



# *Shoals* WOMAN

November 2019

## Food

*I dip, you dip, we dip!*

*Eat your heart out!*

*Recipes from  
local caterers*

## GIFTS

*Shoals merchants  
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## A DOWNTOWN GEM

*PSI is just the place to find  
that special holiday gift*

## Home

**IDEAS ABOUND**

*in this Houston  
Plantation home*

**Ashley decks  
the halls,  
and EVERYTHING ELSE,  
with CHRISTMAS JOY**

**Planning  
Companion**

*calendar of events*



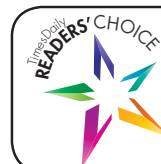
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## ON the COVER



Wreath on cover made by TimesDaily Event Coordinator, Cecilia Brumley.

Photo by Heather Sherrill of Create Portraiture

If you haven't by now at least taken an inventory of your holiday decorations, by the time you've looked through this edition of our magazine you'll want to get the Christmas tree out of the box or tagged at the tree farm. Our Shoals Woman holiday edition is filled with décor ideas that are sure to brighten your home and set a perfect tone for your holiday guests, whether you're entertaining at Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's. Mary Isbell, of Muscle Shoals, graciously allowed us to photograph her home last year, and it is stunning. She has an elegant decorative vision, and there are many ideas to borrow from her home. Each room has a touch of Christmas without overwhelming the year-round beauty of a home that was thoughtfully furnished and accessorized. Sometimes all that's needed is a glass vase of ornaments or a bit of garland tied with a ribbon. We've also brought back a favorite Christmas feature that was published in The TimesDaily newspaper in December 2018. Louise Ashley, of Greenhill, last year had 60 differently adorned Christmas trees in her home. One tree was even displayed upside down. It was truly a Christmasas wonderland. And let's not forget the food. So many delicious dishes to serve your guests can be found right here from local caterers and restaurants. There's no shame in circumventing the kitchen labor, especially during this most busy time of the year. Gift-giving can be just as easy and should be bought right here in town. We got a sneak peek from PSI – yes, the place where all of us for years have bought our office supplies and furniture! It's the best little gem of a gift store right here in town. So ease back in a comfy chair and look through this edition. You'll find an idea or two – or three – that you'll just have to try.



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# *Shoals* WOMAN

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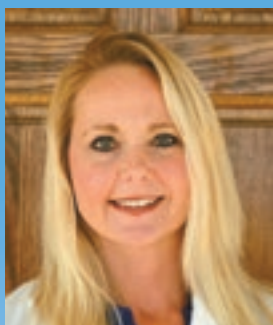
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## HEATHER SHERRILL



Heather Bradford Sherrill is the owner of Create Portraiture and Bradford Farm & Venue. She has been a professional photographer for 13 years and specializes in wedding photography. Heather's creative talent, adaptability, and attention to detail make her one of the most successful photographers in northwest Alabama and have earned her the 2019 TimesDaily Reader's Choice Wedding Photographer Award. We have had the honor of working with Heather on this Shoals Woman Magazine as well as the past six. Heather has brought our ideas to life through her photography, capturing the spirit of both the people and holidays featured each season. Furthermore, she is an absolute delight to work with. Check out more of Heather's work at [createportraiture.com](http://createportraiture.com).

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# Ideas abound in this Houston Plantation home

Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE

The eye is immediately drawn across the room to admire the elegant mantel. Notice also the simple adornment on the chair in the foreground that ties in with the golden ambience in the room.





Our ideas house this year features the home of Mary Isbell of Muscle Shoals who allowed us inside her stunning home in 2018 to graciously share her holiday home décor with you.



Planters are used to contain these miniature Christmas trees. The ornate details on the marble-top table perfectly complement the planters.



The view of the room from the other end shows how simply stunning the trees in the planter are without need to add any more decorations.







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A closer look at the mantel. The mirror can remain year-round, as can the florals. For Christmas, all that was needed were complementing stockings.



