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Gifts for Holiday Hosts

Millions of people open their homes to relatives and friends each holiday season. Taking on the task of holiday host can be a labor of love, as it involves not only a commitment of time, but also a financial investment. Lending Tree reported that 60 percent of Americans considering hosting holiday gatherings in 2023 expected to spend an average of \$556 on their celebrations.

Six-figure earners planned to spend even more, indicating they expected to spend \$764 on holiday hosting.

Guests benefiting from holiday hosts' hospitality can offer tokens of their appreciation upon arrival. The following are some great gifts to offer hosts this holiday season.

- Beverage of choice: A bottle of wine or another spirit can be a great gift for holiday gatherings. Let hosts decide if they want to serve it with the meal or save it to enjoy at a later time.

- Curated food basket: A guest can put together a basket of different foods, including crackers, cheeses, jams, bread sticks, and other items that can be enjoyed as snacks or appetizers.

- Holiday plant.: A poinsettia or Christmas cactus may be fitting this time of year, and a holiday host can enjoy seeing it grow during the season.

- Kitchen tools or serving items: A beautiful olive wood serving platter or cutting board might be appreciated, particularly if guests arrive with it covered in a charcuterie spread.

- Scented candle: Hosts can set the mood and add to the ambiance of an entertaining space with lit, scented

candles, which make for a great gift. Guests can inquire as to the hosts' preferred aromas or stick with safe bets like vanilla or cinnamon.

- Holiday ornament or decorative piece: Guests can offer ornaments for the tree or another decorative item for hosts who are repeat entertainers. Dating the decoration or having it engraved can transform it into a memento hosts can relish through the years.

- Comfort and care assortment: Hosting takes effort, so a box of items to pamper holiday hosts can be a great gift. Fill the box with a loofah, bath bombs, shower gel, moisturizing cream, and massage oil.

Holiday hosts invest time and money into making their homes welcoming spaces to spend the holidays. Guests can treat these hosts with gifts to show how much their efforts and hospitality are appreciated.

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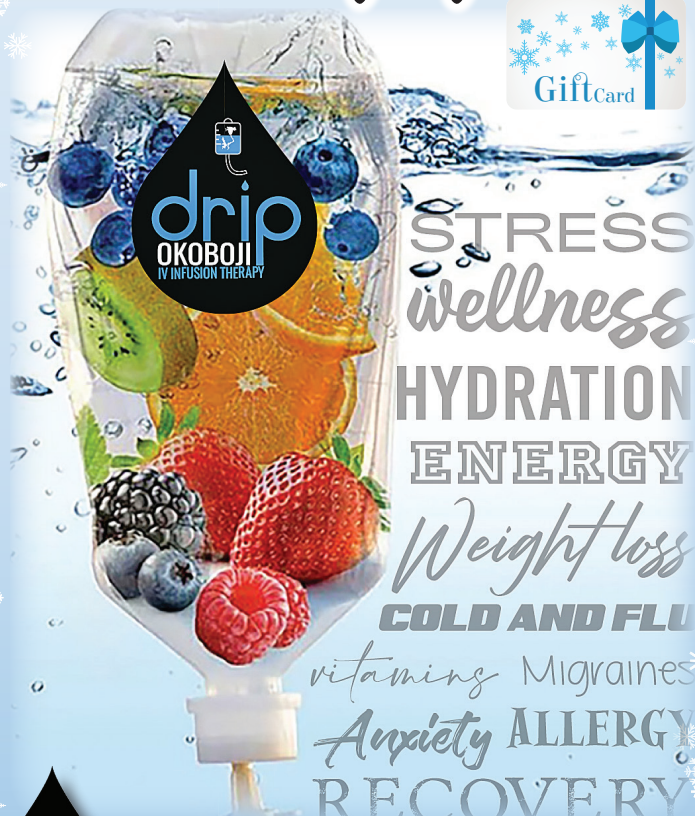
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Tips to Prepare to Host Holiday Guests

They're back! Family, friends and acquaintances are once again taking up residence on cots and fold-out sofas across the country as loved ones gather to celebrate the holiday season. That's welcome news nearly three years after a pandemic first restricted such gatherings. But hosts must ask themselves: Am I ready to host house guests?

