November 2020

Food 5 Fun, Fast, and Fabulous Fall Soups Breakfast Breads

A new future rises from the ashes Stanfield's Restaurant looks forward

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# Welcome

If you haven't by now got your Christmas tree out and started decorating, I am sure you have a goal in mind. To me there is no better way to start the holiday season than to be in the kitchen. Clear, brisk, cool air puts me in the mood to cook all the comfort food I am craving. This year's holiday edition is full of some of my favorite recipes from some special people.

The Christmas gift ideas inside these pages are sure to please everyone on your list. A few tips on starting a new tradition in your family to keep gift giving less stressful came to mind during the planning of this year's magazine. With the help of my sweet niece and nephew, Piper and Tripp Corley, posing for some photos in their new home, we hope that you check out our gift guide for children and incorporate something new into your gift giving this year.

The holidays are fast approaching and I am sure family comes to mind for you as much as it does me. We spent some time with the Stanfield family that suffered an incomprehensible loss on the 20th anniversary of their business being open. In August 2019, Vicky Stanfield remembers how busy they were in the restaurant that night, and not too long after she and her husband, Brian, had settled in at home to unwind, they received the call that their restaurant was on fire. Months of work went into cleaning up, but ultimately the condemning of their building and looking for a new home for Stanfield's landed them in Sheffield. This family has held strong to their faith and hope for the future as they are working to prepare for opening at their new location soon.

COVID-19 has taken a toll on everything and everyone in our community, our state, and our country. With the holidays around the corner, so are a number of annual events that are a tradition to families in the shoals. Our planning companion is shortened slightly this year, but businesses and organizations are modifying their plans so that they can still bring wonderful family traditions and memories to you and yours this season.

I also want to take this opportunity to say "thank you" to the person who helped make this issue beautiful - Heather Sherrill of Create Portraiture. Her beautiful photography can make bowls of soup, children that are like squirrels in a blender when it comes to taking their photo, and gift items placed in the floor award-winning content for this year's Shoals Woman Magazine Holiday Edition.

Like the holidays, this issue is one that brought people together, and we hope you enjoy it and have the happiest of times with the people in your life.

Cecilia Brumley - Magazine Writer and Event Planner



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Missy Montgomery, Pharm. D. / CEO

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Heather Bradford Sherrill is the owner of Create Portraiture and Bradford Farm & Venue. She has been a professional photographer for 14 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 2020 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 eight. 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.

## **ON the COVER**

We are honored to have Katie Leigh Shirey pose for our cover this year. Katie is the wife to Garrett Shirey and mom to Rylan, Aulcie Kate and Rayce. Family is super important to the Shireys. Katie named her favorite Christmas tradition as gathering her family up and spending Christmas Eve at her

parents home, and having a seafood feast, and on Christmas Day spending time at Garrett's parents' home with his siblings and their families.



Photo by Heather Sherrill of Create Portraiture



# a NEW FUTURE RISES from the ASHES

by SHERHONDA ALLEN Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE

## **Stanfield's Restaurant** owners and family look forward to the next 20 years

It's been a long year for Vicky and Brian Stanfield, long before anyone ever heard of COVID-19 or a pandemic.

The night they celebrated 20 years in the restaurant business was the last night they worked from their Ford City location.

It was Aug. 3, 2019, and Vicky remembers how "we were crazy busy that night" before the last customer left, satisfied from the homemade kind of food and made-fromscratch desserts that had made Stanfield's famous among locals and visitors. Vicky and Brian and their staff cleaned, tidied and put away before locking the door on a milestone day.

Then, the phone call. Stanfield's was on fire.

Wiring near the stove hoods in the kitchen had failed, sparking the blaze. By the time firefighters had extinguished the flames, the kitchen and front of the building looked like a total loss. But Vicky and Brian determined they would demo and rebuild.

"About five months into this, we spent a lot of money over there and they condemned it," Vicky recalled. "When they took all of the wood out of the front ... we couldn't really salvage much of it at all. And when they did that the front of the building shifted. You could seriously see the shift in it. So they condemned it."

