your cakes should look ready for an appearance on *The Great British Baking Show*.



USE
Slices of Bread
TO
Keep Soft Cookies Fresh

If you're mailing boxes of treats to loved ones (see page 144 for ideas), consider adding bread to the airtight containers. Weird? Maybe! But the bread slices will transfer their moisture to the cookies, keeping them from drying out and getting superhard. White bread is your best bet, as it won't transfer any flavor to your creations. To make it festive, use cookie cutters to stamp out fun shapes, like stars or snowflakes. Oh, and just let us know if you need our address.

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SWEET THING

JELLY DOUGHNUTS

Enjoy a sufganiyah (that's the Hebrew word for this Hanukkah treat) during the holidays or just 'cause.

BY AMANDA HOLSTEIN



FOOD STYLING BY CHELSEA ZIMMER; PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN

ACTIVE TIME **40 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 25 MINUTES**
MAKES **8 DOUGHNUTS**

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 1 Tbsp. instant or quick-rising yeast (from 2 [¼-oz.] envelopes)
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- 2 large egg yolks
- ½ cup plus 1 Tbsp. warm water (about 110°F)
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, at room temperature
- Neutral oil (such as canola), for frying, plus more for greasing bowl
- ½ cup seedless raspberry jam
- Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

LINE a large, rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Stir together flour, granulated sugar, yeast, salt, and nutmeg in bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook attachment. Make a well in center of flour mixture; add egg yolks, warm water, and butter. Beat on medium speed until dough is smooth and elastic, 4 to 5 minutes.

PLACE dough in a large bowl greased with oil, turning to coat all sides. Cover with plastic wrap; let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1½ hours.

UNCOVER dough and turn out onto a lightly floured work surface. Roll out to a thickness of ⅓ to ½ inch. Cut into 8 rounds using a 2¾-inch round cutter. Place cut dough on prepared baking sheet and cover with a kitchen towel. Let rise at room temperature until dough is slightly puffed and springs back when lightly pressed, about 20 minutes.

MEANWHILE, add oil to a large Dutch oven, filling to a depth of 1½ to 2 inches. Heat over medium until oil reaches 350°F, 15 to 20 minutes.



GENTLY transfer 4 dough rounds to hot oil. Cook until golden brown on both sides, 45 seconds to 1 minute per side. Using a slotted spoon, transfer doughnuts to a baking sheet lined with paper towels. Repeat with remaining 4 rounds.

LET doughnuts stand until cool enough to handle, about 10 minutes. Fill a piping bag or resealable plastic bag with jam; massage bag to loosen jam. Snip corner of plastic bag. Use a butter knife to poke a hole through side and into center of each doughnut, being careful not to poke through other side. Insert piping bag into hole and pipe about 1 tablespoon jam into each doughnut. Dust with confectioners' sugar and serve immediately.

To make these the old-fashioned way—by hand!—stir the dough together with a wooden spoon or spatula, then knead on a lightly floured work surface until smooth and elastic, about 8 minutes. It's a nice little arm workout! (A stand mixer will make things a million times easier, though. If you're in the market, see our pick on page 22.)



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**PEANUT BUTTER CHRISTMAS
TREE NO-BAKE BARS**





BEAUTY HOW-TO

Rock a Bold Lip

Let your mouth do the talking with a bright, matte color (yes, you can pull off this orange!) that doesn't budge but feels buttery smooth. Makeup artist Summer Tran explains how.

BY HEATHER MUIR MAFFEI

1

DITCH DEAD SKIN

Matte lipstick is awesome, but the flat finish can highlight flakes, so this prep step is key, Tran says.

Buff a sugar scrub into damp lips in a circular motion to slough off chapped bits. Wipe away the crystals with a wet washcloth and pat dry.

2

SOFTEN

Slick on balm to lock in moisture. This formula has hyaluronic acid, ceramides, and antioxidants to help plump and smooth that thin lip skin. Blot with a tissue to ensure the next products adhere nicely.

3

PRIME, THEN DEFINE

Swipe a dot of concealer over your lips. "This neutralizes your lip color so the hue you use pops," Tran says. "Plus, it acts as a primer." Next, trace the edges of your lips with a pencil, extending the outline slightly if you want a fuller look.

4

PAINT

Fill in lips by dabbing on a lipstick. Then put your finger in your mouth and pull it out to remove excess and keep your teeth clean.

1



2



3



4



Your Toolbox

- 1 Sugar Lip Polish Exfoliator, \$21; [fresh.com](https://www.fresh.com)
 2 Forget the Filler Overnight Lip-Plumping Mask in Juicy Watermelon, \$22; [lawlessbeauty.com](https://www.lawlessbeauty.com) 3 Precision Lip Pencil in Porquerolles, \$24; [narscosmetics.com](https://www.narscosmetics.com)
 4 Lipstick in Heat Wave, \$26; [narscosmetics.com](https://www.narscosmetics.com)



ADD TO CART

Not-So-Common Scents

While fragrances have long been inspired by flowers, here's something new: Future Society, a line of six perfumes inspired by the DNA of extinct flowers. We'll back up.

In 2017, biologists extracted samples of long-gone blooms from the Harvard University Herbaria. Through DNA sequencing, they identified genes that might encode fragrance-producing enzymes. They printed the codes, then inserted them in yeast to produce scent molecules. Even if your brain doesn't understand the science, your nose will know that the aromas are amazing.

Two of our faves: Solar Canopy (from a Hawaiian flower last seen in 1912, it smells like red currant and pink pepper) and the citrusy Reclaimed Flame (from a South African species that disappeared in 1960).

Try all six in a sample kit. \$35; [wearefuture.com](https://www.wearefuture.com)

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BY JUNO DEMELO

Volunteer Your Time

Your presence is one of the greatest, well, presents you can offer shelter animals, says Eileen Hanavan, director of volunteer and foster engagement at the ASPCA Adoption Center in New York City. “Shelters need volunteers throughout the year,” Hanavan says. If you're able to put in the face time, you can dish out meals, hold cuddle sessions, clean out cages, or even foster at home. Can't show up IRL? You can still offer a virtual hand. Someone needs to write those animal bios, answer emails, and help plan events.



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HOW TO DO THINGS

Donate a Few Things

Chances are, you're sitting on stuff your local shelter needs, like extra sheets and towels. Woo-hoo to cleaning out your linen closet *and* making a difference! Cozy towels are always useful for warming up kennels, Hanavan says. She adds that shelters across the country tend to have different needs. Yours may be desperate for food, toys, or kitty litter. So it's best to call and ask what you can gather up.

Give Some Cash

Animals need our love and affection, but let's keep it real—they rely on money just like humans do. Or rather, shelters rely on it. They have bills to pay and supplies to buy! Instead of sending a lump sum once a year, consider giving a smaller amount every month or so, suggests Noah Horton, chief operating officer at Greater Good Charities, a global nonprofit that supports a variety of causes. "Making small monetary gifts monthly or quarterly, versus a one-time donation, helps organizations predict if they can continue to operate," he says. And check with your employer to see if they match charitable donations. "This way, you can double your gift without taking an extra dime out of your pocket," Horton says. Someone in HR will be able to tell you how to get that match.

Be a Savvy Shopper

You might be able to pay it forward by doing things like shopping at your favorite stores and buying the items you already buy, Horton points out. For example, if you head to [walmart.com/sparkgood](https://www.walmart.com/sparkgood), you can round up your online purchase to benefit your favorite charity. Kroger shoppers can link their rewards cards to a nonprofit of their choice. (The grocer donates money based on total spending.)

"Making small monetary gifts monthly or quarterly helps organizations predict if they can continue to operate."

A bunch of other companies work with or have their own animal charities, including Chewy, Tito's, and Bissell. And some (Grounds & Hounds Coffee Co. comes to mind) donate a portion of proceeds when you shop online.

Support Other Animal Lovers

The average cost of being a dog or cat parent is nearly \$1,300 a year, according to the ASPCA. That may be a challenge for a pet owner who's struggling financially. Help them out by donating canned stuff or bags of kibble to your local food pantry (yes, some accept pet goods) or to pet owners experiencing homelessness. To find donation sites near you, check out findhelp.org or petsofthehomeless.org. You can also help with the cost of medical care, says Vicki Stevens, director of companion animals project management at the Humane Society of the United States. A lot of vet clinics and hospitals have funds for individuals who can't afford care, she explains. Or put a furry face and backstory to your donation through waggle.org, a crowdfunding site that connects Good Samaritans to pet parents who need help covering care. "No matter how you choose to help," Hanavan says, "it's an act of compassion—and the positive impact can be profound." ■

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TRAVEL

GREAT ESCAPES

If Mother Nature's deep freeze makes you wish you could permanently live on a cruise ship, we hear you. We also want to remind you that you probably can't. (Loved ones! Life!) But you can visit one of these warm-weather destinations.

For, say, a week or two.

BY ADRIENNE JORDAN

PROP STYLING BY MARINA BEVILACQUA; TOP INSET PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY IMAGES

Photograph by Ted Cavanaugh

DECEMBER 2023 REAL SIMPLE 65

The art deco buildings along Ocean Drive (pictured), Collins Avenue, and Lincoln Road are Miami highlights.

Punta Islita, Costa Rica

Located in one of the world's five Blue Zones—where people tend to live the longest, healthiest lives—this quiet beach town is an ideal place to decompress and hone your *plan de vida*, or life's purpose. (Some residents partially credit that clarity of mission for their longevity!) There's certainly plenty of natural beauty to draw inspiration from: pristine beaches, blazing orange sunsets, and an 80-million-year-old volcanic rock formation dividing Punta Islita from Playa Corozalito, an undeveloped beach that draws even fewer visitors. While you can luxuriate hard here, adventure opportunities abound. Try coasting high through the rainforest and canyons on a twilight zip line tour. Or head out on a morning Monkey Quest hike, where you'll find howlers—one of the world's loudest animals—feasting in the forest canopy.

Sign up for experiences like these at Hotel Punta Islita (from \$311 a night). The small Autograph Collection hotel consists of villas and suites with views of the forest or crystal-clear waters. While you're there, visit the hotel's restaurant, Alma. The chefs follow a “kilometer zero” menu philosophy, so the fish on your plate was caught nearby. Meaning: You'll eat the same food that's kept the locals in such good health for centuries.



Miami, Florida

Some people go to Miami to party with humongous margaritas on the South Beach strip. The REAL SIMPLE way? Go for the thriving art scene, gorgeous architecture, captivating museums, and diverse culture.

Stop by the Wynwood neighborhood to see exhibits from one of the world's most popular art fairs, Art Basel. Even if your trip doesn't coincide with the show (this year, it's from December 8 through 10), you could spend days exploring the dozens of permanent galleries and hundreds of outdoor murals in the area, getting lost in works by artists from around the globe. Cheat code: Book the street art tour with Wynwood Buggies (from \$45 per person) to cruise around by golf cart. Your guide will take you into nooks and crannies you'd likely miss on your own.

For architecture, check out Ocean Drive, Collins Avenue, and Lincoln Road, showcasing 800 designated historic buildings. In certain sections, the buildings seem to flow into one another but retain their unique art deco charm. Stop at the Villa Casa Casuarina—a.k.a. the Versace Mansion—on Ocean Drive. The late designer's home was converted into a 10-suite hotel, so the best way to get inside is to book a room (if it's in your budget—some rooms cost more than \$1,000 a night) or dine at the on-site restaurant, Gianni's at the Villa.

As for which museums to include in your itinerary, we have a few recommendations: the American Museum of

the Cuban Diaspora, which offers live theater and performance art as well as exhibits; the Black Police Precinct and Courthouse Museum, in what was believed to be the country's only all-in-one precinct and courthouse run by African Americans; and the Haitian Heritage Museum, featuring artifacts, music, art, and more.

Don't forget the food! Thanks to the influx of immigrants who've settled in the city over the decades, Miami is *the* place for Cuban and Caribbean cuisine. Swing by the Little Havana neighborhood and head to Sanguich for a Cuban sandwich (ham, Swiss cheese, mustard, and pickles pressed between sliced Cuban bread). In Little Haiti, you can grab lunch for around \$5 at Pack Supermarket. The no-frills spot serves Haitian pickled vegetables called pikliz, as well as what many call the best fried chicken around. Once you've eaten, sure, get that giant marg.



At Diamond Falls in St. Lucia, the mineral water shimmers in a range of colors.



Proof Bastimentos in Panama is calm, despite being a large island!

St. Lucia

What this Caribbean island lacks in size (it's only 27 miles long) it makes up for in romance. Have dinner on the beach, watch the sunset, or swim under one of the many waterfalls with your person, and you'll see what we mean. Stay at the Windjammer Landing resort (from \$340 a night), nestled in a hillside facing the sea—just make sure you also get out to explore the sights. Folks travel from around the world to view the majestic Pitons, two mountainous volcanic spires. Hiking either one is legit hard, so opt for a view from the water with Knotty Girl Speed Boat Tours instead (from \$125 per person, including lunch). There's also a drive-in volcano (as in, a volcano you get to by car) in an area

called Sulphur Springs. Bring your bathing suit if you want to take a dip in the natural mud bath and rinse off under a 50-foot waterfall. One more can't-miss: a bamboo raft tour on the Roseau River with St. Lucia Bamboo Rafting (from \$100 per person). Your guide will share local history as you glide among wild mangroves. Ask the company to arrange a private-chef-prepared lunch and they'll set up a table—with white linens and all—for you and your date. See? Romance!

Bocas del Toro, Panama

For some incredibly convenient island-hopping, visit Bocas del Toro. While here, you'll likely bounce around among three spots: Isla Bastimentos, Isla Colón, and Isla Carenero, just minutes from one another via water taxi. Though Bastimentos is one of the largest islands in the area, the vibes are chill—especially at Polo Beach, where you can swim in the coral-lined waters and may even run into Polo,



In the Maldives, a snorkeling excursion can take you to a coral reef wonderland.

Baa Atoll, Maldives

If you seek top-notch swimming and once-in-a-lifetime interactions with rare sea creatures, the Maldives should be the next entry on your bucket list. Baa Atoll is a Unesco-designated biosphere reserve (a protected natural area meant for conservation and ecological study) and is home to one of the largest groups of reefs in the Indian Ocean, with at least 250 types of coral. Because of that diversity, the area is rife with plankton that sea animals love to feed on. So a snorkeling trip may reveal up to 1,200 marine species, including manta rays and whale sharks.

The Standard Maldives (from \$535 a night) is a cool, splurgy base for your adventures at sea. Use the resort's complimentary snorkel gear to explore the colorful house reef (yes, the hotel has its own private-access reef!). Ask the concierge about other local activities, like a sea turtle tour (five of the world's seven sea turtle species live in the Maldives) or a boat cruise in Hanifaru Bay, where the mantas and whale sharks are populous and gentle. Remember to send a postcard! ■

the man the beach was reportedly named after. According to legend, he has lived on the beach for more than 50 years and enjoys cooking fish. Also on Bastimentos, you'll find Red Frog Beach, known for the red frogs that hop around the surrounding forest.

When the clock strikes cocktail hour, hit the fun-filled streets of Isla Colón, then grab a water taxi to The Floating Bar, open December through October. The two-story spot sits out at sea, and daredevils can jump off the diving board into the ocean. Others can relax in lounge chairs and enjoy a Balboa, a crisp Panamanian lager.

On Fridays you'll notice gobs of people gearing up for the weekly bar crawl. It's kind of a scene (floating bars across three islands, house music, and water sports), so if you want to skip "Filthy Friday," head to Isla Carenero. With a reputation for some of the best seafood in the area, Receta Michilá at the Doña Mara Gastro Hotel features a menu that changes daily based on the availability of local produce and, of course, the most recent catch. Indulge in a rum-based cocktail while taking in the breathtaking sunset at the beachside property.

Baa Atoll is home to one of the largest groups of reefs in the Indian Ocean, with at least 250 types of coral.

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THE MINDSET

TOTALLY AWE-SOME

Studies show that cultivating this wondrous emotion can help you relax, have more fun, improve your health, and so on. And it's easy to find some anytime, anywhere.

BY ELENI N. GAGE



“Awe is calming, settling, and grounding, but it also awakens and activates us. It makes us more open, curious, playful, and humorous.”

WHEN MY KIDS were little, surprise, delight, and awe crossed their faces a dozen times a day. Any number of occurrences would leave them wide-eyed with amazement—a sudden rainstorm, a squirrel running up a tree, the sunset. I recall my son’s entire pre-K class staring, slack-jawed, as their teacher released butterflies they’d grown from caterpillars into the gray New York sky.

Today, when I suggest we head to the same park where they once marveled at the ducks, my tweens shrug and turn back to their books or video games. I’m not much better. When I wander through spaces that once brought me awe, like the park or a museum, I’m often making mental to-do lists or answering emails on my phone. The only emotion I’m aware of in those moments is anxiety. It’s funny when you think about it: “Awesome” is a word grown-ups throw around all the time, like after a dreaded meeting is canceled. But how many of us regularly feel actual awe?

Positive psychology researchers want us to find it again. They’re making the case for the power of awe—the physical, psychological, and emotional benefits it offers. Even if you’re long past the age of 6, you can cultivate it in your mind (which is absolutely still fertile ground for awe!) and reap its rewards. The key, for those of us with myriad responsibilities and an earned world-weariness that can inure us to the charms of our surroundings, is to seek it out in big, amazing experiences *and* learn to find it in small ones. According to research, you can and should make a habit of that second one. Yep, every day.

The Basics of Awe

In 2003, Dacher Keltner, PhD, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, who’s now widely regarded as a pioneer of “awe studies,” noticed that while thousands of articles in psych journals discussed fear, anger, surprise, and joy, only a handful looked at awe. In his first crack at studying the emotion, he and social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, PhD, coauthored a paper identifying awe’s two primary components—vastness and mystery—and its role in our lives. In 2015, Keltner’s lab collected 2,600 stories from people all over the world about a time they felt awe, which the study defined as “being in the presence of something vast and mysterious that transcends your understanding of the world.”

Through reading the stories, Keltner and his staff determined that awe can be triggered by any of what they’ve named the eight wonders of life: moral beauty (feeling moved by the kindness or bravery of others); collective effervescence (being swept up in a group event, whether it’s a theater performance or a quinceañera); nature (looking up at a towering redwood); visual design (marveling at a beautiful painting, sculpture, or structure like the pyramids); music (hearing a song that moves you); life and death (witnessing or just pondering birth, or experiencing loss); spirituality (feeling a sense of the sublime from a meditation session or religious service); and epiphanies (gaining sudden understanding, maybe from gazing at the face of your date and realizing you’ve fallen in love).

Why It’s Important

Over the years, Keltner uncovered the positive physical, intellectual, emotional, and social benefits of awe. (His book about his findings, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life*, came out this year.) Feeling awe promotes concentration and rigorous thinking, encourages community and connection, relieves depression and anxiety, and can reduce inflammation, aiding our cardiovascular health. It lifts us out of the daily race and, Keltner says, gives us “the sense that we have more time in the day.”

Researchers have learned through brain imaging that experiencing awe activates our parasympathetic nervous system, shutting down the fight-or-flight stress response, and spurs our bodies to produce inflammation-fighting substances called cytokines. Awe also promotes what scientists call modest sympathetic arousal. In this state, we’re somewhere between fully relaxed and on guard, and we feel energized to connect with others, says physician Michael Amster, MD, who wrote *The Power of Awe* with Jake Eagle, a licensed professional counselor. “Awe is calming, settling, and grounding, but it also awakens and activates us,” Amster explains. “It makes us more open, curious, playful, and humorous.”

Why We've Lost It

If awe, a universal experience across cultures, does such incredible things for us, why did we stop feeling it? Mostly because we've forgotten how. As kids, we want to figure out the world, and we keep an open mind so we can better understand it. By the time we reach adulthood, we feel like we've been to this rodeo, and we're just trying to get from point A to point B efficiently. Say we're caught in a rainstorm. We already know from experience that our hair will frizz if it gets wet, so we scramble to find shelter instead of stopping to notice the shape and iridescence of the raindrops. "Awe is everywhere around us," Amster says. "It's just that we've lost the ability to see the wonder and beauty of everyday life."

If you're reading this in the U.S., here's another roadblock for you: Apparently Americans don't do awe that well. In cross-cultural studies measuring people's natural propensity for it, "we're the lowest on the planet," Amster says. He attributes our national deficit to a couple of factors. First, our culture is individualistic, and awe is tied up with connection to the community and the natural world. Also, we live in a country of relative wealth, another awe dampener. Wealthier people tend to be more self-absorbed, Amster explains. "Research shows that those who have less are more reliant on their networks, they're more connected, and they care more about other people and their plight."

