

# holiday

gifts &  
**LIFESTYLE**



A special supplement to the award-winning  
**THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER**  
Tuesday, November 8, 2022



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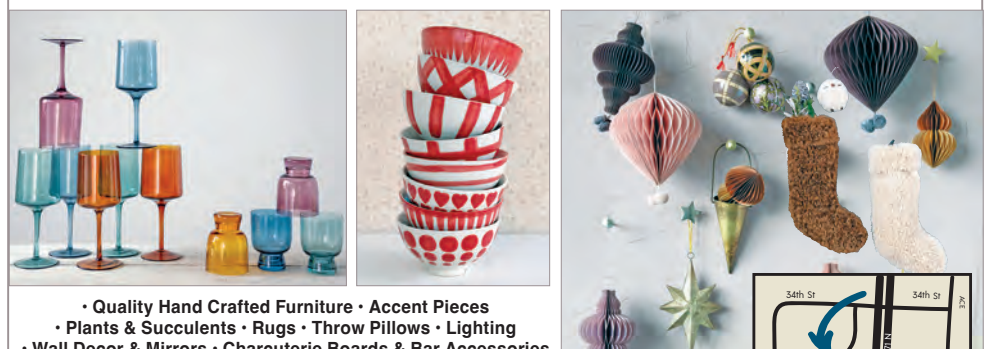
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# What to Give New Homeowners This Holiday Season



- Video doorbell
- Furniture gift card
- Tool kit
- Customized doormat
- Programmable thermostat
- Linens

The real estate market has been a wild ride in recent years. Sellers have cashed in on record-breaking profits, and buyers have had to compete against many others — sometimes in bidding wars — for a limited number of properties. Once listed, homes are selling fast. As interest rates rise and inventory increases, things are likely to change, though for some it did not come soon enough.

Individuals who were lucky enough to find a new home this year may discover they now have little money to

the door, while providing surveillance of the comings and goings outside of the home. Depending on the product, a subscription may be needed to access video history. Doorbells range from \$50 to \$200 and more depending on features and resolution.

• Furniture gift card: There's a good chance new homeowners will need to furnish new rooms in a home, particularly if they're coming from an apartment or a smaller place. Many people also like to update furnishings when they move into new places. A gift card to a popular furniture store in the area will provide the head-start

outfit those homes. Shoppers with new homeowners on their holiday shopping lists may want to help those loved ones outfit their homes this season. The following are some home-related gift ideas to get shoppers started.

• Video/smart doorbell: Although the smart doorbell market began with only a handful of options, there's now a bevy of manufacturers who make video and smart home doorbells. These doorbells serve the dual purpose of alerting homeowners to someone at

new homeowners need to secure sofas, dining sets, lamps, rugs, and more.

• Household tool kit: What better way to prepare new homeowners for the do-it-yourself projects and household repairs than with a tool kit? Home improvement retailers often package common tools needed in carrying cases or sets, but shoppers can grab separate items they think will be used and group them together into one gift. Pliers, screwdrivers, wrenches, a level, and measuring tape are good starter tools.

• Customized doormat: Give that new home additional curb appeal with a doormat customized with a special message or the new homeowners' names, such as Welcome to the Smith Home. Other customizable products include cutting boards and wall plaques.

• Programmable thermostat: A programmable or learning thermostat will help new homeowners save on their energy bills. Many thermostats now pair with smart home systems and phones and automatically adjust the temperature as needed to reduce energy consumption.

• Linens: A high thread count sheet set or plush Turkish cotton towels may not be something new homeowners think to get for themselves. But these luxurious gifts can make life at home more comfortable.

Moving into a new home is an exciting yet expensive endeavor. Carefully curated gifts can tap into what new homeowners need the most.

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## Get The Appliances You Want This Christmas!

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: decor & boutique :

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Santa will be at the South Park Mall, in the food court, every Saturday & Sunday from noon-5pm through Sunday, December 18.

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## Bake Up A Sweet Holiday Treat

Entertaining is a big part of the holiday season. Calendars are packed this time of year with gatherings with friends, family and professional colleagues.

Entertaining requires keeping plenty of refreshments on hand to ensure guests maintain their holiday spirit. Dessert is no stranger to the season, with office break rooms, dining tables and buffet stations brimming with sweet treats to tempt celebrants' palates. Everyone should have a go-to dessert to bring along to a holiday party or to offer guests when hosting their own fêtes. Cookies are a standard due to their versatility and portability.

Festive "Sour Cream Cookies" provide all of the holiday feels and can be customized in color to reflect celebrations of Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or New Year's. Bake up a batch, courtesy of "Live Well Bake Cookies" (Rock Point) by Danielle Rye.