# STANFIELD'S EST. 1999

ANFIELI

The Stanfield family is working day and night to get back to serving the Shoals as soon as they can. (from left) Lila Fountain, Lindsey Smith, Amber and Dewayne Fountain, Brian and Vicky Stanfield, and Chris Springer. JMP



A condemned structure meant the Stanfields would have to raze the building and start from scratch. They were already five months into the loss and needed to satisfy insurance requirements within one year. Building from scratch would take much longer to accomplish. Plus, Vicky said they knew they "couldn't do without money for another year." It was a family business and supported several people. Daughter Lindsey Smith, a niece and nephew were also involved in the restaurant, and the staff was extended family. Many had been with the restaurant for years.

"We thought about it, prayed about it . . . and we came by here one day," Vicky said.

"Here" was a building off Hatch Boulevard that had been home to several former restaurants. Vicky said she thought there was no way they could afford a ready-made location that needed a lot of upgrades and renovations to make it their own.

But they were able to acquire the building and poured sweat equity into the project under the tutelage of carpenter and "like family" friend Chris Springer. One year after the fire, and with delays and setbacks that naturally come with such a massive project worsened by the pandemic, they gutted the building. Their vision was becoming clearer as the months passed.

The interior brick walls and butcher block countertops add a warmth and ambience that hint at the cozy dining experience awaiting patrons. The exposed ductwork in the ceilings painted black, concrete floors and steel shutters add a contemporary touch. Privacy booths with 81/2' tall walls give intimate conversations a chance to stay that way, but if it's a large group that needs seating, farmhouse tables are available. A couch and cozy chairs in another part of the restaurant will invite those looking for a cup of coffee and a dessert the opportunity to dine in "friends" style.

Vicky credits Lindsey with the new design and vibe.

"My daughter has a mind that turns like her dad's – it's 24 hours a day. This is her vision."

"If I could build a house, this is probably what I'd do in it," Lindsey added.

There will be seating and bistro tables outdoors for patrons while they wait for their table inside to become available.

Where they could, they salvaged items from the Ford City location. For instance, two wooden front doors were installed to use as interior doors at the new location. A large bar in the center of the restaurant, left from a previous owner, was retained and upgraded to accommodate 14 seats around it.

In addition to the interior's design, Lindsey updated the restaurant's online presence. Online orders are standard, but a new feature includes allowing diners who are waiting on a table to become available to track the wait.

Vicky said the new location is about 2,000 square feet smaller



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than the Ford City location, which has a seating capacity of 170 compared to 250 at the former site.

"We still have that property and our intent ... is to get this one up and running and then build back there, but not as big," Vicky said.

The restaurant will return in time for holiday dining – and holiday ordering. The Stanfields will continue their famous desserts, which will be showcased in a manner that will be a feast for the eyes as well as the palate.

"We went through a lot of desserts at the other location and I think this one will be just as busy," Lindsey said. "But you'll be able to actually see all of them ...in the cases."

The pizza ovens will return and there will be something that Brian has always wanted but didn't have at the former location – an appetizer station.

It has been a long journey to arrive at this new location, but Vicky said the place that started it all will never be forgotten.

"I hate that we can't be there because that's our history," Vicky said. "It's where we live. But I'm excited about this new place."

There is a photo on Lindsey's phone of a young girl, Lila, who is the daughter of kitchen manager Dwayne Fountain and his wife, Amber.

The photo was taken just days after the fire and Lila is not looking at the camera, but is playing among what is left of the Ford City restaurant.

"When you see (the photo) at first you're like sick to your stomach," Vicky said. "But you see this . . . young child in ... all this mess" and another message emerges.

Vicky said the image is indicative of their life as they emerge from those first 20 years and readjust to embrace what they've rebuilt – a new future.











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# Add Some Sparkle to Your Smile This Holiday Season!



Left to right: Dr. Brittney Reeves, Dr. Julie Rice, Dr. Mary Leigh Gillespie, Dr. Charlotte Stueve



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# JUST 5 GIFTS!

MEMORY MATCH LOTTO

by CECILIA BRUMLEY • Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE

Twins, Tripp and Piper, children of Doug and Crista Corley, invited us into their playroom and are looking forward to Christmas and new traditions this year.

#### Has your Christmas shopping gotten out of control in the past? Are you looking for a way to simplify, save money, and reduce stress this holiday season?

What if this year, you challenge yourself to only buy 5 gifts per child? You may have heard about the 4-gift rule for Christmas, but this challenge is based on the 5-gift rule.

