

HOME HOLIDAYS



ENTERTAINING

Tips for a stress-free holiday gathering for first-time hosts

By Emily Heil and Jura Koncius Special to The Washington Post

he season of celebration is here, and if this is your first time hosting family or friends in your new home for the holidays, you may be wondering how you're going to pull it off. Before we delve into the specifics (don't worry, we've got your back), a few words of general advice: You don't have to throw the party your parents (or grandparents) did. This is your show.

If you want to break out your wedding china and serve a traditional dinner menu, do it. But if you're more the chili and beer type, that's fine, too. Are you more of a morning person? Serve mimosas and quiche at a brunch. Hate holiday music? Queue up an R&B playlist. If living through a pandemic has ing "plated" meals, where a host makes up individtaught us anything, it's to let go of what's not important, and that might include Great-Aunt Trudy's chess

cide what works best for them when it comes to unvaccinated family members or celebrating outdoors.

Pick a serving setup

Before you choose your menu, determine your serving style. Buffets are good if you don't have a large dining table. If you've got the space for it, a familystyle meal – where people sit around a table and food is passed on platters – can cut down on the need for elaborate decorations, notes Amber Mayfield, an event planner and the founding editor of the magazine While Entertaining.

"Food can be part of the design, so you're not going crazy with flowers or anything," she says. "And the beautiful platters of food give you a 'wow' moment."

Most entertaining veterans counsel against havual plates and serves them. With a larger guest list, the food could be cold by the time it gets to the table.



pie that nobody really liked, anyway.

Speaking of the pandemic: This year's gatherings will probably be merrier than 2020's thanks to coromenu. Some people might not be traveling, or they might cancel at the last minute. The ingredients you need for that dessert you planned on making might be sitting in a container ship. Stay flexible.

And know your audience, says Darcy Miller, a celebrations consultant and the author and illustrator of "Celebrate Everything! Fun Ideas to Bring Your Parties to Life." If you have guests who are more nervous than others about sitting close to one another, create your own individual mini-graze boards. "People then have their own platter and it's also active decor when vou line them up on the table." Miller says. The boards can include savory or sweet foods and be topped with and serve with good ice cream. placecards for a personal touch.

We talked to party-planning experts and culinary gurus for advice on how to plan, shop, cook, serve and clean up for your nearest and dearest this holiday season — without losing your mind.

It's all about the game plan

The best way to avoid being frazzled is to be prepared. Many seasoned hosts set their tables several days in advance. "Always pretend your event is a few days before. It's like putting a fake date on your calendar," says Miller. There is always work you have to do at the end, such as cooking and getting fresh flowers. She recommends cleaning the house, rounding up an extra dining chair and buying beverages a few davs in advance.

Miami-based Amanda Gluck, who writes the blog Fashionable Hostess, makes a detailed timeline. "My dinner is at 7 p.m., so at 5 p.m., the pot roast goes in the oven. At 5:30, fill the water glasses. At 6 p.m., light the candles. At 6:30, put the bread on the table,' she says. She lays out platters with serving forks and spoons, with a note on each that says what will go where. "So even if someone else helps me to serve, they won't be searching through my cabinets." You might also realize you don't have a crucial piece: Gluck once had to call her mom to bring a gravy boat.

It's OK to ask for help, says Lola Wiarco Dweck, a recipe developer and cooking instructor at Lola's Cocina in Denver, but be careful what you ask for. "I usually don't like people to bring anything that is really essential to the menu," she says. "Extras are good, such as drinks or dessert. I want to have things ready to host, as you never know who will be late or early.

This year, there's one more thing on the prep list: checking the rules. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines for the holidays have recommendations for minimizing coronavirus risks. Also consult local guidelines for mask-wearing and how they gather. If this speaks to you, jot down a few many guests to host. Individual households must de-

Embrace a hybrid menu

The pandemic has made takeout an option not only navirus vaccines. But covid concerns are still on the for family dinners, but also for entertaining, because restaurants have bumped their offerings up a notch. Many now offer specific holiday dinner dishes to take home.

> Mayfield likes to outsource the main dish and focus on "low-lift" sides. "Think about the local restaurant you love that has a chicken or a leg of lamb," she says. "Buy the big thing from someone who is great at it. It takes the pressure off you."

> Accompaniments can be as simple as a sheet pan of colorful roasted vegetables or a hearty grain salad, she says. She's also a fan of a "semi-homemade" dessert, such as a premade pie shell that you fill with fruit

Dress the house in your own style

Small touches can add warmth to your gathering, whether it's personalized place cards made by your kids or party favors that include chocolates.