Given the state of our world, seeking awe may be more challenging than ever—but now may be the best moment to embrace it. "Awe suits bad times as well as good ones," says



Monica C. Parker, author of *The Power of Wonder*. Unlike happiness, awe is what scientists call a dually valent emotion, allowing us to experience the positive and the negative simultaneously. Standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon, looking into the chasm below, we're able to think both *This is beautiful* and *This is terrifying*. Holding a parent's hand as they pass away, we can grieve deeply as well as find solace in our closeness. Cradling a newborn, we feel joy and pride, but also terror, wondering, *Can I take care of someone so vulnerable?* or *Will I ever be able to watch Law & Order again without thinking about how that victim was someone's child?*

Even everyday moments—the kindness of a stranger who lets you go first in line, unexpectedly harmonizing with the person next to you on the church pew while you sing a hymn—can remind us we're part of something bigger. "We have so many crises going on: isolation, narcissism, overconsumption, climate change, polarization," Keltner says. "People want to connect to something meaningful. Awe could be the cure for our times."

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“We’re giving people training wheels so they can begin to find awe in the ordinary moments of life, without looking for some extraordinary peak experience.”

How to Find It

Opportunities for awe are already all around us, and we can start feeling it right away. To open ourselves to awe, Keltner says, “every person should look at those eight wonders of life and think, *What are some that are easy for me?* Is it seeking community, immersing yourself in art, listening to music? Then do more of that.” One simple—and altruistic—way of finding awe is to experience the wonder of “moral beauty” by giving back to your community. When you volunteer, you’re a front-and-center witness to two awe-inspiring things: other people’s acts of kindness, and people overcoming adversity. Imagine a formerly struggling student acing the SAT after you tutor them, or a devoted gardener doing park cleanup with you despite their arthritis.

The more you seek awe, the more you’ll feel it. Keltner and neuroscientist Virginia Sturm, PhD, conducted an experiment that asked people ages 75 and over to go on a vigorous walk once a week for eight weeks. One group simply walked. The other group was instructed to do an “awe walk” and try to “tap into a childlike sense of wonder” and “take in the vastness of things” by doing stuff like looking at a panoramic view or the details on a leaf or flower. Both groups were told to take selfies on their walks.

The people in the second group reported that they felt less distress each week. And their selfies included more of the environment around them than the other group’s. Keltner’s take-away? “If you cultivate everyday awe, you will become more open.”

Even if you don’t have time to take an awe walk, chances are you have at least a few seconds to spare each day. That’s all Amster and Eagle say you need to practice their AWE method, which they describe as a kind of “microdosing mindfulness.” The A stands for “attention”: Focus on something you value or find amazing, whether it’s a leaf, a ladybug, a pudgy baby hand, or an inspiring book. W is for “wait”: Pause to inhale deeply while you are fully present with whatever you’ve chosen. And E means “exhale” and “expand”: As you breathe out, make the exhale slightly longer

than the inhale, concentrating on whatever feelings come up and letting those sensations fill you. In *The Power of Awe*, they write, “Did you smile? Did you relax? Did you feel a warmth in your belly? Did your vision soften, your eyes moisten with gratitude for this precious item you are observing? Did you feel a surge or release of energy? Congratulations. You have just experienced awe.”

The authors recommend practicing the AWE method three to five times a day, for up to 15 seconds each go. “We’re giving people training wheels to learn how to access moments of awe on demand, to build that muscle, so they can begin to find awe in the ordinary moments of life, without looking for some extraordinary peak experience,” Amster says.

In a study Amster and Eagle conducted at UC Berkeley in the early stages of the pandemic, they asked medical workers and members of the general population to practice the method. Both groups reduced their symptoms of depression by at least 35%, and their anxiety by more than 20%. “What’s really cool is that there was a dose response, meaning the more times you dosed these brief moments throughout the day, the greater the benefit,” Amster says. “At least three times a day seems to be the magic number to get the brain rewiring. Then, within 21 days, we see lasting changes.”

So find a focus for your admiration, take a deep breath, and marvel. Keep at it, and the next time you say “awesome,” you might actually mean it. ■



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Modern Manners Advice for Your Social Quandaries

BY MICHELLE BUTEAU



Grace, can I tell you that the last time my mother visited me, I bought her this huge fried chicken sandwich every day for lunch because I thought she loved it? She raved about it the first time she had it, so I figured, *I got this! I'll keep getting this thing she likes.* Two weeks later, she told me it needed to stop. She had loved the sandwich the first time because she hadn't had one in a while, but every day for two weeks was just too much. This sandwich was \$22! I wish she'd told me earlier! She could've eaten a lunch she loved and I could've saved a lot of money. All this is to say, there's no harm in telling your mother-in-law you're kinda over dark chocolate—don't tell her you never liked it, OK? Obviously gift giving is her love language, so help her pick something you and the family *are* into. Flavored popcorn? Hot sauces? Matching family socks? It could be fun to suggest a group gift because, ultimately, this is how Grandma likes to take care of her family. In the meantime, could you please send me your dark chocolate? Thank you!

GRACE ASKS...

I'm in a silly predicament with my mother-in-law. She is so thoughtful and mails us gifts for every holiday—big and small—which is really sweet! Somehow she got the impression that we love dark chocolate and sends it almost exclusively. The problem: None of us (not my husband, kids, or me) like it. I hate for her to waste her money, but I don't want to hurt her feelings by pointing out that we've been tossing her gifts.



HAVE AN ETIQUETTE QUESTION?

This is Michelle's last column for us. We'll miss her, but we'll still be doling out advice. Hover your phone's camera here to submit your burning question, or email it to modernmanners@realsimple.com.

LISA ASKS...

Some good friends who live in another state have invited me and my husband for a visit. We've accepted the invitation and we're excited about the trip, but this is the first time we'll stay with someone in their home. It sounds like they have lots of ideas to keep us entertained (and busy). I'm sure they're going to be amazing hosts. How can I tell them when I need downtime without sounding like I'm not enjoying their company? P.S. Any ideas for a great host gift?

Lisa, congratulations on having friends who want to host you. That's amazing and rare and what a gift! I totally understand wanting your vacation to feel like your time off. A polite way of putting that out there would sound something like "I love this so much, but I'm going to need to recharge my battery first." Or "This is a great idea, but in order for me to be the best me I can be, I just need to rest a little." Or even "Wow, Vacation Lisa is really relaxed because I can't move! I need to stay put for a little while!" You can be appreciative, kind, honest, and truthful in a fun way.

Oh, and a gift for the hosts could be a spa day, a dinner out, or even a new coffee with a unique mug! Perhaps one with a group photo of everyone from this trip.

I have too many cousins who are busybodies!
I try to ask questions about *their* lives and talk about the news or pop culture.
Neutral ground!

ANNE ASKS...

My brother-in-law, who lives 150 miles away and rarely visits, began calling during Covid. This was welcome at first, but it's morphed into a weekly "report" on the other siblings. I think he's becoming a busybody. Besides asking my husband not to disclose any info about us to him, is there anything I can do? Some of this stuff is just none of our business. I should add that there are a lot of problems in this family, and some of the members hold grudges.

Yikes! Cleanup on aisle 9, honey. We've got a mess! I have too many cousins who are busybodies, and boy oh boy, do they always have a mouthful about everyone else! I try to constantly ask questions about *their* lives and talk about the news or pop culture. Neutral ground! It's how I maintain healthy boundaries when I'm in these predicaments. You can try to change the subject or even keep the convo super short. Honestly, whether you open up to a gossip or not, they will always have their version of the truth and their opinion of your life. And they'll be more than happy to share your business, so it is what it is. Chances are, everyone else also knows what he's up to when he's blabbing.

WENDY ASKS...

Even in the nicest restaurants, with a bottle of fine red wine, we've experienced a nagging fruit fly or two hovering over our wineglasses. I always try to slap them and kill them, sometimes successfully. My husband says I should ignore them, as it's embarrassing to us and the restaurant. I'm not embarrassed and I want them dead. Your take on this?

Wendy! I feel you! Let's wine about it. (I'm so sorry. I had to!) But seriously, fruit flies around my delicious, overpriced wine are definitely annoying. I'm in public at a nice restaurant, in a nice dress, trying to swat them away from my glass. It feels like they've totally come out of nowhere. I'm constantly looking in my glass to see if there's one floating in there. I get paranoid that I've swallowed one. It's the closest I've ever been to camping, besides eating sushi on the subway. And that's a "no, thank you" for me! The last thing you should ever feel is embarrassment—because these little guys can ruin your dinner experience. Some ideas: Instead of trying to kill the fruit flies, maybe put a napkin over your glass? Wear a perfume that has a little peppermint in it? Let the waitstaff know? (They might be able to fix it for the next table or give you a comped glass of Pinot Noir!) Good luck, Wendy! I don't know about you, but nothing could truly come between me and my glass of wine!

ABOUT MICHELLE

Michelle Buteau is a mother, wife, dog mama, actor, writer, comedian, and TV host. She also cohosts the popular podcast *Adulthood on the Exactly Right* network. Her Netflix series, *Survival of the Thickest*, based on her book of essays, is now streaming.



RELATING

RSVP LIKE YOU MEAN IT!

We often stack our calendars to the breaking point during the holiday season. This year, let's slow the heck down and find some peace on earth—or at least in our schedules.

BY JENNIFER KING LINDLEY

FESTIVE COCKTAILS with the neighbors? You bet! A white elephant gift exchange with your book club? Sure! Visit both sides of the family for their Big Day get-togethers? Um...yes? The holidays can bring a blizzard of invitations and obligations. And these events have to be crammed in between making and decorating cookies, shopping for the perfect scarf for Aunt Edna, and, oh yes, all the normal life stuff. Sure, spending time with friends and loved ones is the very spirit of the season. It's just that too many plans can leave us burned-out and ready to bah-humbug anyone who says, "Happy holidays!"

Declining an invite is tough any time of year because we want to be agreeable and avoid disappointing others. But sending regrets now, when expectations are amped up and the whole world seems to be gleefully celebrating 24/7 (particularly on social media), can feel harder than usual. "We're bombarded with messages that the holidays should be glamorous, fun, and amazing, which creates unrealistic expectations and personal and social pressure," says Joyce Marter, a licensed psychotherapist and the author of *The Financial Mindset Fix: A Mental Fitness Program for an Abundant Life*. We literally call it the most wonderful time of the year. No wonder FOMO can hit whenever we say no.

So how do you strike the balance between overdoing it and missing all the fun or, worse, feeling like you're letting folks down? By using this guide to separate the musts from the nice-to-dos from the nahs.

“Sometimes we overcommit because the future seems far off and abstract and we feel disconnected from our future self.”

Picture Your Ideal Season

Marter suggests letting one simple question guide your decision-making: What do you most want your holidays to be like? “Perhaps you want to focus on expressing gratitude or deeply connecting with certain loved ones,” she offers, adding that you should keep that vision in mind when choosing to opt in or out of events. Then stick with what really matters, says Kaylee Hackney, PhD, host of *Elegant Balance*, a podcast about work-life balance. Before the holidays, she and her husband schedule their can’t-miss activities, like dinner with friends from church. “Otherwise it’s halfway through December and we spent the entire month responding to other people instead of taking control,” she says. Not sure *what* your motivation is? Look at your most meaningful memories from the last few years. “Pick your favorite three moments from past holidays and think about why they rose to the top,” suggests Aarti Gupta, PsyD, founder and clinical director of TherapyNest, a private practice in Palo Alto, California. Loved seeing your local theater’s production of *The Nutcracker*? Schedule it in! Rinse, repeat.

Think About Future You

That Saturday-night potluck sounds like a good idea...until it’s time to buckle down and make your famous artichoke dip. And there’s a reason for that, explains psychologist Ann Marie Roepke, PhD, founder of Evoke Training and Consulting, a mental health educational service for professionals in Seattle. “Sometimes we overcom-

mit because the future seems far off and abstract and we feel disconnected from our future self,” she says. “They’re a hypothetical stranger to us, and we’re not that invested in their needs.” The solution: Visualize your future self getting ready for the event after a long week at work. How does that feel? Another idea from Roepke: “Think about what you would decide if this event were to happen tomorrow versus next month.” Do these little mental gymnastics, then RSVP accordingly.

Delay Your Response

We’re so used to firing off an email or responding to a coworker’s Slack message that confirming our attendance ASAP may come automatically too. (It doesn’t help that email invites require only a quick click and that texts feel so urgent.) “I recommend buying time before replying to anything you’re on the fence about,” says Meghan Watson, a licensed psychologist and the founder of Bloom Psychology and Wellness, a therapy collective of Toronto-based Black, Indigenous, South Asian, and multi-racial therapists. “You can say, ‘Thanks so much! Sounds great! I’ll need to check my calendar/look at my workflow/consult my partner and circle back with an answer.’” This gives you a chance to consider whether an invite supports the vision of the holidays you set earlier in the season.

Map Out as Much as You Can

Add any travel plans, activities, and can’t-miss invites to the calendar as soon as they’re confirmed, Hackney advises. (Consider starting even before you finish your Thanksgiving leftovers. And, by the way, it’s totally fine to reach out to people who do something every year to ask if they’re hosting again.) You’ll get a sense of the big picture, without having to plan everything you’re doing just yet. Simply look at the calendar, see what you’re in for, and process it. “I’m big on planning,” Hackney says. “This way, I’m able to fit in things that are part of my dream, and I don’t feel guilty, because I know I’ve incorporated everything I want to.”

Don’t Forget to Schedule Me Time

Treat your energy level like a bank account, “where you’re making deposits and withdrawals,” suggests Natalie Christine Dattilo, PhD, a clinical psychologist and the founder of Priority Wellness Group, a behavioral health consultancy in Boston. Some activities deplete our resources, while others add to them, she says. Finding a happy mix of action and downtime requires

a bit of self-searching. Think about how often you like to socialize and the types of activities that cost energy versus provide it. If your introverted side feels drained after a large party, slot in time for things that help you recharge—like walking, reading, or hanging with your immediate family—afterward. “For instance, I have a client who knows she can handle one or two events on a weekend, tops, and she plans accordingly,” Marter says.

Decline Gracefully

Do you tend to overthink and over-explain your reason (not excuse!) for declining an invitation? Then you need to hear this: You have absolutely zero obligation to justify why you can’t attend. Prepare a simple response. “I would love to, but I have other plans,” is usually sufficient,” says Christin Gomes, founder of the etiquette consulting company Common Courtesy. Avoid the urge to tell even the smallest white lie, because that could lead to tricky conversations and follow-up questions. (“So, how’s your friend’s cat doing after surgery?”) To fortify yourself: “Consider all the nos you’ve received over the years,” Watson suggests. “Did you end up hating that person because they didn’t come to your party? People can withstand a little rejection.” And remember that you can’t control how others feel, she adds.



Forget About FOMO

Here’s the problem with the fear of missing out: It can manifest in a surprising way. “You miss out on today’s pleasures—delighting in your warm and cozy bed, for instance—because you’re so worried about what else is out there,” Gupta says. Practicing mindfulness can help bring your drifting, wistful thoughts back to your current situation. Make a point to savor the experiences you’ve chosen using all your senses. Feel the warmth of the fire on your back, wiggle your toes in your fuzzy slippers, relish the spectacle of your child’s whipped-cream mustache, sink into bed, appreciating the gift of well-restedness. Having a mantra that reinforces your decision can also be reassuring, Marter says. A couple to consider: “Taking care of myself is always the best choice” or “There will be other opportunities for fun and connection.” Oh, and stay off Instagram if you’re doubting yourself. A 2020 study of 419 people published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* found that the more someone used social media, the more FOMO they experienced.

Head Off That Last-Minute Urge to Bail

Ages ago, you agreed to attend your cousin’s ugly-sweater karaoke party. Now every single bone in your body wants to stay home. To rally, recall why you committed in the first place. “Maybe you want to build bonds with neighbors or support a friend who’s been having a rough time,” Dattilo says. “Think about how good you’ll feel afterward! Activating that sense of anticipated reward is a motivator.” If you need more encouragement, moving your body can usually help get your mind on board, Dattilo adds. “Take a shower. Get into your outfit. Tell yourself you still don’t have to go as you do so. But over 90% of the time, when you get that far, you end up going.”

Is it OK to beg off at the last minute? That depends. While you shouldn’t go if you’re feeling sick or if it’ll wear you down, Gomes suggests taking the host’s feelings into account too. Is this a big blowout with a crowd of people where you won’t be missed? Or are you leaving a hole at an intimate dinner party you promised to bring dessert to? If it’s the latter, rally and make an appearance, even if only for an hour. You don’t need to stay until the very end, dancing to Mariah Carey’s greatest hits. Your host will likely understand if you need to catch up on downtime (and may feel a little over-extended too). Prioritize your needs and cut yourself some slack, and you’ll be on your way to a good time. ■



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THEIR WORDS

What We've Learned from Holiday Movies

The season's best flicks leave you with warm, fuzzy feelings and a memorable life lesson or two. We asked some holiday superfans to share their top takeaways.

BY MELISSA MATHEWS



Be Nice and Slooow Down

“Every Hallmark movie boils down to kindness. So much of what they say is just, like, ‘Come from a place of empathy—and have a lot of grace for people.’ Not only in romantic relationships but also in friendships and family relationships. Sometimes while I watch, I also think to myself that maybe I’m moving too fast and maybe I’m not giving anybody a chance. I think we know these lessons but get caught up in life. These movies are a nice reminder!”

JENNA GOLDEN, A.K.A. @JIGOLDEN ON X (FORMERLY KNOWN AS TWITTER), WHERE SHE POSTS A THREAD REVIEWING EVERY MOVIE IN HALLMARK’S “COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS” LINEUP



Don’t Be Selfish

“There are many versions of *Scrooge*, but the one starring Albert Finney from 1970 is my favorite. The movie shows how money can take over a person, and how greed can make you push others out of your life. Money isn’t all it’s cracked up to be, because you can’t take it with you once you’re gone! *The Ghost of Christmas Present* takes *Scrooge* to see how people are enjoying the holidays while he’s all alone and miserable. The movie reminds you to think about others—especially around the holidays, when some people experience depression. You never know what somebody is going through.”

DENNIS WINSTON, U.S. POSTAL SERVICE CARRIER BASED IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA



Have More Fun

“Hands down my favorite holiday movie is *Elf*. I’ve watched it sitting outside in freezing weather by a fire at a friend’s house. I’ve watched it snuggled up with my family. The first time I saw it, I had such a great feeling as the credits rolled.

The movie puts a smile on your face and reminds you the holidays can be joyful at any age. Funnily enough, I worked at Disney World with the scriptwriter. I once tried to set him up with one of my friends. It was a disaster!”

AMY GRANT, SINGER-SONGWRITER WHO HAS RELEASED FIVE CHRISTMAS ALBUMS AND IS KNOWN FOR HER VERSION OF “GROWN-UP CHRISTMAS LIST”

Enjoy the Chaos

“Our family watches *National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation* every year. First, I’ve learned that cutting down your own Christmas tree (which I do, by the way) is a true family adventure but worth the effort. Second, just embrace the holiday chaos because ‘it’s Christmas and we’re all in misery,’ as Beverly D’Angelo’s character says. At least a little bit. And lastly, despite the chaos, finding contentment and joy while surrounded by those we love is the most precious gift of all.”

CHRISTA PITTS, COCREATOR OF THE ELF ON THE SHELF

Keep Your Tongue Inside Your Mouth

“I’ll always have fond memories of watching *A Christmas Story* at my grandparents’ house. On Christmas Eve, my sisters, grandfather, father, and I would watch the movie while my grandmother made cookies for us and Santa. The big lesson? Never lick a frozen flagpole. That scene has always ‘stuck’ with me.”

JOSH RUSS TUPPER, FOURTH-GENERATION CO-OWNER OF RUSS & DAUGHTERS, A NEW YORK CITY SHOP AND CAFÉ KNOWN FOR ITS LOX, BAGELS, CAVIAR, AND OTHER GOODIES



Be Generous

“I never miss *It’s a Wonderful Life* at Christmastime. Every year, Clarence teaches me a thing or two about the importance of our time on this planet. When the generosity of others saves the day, and they repay George for his own kindness, it chokes me up every time. That moment reminds me what the true spirit of Christmas is all about.”