Borrow this idea from Isbell's home: If you don't use your fireplace, take the opportunity to add Christmas baubles and candles to include this space in your décor.



The reds are brought across the room to continue its warm color.



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The house loses none of its elegance in this room that is decorated to welcome family on Christmas morning.



The red ornaments add warmth to the white trees. There's just enough touch of green at the trees peak to draw the eye up.



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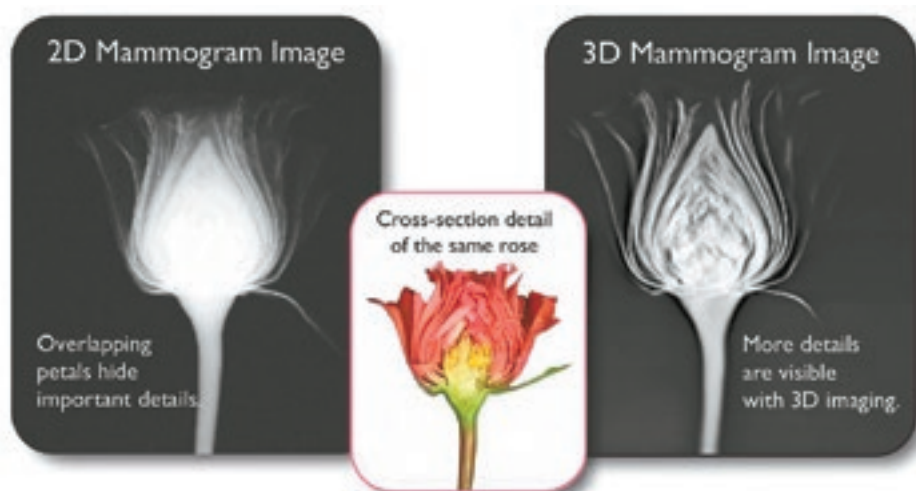
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Don't be afraid of all white and crystal. The varying textures are perfect together.



The planter trees' elegance in white is warmed with a few translucent Christmas balls.



Speaking of colors, Isbell weaved blue, silver, gold and crystal throughout her home, which give her décor cohesiveness without being obvious.



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A few bright gift bags and boxes are all that's needed and doesn't weigh down the surface.

The antique sideboard still shows its glory with a lighter version of the tabletop tree.



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Don't forget the bedroom. No tree is needed to give a room an immediate sensation of Christmas. The addition of blue, silver and gold Christmas balls in a glass container at each nightstand is just enough.



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Holiday-themed place settings are pure gold on this smaller dining space that's just right for a meal with your closest of friends.



If you don't want to invest in holiday place settings for many, look how lovely your table can be with an investment in a place setting for a few that can be adorned with a bright cloth napkin, and complementary goblets and tableware.







This closer view shows it's not a "tree" in the traditional sense. Its shimmer reflected in the mirror behind it gives even more presence.



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This tiered glass stand is perfect for a small glass table. All that's needed for the holiday theme is a Christmas figurine, a bit of ribbon and decorative Christmas balls.



Crystal baubles on the gold branches bring to mind the "silver and gold" of Christmas.



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The lovely scroll  
on the stair rail is  
not hidden under  
heavy garland.

The shimmer of  
the wood is part  
of the charm of  
the room and isn't  
hidden beneath a  
tablecloth.







This dining space loses none of its tailored lines. A simple centerpiece complements without distracting.



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Notice how  
the table setting,  
napkins and napkin  
rings clearly say  
"Christmas."



When the wood is lovely,  
let it shine through. This  
view brings Christmas  
into the room without  
cluttering walk spaces.





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The lines and carving on the mirror's frame remain part of the focal point.