Designer and author Justina Blakeney of the Jungalow lifestyle brand goes outdoors for inspiration. "Rely on seasonal greenery as a jumping-off place," she says. "Pluck some maple leaves and use them as a runner to create a lush look." She also likes "botanicals and bling": greens paired with gold, silver, bronze or mercury glass.

You can zhuzh up your everyday white plates with cloth napkins, jewel-toned glassware and lots of candles, Blakeney says. Or, if you are a so-called "grandmillennial," use your flowered family china along with other vintage pieces.

Most importantly, try to be relaxed. "A house doesn't have to be perfect or completely done for it to feel festive or inviting," says Blakeney, who designs products for Target. "Chill out. These are family and friends, and they are not judging you."

Establish your own traditions

Holiday traditions are a blend of old and new. Dweck, who grew up "Mexican Catholic," says it has been easy for her and her husband, who is Jewish, to combine traditions, because "everything centers on family and food," she says. For generations, several dozen women in Dweck's family have gathered to make tamales before Christmas. They assemble, bag and freeze hundreds of tamales that are then served in all of the families' homes. The main recipe comes from her great-grandmother - slow-cooked pork with red chile sauce – but her husband doesn't eat pork, so now they make a chicken version and a vegetarian one.

Some families have a tradition of reflecting on why thoughts or ask an older relative or your funny cousin

PHOTO COURTESY OF DANAE HORST FOR JUNGALOW

A holiday tablescape featuring pomegranates, grapefruit and greenery by Jungalow.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JUNGALOW

Euphorbia Ammak is decorated for the holidays by Jungalow.

to prepare a toast. "It's a moment to slow down the dinner, a moment for reflection and to share things that are happening in our lives," Gluck says.

And if hosting a large dinner seems overwhelming, throw a party that isn't on the holiday itself. Miller says many people would appreciate something fun to do the day after Thanksgiving. "Start a new tradition of having friends and family come by for a Friday cocktail party." Or host a leftover turkey sandwich bar sometime over the weekend.



ENTERTAINING



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

This Thanksgiving, hosts can try something new by deep frying or smoking their turkeys.

2 UNIQUE WAYS TO COOK A THANKSGIVING 'I'U RKEY

Thanksgiving is a beloved holiday. Families may have their own unique Thanksgiving traditions, but one staple of this kickoff to the holiday season is bound to make its way to Thanksgiving dinner tables no matter how unusual families' holiday celebrations may be: turkey. Much effort goes into picking and preparing a Thanksgiving turkey. Depending on the size of the bird, turkeys can take many hours to cook. Thanksgiving celebrants are no doubt familiar with oven-roasted turkey, which is the most traditional way to cook turkey. But this year hosts who want to expand their horizons and think beyond the oven can consider two popular alternative methods to cooking a Thanksgiving turkey.

1. Deep frying

Deep frying is a popular way to prepare foods at outdoor events. For example, stroll through the parking lot on game day and you're liable to find football fans deep frying their favorite foods at their tailgate parties. Turkey can be deep fried and this method makes for an ideal option for hosts who want to enjoy the great outdoors while welcoming friends and loved ones to their homes. Deep frying imparts a juicy flavor that can be hard to replicate when roasting a turkey. Deep frying is a much faster way to cook a turkey than cooking it in the oven. However, deep frying also can be more dangerous, so it's imperative that cooks remain attentive when setting up the fryer and while the turkey is frying. Where to deep fry the turkey also bears consideration. The turkey experts at Butterball[®] recommend deep frying the turkey outside on a flat surface that's far away from structures, including your home, garage, deck, etc. The time

required to deep fry a turkey will depend on the size of the bird, but experts note that it typically takes about 3 to 3.5 minutes per pound. Electric fryers may take significantly less time and they typically require less oil, so this is another option to consider. Many experts note that it's best to deep fry turkeys that are 15 lbs. or less, as the turkey will need to be completely submerged in oil when frying. In addition, turkeys larger than 15 lbs. may cook unevenly, which can affect flavor.