CHANDA A. BELL, COCREATOR OF THE ELF ON THE SHELF

Look to Kids for Inspiration

“*Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey*, which came out in 2020, is now a fixture in our home and in our hearts. While we appreciate representation and seeing Black leading characters on the screen, it’s the timeless theme of never giving up that really touched my soul. In the movie, a once-decorated toy maker loses his creativity after his apprentice steals his treasured book of inventions. It takes a visit from his estranged granddaughter to ignite his holiday spirit and joy for making toys again. Similarly, I have found that no matter what I’m going through, the unyielding imagination of my children brings me joy.”

TONYA ABARI, FREELANCE WRITER WHO’S DOCUMENTED HER FAMILY’S KWANZAA CELEBRATIONS



Embrace What Makes You You

“I saw *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* for the first time in third grade, and it eventually taught me the value of self-acceptance. In one of my report cards back then, a teacher wrote that I asked too many questions. So of course, I worried about it, concerned that I learned differently from other people. I felt like I had to hold back and not let that side shine. Later, I realized that my uniqueness can be my biggest superpower. I now see that my curiosity has let me develop friendships and get to know other people because they feel heard. I ask questions, and I listen to their answers. I think that’s really my greatest strength when it comes to who I am at my core.”

MEGAN LEVINSON, RADIO CITY ROCKETTE IN NEW YORK CITY



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Is it okay to let a dog lick your face?

Is the 5-second rule real?



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SCAN TO LISTEN





SMART MONEY

WHEN YOUR PLANNER IS A SCAMMER

Financial advisers should have your best interests at heart, and most of them do. Here's what happens when they don't.

BY LISA FREEDMAN

Consumers reported losing nearly \$8.8 billion to fraud in 2022, according to the Federal Trade Commission.

THERE'S THIS CANCELED check for \$75,000 that's burned into my memory. The elegant swoops of my mom's handwriting, the neatly rounded zeros, the incredible permanence of the ink. Though it had been written (and cashed) years before, I saw it for the first time in April 2020. My father had just died unexpectedly, and my world was crumbling. Heartbroken and sick with grief, my brother and I were doing the financial excavating you take on after a parent passes away. We needed to figure out: Would our mom be OK?

Combing through the paperwork, we found all sorts of statements, slips, and emails. I don't know the exact moment we uncovered this little piece of paper (turns out, everything *does* become a blur when you're in shock) or why we had a bad feeling about it immediately. What I do know now, and what has become a very painful part of my family's story, is that most of that money is gone.

The check was written out to a company I soon learned was being investigated by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for lying to investors. In a nutshell, the company claimed to have invented some kind of medical technology (it hadn't) that insurance companies were interested in (they weren't), and it was looking for investors. My parents found this company through a financial adviser airing an ad on local Philadelphia radio, enticing listeners with a seemingly guaranteed 10% annual return.

Here's where I start kicking myself: I remember my dad telling me about this. My parents were attending a free luncheon to learn more about this guy's offerings, he told me years ago.

"You and Mike should really go to one of these," he said, with genuine concern for my marital finances. I told him there was no such thing as a free lunch. He never said anything else about it. And I never followed up.

The fact that I didn't do more haunts me. Could I have said something to persuade them to stay home that day? Should I have gone with them? I definitely should have followed up. I always thought my parents were amazing with money—they'd taught me so much about it. My dad had a long career running software for manufacturing companies. My mom didn't work much but also didn't spend lavishly. They were comfortable and conservative, good savers who lived below their means. I'd sat through their "Here's where all our money is" speech at some point, and it looked fine enough. There was money! It never even occurred to me they could be victims of a scam.

Sometimes I play a not-so-fun game with myself where I imagine the headspace they must have been in to give this guy money. They were probably so excited. So proud of finding such a great deal. So hopeful. So excited about what it might mean for their two kids. Ultimately, they wrote a few more checks to this BS company and other "opportunities" brought to them through their so-called adviser, the very guy they'd heard on the radio. Meaning: They lit a giant chunk of their life savings on fire.

My mom is going to be fine. (Hi, Mom, you're scrappy and resilient and you've got this!) This was a lot of their money, but it wasn't *all* of their money. She'll have to make adjustments and stick to a budget, but she can stay in her home, feed herself, and live her life (tragically, without my sweet and ridiculously funny father). She has gotten a little bit of the money back and might get even more, if the courts and stars align. Still, I obviously wish none of this had happened.

So do plenty of other families. According to SEC filings, at least 50 optimistic investors wrote checks to that bogus medical company. And that's just one scam, by one radio pitchperson (who's since been investigated by the SEC and ordered to pay multiple fines). In the grand scheme of scams, consumers reported losing nearly \$8.8 billion to fraud in 2022—a more than 30% increase over 2021—according to the Federal Trade Commission. People like my parents' scammer often prey on retirees, and there are new and innovative tricks popping up every day. (AI can now mimic the voices of loved ones in distress, begging for money over the phone, just to give one horrifying example.)

Because I've had to deal with the depressing and enraging reality of a shady financial planner, I want to make sure you don't have to. So I called up some top experts for their best advice. Here goes.

Check Credentials

Anyone can call themselves a financial planner or some version thereof. “You can take a weekend class, and now you’re a retirement-planning specialist,” says Lori Schock, director of investor education and advocacy at the SEC. So even if someone touts impressive-sounding credentials, it’s best to look into them, Schock says. There are a handful of good certifications (the CFP Board, for example, has rigorous standards for becoming a certified financial planner), but it’s hard to know what’s legit and what isn’t. Your best bet? Do a free background check on investor.gov. The SEC-operated database will pull up any licensed investment adviser registered at the federal or state level, along with any broker-dealers registered with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA). It’s a one-stop shop, and Schock says she wouldn’t turn over her hard-earned money to anybody not listed there. Yay: Everyone in this database is legally obligated to act in your best interest. This simple search will also reveal how long someone’s been in the biz, where they’ve worked, if there have been any complaints filed against them, and more. “Check it once a year, just in case something new has popped up,” Schock says.



Be Wary of the Free Lunch

While some old-school companies might still throw lunch or dinner seminars, these tactics are often used in cons. In fact, the SEC, FINRA, and North American Securities Administrators Association (NASAA) reviewed 110 seminars that took place between April 2006 and June 2007 and found rule violations (including misleading or exaggerated claims, unsuitable recommendations, and possible fraud) at a whopping 78% of them. Even in 2023, the problems persist, says Amanda Senn, director of the Alabama Securities Commission and a cochair of NASAA’s enforcement section.

“There’s always this urgent pitch, and you’re not provided enough information given the small window of time,” she says, adding that the speakers often try to rush you (which I’ll get into). And because we’re nice human beings, we tend to feel bad saying no after someone has bought us lunch. Cary Carbonaro is a certified financial planner and CFP Board ambassador and says she’s never had to buy somebody lunch to secure a meeting. “You are really bad at your job if you have to pay people to come listen to you.” Harsh? Yes. Inaccurate? Not really!

Ask How They're Paid

It's a simple question that should be easy to answer—unless you're a fraudster, in which case you might give a roundabout reply. Pamela Rodriguez, a certified financial planner and member of the Financial Review Board for Investopedia (which shares a parent company with REAL SIMPLE), has a very clear response: "I don't charge commissions of any kind. I also don't take cuts from other advisers or any kind of kickbacks from investment companies." Any of those things could bias her recommendations. "If they say there's no cost to work with them, that's a red flag too," Carbonaro says, because it means they're selling products just for the high commission, or they're hiding their fees, or both. There are different services and various ways to be charged, including a flat-rate fee or an annual fee (often around 1% of the money you invest). Your adviser should be able to show you a breakdown of what you'd be paying for.

Replay Your Conversations

Whether you've had one meeting or five, take a look back. Did they fail to ask you a single question about your goals? Were they pushing particular investments? Were they rushing you? You guessed it—these are all red flags, says Gerri Walsh, senior president of

investor education at FINRA. "A big part of the job is understanding the client," she says, noting that plans should be tailored to your goals. Your planner should ask when you hope to retire, what you want retirement to look like, what sorts of big purchases you hope to make, and so on. Also, anything that inspires FOMO is inappropriate: "In financial planning, there's really no life-or-death situation," Carbonaro says. "It's whenever you're ready."

Talk to Friends & Family

"We end every financial education program by telling people, 'If you're presented an investment opportunity, ask a trusted friend or family member about it,'" Senn says. Walsh agrees on getting a second (or third) opinion. "The fraudster's goal is to put you in an emotional state where you're not thinking rationally. And they do that by dangling false riches, claiming to be experts, giving you a free meal, making you think you're going to miss out, and similar tactics," she says. To see the opportunity in a new light, try explaining it to people you trust who haven't heard about it. Do they notice any red flags? Do they have simple questions you can't answer?

Consider Whether It's Too Good to Be True

"There's no such thing as get rich quick. There's only get rich slow," Carbonaro says. Also, when it comes to investing, there are no guarantees. Ever. So if someone tells you something is risk-free, they're lying, Walsh says. You can check investment products or investment offerings using the SEC's Edgar database, at sec.gov/edgar. It lets you look up any registered investment opportunities, like mutual funds, exchange-traded funds, and variable annuities. Don't see what you're being sold in the database? Then it's not registered, and you should be wary and do more research. Ask for additional paperwork and, as obvious as it seems, search online to see if anything fishy comes up. Oh, and as for the sort of medical scam my parents fell for, it's unlikely a company you've never heard of has, say, cured cancer, Senn points out.

Report Anything That Seems Off

Let's say you're reading this and alarm bells are sounding. (I'm so sorry!) Take a breath and follow this advice from Walsh: "Complain, complain, complain." Call your state securities regulator, the SEC (800-732-0330), or FINRA (844-574-3577). You'll be pointed in the right direction to share any info you have. All credible claims are taken seriously and investigated—you can even call back to check on the status. "It's important for people to speak up when they think there's customer harm happening," Walsh says. "Your complaint might be the first indicator there's a problem, and the problem might be deeper than just you." You could save yourself, or your parents, or someone else's from being scammed. Just like my mom, you've got this. ■

"There's no such thing as
get rich quick. There's only
get rich slow."



NERDING OUT

WINTER SOLSTICE

Let's shed some light on the shortest day of the year.

BY JENNY BROWN

ON DECEMBER 21, go outside at noon and look at your shadow: It's the longest one you'll cast at that time all year. That's because the sun, which has been gradually descending in the sky since the start of summer, will trace its lowest arc—signaling the winter solstice and, with it, the first day of the season. Let's learn some more.

WHEN THE SUN STANDS STILL

The word "solstice" comes from the Latin *solstitium*, or "sun standing still," since the sun seems to follow the same path for several days. Its arc does change, but only a bit. We'll gain mere seconds of light in the days after the 21st, with the pace increasing to minutes as the season progresses.

TILT-A-WORLD

Of course, as Copernicus taught us, the sun isn't really moving around in the sky. Solstices occur because of the *earth's* journey through space—specifically, its orbit around the sun at a 23.5° tilt. When its top half leans farthest from the sun (between December 20 and 23 every year), the northern hemisphere gets the least amount of light. At the same time (and yes, solstices come at a particular time—this year, the winter one is at 10:27 p.m. ET), the southern hemisphere points most directly at the sun and has its *summer* solstice. The spring and fall equinoxes (from the Latin for "equal night") occur when the whole planet receives roughly 12 hours each of light and darkness.

LOTS OF WONDERS

Stonehenge gets all the attention, but prehistoric structures that align with the sun on the solstices exist around the world, including in Peru, Ireland, Jordan, Egypt, and even the U.S. In Illinois, archaeologists have reconstructed what's known as "Cahokia Woodhenge," a circle of cedar posts originally built by Indigenous people 1,000 years ago.

PARTY TIME

For millennia, the winter solstice has been an occasion for eating and celebration. Ancient people—they're just like us!—were grateful for the return of sunlight and started traditions that persist today. At the Iranian Yalda festival, dating back to Babylonian times, pomegranates and watermelon symbolize the rising sun. In East Asia, the 2,000-year-old Dongzhi festival involves honoring family and heaven. Yule was a 12-day pagan Norse festival later replaced by Christmas, though some customs (like burning a Yule log) remain—as, of course, does the name itself. ■

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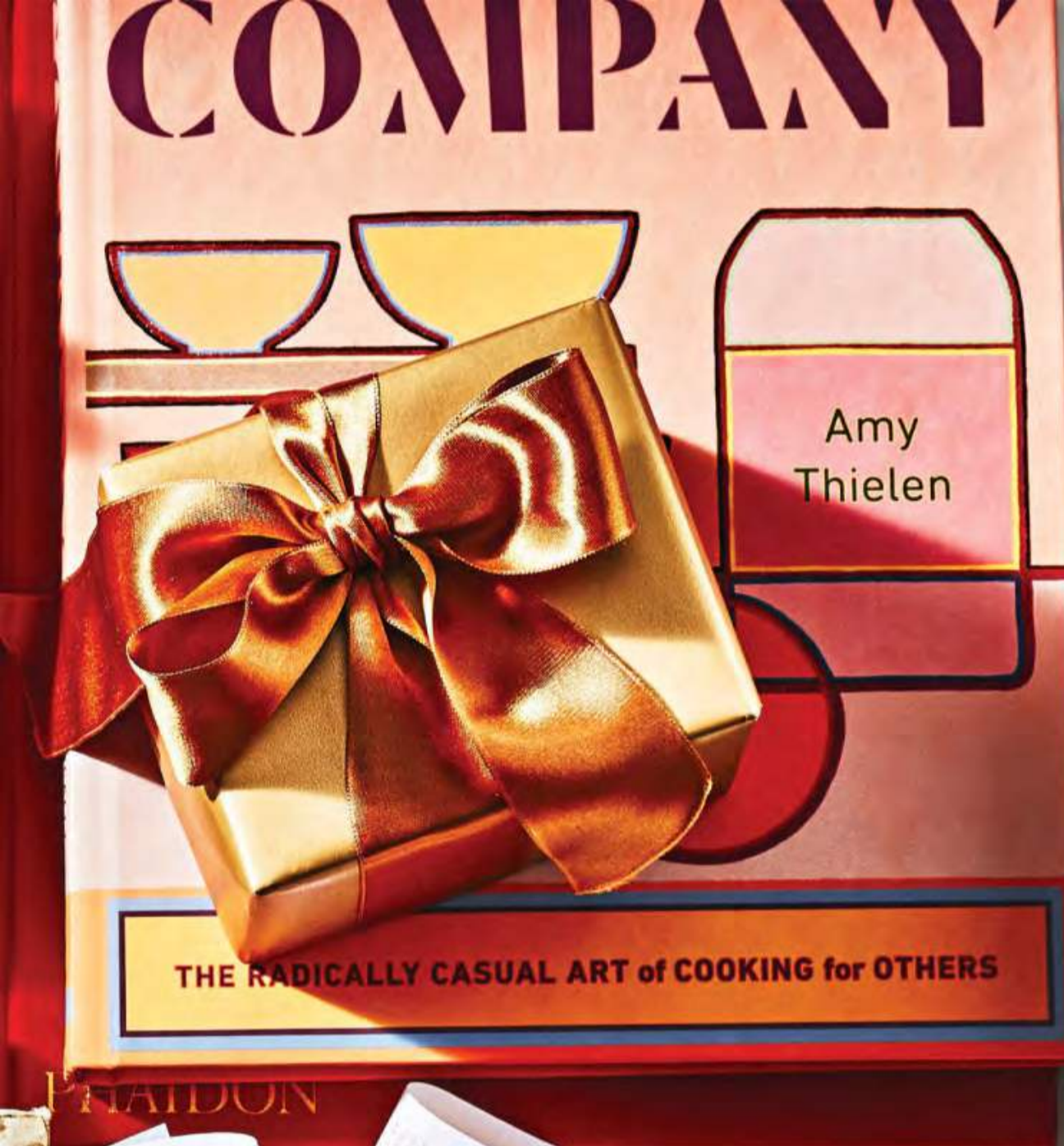


WINE FOR 100% ALL THE THINGS

Embrace the upcoming holidays with the spirit of celebration in every moment. Whether it's a quiet day or a grand festivity, A to Z wines have the power to complement every experience. Why wait for a special meal to savor a glass of wine? *It goes with 100% all the things!* With a wide selection of varietals, you can choose an A to Z wine to be the perfect companion for all your holiday moments, elevating them to new heights of enjoyment. Share joy, laughter, and cherished memories with loved ones while enjoying the versatility of wine. Fill your upcoming festivities with the joy of togetherness and raise a glass to the simple pleasures that make these holidays memorable.

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2023 REAL SIMPLE Gift Guide

It's here! Our much-anticipated annual gift guide. And it's got tons of great ideas for every budget, so you can get wrapped up in your holiday shopping without sweating the bills.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE MATHIS
PROP STYLING BY MEGAN HEDGPETH

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Carrying house keys attached to this colorful enamel stack of classics will fill bookworms with pride (not prejudice). Get one for everyone in your reading group. *Book Club Keychain*, \$18; riflepaperco.com



SAUCY SYRUP

Made in Vermont and aged in apple-brandy barrels, this maple syrup is autumn in a bottle. Great on pancakes and in cocktails, it's for night owls and morning people! *Apple Brandy Barrel Aged Maple Syrup*, \$19; runamokmaple.com



ARTSY WRAP

For the friend who knows how to rock an accessory, this bandana honors Black history and culture, as do many others at the store. Be sure to check them all out. *Oak Bluffs in Color and Other Beaches*, \$24; allverygoods.com



MYSTERY PUZZLE

Not only is this a whopping 1,000 pieces, puzzlers will have no idea what the full picture is until they complete the middle. One little hint you can share: It's a botanical theme. *Shelf Life Surprise Puzzle*, \$18; galison.com



ZESTY TOWELS

Anyone obsessed with color needs a tea towel by Portland, Oregon-based artist Lisa Congdon. Her designs are bold, graphic, and fun with a capital F. *Eat Happy and Le Jardin Tea Towels*, \$24 each; 20x200.com



RECOUNTING CARDS

A new game for game night! Players follow a cue printed on a prompt card ("Weirdest way I've ever made money," for example). The name of the game explains the rest. *Best Story Wins!*, \$18; blueribbongeneralstore.com



CLAW CLIPS

Nobody wants hair in their fruit, but how about fruit in their hair? These four-inch claws, made from plant-based materials, are fantastically grippy. *Watermelon Hair Claw and Banana Hair Claw*, \$24 each; jennylemons.com



DREAM DATES

The dates in this two-pound box are picked from the California desert for their caramel-and-brown-sugar flavor and creamy texture. *Signature Hand-Packed Medjool Dates*, \$23; ranchomeladuco.com



TASTY PASTE

Bakers can use this concentrated paste in place of regular extract for a bolder vanilla flavor in their treats. If you're lucky, they'll make something for you! *Vanilla Paste*, \$25; heilalavanilla.com



BABY LIT

This board book introduces little ones to age-appropriate life lessons from *The Giving Tree*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and other banned books. *Baby's First Book of Banned Books* by Laura Korzon, \$10; mudpuppy.com



SPA HEADBAND

Mornings are easier with this microfiber wrap that keeps hair out of serums. The Velcro closure ensures a comfy fit. *Spa Headbands*, \$15 each, plus \$15 to personalize (see page 16 for a discount); weezietowels.com



BATH FIZZY

Tweens will get a kick out of this bath bomb that turns the water a vibrant mix of pink and blue. And there's a butterfly necklace inside! *Musee Bath Bomb*, \$12; lucysmarket.com

MEDJOOOL DATES: BRIAN HENN; PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

PRETTY PAPERS

Crafters can (swan) dive right into this set of 75 papers featuring Liberty of London's flowery prints. *Liberty Classic Floral Origami Flower Kit*, \$18; galison.com

A BETTER BREW

These beans are cultivated using 100% sustainable farming techniques to protect the earth's coffee-growing regions. *Cooperativa Sacacli ROC Coffee*, \$18.50; heirloomcoffeeroasters.com

MOUSY CAT TOY

Handmade by a Fair Trade group in Nepal, this cutie is infused with catnip. As a bonus, the wool gently cleans tiny kitty teeth. *Mouse Felt Cat Toy*, \$8; shoppatet.com

POP ART CRAYONS

Chunky crayons are the best crayons! This collection of 18 is next-level thanks to Warhol-inspired colors, like Yellow Banana and Pink Cow. *Andy Warhol Soup Can Crayons*, \$20; mudpuppy.com

BOMB BALMS

In juicy coconut, strawberry, and watermelon flavors, these mini balms help heal chapped lips and work wonders to smooth cuticles, groom brows, and tame flyaways. *Baby Baby Balms Trio*, \$14; lanolips.com