Travel is a big component of the holiday season. According to a 2021 survey by The Vacationer, a travel tip and vacation guide, nearly 63 percent of Americans age 18 or older planned to travel for at least one holiday in 2021, with most traveling in December. That marked a 37 percent increase in travel from a year prior. Holiday travel for 2022 may be even higher as families adapt to life during the pandemic. As individuals get ready to host holiday guests, here are some strategies to maximize space and make guests feel comfortable.

• Discuss plans in advance. Every traveler is different.

Some people thrive on making lists and following itineraries. Others fly by the seat of their pants. It's reasonable to ask potential house guests how they envision their visit, including if they plan to stay long and if it will include sleeping over. This way you can make accommodations accordingly, particularly if guests request to borrow a vehicle or want to see the sights.

• Create some extra privacy. While some homes are equipped to handle guests comfortably, smaller homes may not be equipped with such luxuries. Folding screens can be used to create a barrier and add some privacy in open spaces where guests will be staying.

• Stash away travel samples. Travel-sized soaps, shampoos and lotions can make guests feel more welcome. Stock up at the grocery store or pharmacy and leave them in the room where guests will be staying.

• Stock up on new linens. Treat guests to fresh fluffy towels and new bed linens, especially

if it's been awhile since you have restocked these items.

• Ask about food preferences. Your guests may not want to munch on kale chips and tofu hot dogs apart from the holiday meal. Don't push your food restrictions on others. Ask guests what they typically eat and then fill the pantry and refrigerator with some of the items they mention. When guests need snacks, they'll have familiar foods on hand.

• Be mindful of bedtimes. Consider guests' preferences about bedtimes. While you may be a night owl, some guests may hit the hay much earlier, particularly older relatives or those with young children. If need be, make an effort to be quiet when kids or early birds are staying over.

Hosting for the holidays requires a little creativity and flexibility. All that effort is well worth it when loved ones have a good time while staying over.

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When Did Christmas Lights Become So Popular

Holiday lights are now everywhere come the holiday season. Private homeowners tend to hang the holiday lights outside their homes around Thanksgiving weekend and keep them up through New Year's Day. Though it might seem like a tradition without a deep history, decorating a Christmas tree with electric lights can be traced all the way back to the nineteenth century. In 1882, Edward Johnson, who was a friend and colleague of the man who invented light bulbs, Thomas Edison, replaced candles, which had traditionally been used to briefly light Christmas trees, with light bulbs. But at the time of Johnson's innovation, the high cost and relative infancy of light bulbs ensured the idea did not catch on. And though United States President Grover Cleveland used electric lights to illuminate a Christmas tree in the White House in 1895, it would be another eight years before General Electric would begin selling Christmas light kits. Those kits cost \$12 in 1903, which equates to several hundred dollars today. The first outdoor Christmas light shows started to become popular in the 1920s, and this is the same time when commercial sales of Christmas lights picked up. In the 1960s, GE's decision to begin manufacturing Christmas lights overseas helped reduce the price of outdoor lights even further, thus paving the way for the tradition of decorating home exteriors with string lights during the holiday season to take a firm hold. And that tradition remains wildly popular today.

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Savor the Holidays with a Special Roast

Roasts are customary during the holiday season because they often feed a crowd and look impressive on serving platters. Some people opt for a roast beef while others prefer to roast a turkey. However, chicken just as easily can be turned into a Christmas dinner since it is versatile and tasty. In addition, the cooking time for a roasted chicken is much shorter than it is with other roasted dishes.

This recipe for "Roast Chicken with Whole Roasted Garlic" from "Rachael Ray 50: Memories and Meals from a Sweet and Savory Life" (Ballantine Books) by Rachael Ray provides the basis for a tasty holiday meal. Simply multiply the recipe as needed depending on the number of guests.

Roast Chicken with Whole Roasted Garlic

Serves 4

- 1 4-pound chicken
- Kosher salt
- 2 lemons, one pierced several times with the tines of a fork and one halved
- Few sprigs each of thyme and rosemary
- 4 large bulbs garlic, 1 per person or portion, ends cut to expose the cloves (keep the hairy root end intact)
- EVOO (extra-virgin olive oil) for drizzling
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 cup white wine
- Warm, crusty bread



Place the chicken in a shallow baking dish. Salt the chicken inside and out and place uncovered in the fridge overnight. Preheat the oven to 450 F.

Pat the chicken dry and fill with the pierced whole lemon, thyme and rosemary. Tie the legs up. Dress the bulbs of garlic with EVOO; season with salt and pepper. Arrange the garlic in the baking dish around the chicken. Rub the skin of the chicken with butter and season with pepper. Pour the wine into the bottom of the dish.