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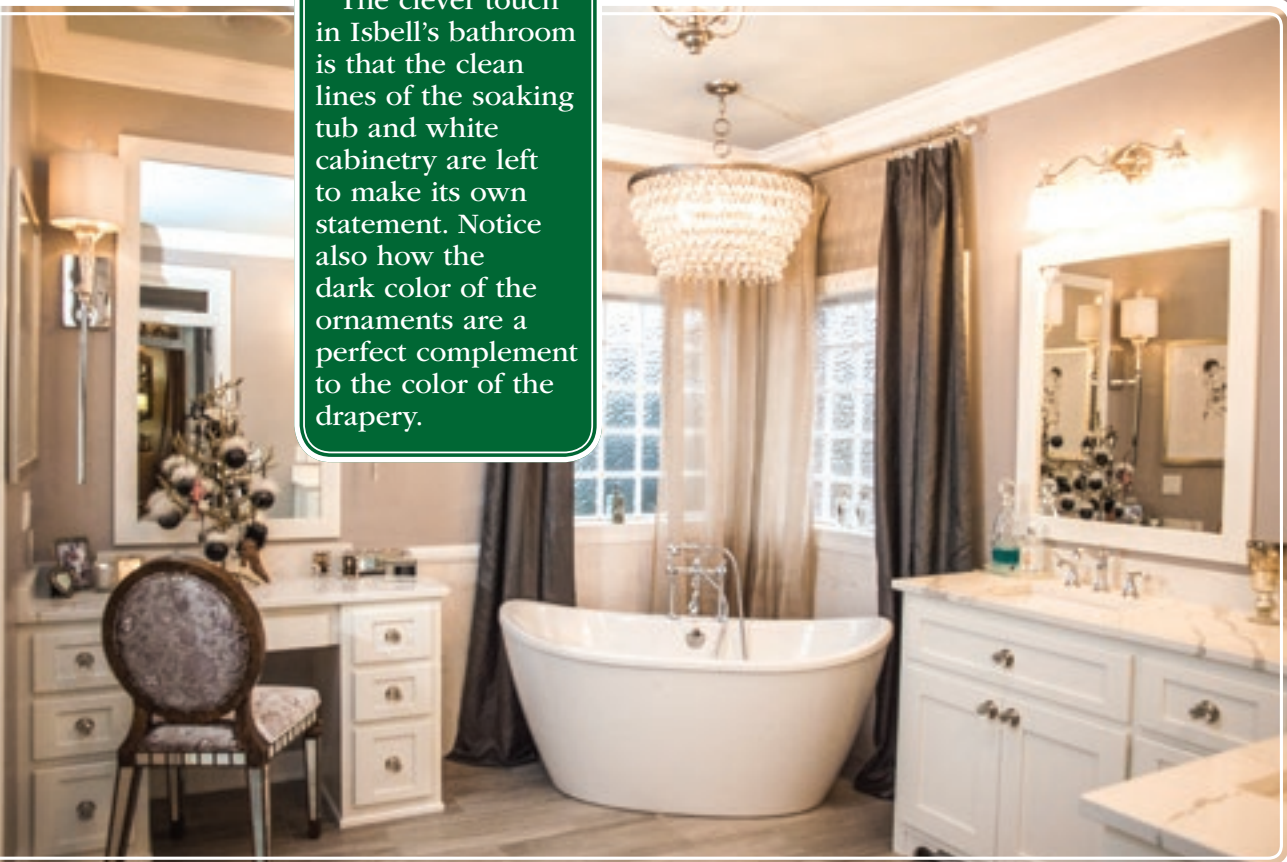
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The clever touch in Isbell's bathroom is that the clean lines of the soaking tub and white cabinetry are left to make its own statement. Notice also how the dark color of the ornaments are a perfect complement to the color of the drapery.



Whether master bath or guest bath, add a touch of Christmas whimsy.



Tabletops and stair rails are perfect for a bit of elegant ribbon and floral stems.



Sometimes all that is needed to bring a bit of Christmas décor to a space is the simple addition of an elegant pillow.