### Sour Cream Cookie

Makes 22 Cookies

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup sour cream, at room temperature

### Vanilla Buttercream Frosting

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon heavy whipping cream or milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Gel food coloring (optional)

1. To make the cookies: Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats and set aside.
2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt until well combined. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or in a large mixing bowl using a handheld mixer, beat the butter and granulated sugar together for 1 to 2 minutes, or until well combined.
4. Mix in the egg and vanilla extract until fully combined, making sure to stop and scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.
5. Mix in the dry ingredients in two additions, alternating with the sour cream. Make sure to mix in each addition until just combined, and be careful not to overmix the batter.
6. Using a 1 1/2-tablespoon cookie scoop, scoop the cookie dough onto the prepared baking sheets, making sure to leave a little room between each one.
7. Bake for 14 to 16 minutes, or until the tops of the cookies are set and spring back when touched lightly. Remove from the oven, and allow to cool on the baking sheets for 10 minutes, then carefully transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool completely.
8. To make the vanilla buttercream frosting: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment or in a large mixing bowl using a handheld mixer, beat the butter for 1 to 2 minutes, or until smooth. Add the powdered sugar, 1/2 cup at a time, mixing in each addition until well combined.
9. Add the heavy whipping cream, vanilla extract, and gel food coloring (if using), and continue mixing until fully combined.
10. Once the cookies have cooled completely, spread the frosting on top of the cookies.
11. Store the cookies in an airtight container at room temperature or in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. ©metrocreativeconnection

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# Experiential Gifts For Kids

The popularity of experiential gifts is undeniable. In its 2021 Winter Holiday Shopping Report, the market research firm Mintel revealed that nearly half of individuals surveyed for the report felt that experiential gifts are superior to tangible items. Such preferences are something holiday shoppers can keep in mind as they pursue the perfect gift for their loved ones.

Experiential gifts are often associated with adults and their bucket lists, but kids have much to gain from being gifted experiences as well. In addition to the lasting memories inspired by experiential gifts, such offerings also get kids up and out of the house. Parents recognize that's not always so easy in the digital age.

Though children likely don't have a bucket list that can make it easy for holiday shoppers to find the perfect experiential gift, the following are a number of experiences that kids of all ages can enjoy.

*@metrocreativeconnection*

- A day at the zoo
- A trip to a trampoline park or bouncy house facility
- Tickets to a sporting event, concert or live show
- Music lessons
- A paint and sip (juice) event with one or both parents
- Cooking lessons
- A day at a nearby national park
- A camping trip
- Horseback riding lessons
- A day at a nearby amusement park
- A day at a local arcade
- A day at a local museum with interactive exhibits
- A helicopter ride
- Art lessons
- A day on the ski slopes
- A day on the beach
- Gymnastics lessons/classes
- A day at the local bowling alley with friends
- Ice skating lessons
- A round of mini golf
- Jewelry-making lessons/classes
- A fishing trip on a nearby body of water

There's no shortage of experiences that can benefit children's lives. That's something holiday shoppers can keep in mind as they shop for the perfect gifts for youngsters on their shopping list this December.



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# Craft an Entire Day Around Tree Shopping



Though retailers may begin playing holiday tunes shortly after Halloween, for many people, no date on the calendar marks the beginning of the holiday season better than the day they pick up their Christmas tree.

There are many different ways to acquire a Christmas tree. Some people prefer artificial Christmas trees that can be stored and taken out each year. Others make a yearly expedition to a tree lot or a Christmas tree farm to find the perfect fir or spruce. Historians believe a man named W.V. McGallard planted 25,000 Norway spruce seedlings at his Mercer County, New Jersey farm in 1901, essentially establishing the first commercial Christmas tree farm. By 1908, customers could visit the farm and choose trees for \$1 each. McGallard helped create an entirely new industry that now accounts for 350 million trees being grown and sold in the United States every year.

Selecting a Christmas tree may not take more than an hour or two, but there are ways for families and other tree shoppers to maximize their time spent looking for a tree.

- Bring refreshments. Couple Christmas tree shopping with picnicking if the weather is amenable. Pack some foldable chairs into the vehicle (sitting on the ground on a blanket may be too cold) and bring along thermoses of coffee or hot cocoa. Snacks like granola bars, Christmas cookies or other filling

treats can keep everyone satisfied and energized while they shop for a tree.

- Pair tree shopping with a trip to see lighting displays. Find the tree lot or tree farm and then scope out potentially scenic spots to view holiday lighting displays nearby. Neighborhood Facebook or other social media groups often tout homes that put up eye-catching displays. Ask around for addresses and plan your own tours.