Roast the chicken for 1 hour or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the dark meat reads 165 F. Let the chicken stand for a few minutes on a carving board until just cool enough to handle. Carve the chicken, dividing the white and dark parts and slicing the breast meat on the bias. Arrange the chicken on plates or a platter and top with drippings, juices and the juice from the remaining halved lemon. The garlic may get dark but it won't be charred. Serve in the skins or squeeze the paste from the skins with your knife and pass with a spoon to eat with the chicken or to slather on the warm chunks of bread.

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Real or artificial?

The Christmas tree debate continues

People are passionate about the things they love. Through the years there have been many debates over a wide range of topics, from which cola brand to back to which book/movie character was more deserving of a lead character's heart. The holiday season features a classic example of taking sides. The debate surrounding artificial Christmas trees and their natural alternatives will pick back up this holiday season. As with any debate, there are two sides to every story. Those on the fence as to whether to go real or fake this year can consider these pros and cons of each.

Real tree

Pros: One of the biggest advantages of a real tree is its pleasing aroma. The fresh pine smell of a natural tree can trigger memories of Christmases gone by and make a home feel cozy and holiday-ready. It takes many years for a Christmas tree to grow large enough to be harvested, and as it grows it provides a habitat for animals and benefits the planet by absorbing carbon and providing oxygen, according to Megan Quinn, coordinator of conservation biology at the Nature Conservancy of Canada. When trees are cut down, two or three can be planted in their place.

Buying a real tree from a business nearby also supports the local economy.

Cons: Real trees can be messy and require upkeep like daily watering. Cutting down a tree oneself and bringing it home can help guarantee freshness, but there is really no way to know when trees at Christmas tree lots were cut down. This means that needles can begin falling the moment the tree is placed in the living room. Another thing to note is that live trees can't be placed just anywhere. They shouldn't be next to fireplaces or heat sources, where they can dry out prematurely and pose a fire risk. A real tree also might have unwelcome bugs or animals hiding within its branches. According to Penn State Extension, anything from spotted lanternflies to spiders to aphids to bark beetles or lice may be on a real tree.

Artificial tree

Pros: Artificial trees can be convenient because they are easy to assemble, disassemble and store. Plus, you don't have to venture out each year to get one. Unlike real trees, artificial trees do not require watering or vacuuming to manage fallen needles. Since artificial trees can be reused for numerous

seasons, they may be more cost-effective than real trees. Artificial trees can last anywhere from six to 10 years, but that life span depends on the quality of the tree and how well it is maintained. Artificial trees also guarantee a uniform, pleasing look year after year. **Cons:** Artificial trees are made from polyvinyl chloride and other plastics, and environmentalists attest that those ingredients make them bad for the environment. According to an assessment study of artificial versus natural trees published in 2009 by Ellipso, a Montreal-based sustainable development consulting firm, an artificial tree emits 8.1 kilograms of carbon dioxide per year, compared to 3.1 kilograms of carbon dioxide emitted by a real tree in a given year. In addition, the chemicals used in manufacture may have adverse effects on human health and often are non-recyclable. Artificial trees also take up room in homes year-round since they need to be stored. Plus, they don't emit a pleasing aroma. The debate over a real or artificial Christmas tree is sure to rage on year after year, so it's up to holiday celebrants to make their pick.

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We have the largest outdoor showroom in the lakes area, you are sure to feel right at home as soon as you enter. Friendly staff members immediately greet customers with a warm welcome. Upon talking to them, you'll realize just how knowledgeable and well-informed the Snook's staff is. Customers that know exactly what they want will appreciate the ability to buy any piece off the floor and take it home the same day, or have it delivered. For those that need a little more guidance, have no fear. Talk with an expert designer about your needs; they are equipped to guide you through the entire process.

With a wide variety of product offerings and unbeatable customer service, it's no wonder Snook's has been a design staple of the lakes area for over 20 years. Bill Adams managed the store for eight years before taking ownership in October 2011. He took the business from its original location, added the outdoor store, appliance store and eventually combined three locations into one, making Snook's the ultimate destination store. Snook's offers a full color center of flooring for every room; carpet, hardwood, luxury vinyl tile, plank wood and more. They also design and install custom tile showers, surrounds, backsplashes, and in-floor heating systems. You will also find a wide variety of Leather Italia indoor furniture, decor, fantastic selection of umbrellas, outdoor patio furniture, and fire tables/pits.