BIG FAN

We all know people who run hot. Help a friend keep their cool with a palm fan in their fave color (it comes in five). Also makes for nice wall art. *Soriya Fan*, \$24; jaysonhome.com

LITTLE NIBBLES

Baked by our beauty director's hubby, these half cookies are available in fun flavors, like birthday cake, churro, and more. *Sampler*, \$22 for 12; halfsiescookiecompany.com

ARTFUL DISHES

Everything in this art-deco-y earthenware collection was designed to be mixed and matched. Get someone starter pieces they can add to later. *Moda Dishes*, from \$20; vietri.com



\$25 or less



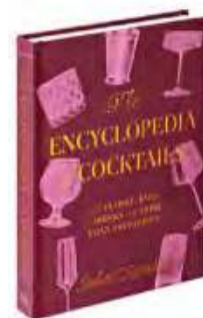
SUNNY PROTECTION

Sunscreen has never been so fun or easy to wear! This mini trio contains an invisible gel, face and body lotion, and tinted primer that will save someone's January. *SPF Bestsellers Starter Kit*, \$25; supergoop.com



CUPS OF CHEER

Anthropologie's Bistro Tile mugs (with real gold details!) are a *thing* with bloggers and decorators. These ones have a holiday theme. *Festive Bistro Tile Monogram Mugs*, \$14 each; anthropologie.com



HAPPY HOUR HERO

This collection of cocktail lore features more than 100 recipes and plenty of interesting info to keep home bartenders busy for the foreseeable future. *The Encyclopedia of Cocktails*, \$25; penguinrandomhouse.com



TUSHY MAGNETS

Fun up a friend's fridge with these fetching dog magnets. The set includes five different bums and one very red fire hydrant. They're great for hanging up, well, pics of dogs. *Kikkerland Dog Butt Magnets*, \$14 for 6; nathanandco.com



COOL CHOCOLATE

Made with Fair Trade and organic cacao beans, this sweet, spiced chocolate powder can be mixed with water or any kind of milk and served hot or cold. *Mexican Hot Chocolate 8-oz. Tin*, \$8; lamonarcabakery.com



A-MAZE-ING GAME

This box contains 20 maze cards that gamers can piece together to make a bazillion (or so) puzzles. A dry-erase marker lets them find the way out again and again. *Laurence King The Infinite Maze*, \$19; amazon.com



AWESOME SAUCE

A home cook's new favorite condiment? This bottle of umami-rich deliciousness. It can marinate meat, amp up fried rice, or get drizzled on virtually anything. *Miso Japanese Barbecue Sauce*, \$13; bachans.com



FANCY FLIGHT

Help someone nerd out over chocolate: This set comes with three one-ounce tasting bars (dark or milk) in varieties like Black Fig Pistachio and Edamame Sea Salt. *Chocolate Flight*, \$10; seattlechocolate.com



EASY BAKES

In her follow-up to the popular *Snacking Cakes*, Yossy Arefi shares 60 one-bowl, pantry-friendly recipes for treats of all kinds. *Snacking Bakes*, \$25; penguinrandomhouse.com



RECORD REFRESHER

Keep an audiophile's records spinning right round with this handy kit, complete with cleaning spray, dry wipes, a vinyl brush, and more. *Aficionados Vinyl Care Kit*, \$22; blueribbongeneralstore.com



STRIPY SOCKS

An outfit really becomes an outfit when colorful socks get involved. These are a breathable cotton blend, ultra soft, and oh-so cute. *Women's Vertical Verve Striped Socks*, \$9 per pair; loouz.com



BLUSHES WITH GREATNESS

These gel-cream formulas promise a healthy winter glow. Wearers can choose between soft pink and warm terra-cotta to match their vibe. *Mini Cloud Paint Duo*, \$23; glossier.com

\$50 or less



Q'S AND CHEWS

Each of these buttery caramels has a conversation starter on the wrapper. Throw a few into everyone's stocking and play the morning away! *Caramel and Questions Game Box*, \$50; goodkarmal.com



WEARABLE ART

This lightweight twisty acrylic ring makes a major statement. It says, "Oh, hey, I'm cool and stylish!" Pick mod white or one of 12 bright shades. *Cloud Knot Ring*, \$35; chofa.etsy.com



ELITE ELIXIR

Supple, shiny skin is possible, even in the dead of winter, with a few mists of this grape-seed, prickly pear, and argan oil blend that soaks right in and smells like a hug. *Moisturizing Fig Body Oil Elixir*, \$49; us.caudalie.com



FILIPINO FLAVORS

Spread the love with this two-pack of sweet citrus marmalade and creamy coconut jam. They both go well on ice cream, toast, or a piled-up charcuterie board. *The Pantry Darlings Duo*, \$32; eatpikapika.com



DO-GOOD DOG

Kids will be thrilled to adopt this cute pup, and you'll be happy to know that 100% of net proceeds go to organizations that help save dogs from abuse and neglect. *Lulu the Rescue Dog*, \$39; theelephantproject.com



HOLIDAY EXPLAINER

Christmas, but make it a book. These stunning pages showcase global traditions, like surfing Santas, shoes filled with carrots, the Nativity, gift giving, and more. *The Christmas Book*, \$50; phaidon.com



PERSISTENT BLOOMERS

Live greenery is great and all, but there's something to be said for plants that can't be killed. These hand-painted wooden geranium "leaves" will last and last. *Forever Flower: Geranium Leaf*, \$40; 20x200.com



CHIC TRAYS

Just short of six inches wide, these painterly dishes with fancy gold rims are scratchproof and serve as nice ring holders in the kitchen or bedroom. *Sierra Bay Mini Trays*, \$31 each; dar-leone.com



NOODLE KNOWLEDGE

The 411 on fettucine? The lowdown on linguine? This illustrated book reveals the history of pasta shapes, with impressive recipes to boot. *The Story of Pasta and How to Cook It!*, \$30; phaidon.com



TOY FOR TOTS

Trendsetting babes can fine-tune their motor skills with this elevated version of the classic shape-sorting box—it's BPA-free and made in Denmark, of course. *Shape Sorting Box*, \$32; mushie.com



POPPY COASTERS

Knit from repurposed dead-stock yarn, these coasters add color to tables while warding off pesky water rings. They're machine washable too. *Dashes Coaster Set*, \$26 for 4; shop.verloopknits.com



SIMPLE SYRUPS

Sure to get a latte use (heh), this set of syrups—coconut almond, Madagascar vanilla, and salted caramel—will do amazing things to coffee drinks! *The Trio*, \$42; enjoydaysie.com



GOOD LIBATIONS

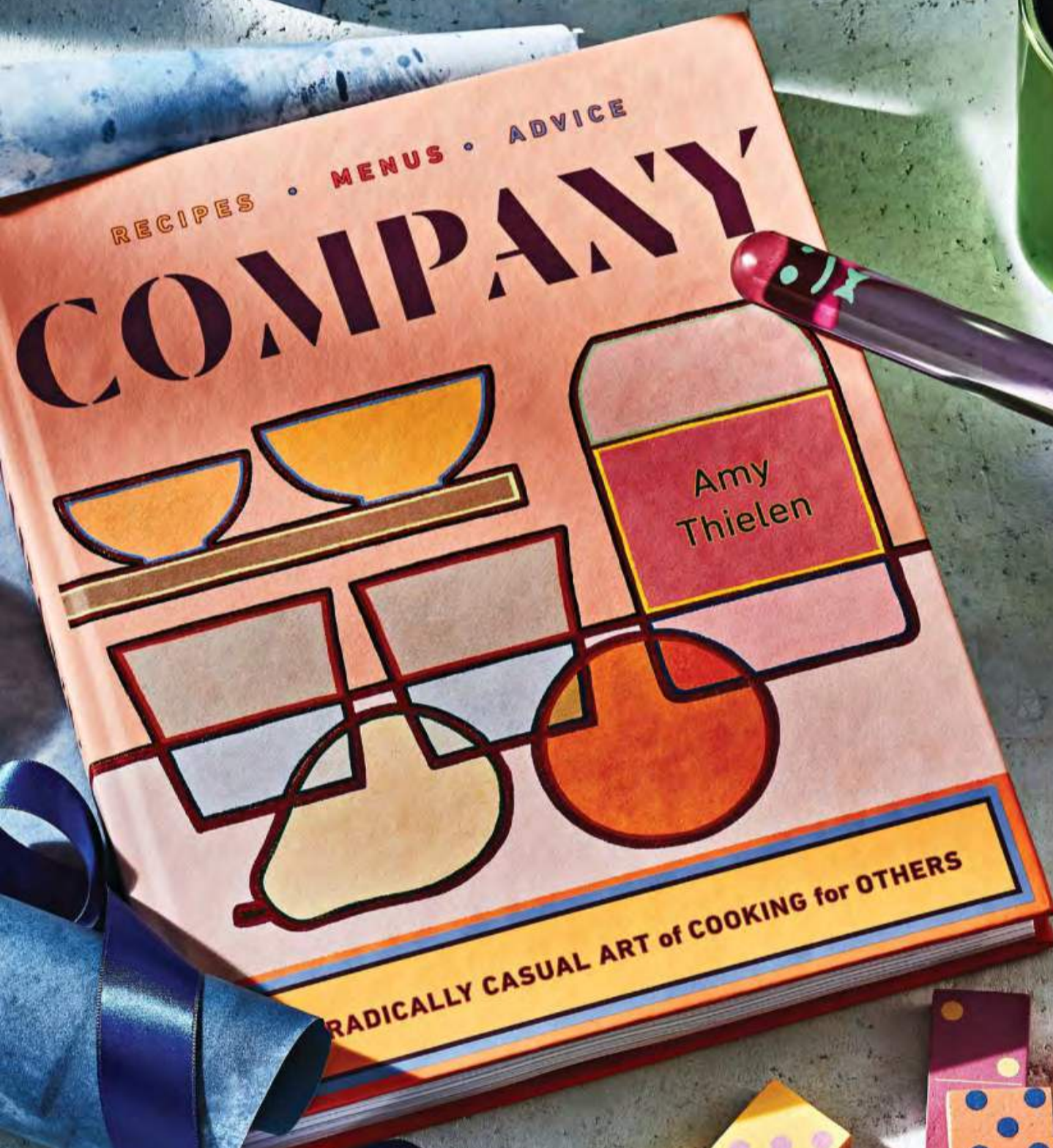
If your friend can't get a table at New York City's Via Carota, at least they can sip a cocktail from there. The Old Fashioned and Negroni are especially tasty. *Craft Cocktails*, \$39 each; drinkviacarota.com

SLEEK SHAKER

Interior designer Sheila Bridges created this cool tool, emblazoned with her updated toile pattern featuring scenes from Harlem. *Sheila Bridges Harlem Toile Cocktail Shaker*, \$50; williams-sonoma.com

SPICE HOLDER

Every cook needs at least two kinds of salt: the fine stuff and flaky flakes. This dual-compartment cellar keeps both within arm's reach. *Salt Sphere*, \$50; materialkitchen.com



HOST'S HELPER

Packed with ingenious recipes and practical advice, this cookbook from beloved author Amy Thielen is a must for entertainers. *Company*, \$40; www.norton.com

ROCKIN' ROLLER

Have you ever seen a better-looking lint roller? You have not! It has a reusable rubber grabber that rinses clean under the faucet. *The Lint Roller*, \$32; meetyourstaff.co

FLASHY DOMINOES

The classic game got a makeover for more cheerful playtime. Plus, the wooden pieces are conveniently lightweight. *Technicolor Dominoes Game*, \$30; store.moma.org



\$50 or less



SALTS OF THE EARTH

Hand-harvested in Iceland, these sea salts—Flaky, Lava, Birch-Smoked, and Arctic Thyme—all bring stellar seasoning to the table. Nothing to be salty about here! *Gift Box*, \$45; saltverk.com



CAT PACK

Cute and roomy, this backpack also happens to be durable and machine washable in case a leaky juice box gets thrown inside. (Spoiler alert: It will.) *Dabbawalla Kitty Backpack*, \$44; nathanandco.com



BRISTLE BRUSH

People never think to get themselves a new hairbrush. This one has nylon bristles to detangle and boar bristles to tame flyaways and add shine. Marcia Brady would be jealous. *Flat Brush in Tortoise*, \$48; emijay.com



PERSONALIZED PET BOWL

Tell this Canada-based artist about your friend's pet and you'll get a playful dish with their name and graphic nods to their hobbies. *Custom Pet Bowl*, from \$48; sweetsaplingstudio.etsy.com



GORGEOUS GLOSSES

In cocoa and nude, these lip oils pack nourishing jojoba oil and brightening vitamin C, so they feel as good as they look. They also come in a no-need-to-wrap floral box. *Saint Jane x Favorite Daughter Luxury Lip Oil Duo*, \$50; sephora.com



BEADED CHAIN

Fashionistas can wear this 29-inch rope with glasses or on its own as a necklace. Get one (or two) for anyone who's always losing their readers. *Dylan Beaded Eyeglass Chain*, \$38; inkalloy.com



BRIGHT NAPKINS

Dyed using all-natural plant extracts, these 10-by-10-inch cocktail napkins have hand-painted tone-on-tone patterns that a machine just can't do. *Block Printed Cocktail Napkins*, \$49 for 6; hettleshop.com



CANINE COUTURE

Pups and their pawrents will love this cozy sweater, which comes in many sizes. Get it monogrammed for an extra-sweet touch! *Chevron Pet Sweater*, \$49, plus \$12.50 to personalize; markandgraham.com



CUTE HOOPS

You'll get two thumbs up for these Southwest-inspired earrings. They're crafted from naturally sourced horn, so each pair is slightly different. *Rainbow Bead Hoops*, \$48; sunshinetienda.net



ECO-FRIENDLY TOTE

Change a grocery shopper's life with this sturdy bag, made in India from recycled plastic. There are a bunch of colors and sizes and they all hold a boatload. *Recycled Striped Bag*, \$44; puebco.us



BUZZY NOTEBOOK

Get this hand-embroidered sketchbook for an insect lover. They can use the 108 blank pages to draw butterflies spotted IRL. Or just write to-do lists. *Curio Sketchbook*, \$45; riflepaperco.com



PINT-SIZE PUTTING

It's *mini* mini golf! Challenge future PGA stars to line up the three track pieces to set the path, then putt their way along the course to the hole. *Mini Golf Set Toy*, \$40; store.moma.org



\$100 or less



PRETTY PADDLES

With a lightweight design, elongated faces, and comfy grip, these fab paddles are surefire aces for the pickleballers in your life. *Boothbay Harbor Paddle and Prouts Neck Paddle*, \$85 each; tangerinepaddle.com

BLOCKS THAT ROCK

Faceted stone-shaped blocks will entice kids of all ages. (Read: grown-ups too.) *Areaware Balancing Blocks*, \$59 for 10; nathanandco.com

FUNKY COUPES

The lucky cocktail lover who gets these handblown glasses will certainly raise them to you. *Fazeek Wave Coupes*, \$88 for 2; gretelhome.com

PACKING BUDDIES

A set of cute, printed packing cubes can help your favorite globetrotter keep their stuff contained, compressed, and neatly stashed. *Packing Cubes*, \$99 for 5; markandgraham.com

COZY TOESIES

Artist Yinka Ilori's colorful quilted slippers are supercool and warm. *Yinka Ilori Subu Slippers*, \$79; store.moma.org



\$100 or less



SELF-CARE IN A BOX

There's a mask for the four big issues (dryness, dullness, lines, and acne) in this kit. Pick one up for your friend who's all in on skin care and they'll be good to glow. *Hello, Mask Obsession!*, \$65; peterthomasroth.com



FESTIVE BREAD

Panettone is an Italian Christmas tradition anyone can get behind. This version of the cake, studded with dried figs and chunks of chocolate, is fragrant and delicious. *Chocolate and Fig Panettone*, \$65; zingermans.com



MULTITASKING TAPESTRIES

Technically, these modern 72-by-20-inch block-printed textiles are meant to be wall art. But they also make great table runners or scarves. *Block Printed Tapestries*, \$65 each; tawathreads.etsy.com



PLANT POTS

These hand-painted planters (with drainage holes!) have an abstract design that complements greenery. Add a saucer and a plant and you've got a custom gift. *Terracotta Outline Planters*, from \$52; francanyc.com



GLITTERY GLOBES

We love ornaments as a host gift. Save these vintage-inspired handblown glass orbs for the host with the most, or break up the set and dole out as needed. *Reflector Ornaments*, \$78 for 6; johnderian.com



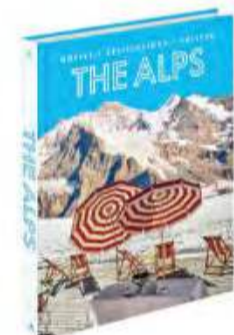
CLEVER HELMET

Got an on-the-go cyclist on your list? This guy keeps their noggin safe, then collapses down to a few inches tall when not in use so they won't have to deal with a bulky bag. *Loop Helmet*, \$76; closca.com



SLEEK TEA SET

Upgrade someone's cuppa with this Tea Forté and Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation collab. It includes a specially designed mug and tray, plus five blends inspired by the architect. *Frank Lloyd Wright Gift Set*, \$65; teafort.com



SNOWY SCENES

Give a friend a day on the slopes they can enjoy from the sofa. This coffee table book explores 84 resorts and hotels in the Alps. *The Alps: Hotels, Destinations, Culture* by Sebastian Schoellgen, \$60; phaidon.com



HEIRLOOM DECOR

Inspired by the geometric patterns of traditional Welsh tapestries, these pillow covers are 100% organic cotton and get softer with age. *Welsh Cotton Woven Pillow Covers*, \$59 each; greenrow.com



HOT WHEELS

Vroom, vroom! Tikes will love this mini scooter, which helps them learn balance while riding in style. It even has a tiny backseat just the right size for a beloved stuffie. *Ride Along Scooter*, \$90; step2.com



MATCHA MAKER

A great match for serious matcha drinkers, this handcrafted whisk is made of bamboo from Japan. The ceramic holder helps prolong its life. *Matcha Whisk and Holder Set*, \$70; owiu-goods.com



SPICY BLENDS

Droosh's four-pack of Indian-inspired spice mixes includes the tart and tangy Chaat Party (great in dips, on fruit, or in cocktails) and the warm Everyday Spice (for veggies and soups). *The Variety Pack*, \$52; shopdroosh.com



CRAFTY KIT

For your friend who loves to keep their hands busy, this weaving kit comes with an easy-to-follow instruction guide, plus all the materials needed to make a trendy wall hanging. *Color-Block Weaving Kit*, \$95; crafter.com

MAIN FLAMES

These soy-and-coconut candles are made for very specific times: Braless smells like cloves and should be lit when the bra comes off. Soaked (cedar) is for bath time, and Wired (citrus) is for focusing. *Lil BB's Mini Candle Gift Set*, \$88 for 3; sidiathebrand.com

SWEET SOAPS

Candy? Nope, it's soap! This set includes mini bars in Lime, Green Tea, Milk, and Cucumber—all made with goat's milk and shea butter for baby-soft skin. *Bon Bon Soaps*, \$55 for 4; murphyanddaughters.com



TIED IN KNOTS

Regular pillows are a snooze. These extra-long bolsters can be twisted into different shapes for maximum comfort, and they come in a bunch of sizes and fabrics. *Clockwise from top left: Playground Love Knot Pillow, \$110, Barbie Double Knot Cushion, \$130, and 528 HZ Double Knot Cushion, \$130; jujiedecor.com*

\$200 or less



LOADS OF CHEESE

Weighing in at nearly four pounds of fromage, this box includes five varieties from an award-winning dairy in Vermont. Send one ahead to a party and everybody gets a gift! *Cheese Baller Collection*, \$135; jasperhillfarm.com



PERSONAL PENDANT

Whether you're shopping for a Libra or a Leo, they'll treasure this necklace with four astrologer-picked stones (based on their birthdate) that comes in a gold-plated or silver finish. *Birthdate Pendant*, \$199; birthdate.co



COMFY CUSHION

This stylish dog bed is made from 100% recycled plastic bottles. And the cover, which also comes in stripes, is machine washable. A win for the planet, the pup, and their people! *The Fritz Bed*, \$149; approvedbyfritz.com



SWEET SEAT

Little ones will be sitting pretty on this pint-size rattan perch. It's coated in a tough water-based finish, so it's adorable and durable. Bring on the finger paints! *Kids Bow Chair*, \$150; brookeandlou.com