2. Smoking

Smoking has grown in popularity in recent years as grills that make this method possible have become more affordable. Smoking is a "low and slow" method of cooking, so this option is ideal for people who intend to be home all day on Thanksgiving and want to infuse their birds with a smoky flavor. However, even busy hosts can still consider smoking, as electric smokers now allow cooks to remotely control the temperatures in their grills. That's important, as smoking requires cooks to periodically check the temperature on their grills to ensure it has not dropped too low or risen too high. Smoking a turkey typically requires maintaining a temperature between 225 and 250 F. Cooking times for smoked turkeys are typically around 30 minutes per pound, though it can take longer if the temperature is lower. Because of the extended cooking time, hosts may want to pick a turkey that weighs around 15 lbs., especially if they don't have much experience smoking. This Thanksgiving, hosts can try something new by deep frying or smoking their turkeys.

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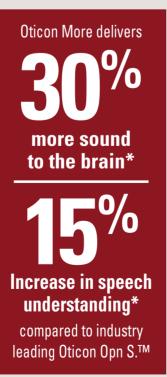


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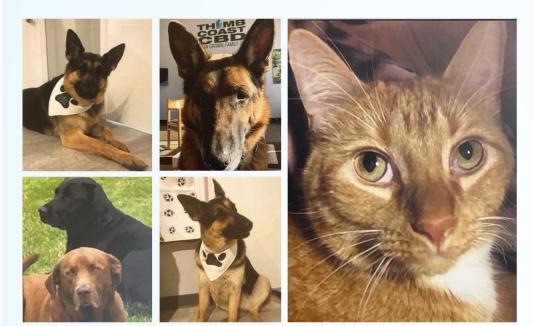


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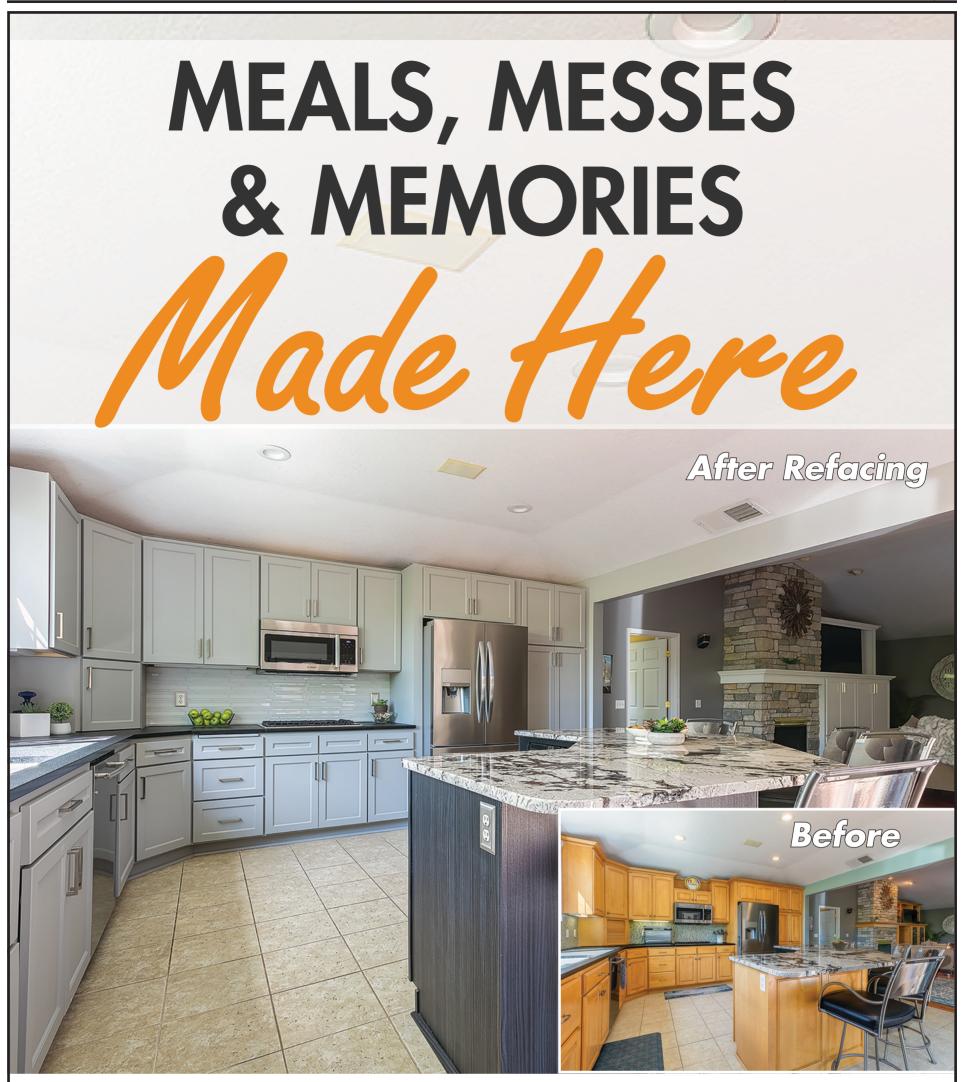