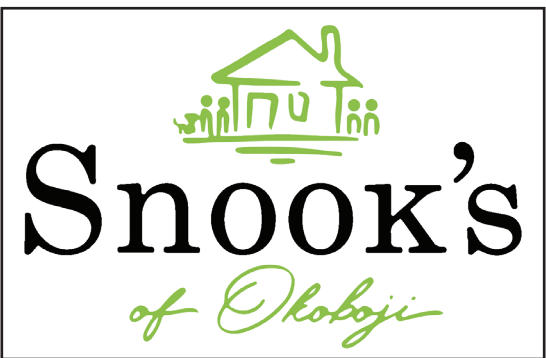
Known for the largest selection of outdoor living furniture in the Northwest Iowa Great Lakes area, Snook's has what you need to take your outdoor living experience to the next level. From lounge chairs for quiet mornings, to fire pits and fire tables

for late-night get-togethers, you're sure to find what you're looking for at Snook's. Weather-proof Adirondack furniture makes a great addition to any outdoor living space. There's no chipping, fading, mildew, or maintenance, so you can set your chairs outside year-round and let your cares float away, with our 20 year warranty. For those cool summer nights, Snook's offers propane, natural gas plus wood burning fire pits in a plethora of styles and designs.

Snook's also has an expansive selection of indoor furniture in every design style, from traditional to modern. They offer very affordable leather furniture and accent pieces to give your home style, and a luxurious soft place to land - Snook's offers a huge assortment of interior furniture and accessories to meet your needs. If you're looking to floor your guests, check out Snook's unbeatable selection of stylish, durable flooring options today. Their highly trained, certified installation experts take care of everything, from measuring your space to removing the existing floor and installing new flooring.

Besides offering quality furniture and flooring, Snook's customer service goes above and beyond. The store offers an array of services like design consulting, financing, fast delivery and estimations for all your flooring needs. Whether you're here to play or here to stay, stop by Snook's of Okoboji today. You'll be pleasantly surprised by everything the "hometown place to shop" has to offer.

In October of 2023, Snooks of Okoboji and Okoboji Wholesale joined homes and are now in one building "Snook's of Okoboji", located at 1005 Okoboji View Ave. Feel free to call us at 712-332-7530. Check out our website at www.snooksofokoboji.com and follow/like us on Facebook.



Get the Whole Package at Snook's of Okoboji

Starting a new business is hard enough, but Bill Adams and his crew make it look easy. Appliances, everyone loves them until they no longer work for the intended purpose. That's where Bill saw an opportunity to enter the lakes area in October of 2018, to offer scratch n' dent appliances at a wholesale price. Owner Bill Adams did countless

hours of research and found the lack of discounted appliances in Northwest Iowa and made the business decision to open up shop. Spirit Lake was the original home of Okoboji Wholesale in a 2,400 square foot showroom packed to the walls in scratch n' dent appliances. Before each appliance

set foot on the floor it was run through rigorous testing to ensure the appliance was working as intended. With some appliances arriving in non-working condition the service team would have to diagnose the issue and repair until the appliance was sellable. With thousands of units leaving the showroom floor, Bill and his staff took the liberty to ensure the satisfaction of a working appliance was leaving with a happy customer. With a lot of blood sweat and tears from Bill and the top tier staff he has, they relocated in the heart of Okoboji on Highway 71 to Snook's of Okoboji, which is a 20,000 square foot building. The purchase of a long-term existing appliance store in Milford happened in August 2020, which was Okoboji Wholesale's biggest milestone. This gave them the opportunity to purchase brand new appliances along with the new scratch n' dent. Melanders in Milford was around for many years and served thousands of happy and satisfied customers. In-