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# ASHLEY DECKS the HALLS, and EVERYTHING ELSE, with CHRISTMAS JOY



Louise Ashley stands in her dining room and talks about the 60 Christmas trees she has on display in her home in Greenhill.



by LISA SINGLETON-RICKMAN

Photos by MATT MCKEAN

If there's one thing that brings Louise Ashley great joy, it's seeing other people's joy.

Ashley, Mrs. Lucy to most, knows a thing or two about creating joy. Her home features 60 themed Christmas trees. It's a labor of love for the 80-year-young, longtime Greenhill resident.

Her home serves as a Christmas party venue of sorts throughout December to various groups with which she and her family are affiliated.

By mid-December she'd hosted more than 150 people, although she doesn't host public tours.

"I married when I was 16 and Charlie loved Christmas trees like I do, but back then we did good to have one tree decorated," she said. "Through the years we started adding trees."

Louise Ashley decorated 60 Christmas trees in her home.

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Her husband died seven years ago, and that year there was only one tree that displayed the benevolent work her family had done in his name.

"It was special, and it was exactly what we needed that year," she said.

The next year, she started back decorating multiple trees, each with a theme close to her and her family's hearts.

The number of trees increased. And increased. But Ashley never had a number of trees in mind. In fact, she's not sure how she wound up with 60 this year, the most ever.

"I'd just have an idea or I'd see some little something that I liked and I'd build a theme around it with a tree," she said, joking that

her emoji tree fills the niche for humor and is of great interest to many young visitors.

The range of themes is vast. There's a movie tree, a red bird tree, a western tree, a jungle tree and a sentimental patriotic tree with family military photos.

There's a tree that features the Wizard of Oz and an ice tree with all wintry ornaments. There's a snowman tree, a candy and gingerbread tree, a laundry tree with Santa's clothing, and an Alabama Crimson Tide tree.

There is no Auburn tree, although she insists she acknowledges that Auburn is a part of Alabama.

"I just don't have a need for an Auburn tree," she joked.

She has a Santa tree,

and her favorite of the themed trees, the Bethlehem tree.

"I'm not specifically celebrating the birthday of Christ necessarily, as we don't know exactly when it was," she said. "I celebrate that every day of my life – his birth, death and resurrection."

Every room of her sprawling home has trees.

"No part of my house is off limits to my trees, even my bathrooms," she said.

She begins decorating the week before Halloween. Along with her helper, Gary Rhodes, who brings in all the Christmas trees and their individually stored ornaments, she begins the process of assembling her own personal Christmas village.



The open family room is the perfect place to gaze upon several Christmas trees.





Who wouldn't enjoy entertaining – or being a guest – in this dining room, which is themed with Christmas yummies like gingerbread houses and other sweets.

# Merry Christmas!

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"Gary does all the mechanics of getting the trees together and I have a lot of furniture that has to move out of my house to accommodate them," she said. "We pretty much have it down now. I've made a joke that I may have 75 next year, but really, who knows?"

Ashley said her fascination with trees really stepped up about 20 years ago when she and Charlie would travel and see trees she really

liked.

"We'd just buy it and load it up," she said.

She said for her children, Freddie, Billy and Alyssa, her Christmas indulgence is just part of their family life. Her two daughters-in-law jumped right in with the family tradition and assist with the decorating as their work schedules allow.

"My kids and their families love it, too, and their co-workers

and friends have always attended parties here and it just seems to make people happy," she said.

Her favorite tree, the revolving family tree, has a special place in her bedroom and is topped with her wedding picture. Below are photos of her family and special family keepsakes.

The trees in her bedroom are the only ones she ever turns off, she said, adding that the



Louise Ashley didn't just concentrate on trees. She also has table scapes to complement her holiday décor.



others simply stay on for simplicity sake.

"Sometimes at night I put on my pajamas and just gaze at them," she said. "It's such a peaceful time."

The transformation of her home at Christmas is about interaction with people, and not to show off, she insists.

"I just like to see people smile and enjoy

things in life," she said. "Oh, I could choose to go other ways and I know this is a lot of work for a short period of time but it's not the length of time that's important, it's the memories you collect."