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HOLIDAY DECOR

A GUIDE TO PICKING THE PERFECT FRESH CHRISTMAS TREE



Selecting a tree is a yearly ritual and each person has his or her set of criteria for what makes the ideal Christmas tree.



haps no tradition evokes the warm and fuzzy "feels" more than a family outing to pick a Christmas tree. Whether it's a trek to a live to the nearest pre-cut tree lot, the process of selecting a tree that will serve as the crown jewel of the entire season is a great way to make lasting memories.

Selecting a tree is a yearly ritual and each person has his or her set of criteria for what makes the ideal Christmas tree. These tips can help families find the right tree.

Choose your species

tree you want prior to buying the tree. lar Christmas tree varieties, but there equally important to measure the are many others, such as noble fir and width of the area where the tree will

ome the holiday season, per- desirable shape and allow for adequate space between branches, advises the home and garden resource The Spruce. Trees groomed to be lush and full will look beautiful un-Christmas tree farm or a short drive adorned, but once ornaments are added, full branches may cause those ornaments to hang low or even fall off. Trees with sparse branches allow for ornaments to hang straight.

Measure your space

Trees in the field or in a lot may look much smaller than they do when brought into the living room. Don't make the mistake of selecting a tree that is too large for your home. The agricultural firm Ragan & Masey Do some homework on the type of says to measure the room from floor to ceiling and subtract the height of Balsam fir and Fraser fir are popu- the tree stand and tree topper. It's



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

A heavy pre-cut tree means it is full of water and has been cut more recently. A healthy, fresh tree is going to require an effort to lift.

the tree likely is not a good choice. In addition, avoid a tree that has glaring defects in the trunk as it can impede water flow through the tree.

Heavier is better

Look for trees that have a desirable shape and allow for adequate space between branches.

for having the most fragrant smell, foot traffic around the tree. but Frasers tend to keep their needles the longest. For those who prefer a Douglas fir, keep in mind that they sometimes drop their needles prematurely due to foliar diseases like needle-cast fungus.

Space for ornaments

Norway spruce. Balsams are known stand and allow for ample space for

Perform a needle check

Every tree will drop some needles, and most evergreens hold their foliage. Modest needle loss is not an indicator of a poor tree. However, Decker's Nursery in Greenlawn, NY says if 50% of the needles are lost when you In addition to aroma and needle swipe your hand down three to five longevity, look for trees that have a different branches around the tree,

A heavy pre-cut tree means it is full of water and has been cut more recently. A healthy, fresh tree is going to require an effort to lift. Older, dried out trees will not be heavy. Upon arriving home, make a fresh cut off the tree trunk and get it in water as soon as possible – even if that's a bucket until the tree stand can be set up.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

IN THE KITCHEN

Celebrate the holidays with special centerpieces

together quite like the holidays, and cal point of a memorable holiday dinner. serving up an elegant, seasonal meal centered around a mouthwatering main flavor, you can select a standout cut of dish is a recipe for creating lasting memories with the ones you love.

Forging a fabulous holiday experience for the special people in your life main course. starts with choosing a flavorful, tender cut of meat to serve as the centerpiece at OmahaSteaks.com/blog/recipes. of the meal. Hand-cut by expert butchers, an option like Spiral-Sliced Ham Courtesy of Family Features

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Rum and Cola Holiday Ham

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Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose Prep time: 30 minutes Cook time: 80 minutes Servings: 10-12

- Ham: 1 Omaha Steaks Spiral-Sliced Ham (8 pounds)
- Glaze: 1 cup cherry fruit spread 34 cup dark spiced rum 34 cup cola 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard ¼ teaspoon kosher salt To make ham:
 - Thaw frozen ham in refrigerator 24-48 hours.
- Remove from refrigerator and let ham come to room temperature, about 30-45 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 325 F. Remove ham from foil and film. Return ham to foil wrapping and place in oven-safe roasting pan. Roll foil down leaving 2 inches of foil around bottom of ham.
- Place roasting pan with ham in oven on lower rack and heat uncovered 60-75 minutes, until ham starts to brown. While ham cooks, make glaze.
- To make glaze:
- In medium saucepot, whisk fruit spread, rum, cola, Worcestershire sauce, Dijon mustard and salt until well incorporated. Bring to boil then reduce heat to me-
- dium. Simmer over medium heat 10 minutes then remove from heat. Cool to room temperature.
 - During last 15 minutes of cooking, glaze ham every 5 minutes.