cluded in the purchase, Okoboji Wholesale agreed to take over those customers and continue to help and serve them. They now offer a wide variety of kitchen and laundry appliances from top brands such as GE, LG, Speed Queen, Frigidaire, Midea, Galanz, Beko & Bosch. As soon as you walk in the door, you are greeted by a knowledgeable staff with a combined 25 years experience to help you from start to finish. Any project big or small, they will guide you to make sure you are getting the appliance that is right for you. Professional delivery and installation by their delivery staff, who will go the extra mile, is always a plus for those in need. Snook's doesn't finish after the door is shut. Service is a huge key to any appliance, and they service anything they sell, whether it's in or out of warranty. Any brand new appliance sold by Snook's Of Okoboji comes with a manufacturer's warranty. The scratch n' dent and used appliances are different. Even though the scratch n' dent appliances are open box brand new they do not carry a manufacturer's warranty. Since Snook's has their rigorous testing procedure to ensure all appliances are in working condition that is not an issue for their customers. Also, for pennies on the dollar, they can provide up to 5 years of an extended warranty on the scratch n' dent appliances purchased. With a huge selection to choose from, Snook's Of Okoboji has become the largest new and used appliance dealer in Northwest Iowa. It's your one stop shop for any refrigerator, stove, dishwasher, microwave, ice maker, freezer, washer, dryer, and much more. Stop in at 1005 Okoboji View Ave, call 712-332-7530, or message us on Facebook for any questions on availability to get your dream appliances today! Snooks of Okoboji has over 20,000 square feet of space to showcase all the appliances, indoor and outdoor furniture, flooring, decor, and more that they have to offer. Be sure to stop in and check us out today! Visit our website at www.snooksofokoboji.com and like/follow us on Facebook.

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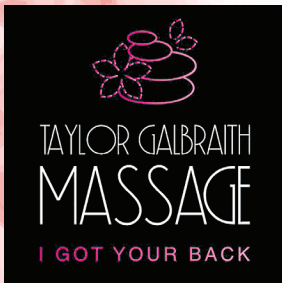


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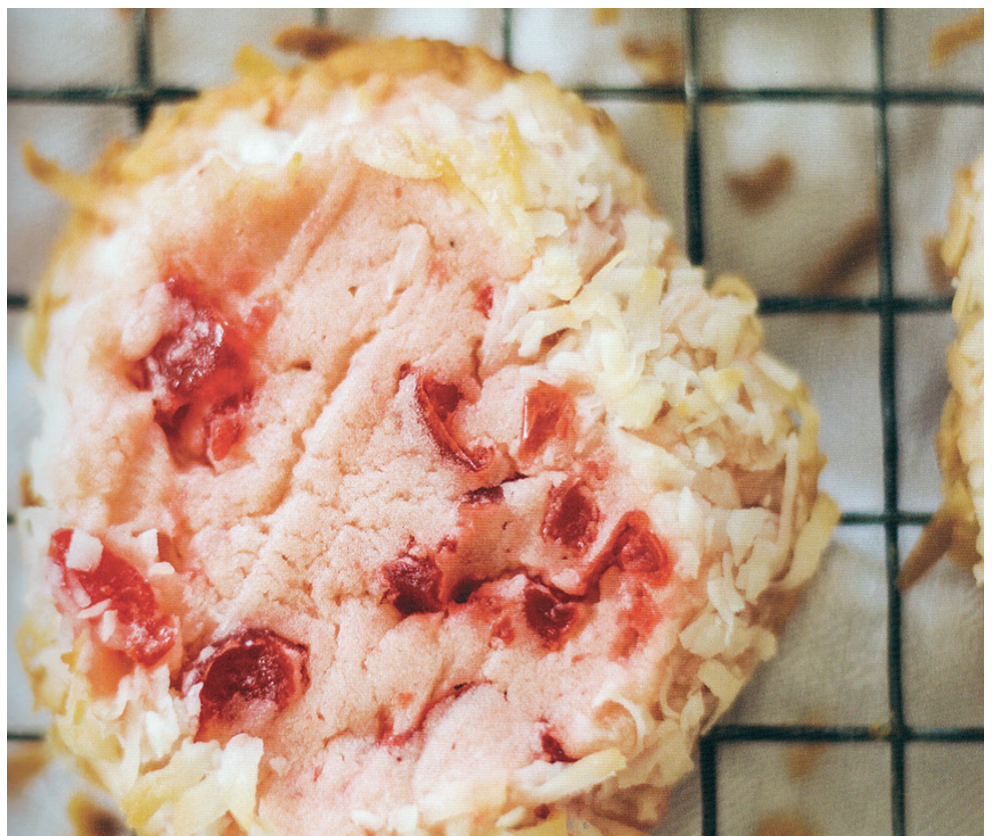
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Add A New Offering To Your Christmas Cookie Lineup

The holiday season doubles as cookie season. Indeed, there's no shortage of baking opportunities in December. Various cookies make the rounds, and if you are tasked with bringing cookies to a function, you might be interested in something a little different.