Ashley's friend and Atlas Church of Christ preacher Miles Stutts said that in his mind, "Mrs. Lucy is

Christmastime."

"I've never known anyone love Christmas like she does and carry out such a passion for seeing other people happy," Stutts said. "She's so giving and loving. She's truly one of a kind."

*This story was published in the TimesDaily in December 2018, and was a reader favorite. We offered it this year as a great holiday profile with more ideas that can inspire your Christmas home décor.*



The cozy sofa is a perfect place to display Christmas-themed pillows.

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Food

# Eat your





# heart out!

A rustic autumn-themed still life is set on a wooden table outdoors. The background is a soft-focus forest. In the foreground, a large arrangement of dried pinecones, twigs, and pumpkins (including a large blue one and several small white ones) sits on the left. To its right is a glass lantern. Further right, a roasted turkey is presented on a wooden stand, garnished with orange slices and herbs. In front of the turkey is a white square dish filled with green beans. A small white pumpkin and some wheat stalks are also on the table.

**Here are some recipes from our favorite local caterers that they would like to share!**

Too busy? Call and let the professionals at Southern Skillet, The Red Clay Table, Alabama Bliss Bistro or Jill's Sweet Memories fill your holiday table with some of the best food in the Shoals!



-SOUTHERN SKILLET-

# Slow Cooker Cranberry Orange Pork Loin





# Slow Cooker Cranberry Orange Pork Loin

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 (3 to 4 pound) center cut pork loin
- 10 slices bacon, uncooked
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup whole cranberry sauce
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 Tbsp dijon mustard
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- 2 Tbsp orange juice
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tsp orange zest

## DIRECTIONS:

Combine brown sugar, garlic powder, rosemary, salt and pepper.

Season pork loin with brown sugar mixture on all sides.

Wrap bacon around pork loin and place in slow cooker.

Mix together cranberry sauce, dijon mustard, orange juice and orange zest. Pour over pork loin.

Cover and cook on LOW 2-1/2 to 3 hours, until internal temperature is 145°F.

Remove pork from slow cooker and place on an oven safe baking sheet. Place under oven broiler for 2 to 3 minutes to crisp up bacon.

*Check out Southern Skillet on Facebook for weekly take-home meals!*

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-JILL'S SWEET MEMORIES-

# Pimento Cheese Bites







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## FILLING:

- 2 cups shredded extra sharp cheddar cheese
- 8 oz cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup mayo
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp onion powder

## PASTRY CUPS:

9 ounces of cream cheese, softened  
1 stick butter, softened  
3 cups of self-rising flour

- 1-4oz jar diced pimento, drained
- Salt/pepper to taste
- Mix all ingredients with a stand mixer until well blended
- Use as filling in the homemade pastry cups

## DIRECTIONS:

Mix in stand mixture to form dough. Sprinkle board with flour, pinch into quarter size balls and roll flat. Press into sprayed mini muffin pan and bake at 350 until golden brown, about 10 minutes.

Fill cups with pimento cheese mixture and top with red pepper jelly. Place in oven until cheese is melted. Let cool and serve!

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-THE RED CLAY TABLE-

# Caramel Apple Bread Pudding



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## INGREDIENTS:

- 6 assorted apples
- 6 eggs
- 4 quarts of broken yeast rolls
- ½ quart of heavy cream
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 1 cup brown sugar

## DIRECTIONS:

Heat oven to 350, prepare baking pan with parchment paper and coat with cooking spray (or butter).

Peel and dice apples, then take half and season with brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Place seasoned apples in the oven for about 15 minutes to soften.

Combine all ingredients, except for the eggs and seasoned apples, in a mixing bowl. When mixture is thoroughly mixed add eggs and mix until just combined.

Take half of the batter and cover the bottom of the pan with it. Distribute half of the baked apples on top of the batter and then add the rest of the batter on top. Distribute the remaining seasoned apples on top of the batter and bake in the oven for about 35 minutes.