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ENTERTAINING 5 TIPS TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR HOLIDAY GUESTS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Whether you're hosting a big or small group of family and friends this holiday season, decorating and decluttering around the house can make party prep easier and more enjoyable for everyone

Cooler temperatures, outings to the Christmas tree farm, game nights and holiday feasts. Now that the holiday season is here, it's time to prep your home for seasonal fun! Whether you're hosting a big or small group of family and friends this holiday season, decorating and decluttering around the house can make party prep easier and more enjoyable for everyone. With that in mind, here are some top tips to create functional and stylish spaces that are easy to keep clean and tidy throughout the festivities.



Delightful décor. Make any also offer extra space to store room feel warm and welcoming with EasyLiner Removable and snow from tracking in the Adhesive Shelf Liner by Duck Brand. Decorating with laminate is an affordable way to add pops of color to a kitchen backsplash, holiday gatherings need a space reading nook or old side table. Choose a print that matches your style and easily stick the laminate to smooth, flat surfaces for a fresh new look that will wow your guests.

 Mudroom without messy floors. Preparing an area near your entryway for bags and shoes is a must when expecting If you have family staying overvisitors. If you have a bench with night, it's time to get your guest storage, add machine-washable room in shape. Dress up drawers liner to the cubby to keep shelves clean and dry. Placing liner by

muddy or wet shoes and stop salt house. When guests leave, toss the liner in the wash and reuse.

• Spotless spaces for kids. All for kids to have fun and play together. While setting up for arts and crafts, line the table with a clear, textured liner to prevent cravons, markers or glue from damaging surfaces. When it's time to clean up, simply wipe the liner or toss it in the dishwasher.

• Get your guest room ready. and closet shelves with Smooth the entrance of your home will will keep the liner and items in guest bathroom. Keep styling on the mat.

Now that the holiday season is here, it's time to prep your home for seasonal fun.

vate your home décor and guests will appreciate how clean and homey the space feels during their stay.

 Bathroom basics. Once you're done prepping the guest

place. Trendy patterns will ele- stations and the bath clean and tidy with shelf liner and a bath mat. Duck Brand offers a variety of cushioned, machine-washable bath and shower mats for extra comfort and safety. The Clorox the holidays. mat is also designed to prevent Top EasyLiner. The grip bottom room, don't forget about the the growth of mold and mildew

Making these small updates around the house now will keep your most-used spaces clean and tidy to ensure family and friends are comfortable and happy over

Story courtesy of StatePoint Media



TRAVEL **TIPS TO ENSURE HOLIDAY ROAD TRIPS ARE SAFE AND STRESS-FREE**

After a 2020 holiday season in which the pandemic forced the postponement or cancellation of festivities, families are planning to get together once again in 2021. Many people will head home for the holidays this year, and the vast majority will take to the highway to do so. The U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics says the Thanksgiving and Christmas/New Year's holiday periods are among the busiest for long-distance travel. The highways will be busy with motorists criss-crossing the country to visit loved ones. Holiday travel may require covering a long distance in a limited amount of time. Finding ways to be efficient in regard to time management can reduce stress and improve safety.

• Travel at night. If you can safely manage it, you may expein the evening hours than during other times of day. In addition, if kids are in tow, they may sleep much of the way, helping to reduce the number of times they ask, "Are we there yet?" Share driving responsibilities with another person so that each driver can take a break to prevent drowsy driving.

check. No one wants to get rants online prior to leaving so stranded on the side of the road with a car filled with gifts and treats. It's well worth the investment to have a mechanic give a may be taking up valuable real vehicle a checkup prior to leaving. Get an oil change even if and beverages to help reduce how it's a little early to do so. Look at many times you need to get off tire tread wear and ensure that the highway. Also, games or other you have the right tires for the forms of entertainment can keep



rience considerably less traffic Holiday travel may require covering a long distance in a limited amount of time. Finding ways to be efficient in regard to time management can reduce stress and improve safety.

headed.

 Plan your route. People often rely on mobile phone or dashboard GPS systems to get where they need to go. However, it helps to have a general idea of the route so that if service drops out you can still find your way. Scout out Get a vehicle maintenance rest stops or acceptable restauyou have a plan for making stops in safe areas.

• Stock the car. While presents estate, pack a cooler with snacks road conditions where you'll be children occupied on long trips.