**The 4-gift rule** is the idea of getting each child only 4 gifts. They each get something they: 1. Want, 2. Need, 3. Wear, 4. Read

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**The 5-gift rule** expands on the 4-gift rule to include an experience gift or something to do, usually together with family. So the 5 gifts are something they: 1. Want, 2. Need, 3. Wear, 4. Read, 5. Experience



You might be wondering what to get your children for their 5 gifts. Turn this page to view a helpful list of ideas for each of the 5 categories.



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> Piper playing in her room with items from PSI.

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#### WANT: GIFT IDEAS

You probably don't need gift ideas for this category. Most kids are very vocal about all the things they want. Here are some of the things that fit into this category:

#### Video games • Cars & Trucks • Legos Electronic Devices • Action Figures Character Toys • Dolls

#### **NEED: GIFT IDEAS**

The needs category can be a little trickier to find good gifts. You want it to be something that is useful, but still is a fun gift for the child.

You also have to know what things your own child will think are fun. For example, my niece would get a kick out of a new lunchbox, while my nephew would think that was so boring. He'd love a flashlight, though, because he is just that random!

Here are some things that you might consider a "need" that can still be fun:

#### Sports equipment

Baseball glove • Soccer ball • Basketball Bike helmet • Duffel bag • Dance leotard

> **Art supplies** Sketchbooks • Markers Colored Pencils • Paints

#### Musical

Carrying case for instrument • Music stand A tote bag to carry their supplies to lessons Books of music to play

#### **School-related**

Backpacks • Pens and pencils • Notebooks

Travel items Suitcase or overnight bag • Sleeping bag • Toiletry bag Bedding / Linens

Reading pillow (pillow with arms) • Special throw blanket Fun bedding for their bedroom

Cups & Water BottlesYeti style cups • Tervis cups • Water bottles

**Cases to protect things they already have** Tablet or phone cases • Portable video games cases

#### Umbrella

#### **Flash Light**

#### **WEAR: GIFT IDEAS**

Like the needs category, you have to know which of these things will be fun for your kid. Here are some gift ideas for things to wear:

> Sweatshirt • Sports jersey • Character shirts Fun socks • Pajamas • Bathrobe • Slippers Apron for cooking • Smock for art • Hat Sunglasses • Fuzzy socks

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Back row from left: Emily Russell, DNP, FNP-C; Danielle Elliott, MSN, CRNP; Liz Davis, MSN, CRNP, NTP <u>Front row from left:</u> Russell Bien, MSN, CRNP; Douglas Woodford, MD

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#### **READ: GIFT IDEAS**

For the read category, most people think of fiction. Fiction is great, but there are so many more options out there! Reading of all types is beneficial to kids, so encourage whatever they're interested in.

Here are some fun gift ideas in the read category:

Picture book • Book with fun facts Animal book • Classic children's series Nature guide book • Biography World record book • Comic book Video game book • Find and Seek Instructional book (how to draw, etc)

#### **EXPERIENCE: GIFT IDEAS**

#### How Do I Wrap Experience Gifts?

One of the biggest concerns with giving experience gifts is how to wrap them. Everyone wants a fun pile of presents under the tree!

Here are 4 ways to wrap experience gifts:

- 1. Use a picture frame. Purchase a picture frame and insert a picture of the place you're going. Wrap up the picture frame. After you go on your experience, you can add a picture of you enjoying your adventure together for a fun keepsake.
- 2. Use the box-in-a-box-in-a-box method. Wrap up a brochure or printed information about the experience in a small box. Then wrap that box inside a bigger box. Wrap that second box inside a third box. You get the idea! I've done this before and the kids love it. The more random the boxes are the better. Shoe boxes, food boxes, shipping boxes, etc.
- **3.** Do a treasure hunt. Wrap a box with a clue in it under the tree. The clue should give a hint about where to find the next clue. Lead them all around the house

to different clues until they finally find the tickets or information about the experience gift. It makes finding the experience gift an experience in itself.

**4. Purchase a small gift to wrap up.** Most experience gifts lend themselves to a small accessory gift that you can wrap up. Check out the list of ideas below with links to accompanying small gifts.