## CARAMEL SAUCE:

- 1 ½ cup unsalted butter
- 3 cups light brown sugar, packed tight
- 4 Tbsp water
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp salt

## DIRECTIONS:

Add butter, brown sugar, salt, and water to a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir mixture until just combined. Heat mixture without stirring until sugar melts completely (very hot!)

When sugar has completely melted add heavy cream. **Caution: heavy cream will boil vigorously. Be Careful.** Stir in slowly until cream is fully incorporated. Remove from heat. Caramel will thicken as it cools.

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-ALABAMA BLISS BISTRO-

# Shrimp and Grits Dressing

## FILLING:

- 1 pound peeled, medium-size shrimp (50/60)
- 3 cups chicken broth
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground red pepper
- 1 cup uncooked regular grits
- ½ cup butter
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 cup fine, dry breadcrumbs
- 1 cup chopped green onions
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

## DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 325. Devein shrimp, if desired.

Bring broth and next 2 ingredients to a boil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk in grits, and return to a boil; reduce heat to low, and stir in butter. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, 10 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Remove from heat.

Stir together eggs and next 4 ingredients in a large bowl. Gradually stir about one-fourth of hot grits mixture into egg mixture; add egg mixture to remaining hot grits mixture, stirring constantly. Stir in shrimp until blended. Pour grits mixture into a lightly greased 11x7 inch baking dish.

Bake at 325 for 55 minutes to 1 hour or until mixture is set. Let stand 10 minutes.

*Check out Alabama Bliss Bistro on Facebook for weekly take-home meals.*

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# I dip, you dip, we dip!

Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE



If you are looking for something quick to whip up for gameday, an upcoming holiday party or just need something in the house to snack on these are some of my favorites and they are SO EASY!



Dips by CECILIA BRUMLEY, TIMESDAILY EVENT COORDINATOR





# Loaded Potato Dip

## Ingredients:

- 24 ounces of sour cream
- 1 packet of dry ranch dressing mix
- 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- ½ cup bacon bits

\*If you want to get fancy you can cook your own bacon and get it real crispy and crumble it up-but who has time for that?!

*\*No actual potatoes were used in this recipe. Trust me someone will actually ask you that question!*



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## Caramel Toffee Dip

### Ingredients:

- 8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup white sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 8 oz. bag of Heath English Toffee Bits

In a bowl with an electric mixer beat cream cheese, brown sugar and white sugar and vanilla. Fold in toffee bits. Best with granny smith apples or just a spoon! Keep refrigerated.

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## Cookie Dough Dip

### Ingredients:

- 8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- ¼ cup white sugar
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 10 oz bag of mini chocolate chips
- 1 tsp vanilla

Mix cream cheese and sugars together until smooth, add vanilla, fold in chocolate chips. Serve with graham crackers. Keep refrigerated.



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## Black Bean and Corn Salsa

### Ingredients:

- 1 can of black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can of sweet whole kernel corn drained
- 1 can of Rotel
- 1/3 cup cilantro packed, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup red onion, chopped
- 1/2 tsp salt to taste
- 1/4 tsp pepper to taste
- Mix and serve!



# a DOWNTOWN GEM



PSI is JUST the  
PLACE to FIND  
that SPECIAL  
HOLIDAY GIFT.

Sandra Cox Johnson stands on the sales floor at PSI in Florence. She and her brother, Bob Cox, are the children of Jessie Cox who founded Printers & Stationers, Inc. Sandra and her husband Mike along with her brother Bob and his wife Beth are the leading forces behind the success of PSI.



**Lovely jewelry, impressive art, table décor for every occasion, charming apparel – oh, and you can also get wedding invitations, fine stationery, office supplies and furniture, and business machines under the same roof.**

Locals who walk down Court Street are used to seeing the downtown mainstay business, PSI Printers & Stationers.

What may surprise some longtime residents is the variety of merchandise inside that has nothing to do with outfitting an office.