"Santa's Whiskers" likely get their name from the coconut on these cookies, which resemble Santa's beard. Maraschino cherries add some jolly red to the cookies as well, making them perfect for Christmas. Try this recipe from "Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy" (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.

Santa's Whiskers

20 to 24 cookies

- 1 1/2 cups confectioner's sugar
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 12-ounce jar pitted maraschino cherries, strained and stemmed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sweetened shredded coconut

In a stand mixer, with a hand mixer, or by hand, cream the sugar and butter until light and fluffy.

Add the cherries, vanilla, almond extract, and salt. Mix thoroughly. Fold into the flour and mix until it forms a crumbly but moist dough. Lay a 16-inch sheet of parchment paper onto the counter. Sprinkle 1 cup of the coconut on the center in a loose rectangle, making sure it does not reach the edge of the parchment. Place the cookie dough on top, flattening a bit with your fingers, and sprinkle the remaining coconut over the top of the dough.

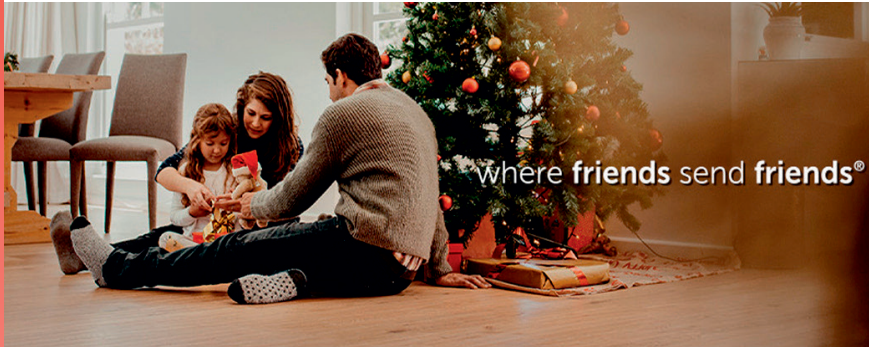
Form the dough into a 12- to 14-inch log, about 3 inches thick. Evenly press the coconut around the log and roll to make the log an even cylinder.

Roll the parchment up with the dough inside and twist the ends. Chill for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice cookies in 1/4- to 1/2-inch rounds, place on the prepared baking sheet, about 2 inches apart, and bake 12 to 15 minutes. Allow to cool before serving. Store in an airtight container.

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Be Mindful of Pets During the Holiday Season

The magic and wonder of the holiday season can be enthralling for people of all ages. There is so much to see and do during the holiday season, making it easy to forge lasting memories. With so much to do in December, life at home can sometimes feel a little hectic, especially for the family pet. Although the holidays can be exciting, the season can induce anxiety in pets. Pets like cats and dogs often thrive on routine and familiarity. Switch up that routine and various behavioral issues can arise, including having accidents in the home. Pets also may become more destructive, chewing or clawing at items to release pent-up tension and anxiety. Pet owners who want the season to be festive for their pets can consider the following strategies.

- Gradually introduce new items. Gradually decorate living spaces so pets can grow acclimated to their newly decorated environs. Add a few pieces to rooms each day until you finally have all of your decorations out for display. This way pets can sniff around the decorations and realize they do not pose a threat.
- Keep familiar pet belongings. Try not to upset the apple cart too much in regard to pets' cherished possessions. For example, do not move the dog bed



from the living room and place the Christmas tree in its place. Pets need that familiarity and having some of their items with familiar smells can make for a smooth adjustment to holiday decorations.

- Designate a pet-safe zone. If you will be inviting people over during the holidays, set aside a room for pets so they can be in relative quiet away from boisterous crowds. Locking pets away also helps prevent their escape from the home as guests come and go.
- Secure the tree and other decorations. Pets are often curious about new things, and they may climb or paw at items to try to understand them better. Decorative items may end up being knocked over by curious pets. Secure the tree using a string and an anchor to the ceiling or wall like you might secure a large

screen TV to prevent it from tipping over. Keep breakable ornaments and other trinkets behind display cases or beyond the reach of pets.