SEXY SCENT

Fragrance can be tricky to pick out for other people, but this warm orange blossom, jasmine, and rose blend is sure to please. Plus, the bottle is so pretty. *J'adore L'or*, \$170; dior.com



SHOWER POWER

Name a better present than softer skin and healthier hair. (We'll wait.) This easy-to-install attachment packs a pressure of 2½ gallons a minute and filters out chlorine and heavy metals. *Filtered Showerhead in Brass*, \$150; getcanopy.co



CLOSET UPGRADE

This bright tweed coat in a classic silhouette, from the latest buzzy collab between a designer and mass retailer, will keep a lucky someone on your list warm all season. *Jason Bolden Tweed Coat*, \$199; jcpenny.com



RELAXATION STATION

Give the gift of an afternoon snooze spot: a printed hammock, part of a cool partnership between West Elm and fan-favorite design house Marimekko. *Marimekko Hammock*, \$179; westelm.com



PLAY TENT

The *intent* (zing!) here is for kids to have fun. It's a collapsible canvas cabin that sets the stage for a "great escape" indoors but is sturdy enough for backyard make-believe too. *Kids Play Tent*, \$149; crateandbarrel.com/kids



CHEEKY PILLOW

This hand-stitched 8-by-14-inch needlepoint throw pillow features every introvert's personal motto. Wrap one up for someone who'd rather be on their couch. *I Came I Saw Needlepoint Pillow*, \$106; furbishstudio.com



BRIGHT LIGHTS

Combine modernist brass candlesticks with colorful twisty tapers (they're twisty and fun!) for a thoughtful double whammy. *Mid-Century Candlesticks*, \$85 for 2; fetehome.com *Drillbit Candles*, \$18 each; 54celsius.com



TENSION TAMER

Better than a gift card to a spa, this portable massager and heating pad can soothe a loved one's sore muscles and cramps at home, at work, or during travel. *Venom Go*, \$129; hyperice.com

Splurges



CUTE CLUTCH

This handwoven straw bag features a botanical print from adored textile company Schumacher. Snag this lemony one or choose from four other tropical designs. *Schumacher Lila Bag*, \$365; pamelamunson.com



MODERN MENORAH

Miracle of miracles! Hand-poured acrylic with a marbled look and sculptural design, this is an updated take on the candleholder. Happy Hanukkah to all! *Mustique Menorah*, \$375; jonathanadler.com



PRO SKILLET

Your favorite home cook will sear and sauté like a pro with this 11-inch pan that has multiple layers of titanium-bonded stainless steel. *Hestan Nanobond Titanium Stainless Skillet*, \$320; hestanculinary.com



BEAUTIFUL ADVENT

In this dollhouse Advent calendar, each drawer reveals a treat: hand lotions, perfume, candles, etc. It's made of sturdy cardboard, so you can restock it next year. *2023 Advent Calendar*, \$300; us.glasshousefragrances.com



SHAPELY VASE

Talk about a statement piece! Seattle-based ceramist Kassandra Guzman sculpts her raw stoneware pieces by hand, so no two are ever the same. *Curvy Amphora Matisse Vase*, \$225; minted.com



PIZZA WHIZ

With temps reaching 850°F, this electric pizza oven bakes pies in 90 seconds. It plugs into a regular outlet and can be used outside or inside on the kitchen counter. *Volt 12 Electric Pizza Oven*, \$999; ooni.com



HAPPY SWEATER

Remember the Marimekko hammock from earlier? Sigh. Their patterns are just so good! This cozy sweater features the brand's iconic poppy print. *Opaakki Unikko Knit Pullover*, \$355; marimekko.com



AT-HOME SPA

Spoil someone with this microcurrent facial-toning gizmo. After just a few uses, they'll start to see the long-lasting results—smoother lines, lifted brows, and a sculpted jawline. *Halo*, \$349; ziipbeauty.com



HOT SEAT

Feline friends can scope out the room on this slatted tower that'll fit in *purr*fectly with any decor. It comes in two heights: 24 and 41 inches. *Grove Cat Tower*, from \$499; tuftandpaw.com



A COOLER COOLER

Treat the most outdoorsy person you know to this soft-shell version, which holds up to 11 cans, is leakproof, and resists mildew. *Hopper Flip 8 Soft Cooler*, \$200; yeti.com



CUTTING-EDGE KNIVES

Instead of the usual dimples on a santoku knife, these blades have etchings of the Teton mountain range. *7-inch Teton Edge Santoku*, \$400 each; newwestknifeworks.com



GREAT GADGET

The latest in tablet tech, this 11-incher can stream shows, send emails, control smart home devices, and more. The included docking station is also a speaker! *Pixel Tablet*, \$499; store.google.com

SILKY ROBE

Hand-painted and made of supremely soft 100% silk, this lovely thing makes luxuriating extra luxe. *Crane Short Kimono Robe*, \$278; kimandono.com

SUPERIOR BLENDER

Think of it as the Rolls-Royce of blenders. It can adjust its own speed and whips up smooth smoothies, creamy hot soups, and more. *A3500 Gold Label Blender*, \$700; vitamix.com

SUPERSOFT THROW

The coziest blankets to ever blanket, these throws measure 55 by 67 inches and come in five calming colors. *Mohair Throws*, \$304 each; evangelinelinens.com



festive FEASTS

These pages will take some of the holiday menu planning off your very full plate so you can focus on the good parts: quality time with the people you love most, and enjoying every last delicious bite.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VICTOR PROTASIO
FOOD STYLING BY EMILY NABORS HALL / PROP STYLING BY SUMMER MOORE





First Night of Hanukkah Menu

Crispy Potato Latkes
Bitter Greens & Beet Salad
Slow Cooker Brisket with Melty Onions & Chimichurri
Sweet Tahini & Date Truffles

BY ANNA THEOKTISTO

Crispy Potato Latkes

Minced garlic adds subtle yum to these spud-tastic pancakes.

ACTIVE TIME **35 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **35 MINUTES**
MAKES **ABOUT 24 LATKES**

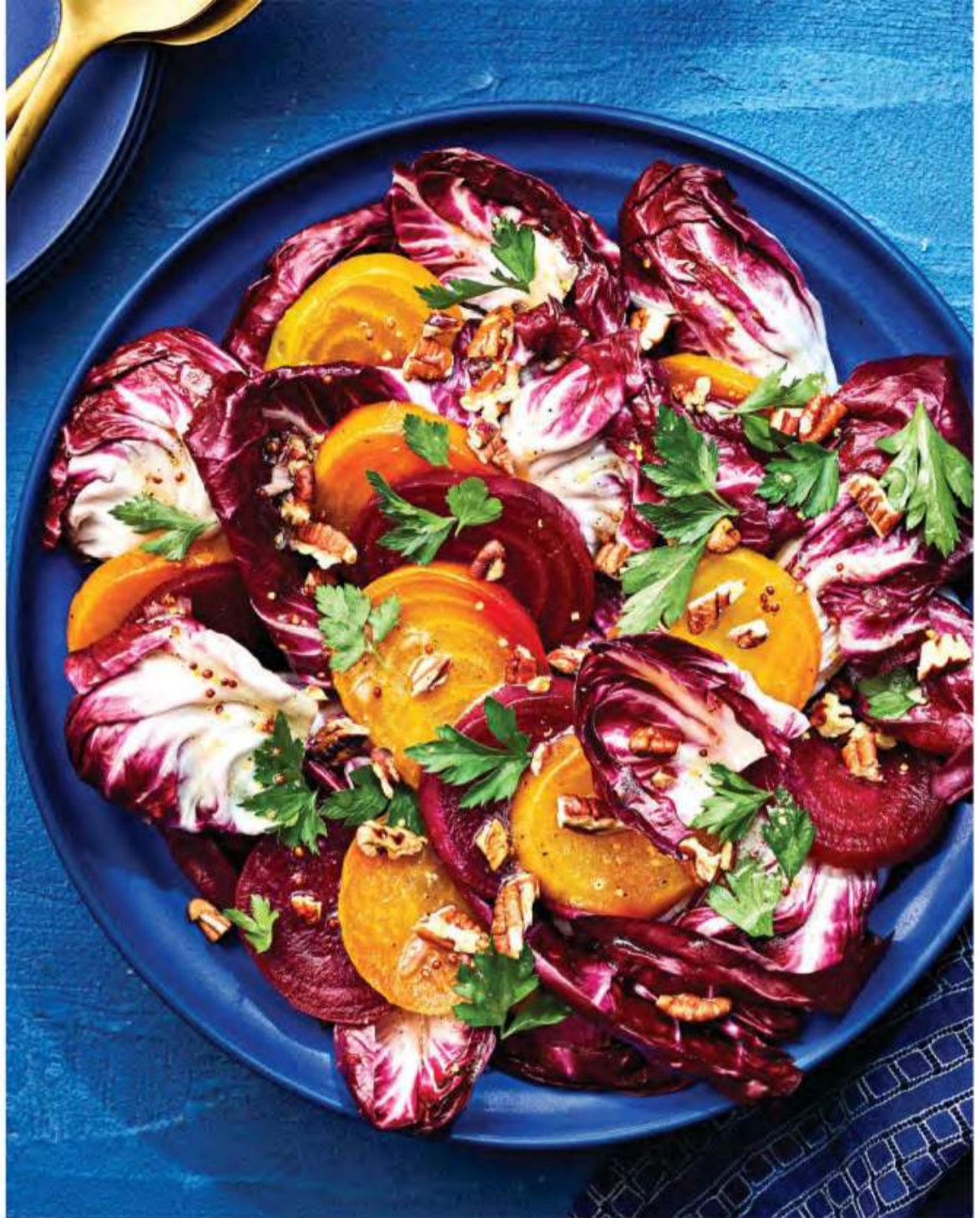
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 2 large russet potatoes (about 1½ lb. total), peeled
- ¼ cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley (from 1 bunch), finely chopped, plus more for topping
- 2 large eggs
- 2 Tbsp. matzo meal
- 3 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 Tbsp.)
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more for topping
- Vegetable oil, for frying
- Flaky sea salt, for topping
- Sour cream and applesauce, for serving

GRATE onion on the largest holes of a box grater; transfer to a large bowl. Grate potatoes on the largest holes of a box grater onto a clean kitchen towel. Gather ends of towel together and wring out as much liquid as possible. Transfer grated potatoes to bowl with onion. Stir in parsley, eggs, matzo meal, garlic, kosher salt, and pepper until just combined.

HEAT ¼ inch oil in a large skillet over medium-high until very hot but not smoking. Working in batches, add heaping 1-tablespoon portions of latke mixture; flatten slightly into circles using the back of a spatula. Cook until crisp and browned, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a large baking sheet lined with paper towels. Repeat with remaining latke mixture, adjusting oil and heat as needed.

TOP latkes with flaky sea salt, parsley, and pepper. Serve with sour cream and applesauce.

Cooking latkes in oil honors the miracle of Hanukkah. As the story goes, one night's worth of oil kept the menorah burning for eight. For more fried goodness, try a sufganiyah (page 56).



Bitter Greens & Beet Salad

This colorful dish is a fresh best friend for your rich brisket and golden latkes.

ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 15 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 2 medium red beets, scrubbed and trimmed
- 2 medium golden beets, scrubbed and trimmed
- 7 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- ¼ cup rice vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped shallot
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 1 Tbsp. whole-grain mustard
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 head radicchio, leaves separated (about 8 cups)
- ½ cup toasted chopped pecans
- ½ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

PREHEAT oven to 425°F. Place beets in a baking dish large enough to fit them in a single layer. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon oil and cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake until fork-tender, 50 to 60 minutes. Remove foil and let beets stand until cool enough to handle, about 10 minutes. Brush skins off beets with a paper towel; discard skins. Slice beets into ¼-inch-thick slices.

WHISK vinegar, shallot, honey, mustard, salt, pepper, and remaining 6 tablespoons oil in a small bowl.

PLACE radicchio leaves in a large bowl. Toss with about half of vinaigrette. Transfer to a serving platter. Place beets in bowl and toss with 2 tablespoons vinaigrette.

ARRANGE beets over radicchio. Drizzle with more vinaigrette and top with pecans and parsley.

Slow Cooker Brisket with Melty Onions & Chimichurri

A hands-off main frees you up to do all that latke frying right before serving.

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **8 HOURS, 20 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

Brisket

- 3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 5-to-5½-lb. brisket, trimmed
- 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 4 large red onions, cut into ½-in.-thick slices
- 1 cup dry red wine (kosher if desired)

Chimichurri

- 1½ cups fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, chopped, plus more for serving
- ¾ cup olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. prepared white horseradish
- ½ tsp. lemon zest plus 1 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ⅛ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

MAKE THE BRISKET: Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Sprinkle brisket with 1 tablespoon salt and 1 teaspoon pepper. Place in hot oil and cook until browned on both sides, about 6 minutes per side. Transfer to a 6-to 8-quart slow cooker.

ADD onions and remaining 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper to skillet. Cook over medium until onions are starting to wilt, about 5 minutes. Stir in wine; cook, scraping up browned bits from bottom of skillet, for 2 minutes. Transfer onions to slow cooker. Add 1 cup water. Cover and cook until brisket is fork-tender, on low for 8 to 9 hours or on high for 6 hours.

MAKE THE CHIMICHURRI: Stir together parsley, oil, horseradish, lemon zest and juice, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

SLICE brisket against the grain. Top with onions, braising liquid, and parsley. Serve with chimichurri.

Sweet Tahini & Date Truffles

They're so rich and fudgy, it's hard to believe these are made (mostly) of fruit.

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **45 MINUTES**
MAKES **ABOUT 16 TRUFFLES**

- 1½ cups Medjool dates (13 to 15), pitted
- ¼ cup blanched almond flour
- ¼ cup tahini
- 8 oz. 63% cacao bittersweet chocolate, chopped
- 1 Tbsp. coconut oil
- Flaky sea salt, for topping

PROCESS dates, flour, and tahini in a food processor until smooth, about 1 minute. Roll mixture into 1-tablespoon balls. Transfer to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Refrigerate until ready to dip in chocolate.

PLACE chocolate and oil in a medium microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high in 30-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted, about 90 seconds. Let cool to room temperature, about 15 minutes.

USING a fork, dip 1 truffle in chocolate. Jiggle fork slightly to remove excess chocolate; return truffle to parchment. Repeat with remaining truffles. Use fork to drizzle leftover chocolate over truffles. Immediately sprinkle with salt. Refrigerate for 10 minutes or until ready to serve.





Christmas Eve Menu

Little Fish Antipasto Board

*Oysters with
Pepperoncini Mignonette*

Shellfish Spaghetti

Parsley-Garlic Salmon

BY JENNA HELWIG



Little Fish Antipasto Board

Tinned seafood makes for simple and on-trend (if you care about that sort of thing) appetizers.

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **25 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

Smoked Trout Spread

- 7 oz. smoked trout (drained if in oil and skin removed if skin-on), flaked (about 1 cup packed)
- 4 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped shallot
- 1 Tbsp. nonpareil capers, chopped
- 4 tsp. fresh lemon juice (from 1 lemon)
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt, plus more if desired
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, plus more for topping

Anchovy & Butter Breads

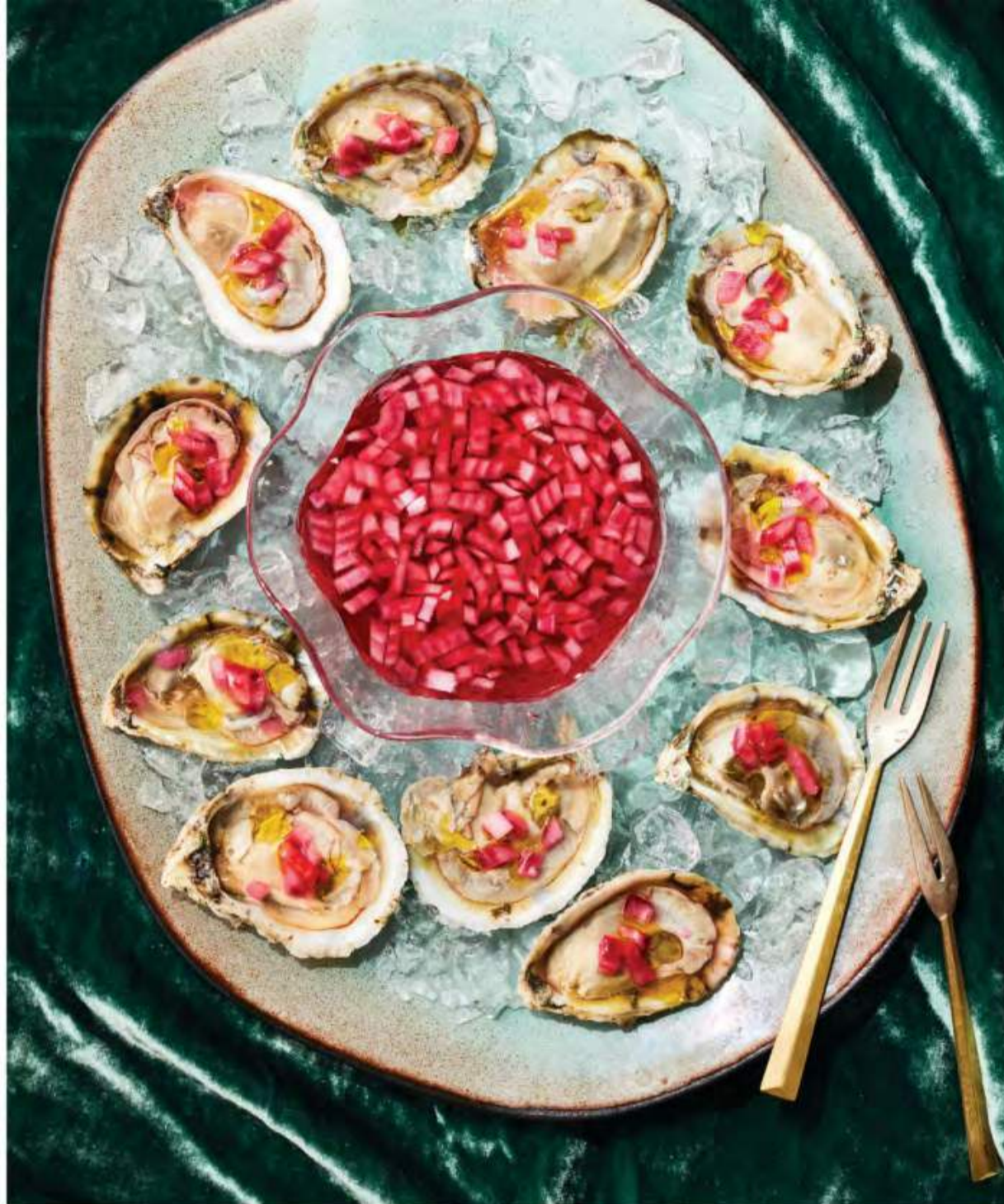
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, softened
- Sliced baguette
- 1 2-oz. jar anchovy fillets, drained
- Crackers, raw vegetables (such as cucumber, fennel, carrots, and celery), and olives (such as Castelvetrano), for serving

MAKE THE SMOKED TROUT SPREAD:

Stir together trout, cream cheese, shallot, capers, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl until well combined. Stir in parsley. Taste and add more salt if desired. Transfer to a serving bowl and top with parsley.

ASSEMBLE ANCHOVY & BUTTER BREADS:

Spread a thick layer of butter on 1 baguette slice. Top with an anchovy. Assemble remaining breads or serve ingredients—along with Smoked Trout Spread, crackers, vegetables, and olives—on a board.



This menu is inspired by the Italian American Christmas Eve Feast of the Seven Fishes. While no one is sure exactly how the idea originated, the rule is that you must include at least seven types of seafood.

Oysters with Pepperoncini Mignonette

They seem fussy. They are not.

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **25 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- ⅓ cup white wine vinegar
- 3 Tbsp. finely chopped red onion
- 1½ tsp. pepperoncini brine
- ⅛ tsp. kosher salt
- ⅛ tsp. granulated sugar
- 24 fresh oysters, scrubbed
- Extra-virgin olive oil, for serving

STIR together vinegar, onion, brine, salt, and sugar in a serving bowl. Let stand at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes.

MEANWHILE, open oysters and separate meat from shells. Top each oyster with a small spoonful of mignonette and a couple of drops of oil. Serve immediately, preferably on a bed of ice.

Shellfish Spaghetti

Three fish in one dish!