“We have such a wonderful department store atmosphere with all this space,” said PSI’s Sandra Johnson. She said the company, still family owned and has been in Florence since 1933, has seen downtown bloom with returning

businesses and with the University of North Alabama thriving.

“We thought: why not bring in apparel? Why not bring in gifts?” she said.

With printing part of its business, PSI already catered to special occasion invitations like for weddings and anniversaries. But when the merchandise was extended to include items for home décor, apparel, and unique gifts, PSI grew its customer base beyond what locals expect to find there.

“Most of the locals in town . . . think of us as office supplies,” Johnson said. “We have more out-of-town customers – repeat customers – from literally all over the nation that are here for Shindig or ShoalsFest or Arts Alive, or one of our



Did we mention that we offer complimentary gift wrapping? Santa really appreciates that during this time of year.

JOY Tea Towel: \$18.00 • Cheese Spreader: \$6.50 • Nest Candle: \$40.00 • Mr. Bird Bird House: \$12.00 • Christmas matchbox: \$12.00



Vietri Bakers have been a favorite of our registered brides and are a perfect Christmas gift. They come in so many beautiful colors.

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festivals, and we're the place that they want to come visit.

"We're so thrilled to be doing this, because we are this little gem in the area that most of the locals don't even know about."

She said out-of-town visitors tell her they love PSI because it's so unique and because "we have a little bit of everything."

"This industry . . . printing and office supplies . . . has evolved," she said. "Then, you have the internet in particular, and of course you have the big box stores, (but) those didn't really phase us that much, but the internet has. We have been going to these (industry) meetings for years – my dad and my mom went before us – and we have seen so many mom and pop businesses like ours close. And we're one of just a few, really, in the nation, who are still thriving. We have reinvented ourselves over the years. And we've got such a great team. It's such a family affair. We all work really hard, and it works."

The layout of the store is customer friendly. Commercial furniture is on the mezzanine, office machines on the third floor and commercial office supplies are in the basement. The ground floor is where customers may linger to



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Candy Cane paper placemats, set of 12: \$29.00

Gingerbread paper table accents, set of 12: \$14.50

Vietri place setting: Part of the Incanto collection; Prices vary.



browse the unique gift items, or home décor or find that perfect serving dish to complement their table scape.

The business is still locally owned but has a far reach into its customer base, serving not just north Alabama, but Tennessee, Mississippi, even into Birmingham.

And if you're worried about downtown congested parking, don't be. Johnson said shoppers find plenty of parking spaces before and



We hope that with our new expansion into bridal registry, we can offer our local brides a wonderful selection of fine china, drinkwear, serving pieces, and much more.

Our registry specialist, Kristen, is available to help each bride through the simple and fun process of registering for gifts that will make any home more beautiful.





We have so much fun shopping for unique items to bring into the store. We love that our customers can find gifts and apparel here that are exclusive to PSI. Our goal as a small business in downtown Florence is to keep our customers, both local and visiting, always excited to find something new here.