#### Fun Experience Gifts for Kids

- Tickets or a membership to the zoo
- Gift to wrap: stuffed animal of their favorite zoo animal.
- · Passes to a local science museum
- Gift to wrap: science experiment book.
- Pool or water park passes
- Gift to wrap: swim goggles.
- Art class
- Gift to wrap: art smock.
- Amusement park tickets
- Gift to wrap: fanny pack. Seriously, they are back!
- Bowling
- Gift to wrap: picture frame for your winning frame. Get it? Frame?Ice cream
- Gift to wrap: ice cream scoop.
- A road trip
- Gift to wrap: Car bingo.
- Movie tickets
- Gift to wrap: Popcorn or movie theater style candy
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by CECILIA BRUMLEY Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE

If your plans for fall involve cozy sweaters and filling your meal plan with the best soups of the season, you're hardly alone. I'm right there with you, as is the rest of the Shoals. Whether you're on team brothy or team creamy, or you prefer a good slow cooker soup or one you can pull together in 20 minutes after work, there is something here for everyone. I love soup recipes. Actually, that's an understatement. I simply adore soup. I love making it, I love eating it, and I love packing up the leftovers so that I can enjoy it again the next day.



FOOC

#### Here are a few tips for making soup recipes I have learned over the years...

- 1. Season to taste. Raw vegetable ingredients need seasoning, and vegetable broths vary in salt level. If your soup is bland, don't hesitate to add generous pinches of salt and lots of fresh black pepper. Taste as you go.
- **2. Drizzle with olive oil.** I always finish soups with a generous drizzle of olive oil. It adds richness. This is a new tip that I am working on incorporating into my cooking.
- **3.** Save some for lunch. Most soups taste better on the second day, so be sure to make enough to have leftovers. In addition, most soup recipes freeze well for up to a few months.
- 4. **Spice to your level.** This is the fun and creative part of cooking soup recipes. If you're making a soup that calls for lots of spice, but you prefer milder flavors, start with less. If you like things spicy, add more. It's important to taste as you cook and adjust the flavors to make something you really love.

Now, does anyone have any tips on making husbands love soups? That is something that I have to work on!

I collected some of my closest friends and family's favorite "go-to" soups and asked them to share them with you our readers.



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# crista Corley of Lexington Spinach Tortellini Soup

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1/2 medium onion, diced
- 1 tbsp minced garlic
- 6 cups (1 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> quarts) chicken broth
- One 14.5-ounce can diced fire-roasted tomatoes
- 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning
- One 9-ounce package cheese tortellini

- One 14.5-ounce can cannellini beans, rinsed well and drained
- 6 cups baby spinach
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh basil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1 cup freshly shredded Parmesan cheese (about 4 ounces)

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

1000RR

In a large soup pot melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté, stirring constantly, until the onion is soft and tender, 3 to 4 minutes.

Add the broth, tomatoes, and Italian seasoning and bring to a roiling boil. Add the tortellini and beans and cook until the tortellini are cooked through, about 2 minutes.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the spinach, parsley, basil, salt and pepper to taste and stir until the spinach is wilted, 1 to 2 minutes. Squeeze the lemon juice over the soup.

Ladle into bowls, sprinkle with the Parmesan, and serve immediately with bread for dipping.

Store in airtight container in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days or in the freezer for up to 2 months. Let the soup thaw before reheating.

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# Srunswick Stew

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups chopped onion
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 (32-ounce) cartons chicken broth
- 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1 (16-ounce) package frozen corn

- 1 (16-ounce) package of frozen lima beans
- 1 (15-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 1 ½ cups vinegar-based barbecue sauce
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 pound chopped smoked pork
- 3 cups chopped cooked chicken
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp salt

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

In a large Dutch oven, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add onion, bell pepper, garlic; cook, stirring frequently, for 8 minutes or until just tender. Stir in broth and next 6 ingredients, and bring to a boil.

*<b>LIMESDAILY* 

Reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Stir in pork, chicken, pepper, and salt and simmer 30 more minutes.

\*I use all pork and will add a small bag of yellow new potatoes quartered and add them the last 30 minutes of cooking.

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#### **INGREDIENTS & DIRECTIONS:**

- 3 or 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 2 or 3 tsp basil
- 2 or 3 tbsp olive oil
- Sauté
- Add 1 large can crushed tomatoes
- Let mixture bubble (not boiling)
- Stir in 1 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
- Salt and pepper to taste

Stephanie Pless of Muscle Shoals

Potato Soup

• 1 can cream of onion

• 1 pint half and half

Pepper jack cheese

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 6-8 potatoes
- 2-(14 oz) chicken broth
- 2 cans cream of celery

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

Boil the potatoes in the chicken broth until soft and mushy.

Add the half and half, cream of celery and cream of onion.