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **35 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- Kosher salt, for pasta water
- 1 16-oz. pkg. spaghetti
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 lb. littleneck clams, scrubbed
- 2 lb. mussels, scrubbed and debearded
- 1 lb. peeled and deveined tail-on extra-large raw shrimp
- 1 24-oz. jar marinara sauce
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- Finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley and crushed red pepper (optional), for topping

BRING a large pot of generously salted water to a boil. Cook spaghetti according to package directions. Drain spaghetti and return it to pot.

MEANWHILE, bring wine to a simmer in a large pot. Add clams, mussels, and shrimp, in that order. Cover and steam over medium-low until shrimp are opaque and clams and mussels are open, 9 to 10 minutes. (Remove shrimp if it is cooked through before clams and mussels open.)

TRANSFER shrimp to a medium bowl. Transfer clams and mussels to a large bowl. Remove about half of mussels and clams from their shells and set aside. Discard shells.

POUR cooking liquid into a liquid measuring cup if it looks gritty; let stand for 2 minutes. Wipe pot clean. Slowly pour liquid back into pot, leaving about 2 tablespoons liquid and solids behind.

STIR marinara sauce into cooking liquid in pot. Bring to a simmer over medium; cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in butter.

ADD cooked spaghetti, shrimp, and shelled clams and mussels to sauce; toss to coat. Add clams and mussels in their shells and toss gently. Serve immediately, topped with parsley and (if desired) crushed red pepper.



Parsley-Garlic Salmon

Save this recipe for weeknight dinners too—it's that easy.

ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 1 2-lb. skin-on salmon fillet
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. mayonnaise
- 4 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. lemon zest plus 2 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
- ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped garlic
- 6 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (from 1 bunch), divided
- Flaky sea salt, for topping

PREHEAT oven to 375°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Place salmon, skin side down, on parchment. Sprinkle with ½ teaspoon kosher salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper.

COMBINE oil, mayonnaise, mustard, lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce, and remaining ½ teaspoon kosher salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper in a medium bowl. Stir in garlic and ¼ cup parsley.

SPOON sauce over salmon, coating all exposed sides. Bake until salmon flakes easily with a fork and a thermometer inserted in thickest part reads 130°F to 135°F, about 25 minutes.

LET stand on baking sheet for 5 minutes. Top with lemon zest, remaining 2 tablespoons parsley, and flaky sea salt.







Christmas Dinner Menu

*Apple Brandy Pork Loin
Roast with Parsnips & Apples*

*Fennel, Leek &
Mushroom Gratin*

*Broccoli with Lemon &
Smoked Almonds*

*White Chocolate
Pomegranate Cheesecake*

BY MARIANNE WILLIAMS

Apple Brandy Pork Loin Roast with Parsnips & Apples

True story: Pork and apples can be gussied up for a crowd-pleasing holiday main.

ACTIVE TIME **1 HOUR, 10 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **13 HOURS, 55 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 1½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1½ tsp. ground fennel seeds
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 3½-lb. center-cut pork loin roast, trimmed
- 2 Tbsp. pure maple syrup
- 1½ tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¾ cup apple brandy (such as Calvados), divided
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 3 parsnips, peeled and cut diagonally into 2-in. pieces (about 2½ cups)
- 2 Honeycrisp apples, cut into ½-in.-thick slices
- ¾ cup chicken stock, divided
- 5 sprigs thyme, plus more for topping
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, cubed, divided
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar

MIX together pepper, fennel seeds, garlic powder, and 1 tablespoon salt in a small bowl.

PAT pork dry with paper towels. Place pork on a wire rack set inside a rimmed baking sheet and sprinkle with salt mixture. If desired, tie 3 or 4 pieces of kitchen twine crosswise around pork to tighten and secure shape. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 12 hours and up to 24 hours. Remove pork from refrigerator 45 minutes before cooking.

PREHEAT oven to 450°F. Whisk syrup, mustard, ¼ cup brandy, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a bowl.

HEAT 2 tablespoons oil in a large cast-iron or other oven-safe skillet over medium-high. Add pork; cook, undisturbed, until browned on bottom, 4 to 5 minutes. Turn pork and repeat, continuing to cook until browned on all sides, about 12 more minutes total. Carefully turn pork to sear ends until browned, about 30 seconds per side. Add parsnips and apples around pork. Pour ½ cup stock and remaining ½ cup brandy around parsnips, apples, and pork. Scatter thyme sprigs, half of butter, and ¼ teaspoon salt over parsnips and apples. Brush pork with half of syrup mixture.

ROAST pork until a meat thermometer inserted in thickest part reads 130°F (temperature will continue to rise as pork rests), about 35 minutes. Halfway through cooking time, brush pork with remaining syrup mixture and gently stir parsnips and apples.

TRANSFER pork to a cutting board or platter and let rest for 15 minutes. Add vinegar, remaining butter, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt to parsnips and apples in skillet. Swirl skillet and stir until sauce is emulsified and smooth, about 1 minute. Slice pork into ¼-to-½-inch-thick slices. Serve with parsnips, apples, and sauce. Top with thyme sprigs.

*
Ham and turkey may be traditional at Christmas dinner, but pork loin is just as dramatic and delicious. Plus, it cooks faster.



Fennel, Leek & Mushroom Gratin

While oyster or maitake mushrooms make this dish extra fancy, creminis work too.

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 45 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 2 medium bulbs fennel, cored and sliced (about ½ in. thick)
- 3 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 2 oz. Parmesan cheese, grated (about ½ cup), divided
- 8 oz. sliced mushrooms
- 2 leeks (white and light green parts only), halved and thinly sliced
- 4 oz. Gruyère cheese, shredded (about 1 cup), divided
- 1¼ cups heavy cream
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ⅛ tsp. ground nutmeg
- 2 Tbsp. crispy fried onions (such as French's)
- 1 Tbsp. sliced chives

PREHEAT oven to 450°F. Place fennel in a 2½-quart baking dish. Toss with 1 tablespoon oil and ½ teaspoon salt. Sprinkle with ¼ cup Parmesan. Roast until tender, about 20 minutes.

MEANWHILE, heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium-high. Add mushrooms; cook, undisturbed, until browned on bottom, about 4 minutes. Stir and cook until golden brown on all sides, about 3 minutes. Add leeks; cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Season with ½ teaspoon salt.

TOP fennel with ½ cup Gruyère. Add mushrooms and leeks to fennel; toss to combine. Whisk cream, mustard, pepper, nutmeg, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt in a small bowl. Pour over vegetables in baking dish. Top with remaining ½ cup Gruyère and ¼ cup Parmesan. Cover with aluminum foil and bake until vegetables are tender and cream is bubbling, about 45 minutes.

REMOVE foil from baking dish. Continue to bake until cheeses are golden brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Let rest for 15 minutes. Top with fried onions and chives.





Broccolini with Lemon & Smoked Almonds

Swap in regular broccoli if you prefer. They're both aces!

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **20 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 1/4 cup chopped almonds (preferably smoked)
- 2 Tbsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tsp. lemon zest plus 1 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 1 large shallot, thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced (1 Tbsp.)
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 2 lb. Broccolini, trimmed

MIX almonds, parsley, lemon zest, and crushed red pepper in a small bowl.

HEAT 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium. Add shallot, garlic, and 1/4 teaspoon salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 4 minutes. Add Broccolini, remaining 2 tablespoons oil, and remaining 3/4 teaspoon salt; turn to coat Broccolini in oil. Add 1/2 cup water.

COVER skillet and cook until Broccolini is crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Uncover and continue to cook until liquid has evaporated, about 1 minute.

ADD lemon juice. Transfer to a serving dish and top with almond mixture.

White Chocolate Pomegranate Cheesecake

This luscious dessert is pure holiday magic.

ACTIVE TIME **50 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **6 HOURS, 50 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 1 1/2 cups (about 7 oz.) finely crushed gingersnap cookies
- 6 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted, divided, plus more for greasing pan
- 3/4 cup plus 2 1/2 Tbsp. granulated sugar, divided
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 3 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, at room temperature
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 2/3 cup sour cream
- 7 oz. white chocolate, melted and cooled to room temperature, plus more, unmelted, for topping (optional)
- 1 Tbsp. plus 2 tsp. cornstarch, divided
- 1 1/2 cups pomegranate juice
- 2 tsp. lime zest plus 1/2 tsp. fresh juice (from 1 lime)
- 1/4 cup pomegranate arils
- 2 Tbsp. roasted, salted pistachios, roughly chopped

PREHEAT oven to 350°F with a rack in center position. Wrap bottom and sides of a 9-inch springform pan with 4 layers of aluminum foil; lightly grease pan with butter.

STIR together crushed cookies, 5 tablespoons melted butter, 1 tablespoon sugar, and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Press evenly into bottom and 1 inch up sides of prepared pan.

BAKE crust until dark brown and fragrant, about 12 minutes. Let pan cool on a wire rack while you make filling.

REDUCE oven temperature to 325°F. Combine cream cheese and 3/4 cup sugar in a large bowl. Beat with an electric mixer until very smooth. With mixer on low speed, add eggs, 1 at a time, beating until just incorporated. Add sour cream, melted chocolate, 1 tablespoon cornstarch, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Beat on low speed until combined. Pour filling into crust and smooth top. Place pan on a rimmed baking sheet.

BAKE until sides are set but center is still slightly jiggly, 50 to 60 minutes. Let cheesecake cool completely on a wire rack, about 1 hour. Refrigerate, covered, for at least 4 hours and up to 12 hours.

WHILE cheesecake chills, stir together 2 teaspoons water and remaining 2 teaspoons cornstarch in a small bowl. Bring pomegranate juice and remaining 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar to a boil over medium-high in a small saucepan. Boil, stirring occasionally, until reduced to about 1/2 cup, about 15 minutes.

REDUCE heat to medium and stir in cornstarch-water mixture; cook, stirring often, until sauce thickens and coats the back of a spoon, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in lime juice, remaining 1 tablespoon butter, and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt. Transfer to a small bowl. Set aside or refrigerate until ready to use.

RUN a paring knife around edges of crust. Remove sides of springform pan. Run knife around bottom of cheesecake to loosen. Gently shimmy or use large spatulas to transfer cheesecake onto a cake stand or serving plate. Decorate cheesecake with pomegranate arils, lime zest, and pistachios. Use a Microplane zester to grate white chocolate over top of cheesecake, if desired. Serve cold or at room temperature with pomegranate sauce.



**New Year's Day
Brunch Menu**

Cucumber Spritzer
Herbed Ham & Cheese
Baked Eggs
Pepper & Chive Biscuits
Winter Citrus with
Nut & Honey Crunch

BY LIZ MERVOSH





Cucumber Spritzer

If some people want a boozy bev and others don't, skip the gin in the pitcher and stir in 2 tablespoons per glass for the drinkers.

ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **20 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup packed fresh mint leaves, plus more for garnish
- 2 medium English cucumbers, coarsely chopped, plus slices for garnish
- 1/3 cup fresh lime juice (from 5 limes)
- 3 cups chilled club soda, plus more for topping off
- 8 oz. (1 cup) gin (optional)

BRING sugar, mint, and 1/2 cup water to a gentle simmer in a medium saucepan over medium, stirring occasionally to dissolve sugar. Simmer, undisturbed, for 2 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes.

PROCESS chopped cucumbers, lime juice, and cooled mint syrup in a blender until mostly smooth, about 30 seconds. Pour mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a medium pitcher, pressing gently to squeeze out juice (do not push solids through strainer). Discard solids.

STIR in club soda and (if desired) gin. Serve over ice topped off with more club soda and garnished with cucumber slices and mint.

Herbed Ham & Cheese Baked Eggs

For a veggie version, leave out the ham and sauté mushrooms with the onions instead.

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 sweet onion, thinly sliced (1 1/2 cups)
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped (1 Tbsp.)
- 12 large eggs
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 4 oz. Gouda cheese, shredded (1 cup)
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh chives, plus more for topping
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, plus more for topping
- 3 oz. Parmesan cheese, finely shredded (about 2/3 cup), divided
- 8 slices deli smoked ham (8 oz.), torn into pieces

PREHEAT oven to 350°F with racks in center and upper third positions. Heat oil in a 10-inch cast-iron skillet over medium. Add onion, pepper, and 1/4 teaspoon salt; cook, stirring occasionally, until onion is lightly browned on edges, 6 to 8 minutes. Add garlic; cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 1 minute.

MEANWHILE, whisk eggs, sour cream, mustard, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt in a large bowl until thoroughly combined. Whisk in Gouda, chives, parsley, and 1/3 cup Parmesan.

POUR egg mixture over onion mixture in skillet and scatter ham over top. Cook, stirring gently and scraping along edges of skillet, until eggs are just beginning to set and form creamy curds, 3 to 4 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining 1/3 cup Parmesan.

BAKE on center rack until edges are puffed and center is almost set, about 10 minutes. Transfer skillet to upper rack and increase oven temperature to broil. Broil until lightly browned on top, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool for 5 minutes. Top with chives and parsley. Serve warm or at room temperature.



Pepper & Chive Biscuits

Serve with softened butter or cream cheese for slathering. It's still the holidays!

ACTIVE TIME **15 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **45 MINUTES**
MAKES **8 BISCUITS**

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface
- ½ cup finely chopped fresh chives
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1½ tsp. granulated sugar
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more for topping
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ½ cup (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into ½-in. pieces
- 1 cup chilled whole buttermilk, plus more for brushing biscuits

WHISK flour, chives, baking powder, sugar, salt, pepper, and baking soda in a medium bowl.

RUB and pinch butter into flour mixture until mixture resembles coarse crumbs with pea-size pieces of butter. Gradually stir in buttermilk. Knead a few times until a shaggy dough forms.

TRANSFER dough to a lightly floured work surface. Pat dough into a 6-by-8-inch rectangle (about ¾ inch thick). Cut crosswise and lengthwise to form 4 evenly sized smaller rectangles. Stack rectangles on top of each other and pat them down into a ¾-inch-thick rectangle again. Repeat process 1 more time. Cut dough into 8 (about 2½-by-3-inch) biscuits. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, spaced evenly apart.

BRUSH tops with buttermilk and sprinkle with pepper. Freeze biscuits, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 425°F.

BAKE biscuits until golden brown, 16 to 18 minutes. Serve warm.

This flavorful menu strikes a nice balance for January 1. It's special, yet still kinda light to help you recover from a week (or more) of celebrations.



Winter Citrus with Nut & Honey Crunch

Choose multiple types of citrus for the prettiest, and tastiest, fruit salad ever.

ACTIVE TIME **35 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **35 MINUTES**
SERVES **8**

- 4 lb. mixed citrus (such as blood oranges, grapefruit, Cara Cara oranges, and tangerines)
- ¼ cup honey
- Kosher salt
- ½ cup hazelnuts or almonds
- 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- ½ tsp. ground cardamom
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 cups vanilla whole-milk yogurt

ZEST and juice 1 orange to yield 1 teaspoon zest and ¼ cup fresh juice. Place zest and juice in a small saucepan; stir in honey, ¼ cup water, and a pinch of salt. Bring to a boil over medium. Boil, stirring occasionally, until syrupy, thickened, and foamy on top, about 6 minutes. Let cool for 10 minutes.

WHILE orange syrup cools, line a small baking sheet with parchment paper. Cook nuts, sugar, cardamom, cinnamon, and a pinch of salt in a medium nonstick skillet over medium-high, stirring constantly with a heatproof rubber spatula, until sugar is melted and browned and coats nuts, 5 to 6 minutes. Scrape nut mixture onto prepared baking sheet and quickly spread in an even layer. Let cool completely, about 10 minutes. Break or coarsely chop candied nuts.

USING a paring knife, remove peels and pith from remaining citrus. Slice citrus crosswise into rounds (about ½ inch thick). Spread yogurt evenly on a large serving platter. Top with citrus and candied nuts. Drizzle with orange syrup.

What to Wear Where

HOLIDAY
EDITION

A bit stressed about getting dressed? The holidays can do that to you. (The parties! The pictures! The social media of it all!) Each of these ideas hits every beat to have you looking and feeling fabulous: They're comfortable, festive, flattering, and fully on trend.

*Photographs by Meredith Jenks * Styling by Stephanie Tricola
Set Design by Amy Elise Wilson * Hair by Anike Rabiou
Makeup by Moani Lee * Nails by Mamie Onishi
Text by Samantha Sutton & Heather Muir Maffei*



Big Bash

This is the season of matching sets for one-and-done dressing. OK, technically two and done. Still, you get the benefit of not having to think too hard. Our picks for party versions? Sparkling winter white, velvet, and brocade.

Left: *Delaina Embellished Long Sleeve Crop Top*, \$550; aliceandolivia.com *Pencil Midi Skirt in Textured Sequin Mesh (similar to shown)*, \$109; asos.com *Rhinestone Heeled Boot*, \$215; whitehouseblackmarket.com *Chandelier Drop Earrings*, \$35.50; chicos.com *Square Sparkle Hero Rings*, \$50 each; pandora.net *Middle: Velvet Vest*, \$99, and *Velvet Pants*, \$110; whitehouseblackmarket.com *Heeled Boots*, \$55; hm.com *Multi-Strand Earrings*, \$49.50; chicos.com *5-Pack Bangles and Bracelets*, \$10; hm.com *Gold Triple Ring (right hand) and Gold Bone Ring*, \$50 each; rainbowunicornbirthday.com *surprise.com*

Right: *Cobalt Jacquard Coat*, \$169, and *Cobalt Jacquard Pants*, \$110; chicos.com *Tank Bodysuit*, \$58; skims.com *Mingle Mary Jane Platform Pump*, \$100; stevemadden.com *Houndstooth 15 Den Tights*, \$48; falke.com *Rhinestone Giant Square Earrings*, \$28; rainbowunicornbirthday.com *surprise.com*





Quick & Classic

The easiest holiday makeup routine: Even out your skin with a glowy tinted moisturizer and swipe on a matte red lipstick. (Layer a matching liner underneath if you want the color to last long past dessert.) Tie it all together by blending blush on cheeks and—just trust—in the creases of your eyes.

Dr. Jart+ Premium BB Tinted Beauty Balm in Light Medium, \$46; sephora.com MatteTrance Lipstick in Celestial Nirvana: Forbidden Love, \$39; patmcgrath.com Forget the Filler Definer Liner in True Love, \$21; lawlessbeauty.com Soft Pop Plumping Blush Veil in Berry Punch, \$30; makeupbymario.com Crystal Mesh Mini Dress, \$220; chicos.com

Office *Party*

It's not often that a day-to-night look works equally well for both. This does—a monochromatic top and bottom (another matching set!) fit for the office, with a bit of sparkle for the evening. And don't sleep on the sleek topcoat... unless, of course, you're really tired at the bar.

Double Breasted Coat, \$299, Sheer Glitter Top, \$79, and Sheer Glitter Skirt, \$129; stories.com Heeled Boots, \$55; hm.com Rhinestone Drop Earrings, \$8; forever21.com Timeless Pave Single Row Ring, \$95; pandora.net



Cocktails with Friends

A leather fringe skirt + black tights + statement pumps = the ideal going-out getup. Add a cool top, giant drop earrings, and whatever else you want to the equation. The math still checks out.

Karolina Fringe Skirt, \$495, and Blaze Plunge Bodysuit, \$375; lagence.com Persona Slingback Pump, \$155; jeffreycampbellshoes.com Pure Matt 100 Den Tights, \$53; falke.com Diamond Drop Earrings, \$25; rainbowunicornbirthday surprise.com Tanzanite Ring, \$225; deandavidson.com



Open House

The shirt makes it festive; the rest makes it chic. All the cool kids will be dabbling with the ankle-socks-and-loafers look this season. If that's not your vibe, skip 'em. (The socks. No one is antiloafers.)

We the Free Mar Ruffle Blouse, \$128, and We the Free Uptown High-Rise Vegan Pants, \$98; freepeople.com Karmine Loafer, \$100; stevemadden.com Glitter Frill Socks, \$15; stories.com Gold Medallion Necklace, \$30, and Gold Bone Ring, \$50; rainbowunicornbirthday surprise.com Multicolor Crystal Signet Ring, \$78; kurtgeiger.us





Simple & Shimmery

Glitter is, in fact, for grown-ups! Just keep your look sophisticated by using a finely milled shadow (versus the chunky stuff). When applying blush, know this: The higher you brush it on, the younger you'll look. Oh, one more thing! Brushing your brows upward is always the right finishing touch.