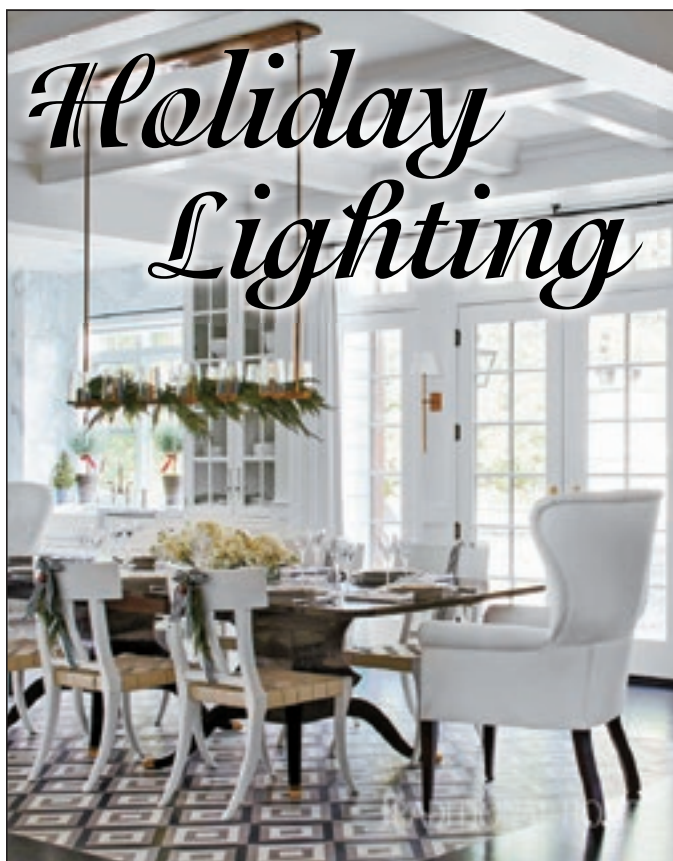
after the lunch crowd has enjoyed a meal at one of the many popular eateries downtown.

PSI's philosophy is summed up in its company information on its website: "Like you, we live, work and play in this community. We have a vested interest in its economic health. Buying from local companies makes us unique and contributes to creating and maintaining jobs here. . . . We strive to preserve what makes our community special and encourage the entrepreneurial spirit which attracts new commerce and creates new jobs in our community."



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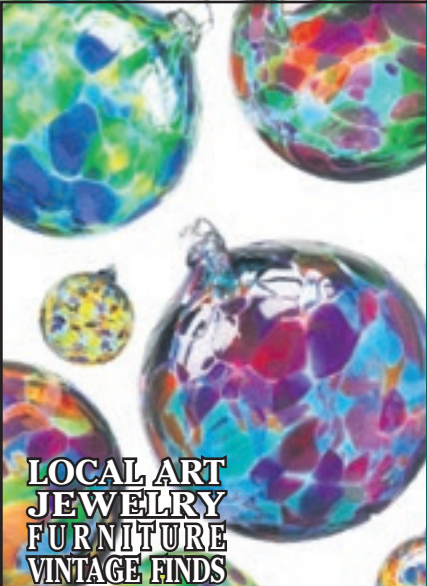
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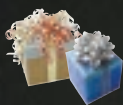
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December 5 to December 14

Dates on the following events are based on each event's preseason schedule. For questions, call the numbers provided or go to the website.

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617 U.S. 72,  
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Admission: \$15  
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Tickets: Alabama Music Hall of Fame

or amhof.ticketleap.com/xmas17  
Details: 256-381-4417

### DEC. 6-DEC. 24 TREES OF CHRISTMAS

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The ghost of Christmas present, Trey Edwards, holds the door for Jacob Marley, Chuck Christopher, at the Scones and Moans breakfast in Tuscumbia. The breakfast was part of the Charles Dickens Christmas event.





Scrooge, portrayed by David Mitchell, wanders around the roundhouse in Tuscumbia at the Charles Dickens Christmas event.

## DEC. 8

### A PLANTATION CHRISTMAS

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## DEC. 13

### DICKENS CHRISTMAS FEAST

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Victorian English  
Christmas dinner  
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**DEC. 14**  
**"DICKENS CHRISTMAS,  
Y'ALL"**

Downtown  
Tuscumbia various  
locations will  
feature carolers  
and costumed  
Victorian characters,  
Clydesdales carriage

rides, horse and  
buggy two-person  
rides, and an  
outdoor holiday  
market. There will  
be performers from  
The Nutcracker  
Victorian Ballroom  
Dancers, brass and  
string ensembles,  
vocalists, children's  
dance groups and  
appearances by  
Santa Claus and



Katie Logan walks through the rain with Holly, who is dressed for the affair, to the Charles Dickens Christmas event at the roundhouse.

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his earlier English counterpart, Father Christmas

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holiday decorations  
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### DEC. 14

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