Cut up half a block of pepper jack cheese and add to the mixture.

Let simmer until creamy and then garnish with cheese, parsley, bacon bits.

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# Butternut Squash Soup

Butternut Squa Soup

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 large butternut squash
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1 onion, diced
- 1/2 can of coconut milk
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 large container of chicken stock

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

Cube butternut squash, carrots, and onion place on a sheet pan and drizzle with oil, salt and pepper. Roast until tender.

Add roasted vegetables, ½ can coconut milk, 1 tsp nutmeg, 1 tsp thyme, salt and pepper to blender.

Add chicken stock to smooth consistency.

Serve topped with roasted sunflower kernels.

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## BREAKFAST



by CECILIA BRUMLEY Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE

Holidays are about making memories and being with the ones you love. Spending less time in the kitchen is an easy way to make your family a priority. These make ahead dishes that can be thrown together quickly are a great way to have a simple and

sweet breakfast. Special thanks to these ladies who submitted an easy breakfast bread that can be enjoyed by all with a hot cup of coffee while being cuddled up in a cozy blanket surrounded by your most favorite people.


# **Blueberry Muffin Cake**

### **INGREDIENTS:**

### **Crumb Topping**

- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/3 cup plus 3 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 3/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup plus tbsp butter, room temperature

### Cake

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup butter, room temperature
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 2 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 2 cups fresh blueberries

### Glaze

- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1/4 tsp vanilla
- 2 tsp milk

### **DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat the oven to 375.

Spray a 9" Springform pan with nonstick spray and set aside.

In a medium bowl combine all the Crumb Topping ingredients with a fork or pastry cutter until they are blended. Set aside.

In a large bowl mix together all the cake ingredients except the blueberries and mix until mostly smooth. Fold in the blueberries.

Spread the cake batter into the prepared pan and top evenly with the crumb topping.

Bake for 40-50 minutes until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

Allow the cake to cool for 10 minutes in the pan. Loosen the edges of the cake from the pan with a butter knife and then remove the sides of the pan.

For the glaze, mix together all the ingredients together until smooth and then drizzle on top of the cake.

Serve warm or at room temperature.





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### Tamra Osborn of Muscle Shoals

# Chocolate Chip Pumpkin Muffins

This Fall recipe is a family favorite. Not just because it's super easy, but we love the flavor and texture of these simple muffins. Spread a little cream cheese on top, and they're even better.

Cake mix is the secret ingredient to making this quick and easy recipe. This might not be a secret to you, but the spice cake mix is perfect for making moist and delicious pumpkin muffins and they are even better with chocolate chips.

This recipe is so incredibly easy there is no need to even write it down, it will be committed to memory forever after just one bite! Simply mix a can of pumpkin puree with a box of spice cake mix and then add ¾ a bag of chocolate chips. Sprinkle the remaining chips on the top.

Just make sure you are using Pumpkin puree, NOT pumpkin pie mix. The pumpkin pie mix is sweetened and seasoned, which you don't need because the box cake already has enough of that.

The batter will be very thick, I like to use a ice cream scoop to fill my muffin tins.

I've also tried this recipe with raisins instead of the chocolate chips, and then spread a little cream cheese on top before eating. Yum! Don't be afraid to experiment. You can also add in a little extra pumpkin spice or cinnamon if you would like.

### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 box spice cake mix
- 1(15 ounce) can pumpkin
- 1 bag chocolate chips

### **DIRECTIONS:**

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees, and grease muffin pan or line it with muffin liners.

In a large bowl, mix together the spice cake mix and pumpkin until well blended. (The batter will be thick.)

Fold in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the bag of chocolate chips to the batter.

Evenly distribute the batter into your muffin tin, each one should be about  $\frac{34}{4}$  full.

Bake at 15-20 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.



### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 cans (16.3 oz each) Pillsbury Grands Flaky Layers refrigerated Original biscuits
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts or pecans if desired
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- ¾ cup butter or margarine, melted

### **DIRECTIONS:**

Heat oven to 350. Generously grease a 12 cup fluted tube pan with shortening or cooking

spray. In large 1-gallon plastic food storage bag, mix granulated sugar and cinnamon.

Separate dough into 16 biscuits; cut each into quarters. Shake in bag to coat. Arrange in pan, adding nuts among the biscuit pieces. Sprinkle any remaining sugar over the biscuits.

In a small bowl, mix brown sugar and butter; pour over biscuit pieces.