 Slow down in inclement weather. The holiday meal can be reheated if you're late, so don't feel compelled to speed or drive erratically when the weather is stormy. It's not worth the risk of getting into an accident that can cause serious injuries. Travelers United, a nonprofit organization that represents all travelers, also warns that quick storms that pop up after a long dry spell can immediately make road surfaces extremely slippery. Use caution.

Planning and preparation are essential to getting home safely this holiday season.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection



Planning and preparation are essential to getting home safely this holiday season.





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SHOPPING

HOW TO HANDLE THE RETURN OF BLACK FRIDAY

he holiday season figures to feel more familiar in 2021 than it did a year ago, when a global pandemic forced people to change how they celebrated and shopped. Though the pandemic is not yet in the rearview mirror, the rollout of a trio of effective vaccines should make it possible for millions of people to celebrate safely this holiday season.

A return to normalcy should be welcome news for local retailers, and Black Friday could start the beginning of a busy and lucrative holiday season. With a more normal holiday season on the horizon, shoppers may benefit from a refresher course on how to get the best Black Friday deals.

 Start early. Black Friday may not begin until the day after Thanksgiving, but savvy shoppers know that many retailers post or leak their sales well in advance of the big day. Various websites are devoted to helping consumers find the best Black Friday deals. Many such websites update their listings as retailers release more sales information. Consumers can bookmark Black Friday websites and then periodically visit them to learn about the latest deals.

• Comparison shop. Getting a head start on Black Friday shopping day out for the second year also affords shoppers a chance to comparison shop. PriceGrabber.com makes it easy to compare deals from a wide range of retailers on everything from appliances to furniture to pet supplies.

• Confirm when stores open. Many retailers abandoned midnight store openings on Black Friday safely land great deals by a year ago. Such decisions opting for curbside pickup were made to protect pub- this Black Friday. lic health and they may remain in place in 2021. feel more normal in 2021 Though it might be a family tradition to visit a retailer in the wee small hours of the Black Friday morning, the pandemic has changed the holiday shopping landscape. So confirm when stores open and close before crawling out of bed in the dark this Black Friday.



Black Friday figures to feel more normal in 2021 than it did a year ago.

 Utilize curbside pickup to avoid crowds. Shoppers who are still nervous about COVID-19 don't have to sit Black Friin a row. Various retailers started offering curbside pickup during the pandemic and that option has proven so popular that it's stuck around even after vaccines became widely available. Shoppers with unvaccinated children at home or those who simply want to avoid crowds can

PHOTOS COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION



Black Friday figures to than it did a year ago. Consumers can capitalize on Black Friday sales by revisiting some old shopping strategies and embracing new ones as the 2021 holiday season begins.

Story courtesy of Metro Creative Connection

Shoppers may benefit from a refresher course on how to get the best Black Friday deals.

ENTERTAINING

Warm and wow guests with homemade hot mulled apple cider

that hosts direct so much of their for the festivities. focus to the foods they plan to serve. The main course is often the focal point and most memorable aspect of a dinner party, and that's true whether the get-together is a backyard barbecue, a holiday meal with colleagues.

Food might be a focal point, but guests also will need something to drink. Traditional spirits like wine and cocktails are the standard, but hosts who want to get a little creative should not hesitate to do so. When choosing a special beverage, want to cool down on warm summer evenings, so something cold perfect signature cocktail. When hosting on nights when the mercury has dropped, a warm beverage can heat up guests in a matter of minutes. On such nights, hosts can serve this version of der" courtesy of Laurey Masterton's "The Fresh Honey Cookbook" (Storey). One added benefit to Mas- Courtesy of Metro Creative terton's recipe is it can produce a Connection

When hosting friends and fam- welcoming winter aroma, helping ily at home, it's understandable hosts establish a warm ambiance

Hot Mulled (Sherried) Apple Cider

Serves 16

1 gallon apple cider 1 orange, unwith the family or a formal affair peeled, cut into slices 1/4 cup whole cloves 4 sticks cinnamon 1/4 cup honey, preferably cranberry honey 1 cup sherry (optional)

• Combine the cider, orange slices, cloves, cinnamon, and honey in a large pot over medium heat. If you are picky about things floating in your cider, make a littiming is everything. Guests will the bundle out of cheesecloth and place the cinnamon and cloves inside before adding to the cider. I and refreshing can make for the like to chew on cloves, so I just toss everything in. Bring to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer over low heat for an hour or so to spread these lovely winter aromas around your home.