- Discourage pets from using decorations as toys. Reprimand pets or move them away from holiday decor so they don't get the idea that these items are now their toys.
- Be careful with holiday foods. Holiday foods and desserts are rich and full of ingredients that may not be healthy for pets. Keep a secure lid on trash pails and remind holiday guests that pets should not be fed table scraps. Pets may need some time to adjust to the changes that come with holiday decorating and celebrating to keep them happy and safe.

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Add Seasonal Bazaars to Your List of Holiday Shopping Locations



There is no shortage of options to find every item on your holiday shopping list. Shopping malls, online retailers and mom and pop stores along Main Street can be great spots to grab holiday deals, but shoppers also can find great gifts at holiday fairs and bazaars. Bazaars are found all over the world, but are notable to Middle Eastern and Asian countries. Bazaars are marketplaces that feature several small shops or vendor stalls. In some countries, bazaars are outdoors and covered by tents, while in others they feature several stalls set up in large rooms. Holiday bazaars often pop up during the holiday season and mimic international marketplaces. They may be hosted by cities or towns, schools or places of worship. Sometimes they are fundraising opportunities, with nonprofit organizations charging a stall- or table-renting fee for bazaar participants. Holiday fairs and bazaars often bring to-

gether an array of different retailers, many of whom are small businesses selling interesting wares. Shoppers should take advantage of every opportunity to visit these holiday bazaars because they will only be around for a short time. Here's a look at some of the benefits of bazaar shopping for the holidays.

- Patronize small businesses. Holiday bazaars often bring together small businesses that may not normally have storefronts. This allows shoppers to meet the individuals behind businesses they already patronize or discover new firms they were previously unacquainted with.
- Shop unique wares. Holiday bazaars may showcase items not easily found elsewhere, from handcrafted jewelry to unique soaps to custom woodworking items.
- Develop new relationships. Shopping at holiday bazaars enables you to meet and interact with new

people. This can expand your social circles and may even expand your professional network.

- Enjoy the shopping experience. Shopping away from the bustle of larger, busier retail stores gives you a break from the harried shopping experience many experience during the holiday season. Rather, holiday fairs and bazaars typically are less crowded and engage at a slower pace. Plus, they may have a more homespun decorating design that can have you feeling like you're shopping in a Christmas village.
- Take advantage of food vendors. Food vendors likely will be mixed within the offerings of the holiday bazaar. That gives you opportunity to take the day off from cooking and enjoy some savory and sweet bites while grabbing gifts. Holiday shopping bazaars are great places to shop for the holidays.

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Holiday Decorating Ideas

Homes are often described as sanctuaries for their residents. Homes also provide a great way for homeowners to express themselves, an opportunity that is amplified during the holiday season. Holiday decor takes center stage come December, and there are a number of ways for homeowners to utilize their homes to showcase their holiday spirit during this special time of year.



- **Wrap the front door.** Gift-wrapped front doors have been popular for some time, and they remain a great way to utilize a home's entryway to spread a little holiday cheer. Shiny, single-color door wraps may never go out of style, but homeowners can choose patterned wraps as well. A bow door cover lets all visitors know a home and its residents are full of holiday cheer.

- **Go for the garland.** Garland can add a touch of the holiday season to any room of the house. Wrap garland around a staircase, alternating between the banister and spindles so residents and guests can still safely navigate their way up and down. Garland streamed along foyer tables sets a decorative tone for all guests, and living room television stands and dining room banquets

also can be made a touch more festive with some garland.

- **Hang stockings throughout the house.** Stockings have long been hung by chimneys (with care), but they also can be incorporated into holiday decor throughout a home. Spread holiday cheer in each room with brightly colored holiday stockings, which can be hung along a staircase wall as well.

- **Don't forget the kitchen.** Realtors and contractors often note the popularity of the kitchen, a room where families tend to congregate each day before work and school and then again upon returning home. Some festive kitchen accessories, like a holiday-themed cutting board, jar sets and table settings can bring the spirit of the holiday season into the busiest room

in the house.

- **Create some pinecone Christmas trees.** Involve the whole family in holiday decorating by spending a weekend afternoon creating pinecone Christmas trees. Gather pinecones from your own backyard, if possible, or take a trip to some nearby woods for some supplies. There's no shortage of websites offering instructions on crafting pinecone trees. Once completed, the trees can be placed in various rooms to spread holiday cheer throughout the house.

Decorations are a big part of the holiday season. Families can make their homes holiday central by ensuring each room is decorated for this special time of year.

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