Bake 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown and no longer doughy in center. Loosen edges of pan with metal spatula. Cool in pan 5 minutes. Turn upside down onto serving plate; replacing any biscuit pieces and caramel from pan. Pull apart to serve. Serve warm.



Sleigh-Loads of PILLOWS

Christmas pillows are an easy and fun way to add lots of Christmas cheer to any decor. Every home needs an assortment of stand-out seasonal pillows. We've piled up a few favorites for your consideration.



### 1. Merry Christmas 'Ya Filthy Animal

Glory Haus Designs - Embroidered on woven 100% cotton with a black and white buffalo plaid back and black tassel accents. 23" x 16" - \$39.99 David Christopher's, Sheffield, AL

 Reindeer Santa - Deck the Halls, Y'all! - Washable Polyester with soft woven details and red trim. 13" x 19" - \$19.99 David Christopher's, Sheffield, AL

 Red Barn and Sleigh Winter Christmas Pillow - Beautiful County Christmas scene accent pillow.
 17" x 10" - \$32.25 Lola's Gifts and Flowers, Sheffield, AL





by CECILIA BRUMLEY Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE



- 4. Extra Large Santa's Reindeer -Hand lettering accents with crimson trim.
  32" x 18" - \$70.00 Lola's Gifts and Flowers, Sheffield, AL
- 5. Merry Christmas Red and Turquoise with pom pom trim. 13" x 19" - \$32.25 Lola's Gifts and Flowers, Sheffield, AL
- 6. Hand Painted Christmas
  Ornament Pillow Other designs available and customized upon request. 18" x 18"
  Watson House Design & Landscape, Florence, AL

### 7. Santa Stop Here -Washed canvas pillow. 12" x 21" - \$28 Reclaimed Spirit, Florence, AL





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# christmas wreaths HOMENADE with FRIENDS



by CECILIA BRUMLEY Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE

**Easy Christmas** wreath ideas are hard to come by. So, when I asked my friend Amy to collaborate on a **Christmas craft** tutorial, she was all in. Amy Moncus of Lexington is a high school science teacher by day, but spends her spare time as a Noonday Ambassador. Noonday Ambassadors are stylists, storytellers, and social entrepreneurs who earn an income by selling beautiful products handmade by artisans around the world. Noonday always offers a beautiful holiday collection of unique pieces, and Amy and I are always looking for a fun reason to

gather with our friends so we jumped on the opportunity to have a craft time in her home. Her husband Mack cooking up his famous homemade biscuits was in the plans, too. The wheels in our heads started turning. We did our research and came up with a DIY metal hoop wreath and incorporated some of Noonday's beautiful pieces.

While I'm relatively crafty, taking on a new project is always intimidating. Especially when you're trying to lead others. I'm happy to report, though, that these wreaths were easy to make and the time we had together was just as fun.

### Here are a few tips Amy and I came up with that may help you create a fun craft night for you and your friends.

### 1. Pick a Simple Craft

While you may be a pretty experienced crafter, not everyone is super creative or knows the basics of crafting. Be sure to pick a craft simple enough to easily teach to people of all levels of creativity.

### 2. Don't Blow Your Budget

We asked everyone attending to contribute a small amount to participate. Depending on the craft, you can purchase supplies for everyone to go home with a unique item they made themselves and provide snacks for everyone. Make sure you buy affordable supplies.

### 3. Get Others Involved

Make sure you have a few friends who are willing to help you out. Figuring it out all on your own and doing it by yourself can sometimes be too much. Having a few people who you can delegate tasks to makes things so much easier. Plus, it helps you build friendships and create bonds. Assign someone else to set up the snacks, or do the announcements. Working as a team makes it easier.





### 4. Have Great Snacks

Making sure you have awesome refreshments makes the evening even better. Fresh fruit, homemade biscuits (early Saturday morning worked best for us), and specialty cookies made our last get together even more enjoyable. You don't need an extensive menu, just a few great things that your guests will love. (ALWAYS have coffee!)

### 5. Give Yourself Adequate Lead Time

Make sure you give your guests a few weeks to make sure there is time in their calendar to attend. Our group usually makes an announcement about a month before the event, then makes follow-up announcements to make sure everyone gets the message and has a chance to sign up so we have an accurate head count. With packed family schedules these days it is hard to find time for your friends, but make it a priority for your sanity.