• If you're serving it to adults, "Hot Mulled (Sherried) Apple Ci- add the sherry. It might make everyone want to go sledding!



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION When hosting on nights cool nights, a warm beverage can heat up guests in a matter of minutes.

IN THE KITCHEN HOLIDAY SWEETS MADE TO SHARE



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAMILY FEATURES

With an easy recipe like Peanut Butter Saltine Candy that calls for just a handful of ingredients, you can get the whole family involved in the kitchen.

Among the decorations, gifts and gatherings of loved ones, there's perhaps nothing quite like family favorite foods that call to mind the joy of the holidays. Whether your loved ones relish building gingerbread houses or dining on an allin feast, looking forward to annual traditions is part of what makes the season so special.

This year, you can add to the fun with a new annual activity by creating a delightful dessert with the help of little ones and adults alike. With an easy recipe like Peanut Butter Saltine Candy that calls for just a handful of ingredients, you can get the whole family involved in the kitchen.

Ask your little helpers to measure out ingredients while a grownup prepares the pan and uses the stove. Once the base is finished baking, call the kids back to sprinkle chocolate chips and peanut butter chips over the top.

After your candy creation is cooled, just break it into pieces meant to be shared with the entire family. An added benefit: all can enjoy the nutrient-rich flavor of peanuts, which rise to superfood status by delivering 19 vitamins and minerals and 7 grams of protein per serving. Find more holiday recipes at gapea-

nuts.com

Courtesy of Family Features

Peanut Butter Saltine Candy

Yield: 45 pieces

Nonstick cooking spray (butter flavor) 1 sleeve (4 ounces) regular saltine crackers 1/2 cup butter 3/4 cup creamy peanut butter 1 cup granulated sugar 2 cups milk chocolate chips 1/2 cup peanut butter chips 1/2 cup rough chopped, dry roasted peanuts

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line 10-by-15-by-1inch pan with aluminum foil. Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray then lay saltines flat in single layer on prepared pan. Set aside.

 In heavy duty, 1-quart saucepan over medium heat, combine butter, peanut butter and sugar. Stir constantly until butter and sugar are melted, bringing mixture to boil. Boil 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Pour cooked mixture over saltines and bake 5 minutes.

 Remove from oven and sprinkle chocolate chips over saltines. Let cool 3 minutes then spread melted chocolate completely over saltines.

• Sprinkle peanut butter chips evenly over chocolate. Return pan to oven 1 minute to soften chips. Pull pointed tines of fork through softened peanut butter chips to partially cover chocolate. Sprinkle chopped peanuts on top, gently pressing into candy.

• Let cool on rack about 15 minutes then place in freezer 3 minutes. Remove from freezer and break into pieces. Store in airtight container.

IN THE KITCHEN Chocolate cookies are a sweet finale to Thanksgiving dinners

Holiday entertaining season begins 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract on Thanksgiving. Anyone who has been tasked with hosting Thanksgiving understands the commitment required to prepare a delicious meal for guests, aside. which often encompasses appetizers, several side dishes and, of course, turkey as the centerpiece. Guests attending a Thanksgiving dinner can give holiday hosts and hostesses a break by providing dessert.

Cookies are a popular treat. Thanks to their flavor, portability and relatively short preparation and cooking times, cookies are a smart choice when bringing dessert to a holiday gathering. This recipe for "Flourless Chocolate Cookies" from Danielle Rye's "Live Well Bake Cookies: 75 Classic Cookie Recipes for Every Occasion" (Rock Point) offers the added benefit of being flourless. That means that even those with gluten allergies or intolerances can indulge.

Flourless Chocolate Cookies

Makes 24 to 36 cookies

3 cups powdered sugar 34 natural unsweetened cocoa powder 1/2 teaspoon espresso powder (optional) ¼ teaspoon salt 2 large egg whites, at room temperature 1 large egg, at room temperature 1 Connection

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats and set

• In a large mixing bowl, sift the powdered sugar and unsweetened cocoa powder together, then whisk in the instant espresso powder (if using) and salt until well combined. Set aside.

• In a separate mixing bowl, whisk together the egg whites, egg, and vanilla extract until fully combined.

 Add the wet ingredients to the dry ingredients, and stir until the mixture is fully combined and smooth.

• Using a 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, scoop the cookie dough onto the prepared baking sheets, making sure to leave a little room between each one.

Bake for 11 to 14 minutes, or until the tops of the cookies are set. Remove from the oven, and allow the cookies to cool completely on the baking sheets.