Mothership IX Eyeshadow Palette: Huetopian Dream, \$128; patmcgrath.com Rare Beauty Stay Vulnerable Melting Cream Blush in Nearly Berry, \$22; sephora.com Generation G Lipstick in Punch, \$18; glossier.com Brow Freeze in Clear, \$23; anastasiabeverlyhills.com Rhinestone Mesh Bodysuit, \$50; zara.com



A Trip to the *Tree Farm*

Denim on denim has been happening the last few years, and it's still going strong. Here, a cream denim jacket with faux-fur lining ups the utility and warmth. Denim on denim on denim!

Holly Cozy Denim Jacket, \$298; freepeople.com Reign Denim Shirt, \$90, and The Loose Jean, \$130; bananarepublic.gap.com Leather Waterproof Boots, \$160; cougarshoes.com Gold Pendant Necklace, \$20; urbanoutfitters.com

Festive Family Meal

There's an age-old trick to wearing two patterns at once: Stick to the same color palette and vary the scale. To make it very "this season," layer a corset or vest on top.

Mesh Long Sleeve Turtleneck, \$49.50, and Floral Midi Skirt, \$140; whitehouseblackmarket.com Fay Strapless Bustier, \$425; lagence.com Mingle Mary Jane Platform Pump, \$100; stevemadden.com Ritual Tights, \$50; falke.com Ring Pack, \$10, and Earrings and Studs Pack, \$18; hm.com





Monochromatic & Modern

Not a bold lip or eye kind of person? This understated moment is your move. First press a liquid highlighter onto cheekbones for a little glow. Then top your lids with a shimmery shadow that almost matches your skin tone, and swipe a clear lip gloss over it. Finish with a nudish lip liner and more gloss.

Fluid Sheer Glow Enhancer in Champagne, \$39; giorgioarmanibeauty-usa.com
Artistique Eyeshadow in Me Peche, \$22; surrattbeauty.com
Danessa Myricks Beauty Colorfix Glaze in Clear, \$20; sephora.com
Mac Cosmetics Lip Pencil in Oak, \$24; ulta.com
Peptide Lip Treatment in Salted Caramel, \$16; rhodeskin.com
Sheer Rhinestone Mesh Dress, \$139; stories.com



This Minneapolis home is full of great design, good cheer—and tasteful Christmas decor.





MERRY & BRIGHT

By Erica Finamore / Photographs by Clettis Wright
Styling by Alison Hoekstra



Entryway

The door is original to the nearly 100-year-old home and one of Patti's favorite features. With a rounded top and hammered-iron hardware, it doesn't need much to make it feel special. A simple twinkly wreath does the job.

Outdoor Winter Evergreen Foliage Wreath, from \$129; balsamhill.com



EXTERIOR: COURTESY OF PATTI WAGNER

Dining Room

Just off to the right of the entryway sits the dining room, with a classic walnut table and comfortable—and very wipeable—leather seats. For the holidays, the table gets set with mixed-and-matched gold-colored candlesticks, pink glassware, and a vase overflowing with berries and pine. Side note: Can we talk about those arched doorways?!

Tate Mid Century Dining Table, from \$1,499, and Cullen Shitake Sand Round Back Dining Chairs, \$499 each; crateandbarrel.com Lolo Rumi Berry Rug (similar to shown), from \$248; houzz.com Mimi Thorisson Italian Hours Glass Pitcher, \$48, Aurora Candlesticks, from \$20, Ramona Coupe Glasses, \$56 for 4, and Mimi Thorisson Italian Hours Wine Glasses, \$56 for 4; anthropologie.com Classic Blue Spruce, from \$299; balsamhill.com

YOU'D NEVER KNOW it from looking at these pics of her home, but Patti Wagner didn't grow up decking the halls. The designer was born in Laos and left the war-torn country with her family when she was very young, staying in refugee camps in Thailand and the Philippines before eventually settling in the U.S. when she was about 7. Once here, they lived in rentals, which her parents didn't think of as theirs to decorate. "I remember always looking around and wanting to put stuff on the walls," Patti says. That desire (and a love for the beautiful rooms she'd see in magazines) inspired her to study interior design, which led her to a job as a product designer for Target. When she and her husband, Brian, bought their 1927 Tudor in Minneapolis in 2011, she was more than ready to make her mark on the house, filling each room with clean midcentury pieces, textured neutrals, and vintage artwork (see more on Instagram at @patticakewagner). At Christmastime, she enlists the help of their three children—Ava, 9; Olivia, 7; and Jack, 5—and amps up the cozy by incorporating garlands, fresh wreaths, and lots of little touches. "It's been this amazing tradition that grows more and more every year," she says, welcoming us in for a tour.









Kitchen

When the Wagners moved in, the house had a tiny galley kitchen, so they converted the garage into this open, light-filled cooking and gathering space. It features durable terra-cotta tile, polished granite and Carrara marble counters, and cupboards that mimic the original built-ins, which appear throughout the house. The Christmas spirit appears in big ways (the giant fir-and-eucalyptus bouquet) and small ones (the bottle brush forest on the counter).

Left: Vito Industrial Loft Hand Wrought Antique Brass Iron Counter Stools, \$349 each; kathykuohome.com Perrin & Rowe Georgian Era Bridge Faucet with Sidespray, \$3,032; perigold.com Above: 28" Whitney Rug Runner (similar to shown), \$69; rugs.com Wondershop Sisal Bottle Brush Tree Set, \$10 for 6, and Mixed Greenery and Cedar Wreath, \$30; target.com



Mudroom

In Minnesota, winter hits hard, so the must list includes boots, snowpants, layers upon layers, and mudrooms! Patti outfitted hers with a bench (for removing those boots), an absorbent floor runner, and woven bins to hold hats and mittens. Seasonal elements include pretty and functional red-accented velvet throw pillows and a slim garland and wreath—nonintrusive, so kids and grown-ups have plenty of room to shimmy in and out of snow gear.

Wondershop 22" Mixed Greenery, Pinecones & Red Berries Wreath, \$20, Hearth and Hand with Magnolia Decorative Metal Entryway Boot Tray, \$50, and Brightroom 13" Decorative Coiled Basket (white), \$16; target.com EverySpace Recycled Waterhog Runner, from \$99; llbean.com Eastern Accents Uma Velvet Colorblock Pillows (similar to shown), \$130 each; wayfair.com Real Touch Norfolk Pine Garland (similar to shown), \$62; afloral.com

Living Room

What do you do when you have an awesome fireplace but no mantel? If you're Patti, you turn to Etsy! This cedar ledge was custom-made and is now home to a brass mirror year-round, and to a berry garland and crimson tapers in December. The neutral sofas are dressed up for the holidays with velvet pillows and thick mohair throws.



Outdoor Eucalyptus and Berry Foliage Garland, from \$259, and Classic Blue Spruce, from \$299; balsamhill.com Christenia Velvet Pillow Covers (similar to shown), \$32 for 2; wayfair.com Fern Brushed Mohair Throw (similar to shown), \$425; landsdownunder.com Antique Log Holder, \$59; etsy.com for similar

The Girls' Room

Every year, Ava and Olivia's room gets a holiday makeover with a mini faux tree and seasonal bedding (both of which pop against the sophisticated blush paint color the girls picked out). The iron spindle beds look vintage but are actually new. Of course, they're empty at first light on Christmas morning.

Dakota Alpine Tree (similar to shown), \$199; arhaus.com
Pink Ground No. 202 Paint, \$130 per gallon; farrow-ball.com
August Grove Cliffrose Metal Beds, \$157 each; wayfair.com
Comfort Spaces Cotton Flannel Twin Sheets, \$28; amazon.com





Out-of- the-Box




Cookies

Planning on gifting a festive collection of confections? Pack up an assortment of these unique treats and you'll be on everyone's "nice" list.

BY TRICIA MANZANERO STUEDEMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FRED HARDY FOOD STYLING BY EMILY NABORS HALL

PROP STYLING BY CLAIRE SPOLLEN



Break this giant cookie into small slivers or big shards, and feel free to play with toppings! Sprinkles, coconut flakes, or chopped dried fruit would also be delightful.

Pistachio & White Chocolate Cookie Bark

PISTACHIO & WHITE CHOCOLATE COOKIE BARK

ACTIVE TIME **35 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 25 MINUTES**
MAKES **15 TO 25 COOKIE PIECES**

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup packed light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. orange zest
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 7 Tbsp. refined coconut oil, melted, divided
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. fine salt
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup raw unsalted pistachios, divided
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups (15 oz.) white chocolate chips
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freeze-dried raspberries, roughly crushed

PREHEAT oven to 350°F. Line an 18-by-13-inch rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper, leaving a 1-inch overhang on long sides.

WHISK granulated sugar, butter, brown sugar, orange zest, vanilla, and 6 tablespoons oil in a large bowl until smooth. Add flour and salt; stir until nearly combined.

FINELY chop $\frac{1}{3}$ cup pistachios; fold into sugar mixture until combined. Press dough into pan in a thin, even layer all the way to edges. Bake until set and golden brown, 20 to 22 minutes. Let cool completely in baking sheet on a wire rack, about 1 hour.

PLACE chocolate chips and remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high in 20-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Spread evenly over cooled cookie.

ROUGHLY chop remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup pistachios. Working quickly, sprinkle pistachios and raspberries evenly over chocolate. Refrigerate until set, about 30 minutes.

USING parchment overhang, lift cookie from pan; break or cut into pieces. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

SPARKLING GINGERBREAD STARS

ACTIVE TIME **1 HOUR**
TOTAL TIME **8 HOURS**
MAKES **36 COOKIES**

Cookies

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup packed light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. lemon zest
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup unsulfured dark molasses
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- $3\frac{1}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling and cutting
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground ginger
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground allspice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cloves
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fine salt

Glaze

- 1 16-oz. pkg. confectioners' sugar
- 3 Tbsp. light corn syrup
- 3 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. lemon zest plus 1 Tbsp. fresh juice (from 1 lemon)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. fine salt
- 4 to 6 Tbsp. milk, divided
- 1 cup sparkling sugar

MAKE THE COOKIES: Beat butter, brown sugar, granulated sugar, and lemon zest in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. Add molasses and egg; beat on medium speed until well combined, 20 to 30 seconds.

WHISK flour, cornstarch, ginger, baking powder, cinnamon, allspice, cloves, and salt in a medium bowl. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined, 1 to 2 minutes (dough will be soft). Divide dough in half and form into 2 disks. Wrap each disk in plastic wrap; refrigerate until firm, about 90 minutes. (Dough can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.)

PREHEAT oven to 325°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Roll 1 dough disk between 2 sheets of lightly floured parchment paper until $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, lightly flouring top of dough as needed. Transfer dough and parchment paper to a third baking sheet; freeze until firm, about 15 minutes. Remove from freezer and cut using a lightly floured $3\frac{3}{4}$ -inch star cutter. Place stars $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Reroll, cut, and refrigerate scraps as needed. Repeat with remaining dough disk.

BAKE until cookies are set and slightly deeper in color and centers bounce back when lightly pressed, about 15 minutes. Let cool on baking sheets on wire racks for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire racks to cool completely, about 30 minutes.

MAKE THE GLAZE: Whisk confectioners' sugar, corn syrup, butter, lemon zest and juice, salt, and 4 tablespoons milk in a medium bowl until combined. Whisk in up to 2 more tablespoons milk, 1 teaspoon at a time, until a ribbon of glaze drizzled over surface of glaze in bowl takes 8 to 10 seconds to meld back in.

PLACE sparkling sugar on a large rimmed plate. Dip top of 1 cooled cookie into glaze; pull straight out, letting excess glaze drip off. Quickly flip cookie, glaze side up. Holding cookie over plate, generously sprinkle with sparkling sugar until glaze is completely covered. Repeat with remaining cookies, glaze, and sparkling sugar. Let cookies stand on baking sheets until glaze is set, about 4 hours. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

Sure to shine in any box, these cookies bring the bling! Use whatever color sparkling sugar appeals.

HAZELNUT MACAROON THUMBPRINTS

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 30 MINUTES**
MAKES **26 COOKIES**

- ¾ cup raw hazelnuts
- ½ cup confectioners' sugar
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ½ tsp. fine salt
- 2½ cups sweetened flaked coconut, divided, plus more for topping
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 2 large egg whites
- ½ cup hazelnut-chocolate spread (such as Nutella)

PREHEAT oven to 325°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

PULSE hazelnuts, confectioners' sugar, granulated sugar, salt, and 1½ cups coconut in a food processor until finely ground. Pulse in vanilla until combined, about 2 pulses. Gradually add egg whites through food chute, pulsing until well combined and mixture holds when pressed together. Transfer mixture to a large bowl and stir in remaining 1 cup coconut.

SCOOP coconut mixture into 1-tablespoon mounds; roll into balls and place 1 inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Use the back of a round ½-teaspoon measuring spoon (or your thumb) to make an indentation in center of each ball. With wet fingertips, press dough together to smooth any cracks in edges.

BAKE until cookies are set and bottoms are lightly golden, about 15 minutes. If cookies have puffed or cracked, indent centers again and press cookies back together while hot. Let cool completely on baking sheets on wire racks, about 1 hour.

STIR hazelnut-chocolate spread until softened and smooth. Spoon or pipe spread into centers of cooled cookies, smoothing into an even layer if needed. Top with coconut. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

They're classic thumbprint cookies but with—wait for it—coconut and Nutella!

BROWN BUTTER JAM TARTS

ACTIVE TIME **50 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **3 HOURS, 10 MINUTES**
MAKES **24 COOKIES**

- 2½ cups (5 sticks) unsalted butter
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 1 Tbsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. almond extract
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar, divided
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ cups superfine natural almond flour (such as Bob's Red Mill)
- 1 cup cornstarch
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. fine salt
- 1½ cups seedless strawberry or apricot jam
- ½ cup sliced natural almonds

COOK butter in a medium saucepan over medium, stirring often, until butter solids turn amber and smell nutty, 8 to 12 minutes. Transfer to a medium microwave-safe bowl. Measure out 2 cups brown butter and add to a large heatproof bowl. Refrigerate large bowl until butter is set and opaque but still very soft, 60 to 90 minutes. Set aside remaining brown butter in microwave-safe bowl at room temperature.

PREHEAT oven to 350°F. Line 2 (12-cup) muffin trays with paper liners. Add granulated sugar, vanilla, almond extract, and 1 cup confectioners' sugar to chilled brown butter in large bowl. Beat with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute.

WHISK all-purpose flour, almond flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl until well combined. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until just combined, 1 to 2 minutes.

SPOON dough into muffin liners (about 3 heaping tablespoons each), pressing into an even layer. Use the back of a round 1-tablespoon measuring spoon to make a 1½-inch-wide, ¾-inch-deep well in each dough portion. Smooth edges if needed. Place jam in wells (about 1 tablespoon each). Sprinkle with sliced almonds.

BAKE until lightly golden and set, 18 to 20 minutes. Let cool completely in muffin trays on wire racks, about 1 hour. (Jam centers will sink slightly when baked and cooled.)

MICROWAVE reserved brown butter on high in 15-to-30-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Whisk in 1 teaspoon water and remaining 1 cup confectioners' sugar until combined. Gradually add up to 3 teaspoons water, ½ teaspoon at a time, until desired consistency is reached. Using a fork, lightly drizzle glaze over cooled tarts. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days.

Brown Butter Jam Tarts



A little secret:
These substantial
sweeties also make
for an excellent
breakfast. Just thought
you should know.



Hazelnut Macaroon Thumbprints

Cardamom Spice Snowballs



These melt-in-your-mouth cookies have all the flavors of cozy chai (cardamom, ginger, cloves), but they're way more fun. Because, cookies!



CARDAMOM SPICE SNOWBALLS

ACTIVE TIME **45 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 45 MINUTES**
MAKES **36 COOKIES**

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1⅔ cups confectioners' sugar, divided
- 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp. ground cardamom
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¾ tsp. fine salt
- ¼ tsp. ground ginger
- ⅛ tsp. ground cloves
- ⅛ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- Pink and green gel food coloring

PREHEAT oven to 350°F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

BEAT butter, granulated sugar, vanilla, and ⅓ cup confectioners' sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes.

WHISK flour, cardamom, cinnamon, salt, ginger, cloves, and pepper in a medium bowl until well combined. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until just combined, 1 to 2 minutes.

DIVIDE dough in half and place 1 portion in a second medium bowl. Tint dough in 1 bowl with pink food coloring until desired shade is reached, starting with 2 or 3 drops, stirring with a rubber spatula until no streaks remain. Repeat with other dough portion and green food coloring.

SCOOP dough into 1-tablespoon mounds; roll into balls and place 1 inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Bake until tops and edges appear dry but centers still feel slightly soft, about 10 minutes. (Do not overbake.) Let cool on baking sheets on wire racks for 5 minutes.

PLACE remaining 1⅓ cups confectioners' sugar in a medium bowl. Roll warm cookies in sugar until well coated. Let cool completely on wire racks, up to 1 hour. Roll cooled cookies in sugar again until well coated. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

MINT CHOCOLATE COOKIE BARS

ACTIVE TIME **45 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 40 MINUTES**
MAKES **21 BARS**

Cookie

- Cooking spray
- ⅓ cup packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup confectioners' sugar
- ¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 large egg yolk, at room temperature
- 1½ Tbsp. heavy cream
- ¾ tsp. pure vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. peppermint extract
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup Dutch-process cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp. fine salt

Frosting

- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- ⅛ tsp. fine salt
- 1½ cups confectioners' sugar
- 2 Tbsp. heavy cream
- 4 Tbsp. finely crushed soft peppermint candies (such as Bob's Sweet Stripes), plus more for topping

Ganache

- 4 oz. semisweet chocolate baking bars, finely chopped (about ⅔ cup)
- 2 Tbsp. heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¼ tsp. pure vanilla extract

Every cookie box needs substantial, showstopping bars—specifically, these substantial, showstopping bars.

MAKE THE COOKIE: Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat an 8-inch square baking dish with cooking spray. Line with parchment paper, leaving a 2-inch overhang on all sides.

BEAT brown sugar, confectioners' sugar, and butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-low speed until just combined, about 1 minute. Increase speed to medium and beat until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. Add egg yolk, cream, vanilla, and peppermint extract; beat on medium speed until combined, 15 to 30 seconds. Whisk flour, cocoa, and salt in a medium bowl. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating on low speed until just combined, 1 to 2 minutes. Press dough into an even layer in prepared baking dish.

BAKE until edges are set and top appears dry but center still feels soft, about 10 minutes. Let cool completely in baking dish on a wire rack, about 1 hour.

MAKE THE FROSTING: Beat butter, vanilla, and salt in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until smooth and creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until just combined, about 30 seconds. Add cream; beat on medium-high speed until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Fold in candies. Spread frosting evenly over cooled cookie in baking dish. Freeze for 15 minutes.

MAKE THE GANACHE: While cookie is in freezer, place chocolate, cream, and butter in a medium microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high in 10-to-15-second intervals, stirring between each, until chocolate is melted, 30 to 45 seconds. Stir in vanilla; continue stirring until butter is melted and mixture is smooth and shiny.

WORKING quickly, pour ganache over chilled frosting; smooth into an even layer with a small offset spatula. Freeze until set, about 30 minutes. Using parchment, remove from baking dish. Cut into bars with a warm, dry knife. Top with peppermint candies. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 5 days.



Mint Chocolate Cookie Bars

Oh, what fun!



You can deck the halls without breaking the bank. Just try some of these inexpensive yet very jolly ideas and add more joy to your world.

BY TEDDY WILLSON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOYOUN KIM



Build a Tree-Filled Holiday Village

A FEW LITTLE PIECES MAKE THIS SWEET SETUP POSSIBLE

Becky Shea
New York City
@beckysheadesign

This tableau, from interior designer Becky Shea, has us evergreen with envy. To make your own, lay faux trimmings across some shelves, along a mantel, or on a dresser. Then add a few ceramic houses (Target sells them for around 5 bucks) and a variety of cheap and cheerful wooden trees (check your local craft store) to round out your winter wonderland.







Add Greenery to Unexpected Places

THINK BEYOND THE MANTEL

Anastasia Casey

Austin, Texas

@theinteriorcollective

Your wreath is hung on the front door, your tree is perched in the family room, and your garland is...wherever you want it to be!

This sleeping nook (left), by designer Anastasia Casey, is a reminder that winter greenery can go anywhere. You can drape some along your headboard, around a mirror, or over a chandelier (away from bulbs). Pro tip: Go with the faux stuff to keep costs down and save yourself from having to clean up pine needles at every turn.