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### 6. Do A Test Run

Be sure to make an "example" piece at home, walking through all the steps and knowing what kinks may arise during the process. Doing this gives you an idea of how you need to break down the steps to your guests, and how to make this easy for them. Sometimes you need additional tools that are not listed in instructions, being overprepared for something like this is never a bad idea. Make sure you think of everything you'll need for your event.

### 7. Be Prepared for the Unexpected

Make sure you prepare for something to go not as planned. Purchase a few extra supplies for any extra people that show up for your event, or in case something breaks or gets messed up. Also, be sure you have cleaning supplies to take care of any spills of supplies or snacks. Thinking ahead for things like this can be a lifesaver.





Monday-Saturday 10am-5:30pm





Here is all the information you need to create a Christmas Hoop Wreath on your own like we did. But please – don't do it alone! Make a girls night of it! The process is more fun with friends.

### CHRISTMAS HOOP WREATH MATERIALS

- Metal hoops, we went with a 12" hoop and found them on Amazon.
- Florals Fresh greens at Christmas are my favorite and fill your home with an amazing aroma. We also picked out some different colors and textures of artificial greens at a local craft store. Amy also worked some magic and dried some orange slices.
- Floral Wire Having a roll of floral wire around your home is something that comes in handy more times than you think. When gathering up supplies we ran across Daricegarland, or what some would call wire pine garland, and it was perfect for these hoop wreaths as well.
- Scissors and wire cutters
- Ribbon Select a ribbon that matches your holiday theme in your home. At least 1-1.5 inches thick.
- Something Unique We wanted to add something unique to our wreaths so we chose to use the Bazaar Bells by Noonday. They are made from brass in India. You can check out what Noonday has to offer, or maybe you have something special you can incorporate into your wreath from a family member, or a special ornament that you might have picked up and wanted a special place for it.

This is a project that allows everyone to create their own masterpiece. Amy and I made sure that everyone had all the needed materials. Each lady selected their own greenery and ribbons. We had wreaths we had created to display, and everyone took on the task of creating something special for their homes.

And, that's it! I know it might sound like a lot, but once you get rolling I promise you'll be fine.









### by CECILIA BRUMLEY Photos by HEATHER SHERRILL of CREATE PORTRAITURE



Christmas is coming! Have you started making your to-do list? How about all of those homemade Christmas gifts you have been wanting to create?

I have the most adorable DIY gift that your friends, co-workers, teachers, neighbors – really everyone on your list – will love.

These little Hot Cocoa Kits turned out so cute. They make a darling Christmas gift, and depending on what you add to the tubes and how you decorate them, they are also around \$5, making them an inexpensive homemade hot chocolate gift idea as well. So let's get started...

First, you need to find your supplies, here's what I used...

Hot Cocca KIT SUPPLIES

**Bottles or Tubes** - You can get these on Amazon. I used 110 ml tubes.

**Glue or Glue Dots** - I like using glue dots when working with small items, like attaching the ribbon, because then I don't burn my fingers with the hot glue gun, but you can certainly use that if you like.

**Ribbon or Twine** – anything you like, any size you like.

**Rubber Bands** – you don't have to have these, but it did make it easier to hold the bottles together.

**Ornaments or Decorations** - Decorate your Hot Cocoa Kit any way you like.

Next, you will need to get ingredients to fill the bottles.

Hot Cocoa **KIT INGREDIENTS** 

- Hot Cocoa Mix You can buy store bought packets, or make your own.
- Mini Marshmallows We used Micro Mini Marshmallows.
- **Candy** Any variety you like. We used mini chocolate chips, Mini York Peppermint Patties and Almond Joy Pieces.
- **Peppermint Balls or Sticks** You could also use candy canes and crush them.

Now, just fill your bottles and wrap them together with twine or ribbon.





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# Shoals TINSEL TRAIL

by BERNIE DELINSKI Photo by MATT MCKEAN

After a successful inaugural year, the Shoals Tinsel Trail is gearing up for a bigger Year 2.

Last year, the trail included the full allotment of 52 available trees, and organizers had to turn away other groups and businesses that were interested in adding to that number.

This year, they plan to make it larger so that everyone can be involved.

In doing so, they included an Early Bird sale in August, which sold 20 trees, said Randa Hovater, manager over media relations for Florence-Lauderdale Tourism.

The trail again will be outside the tourism office at McFarland Park.

Opening night is Dec.