 Store the cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 5 days.

Courtesy of Metro Creative



PHOTO COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

These flourless chocolate cookies are delicate and need to be cooled completely before handling

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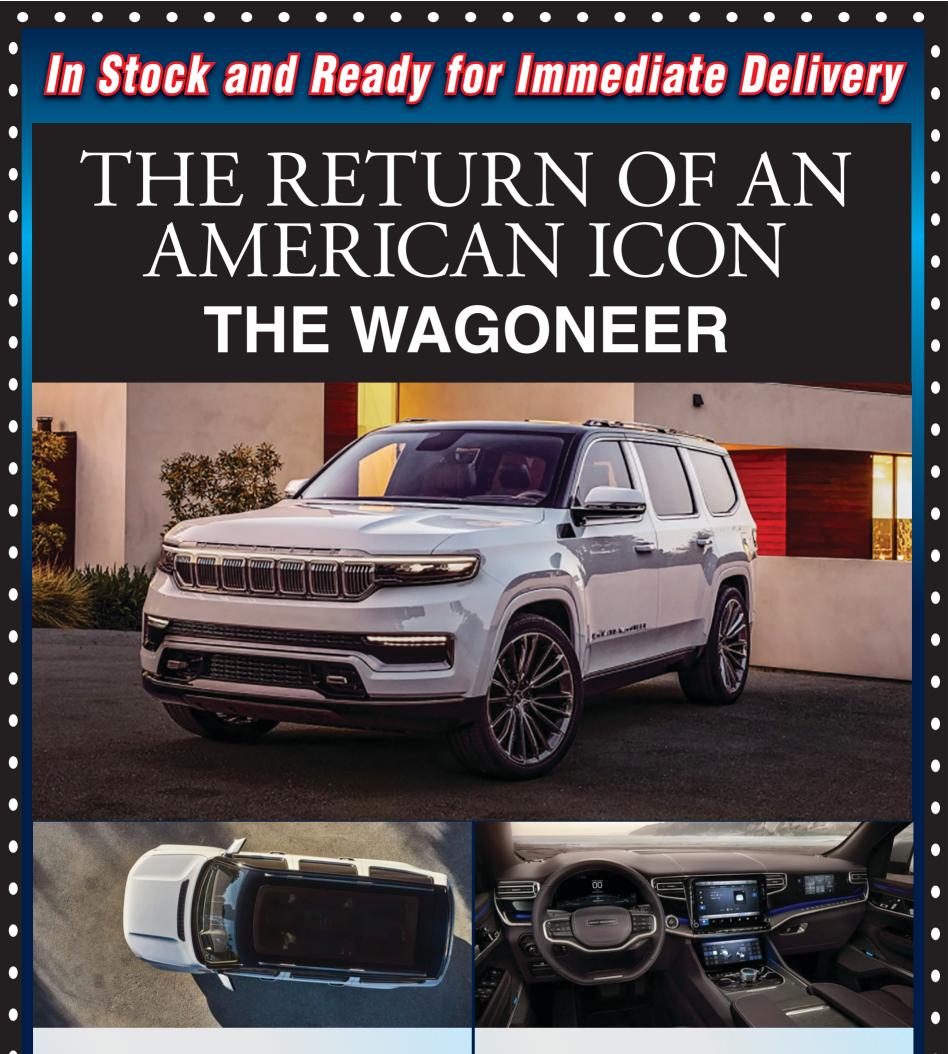


Sunday, November 25, 2021

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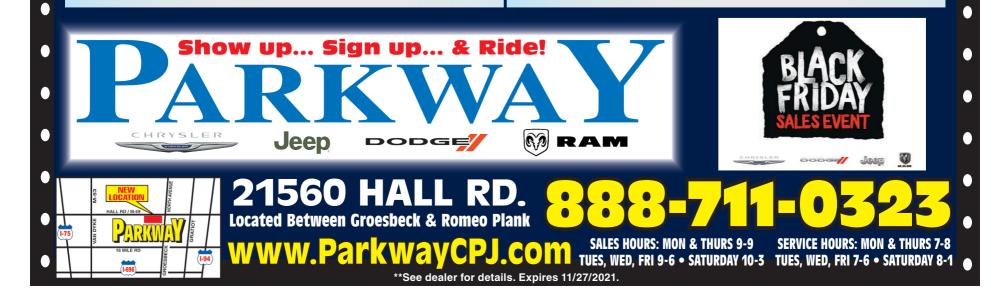
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