Swap Out Your Art

A GALLERY WALL TURNS SEASONAL WHEN FILLED WITH CAROLS & SNOWFLAKES

Liz Rishel Orlando, Florida @withinthegrove

No offense to that family portrait or your other meaningful prints, but maybe take them down—just for now! Using the same frames, replace them with festive digital downloads. Blogger Liz Rishel, who scored these on Etsy for a few dollars each, suggests searching the site for designs that speak to you (use a word like “abstract,” “quirky,” or “minimalist”). Fill your cart, print, and display.





Stack Some Firewood

BRING THE OUTDOORS IN TO GET THOSE COZY WINTER-CABIN VIBES

Ashley Rose Houston @sugarandcloth

Warm up your living room with a few bundles of firewood. Pile them in the fireplace, like DIY blogger Ashley Rose did. If you don't have one, or you want to be able to light a fire, fill a rack in a corner of the room. Just collect seasoned (dried) or decorative logs so critters don't come with.



Toss on a Few Throw Pillows

MAKE YOUR COUCH A BIT MORE MERRY (& SNUGGLY)



TREE TRIMMINGS

Festive Noa Hook Pillow, \$69; jungalow.com



APRÈS-SKI

Wondershop Reversible Skiing to Plaid Christmas Throw Pillow, \$10; target.com



SEASON'S GREETINGS

Rifle Paper Co. x Lolo Partridge Embroidered Pillow, \$98; riflepaperco.com



Pick the Cheapest Tree on the Lot

YOU CAN'T DENY THE CHARM OF A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS TREE

Little Greene

@littlegreenepaintcompany

Take a page from this scene by Little Greene, a luxury paint and wallpaper company, and skip the spendy seven-foot fir. Opt instead for the runt of the farm. Its scraggly branches and wonky shape will look adorable adorned with twinkle lights and your favorite ornaments.





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what to cook

RECIPES FOR
REAL LIFE

A Fuyu persimmon is about the size of a slightly squashed tennis ball. A Hachiya is usually a little bigger.

IN SEASON

PERSIMMONS

These fruits come in two common varieties: Squat Fuyus (shown) are tart and crisp, while oblong Hachiyas are intensely sweet, floral, and jammy.

SHOP Look for glossy, unbruised fruits that feel heavy for their size.

STORE Let both varieties ripen at room temp. When ready, a Fuyu will give just a bit when squeezed.

A Hachiya should be so soft it's practically molten. (Eat it too soon and its tannins will suck all the moisture from your mouth.)

SERVE Slice Fuyus into wedges for snacking or salads. Ripe Hachiya pulp can be used in baked goods, like sweet breads or cakes. For a true treat, cut the top off a Hachiya with a knife and eat the inside with a spoon. Then eat the skin!

—Jenna Helwig

7

Easy Dinners

#1 / Shrimp Tacos with Caramelized Pineapple

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ One Pot ✓ Gluten-Free



- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 1 to 2 tsp. hot sauce
- 3½ Tbsp. fresh lime juice (from 3 or 4 limes), divided, plus wedges for serving
- 2½ Tbsp. neutral oil (such as canola), divided
- ½ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1¼ lb. peeled, deveined large raw shrimp
- ¼ cup Mexican crema or sour cream
- 4 pineapple rings (from an 8-oz. can), patted dry
- 2 cups thinly sliced red cabbage
- 12 5-to-6-in. corn tortillas, warmed
- Fresh cilantro leaves, for topping

WHISK chili powder, hot sauce, 1½ tablespoons lime juice, 1½ tablespoons oil, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Add shrimp and toss to coat. Let marinate at room temperature for 15 minutes.

MEANWHILE, whisk crema, remaining 2 tablespoons lime juice, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt in a bowl.

HEAT remaining 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high. Add pineapple rings; cook until charred on both sides, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board and chop into ½-inch pieces.

WIPE skillet clean and return to medium-high heat. Add shrimp and any marinade in bowl; cook until shrimp are opaque and cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat.

DIVIDE cabbage among tortillas. Top with shrimp and pineapple. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve with lime-crema mixture for drizzling.

PER SERVING: 446 Calories, 15g Fat (1g Saturated), 187mg Cholesterol, 6g Fiber, 26g Protein, 58g Carbs, 612mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

Recipes by Nicole Hopper
Photographs by Jennifer Causey



#2 / Salt & Pepper Chicken with Blistered Green Beans

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Gluten-Free ✓ Dairy-Free

- 1 cup white rice, rinsed
- 1¼ lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces
- 3 Tbsp. cornstarch
- ¼ tsp. Chinese five spice (such as McCormick Gourmet)
- 1¾ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, divided
- ¼ cup peanut or canola oil
- 1 jalapeño, stemmed, seeded (if desired), and thinly sliced crosswise into rounds
- 5 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 12 oz. fresh green beans, trimmed

COOK rice according to package directions. Cover to keep warm.

MEANWHILE, toss chicken with cornstarch, Chinese five spice, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in a medium bowl until evenly coated.

HEAT oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium-high until shimmering. Add jalapeño and garlic; cook, stirring often, until garlic is light golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer jalapeño and garlic to a medium bowl.

ARRANGE half of chicken in a single layer in skillet. Cook over medium-high, undisturbed, until golden on bottom, about 4 minutes. Turn chicken pieces over; cook, turning occasionally, until cooked through, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to jalapeño mixture in bowl. Repeat with remaining chicken. Sprinkle chicken-jalapeño mixture with ½ teaspoon each salt and pepper.

ADD beans to skillet; cook over high, tossing occasionally, until charred, 3 to 4 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Serve with chicken and rice.

PER SERVING: 508 Calories, 21g Fat (4g Saturated), 0mg Cholesterol, 3g Fiber, 34g Protein, 49g Carbs, 969mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

- 4 oz. diced pancetta or chopped thick-cut bacon
- 1 lb. fresh pizza dough, at room temperature
- All-purpose flour, for dusting
- 2 cups shredded whole-milk mozzarella cheese
- 1 oz. Pecorino Romano cheese, grated (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup), plus more for topping
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more for topping
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- Chopped fresh chives, for topping

PREHEAT oven to 450°F with a rack in lower third position. Place pancetta in a large skillet. Cook over medium, stirring occasionally, until golden and starting to crisp, about 6 minutes. Remove from heat. Transfer pancetta to a paper-towel-lined plate to drain.

GENTLY stretch dough into a 12-inch round on a lightly floured work surface. Transfer to a lightly floured baking sheet. Sprinkle evenly with mozzarella and Pecorino Romano, leaving a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch border around edges. Top with cooked pancetta and sprinkle with pepper.

BAKE until crust is puffed but still pale and cheese is melted, about 8 minutes. Meanwhile, place egg and yolk in a small bowl or measuring cup (do not whisk).

CAREFULLY pull rack with pizza out from oven and tip eggs onto center of pizza. Using a fork, carefully spread egg white over a larger area to help eggs cook evenly. Return to oven and bake until whites are set and yolks are runny, about 5 minutes.

BREAK yolks with a spoon and drizzle all over pizza, if desired. Top with chives, Pecorino Romano, and several grinds of pepper.

PER SERVING: 583 Calories, 31g Fat (15g Saturated), 165mg Cholesterol, 2g Fiber, 28g Protein, 51g Carbs, 1,348mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

#3 / Carbonara Pizza

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Quick Cooking





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#4 / Chickpea-Harissa Stew with Meatballs

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓Freezable ✓Make Ahead ✓One Pot

- 1 lb. ground lamb or beef
- 1 large egg
- ¼ cup dry plain bread crumbs
- 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. ras el hanout or Moroccan seasoning, divided
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 Tbsp. neutral oil (such as canola)
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped (about 1¼ cups)
- 2½ Tbsp. harissa paste
- 2 15.5-oz. cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 14.5-oz. can diced fire-roasted tomatoes
- 1 5-oz. pkg. fresh baby spinach
- Plain whole-milk yogurt, for serving (optional)

STIR together lamb, egg, bread crumbs, 1 tablespoon ras el hanout, and ½ teaspoon salt in a large bowl until just combined (do not overmix). Shape mixture into 12 meatballs (about 1½ inches in diameter).

HEAT oil in a medium pot over medium-high. Add meatballs in a single layer; cook, turning occasionally, until browned all over, 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

REDUCE heat to medium. Add onion and remaining ½ teaspoon salt to pot; cook, stirring often, until onion is softened and starting to brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Stir in harissa and remaining 1 teaspoon ras el hanout; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute.

ADD chickpeas, tomatoes, and 1 cup water to pot. Bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Nestle meatballs in chickpea mixture, cover, and reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer until a thermometer inserted in meatballs reads 165°F, 10 to 15 minutes.

REMOVE pot from heat. Uncover and gradually stir in spinach until wilted. Serve dolloped with yogurt, if desired.

PER SERVING: 510 Calories, 23g Fat (7g Saturated), 121mg Cholesterol, 10g Fiber, 32g Protein, 43g Carbs, 1,192mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

Harissa, a North African chili paste, brings big flavor to stews, soups, and dips.



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#5 / Loaded Tuna Salad Tartines

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **20 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Make Ahead ✓ Dairy-Free



- 2 6.7-oz. jars tuna fillets in olive oil
- 2 stalks celery, thinly sliced (about 1 cup)
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced (about 1/2 cup)
- 1/4 cup chopped mixed fresh tender herbs (such as dill and flat-leaf parsley), plus more for topping
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 8 cornichons, finely chopped (about 1/4 cup), plus 4 tsp. brine
- 2 Tbsp. drained nonpareil capers, chopped
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 4 1/2-in.-thick slices crusty rye or sourdough bread
- 2 medium avocados, thinly sliced

PREHEAT broiler with an oven rack about 6 inches from heat. Drain tuna, reserving 2 tablespoons oil. Using a fork, gently flake tuna into large pieces in a medium bowl.

ADD celery, shallot, herbs, mayonnaise, cornichons with brine, capers, reserved tuna oil, and 1/8 teaspoon salt to tuna. Gently stir until combined.

ARRANGE bread slices in a single layer on a baking sheet. Broil until golden and toasted on top, about 2 minutes. Flip slices over and broil until toasted on other side, 1 to 2 minutes.

TOP toasted bread with sliced avocado and sprinkle with remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt. Spoon tuna mixture over toasts. Top with herbs.

PER SERVING: 528 Calories, 37g Fat (6g Saturated), 16mg Cholesterol, 10g Fiber, 22g Protein, 29g Carbs, 872mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

simple extras

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INGREDIENTS

- 28** vanilla creme-filled chocolate sandwich cookies, divided
- 1** Tbsp. butter, melted
- 30** starlight mints, crushed
- 4** pkg. (8 oz. each) PHILADELPHIA Cream Cheese, softened
- 1** cup sugar
- 4** eggs

DIRECTIONS

- 1.** Heat oven to 325°F. **2.** Chop 10 of the cookies for later use. Use pulsing action of food processor to process remaining cookies until finely ground. Add butter; mix well. Press onto bottom of 9-inch springform pan. **3.** Beat cream cheese and sugar in large bowl with mixer until blended. Add eggs, 1 at a time, mixing on low speed after each just until blended. Stir in crushed mints and chopped cookies. Pour over crust. **4.** Bake cheesecake 55 min. or until center is almost set. Run knife around rim of pan to loosen cake; cool before removing rim. **5.** Refrigerate cheesecake 4 hours.

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#6 / Spicy Dumpling Soup

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Freezable ✓ One Pot ✓ Vegan



- 4 scallions
- 3 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
- 1 5-oz. pkg. sliced fresh shiitake mushrooms
- 1 1½-in. piece fresh ginger, peeled and cut into thin matchsticks (about 2 Tbsp.)
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped (about 1 Tbsp.)
- 5 cups lower-sodium vegetable broth
- 5 Tbsp. lower-sodium soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp. seasoned rice vinegar
- 16 frozen miniature vegetable dumplings or potstickers (9½ oz. total)
- 4 small heads baby bok choy, trimmed, leaves separated
- 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. chili crisp, plus more for topping (optional)

THINLY slice scallions, separating white and light green parts from dark green parts.

HEAT oil in a large saucepan over medium. Add mushrooms, ginger, garlic, and white and light green scallion slices; cook, stirring often, until mixture is fragrant and starting to soften, about 5 minutes.

POUR broth, soy sauce, and vinegar into pan. Bring to a boil over medium-high. Reduce heat and simmer, undisturbed, for 5 minutes. Stir in frozen dumplings and bok choy. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until dumplings float to surface and bok choy is tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in chili crisp.

SERVE soup topped with dark green scallion slices and, if desired, more chili crisp.

PER SERVING: 332 Calories, 21g Fat (3g Saturated), 0mg Cholesterol, 4g Fiber, 8g Protein, 30g Carbs, 1,334mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar



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WHAT TO COOK



#7 / Halloumi Grain Bowls with Figs & Charred Lemon Dressing

ACTIVE TIME **40 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **40 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓ Make Ahead ✓ Whole-Grain ✓ Vegetarian

- 1 cup uncooked pearled farro
- ¼ cup plus 2 tsp. olive oil, divided
- 2 large lemons, halved crosswise
- 2½ tsp. honey or hot honey
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 medium bunch curly kale, stemmed and torn (about 8 cups)
- 1 cup dried figs, quartered, or halved if small
- 1 8.8-oz. block Halloumi cheese, cut crosswise into 12 (¼-in.-thick) slices
- ¼ cup sliced almonds, toasted
- ¼ cup torn fresh mint

BRING a medium saucepan filled with water to a boil. Add farro; reduce heat to medium to maintain a gentle boil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain.

MEANWHILE, heat 2 teaspoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium. Add lemon halves, cut side down. Cook, undisturbed, until cut sides are charred, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Let lemon halves cool slightly, about 5 minutes. Wipe skillet clean.

SQUEEZE lemon halves into a medium bowl to measure ¼ cup juice. Whisk in honey and ½ teaspoon salt. Gradually drizzle in remaining ¼ cup oil, whisking constantly until combined.

PLACE kale, 1 tablespoon lemon dressing, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Using your hands, massage kale until softened and wilted, about 2 minutes. Add drained farro and figs to bowl. Drizzle with about ⅓ cup lemon dressing; toss to coat.

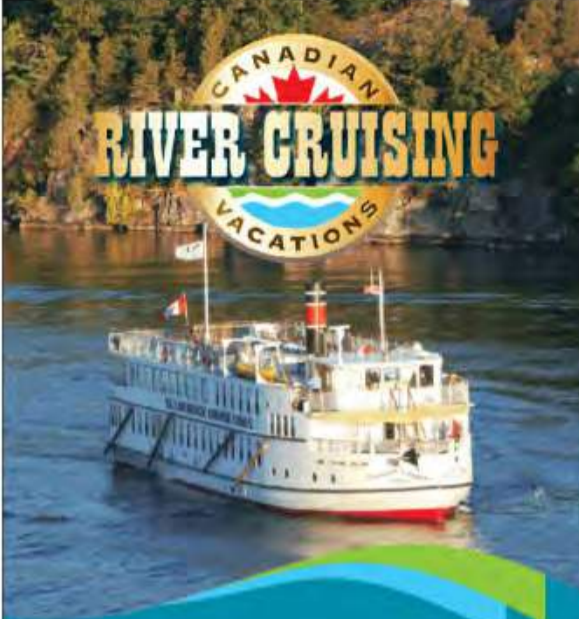
HEAT cleaned nonstick skillet over medium-high. Pat cheese slices dry. Add cheese to skillet in a single layer; cook until golden brown on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side.

SERVE farro and kale mixture in bowls topped with cheese, almonds, and mint. Drizzle with remaining dressing. Serve warm or at room temperature.

PER SERVING: 647 Calories, 36g Fat (14g Saturated), 47mg Cholesterol, 9g Fiber, 23g Protein, 63g Carbs, 1,184mg Sodium, 4g Added Sugar



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BETTER FOR YOU

BUTTERNUT ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

This is the cheesy, veggie-filled dinner you've been waiting for.

BY JULIA LEVY



ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES**
 TOTAL TIME **1 HOUR, 25 MINUTES**
 SERVES **6**

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. chipotle chile powder
- 1 tsp. sweet or smoked paprika
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 13-oz. pkg. cubed butternut squash (about 2½ cups)
- 1 chopped red bell pepper
- 1 chopped poblano chile
- ¾ cup chopped red onion (from 1 onion)
- 1 15-oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 15 5½-in. corn tortillas
- 2 cups (16 oz.) red enchilada sauce, divided
- 6 oz. pepper Jack cheese, shredded (about 1½ cups), divided
- Cooking spray
- Sliced avocado, chopped fresh cilantro, and jalapeño slices, for topping (optional)

PREHEAT oven to 400°F. Stir together oil, chile powder, paprika, cumin, and salt in a large bowl. Add squash, bell pepper, poblano, and onion; toss to coat.

TRANSFER to a large baking sheet lined with parchment paper; spread in a single layer. Bake until vegetables are tender, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and stir in beans.

CUT 12 tortillas in half. Pour ½ cup enchilada sauce over bottom of an 8-inch square baking dish. Arrange 8 tortilla halves over sauce, overlapping as needed, with flat edges of tortillas against sides of dish. Place 1 whole tortilla in center to cover. Spoon half of vegetable mixture over tortillas. Sprinkle with ½ cup cheese.



ARRANGE 8 more tortilla halves and 1 more whole tortilla in same manner. Cover with ¾ cup enchilada sauce. Top with remaining vegetable mixture and sprinkle with ½ cup cheese. Repeat with remaining 8 tortilla halves and 1 whole tortilla. Cover with remaining ¾ cup enchilada sauce and sprinkle with remaining ½ cup cheese. Cover with aluminum foil lightly coated with cooking spray.

BAKE until heated through and cheese is melted, about 25 minutes. Remove foil and bake until bubbly, 5 to 10 minutes. Top with avocado, cilantro, and/or jalapeño slices, if desired.




We love the ease of precut butternut. But if you want to prep the squash yourself, peel it, trim off the top and bottom, and slice it horizontally where the neck meets the bulb. Then halve the bulb lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, and chop!

MINOR ISSUES, MAJOR OPINIONS

IS IT OK TO EAT SNOW?

Everyone's got strong feelings!
We gathered yours, then
called on the experts to settle the
debate once and for all.

BY LESLIE CORONA



79% of Instagram
commenters say
it's totally fine to
nibble on snow.

Readers say...

Go for it!

“We enjoy as many clean flakes as we can catch on our tongues. The kids run around trying for hours! Once it lands on the ground, though, it's off-limits.”

 @PIXIELANESTACYLEVY

“We ate fresh snow drizzled with cooked maple syrup at my grandparents' house.”

 @SHAR_THOMPSON

“The fresher the better! I have eaten it all my life. I feel calm just thinking about it.”

 @K_MONEY01

No way!

“My kindergarten teacher insisted that snowflakes form around a speck of dirt, so if you eat snow, you're eating dirt. Not sure if that's true, but the thought of it has always made eating snow unappealing to me.”

 @RACHELMAYESALLEN

“To me it's not safe. You might get sick.”

 @MAIACRUZ803

“No, no, no! Unless you want a mouthful of dirt and chemicals.”

 @RICHPEDINEPR

The experts say...

Follow us on
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next low-stakes
controversy!

A taste? Maybe. A feast? Definitely not. You know to avoid any that's yellow (pee!), black (car exhaust), or just *not white*. Green or red can be a sign of algae, adds Michael Muccilli, winter program coordinator for the National Weather Service. But even white snow could have invisible stuff lurking in it, especially in urban areas, says David Robinson, PhD, a climatologist and geography professor at Rutgers University. “As snow falls through the atmosphere, it's a good scavenger of pollution that

might be up there, like particulates from fossil fuel emissions, and it could absorb some of that,” he says. (Who wants to eat pollution?!) Muccilli also says blizzards can blow dirt, further grossifying falling snow. Plus, piles sitting around can be tainted with salt and chemicals.

What about pure white, undisturbed, backyard country snow from a not-too-blustery storm? “It's pretty safe to eat it in those conditions in small quantities,” says Noah Molotch, PhD, an associate professor at the

University of Colorado Boulder's Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, who suggests limiting your snacking to one bite. Cory Fisher, DO, a family medicine physician at Cleveland Clinic in Rocky River, Ohio, agrees that the risk of pollutant exposure from backyard snow is “quite low.” Just be sure to keep an eye on the time. “After an hour, you don't know what animals have tracked through it, what has blown on it, and so on,” Muccilli says. The point: Hurry up and go play!

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