The Shoals Tinsel Trail of decorated Christmas trees line the walkway to the Florence-Lauderdale Tourism and Visitor Center. Brothers Jason and Jeremy Grigsby decorate their tree.

4 and it will continue until Jan. 6, Hovater said.

Sponsors decorate the trees, typically with a theme they choose.

Last year, the program raised \$13,355.33 for the local Sleep in Heavenly Peace program.

This year, the group or individual who purchases a tree gets to decide the charity of choice that the tree represents.

<sup>"</sup>Each organization can have its own foundation or charity that's near and dear to their heart," Hovater said. "Also, more than one business can represent the charity. The sign will give the name of the sponsor and who it's sponsoring. We definitely encourage choosing local charities or nonprofits."

The trees will be in a contest decided by digital voting during the week of Dec. 4-11, she said. The charity or cause that is sponsored by the winning tree receives proceeds from this year's tinsel trail.

Hovater said she is excited by the prospect of how many trees can fill the trail this year.

"We limited it last year to see where it went, and it really took off," she said. The 2020 Shoals Tinsel Trail is something that will be a tradition for families for years to come."

Adapted from story first published in the TimesDaily.







# **PLANNING** Companion

### November 20 to December 31

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

### **NOV. 20 - 21** CANDYLAND CHRISTMAS MARKET

Shop for your Christmas list and support local art. 10am-4pm Studio 23 333 East College Street, Florence, AL 35630

### NOV. 28 - DEC. 23

WINTER ART MARKET 9am-5pm Tennessee Valley Museum of Art 511 N Water St., Tuscumbia, AL 35674 For info: 256-383-0533 tennesseevalleyarts.org

### **DEC. 3**

**CHRISTMAS COKE PARTY** 10am-5pm Fiddledee D! Gift Shop 111 S. Main St. Tuscumbia, AL 35674 For info: 256-383-9797

Bring your list for last-minute Christmas shopping, and join us in sipping an ice-cold bottle Coke! Santa Claus will be on hand through

the afternoon for your photographs and at 4:00 p.m., Santa will draw for a \$100 and a \$50 gift certificate, redeemable at Fiddledee D! You will be entered into the drawing once for every *\$50 spent at Fiddledee D! (Beginning now!)* This nostalgic event is sponsored by Tuscumbia Retail Development (non-profit) and the varied artisans and small business vendors of Fiddledee D!, a business incubator for retail cooperation and growth in historic downtown Tuscumbia.

### **DEC. 4 - JAN. 6 2ND ANNUAL SHOALS TINSEL TRAIL** Shoals Tinsel Trail will take place in

McFarland Park at the Visitor Center. The trail will be donned with live Christmas trees sponsored and decorated by Shoals businesses. For more information visit shoalstinseltrail@ gmail.com, or visitFlorenceal.com



# Johannon's Guide to Social Distancing \*

48

cockroaches

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### **DEC. 5**

2ND ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MARKET

9am-5pm First Baptist Killen 530 J C Mauldin Hwy, Killen More than 30 vendors, Mini Photo Sessions, Concessions, Local Arts & Craft Vendors, Christmas Music, \$3 Admission

### DEC. 11 & 12 CHRISTMAS AT IVY GREEN

300 N. Commons W., Tuscumbia, AL 35674 Helen Keller's birthplace will be decorated with live holiday decorations 8:30am-4pm Admission charged For info: 256-383-4066 Helenkellerbirthplace.org

### **DEC. 12**

**"DICKENS DAY DOWNTOWN"** Main Street, Tuscumbia 10am-3pm For info: 256-383-9797

Celebrate the season at "Dickens Day Downtown," a modified version of Tuscumbia's annual "It's a Dickens Christmas. Y'all" Festival. Due to COVID-19, a more *limited lineup will* include a return of the popular carriage rides and will feature a Dickens Stroll with Scrooge, all the Dickens characters and Santa, too! Downtown shops will offer specials during the day. Practice masking and social *distancing in all public* areas. Sponsored by Tuscumbia Retail Development. Follow on Facebook.

### **DEC. 31** 3rd Annual Food Truck Festival

Proceeds to Sponsor the Children's Museum of the Shoals 12pm-3pm Singin' River Brewing Company 526 E College St., Florence, AL 35630



The cottage next to Ivy Green where Helen Keller was born. The cottage served as a living space for Helen and her teacher, Anne Sullivan.



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