- Plan a night out. Everyone may be tired and hungry after a long day of Christmas tree hunting. Plus, it's typically a good idea to wait some time for boughs to open before decorating. Use this opportunity to dine out and return home ready to decorate. Make it a regular occurrence that Christmas tree shopping is followed by a family meal at a favorite restaurant.

- Watch a classic film. Many different holiday movies are broadcast this time of year and each enhances the Christmas spirit. While putting up the tree, play a favorite film in the background. What better way to enjoy decorating your own tree than by watching Charlie Brown adorn his meager evergreen at the same time?

Make a day of selecting and putting up the Christmas tree each year. Doing so can enhance the holidays and make for an entertaining way to spend time together as a couple or family.

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# 8 Easy Holiday Centerpiece Ideas



The holiday season is a great time to make any home a bit more merry and bright. Most individuals let their personalities show through their home decor, and holiday decorating is just as personal as decorating throughout the rest of the year.

The main living areas of a home get the most decorating attention, with a Christmas tree or menorah taking a prominent position in the front window. Garlands, candles and other accoutrements also may dress up spaces. However, when it comes to holiday hosting, attention also should be given to the dining table — which can benefit from a festive centerpiece.

Premade centerpieces are undeniably attractive, but adding a homespun touch can be a fun creative pursuit and become a family tradition. Explore these eight simple ideas to dress up your holiday table.

1. Frosted pine cones: Take advantage of a crisp winter's day to venture into a forest or park that is rich with evergreen trees. Gather pine cones from the forest floor and, if possible, a few evergreen boughs. Give the pine cones a touch of winter whimsy with a little faux snow in a can or even white paint. Nestle the boughs and pine cones into a wide-mouthed vase or bowl in the center of the table. Individual pine cones can later be turned into place cards for seating guests.

2. Holiday thanks: Cut many strips of paper roughly 6 inches in length from various colored pieces of paper to match the holiday theme. When guests arrive, ask them to write a favorite holiday memory or two, or what they're thankful for. Twirl the paper strips around a pencil to curl them, and then place the curlicues into a decorative

bowl in the center of the table. Later in the evening, the host or hostess can read some of the sentiments.

3. Magical forest: Use green and silver conical party hats to turn a table or sideboard into a veritable evergreen forest. Arrange them on a blanket of faux snow or white confetti.

4. Freshly cut: Select attractive flowers in vibrant holiday hues from a florist or even the supermarket floral section. Cut the stems and place them into an unusual display container, such as holiday themed mugs or a punch bowl.

5. Glass baubles: Who says ornaments should be exclusive to the tree? A crystal or glass cake stand can be transformed into an icy delight when topped with silver and clear glass ornaments.

6. Birch wood: The crisp white coloring of birch bark is right at home with holiday decor. Go stark with pieces of the cut wood in varying heights intermingled with white candles that mimic the shapes and scale of the wood.

7. Fruit and vegetables: If guests are coming over and the race is on for a fast centerpiece, look no further than the kitchen. Lemons, artichokes, pears, or pomegranates look festive in a bowl interspersed with some greenery and baby's breath.

8. Cornucopia: The horn of plenty can be customized to any holiday. Purchase a horn in wicker or woven grapevine and fill with flowers, fruit and greenery, or even painted gourds or miniature pumpkins.

Holiday hosts and hostesses should not neglect the dining table when they decorate. Festive centerpieces can be handmade without much effort on the part of hosts..

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# A classic cocktail toasts the season with a twist

People indulge just a little bit more when the holidays arrive. That may translate into enjoying an extra meal at a favorite neighborhood restaurant, buying one or two additional gifts to stash under the tree or hosting a gathering with close friends that stretches into the wee hours of the morning. Some choose to indulge by sipping a cocktail while watching the snowflakes fall. A whiskey sour is a classic that can be given a makeover with some ingredients that are tailor-made for the holiday season. In this recipe for “Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour,” courtesy of the editors of American Lifestyle, fragrant and flavorful fruit and herbs blend well with the tartness of the drink.

## Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour

Makes 4

### Rosemary Simple Syrup:

- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary

### Cocktail:

- 6 ounces whiskey
- 3 ounces sour mix
- 16 ounces cranberry juice
- Cranberries, for garnish
- Rosemary sprigs, for garnish

1. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the sugar, water and rosemary. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, creating a syrup. Remove from the heat, strain to remove the rosemary, and refrigerate.
  2. Fill a shaker with ice, and pour in the whiskey, sour mix, simple syrup, and cranberry juice. Shake, and pour into ice-filled glasses. Garnish with cranberries and rosemary before serving.
- Tip: This recipe is great without the whiskey, as a classy, adult “zero proof” drink. You can make a big batch as a lovely punch — leave some cranberries and rosemary on the side for garnish.
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