Holiday Gift & Shopping Guide

Special Supplement To

The Cameron Shopper

November 24, 2020

Old School centerpiece for multiple Christmas events

While many traditionally do not put up their Christmas decorations until after Thanksgiving, volunteers at the Old School took a different approach with a trio Christmas-themed in Cameron just around the corner.

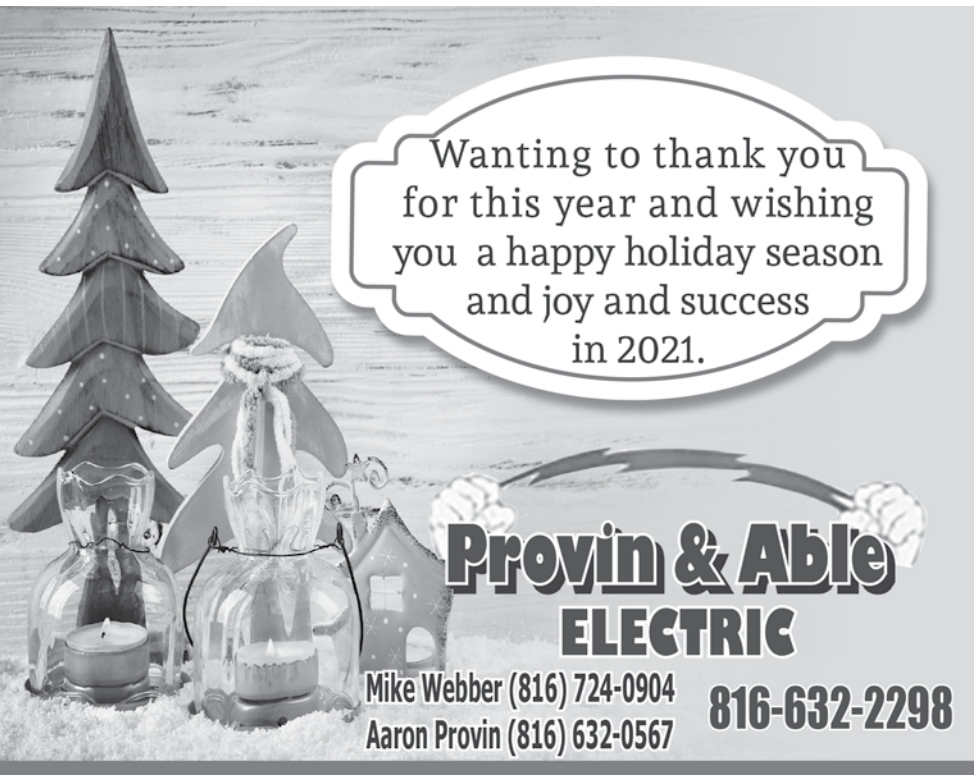
Last Friday volunteers began putting up decorations, anticipating hundreds pass through the Old School for their Nov. 28 Holiday Faire and Christmas on Main Street and the Dec. 4 Christmas in Cameron Tour.

"We're going to have the school decorated so people will come and visit the school and the tree walk. We're doing it up bigger and better this year. We're going to have a grand entrance, trees outside … We're part of the downtown Christmas Tour. We're on the map."

Doors open to the Holiday Faire at 10 a.m. The event will feature kids crafts, craft venders, food and photo opportunities. A 4 p.m. parade will kickoff Christmas on Main Street - formerly Christmas in Cameron. This will be the second year Cameron Main Street, Inc. will organize holiday festivities for Cameron. Following the parade, barring any changes due to COVID-19, the Cameron High School Choir will perform at 5:30 p.m., then a lighting ceremony and Cameron City Councilwoman Darlene Breckenridge presenting a reading of 'The Night Before Christmas'.

For Old School Volunteer Heather Shoemaker, hosting events such as the Holiday Faire and Christmas on Main Street have more impact than simple monetary gains. Maintaining annual traditions, strengthens a community no matter the size.

"It's important for a community to stay together. No matter how big they try to make this town, it's really just a small town," Shoemaker said. "Small towns need to stick together. If we don't, then it will fall apart and become a ghost town … The more we come together and the more groups that follow our lead, the more we can build up downtown and show the historical value."



please join us for

Cameron Toys For Tots Toy Collection Drive

Each year, the Cameron Toys for Tots makes it possible for children from low income families to receive new toys during the holiday season. During 2019 we provided toys for 262 children in Clinton, Caldwell and Dekalb counties.

Unwrapped toys are collected during the 4th quarter through local toy drives and community drop-off boxes placed around the three-county area. If you would like a Toys for Tots drop box at your business, please call us at the contact information listed below.

Cash donations are also accepted and will be used for the purchase of toys or miscellaneous supplies needed to host the event (trash bags, labels, stamps, etc.) Please make all cash/check donations payable to *Cameron Toys for Tots* by Friday, December 18, 2020 and can be mailed to the following address:

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2020 CAMERON TOYS FOR TOTS SCHEDULE

December 18	Cash Donations Due
December 16-18	Toy Sorting 9:00am - 4:00pm
December 19	Toy Bagging @ 9:00 am
December 21	Delivered to Health Offices for Family Pickup

If you would like to help or have any questions, please feel free to call us at the contact information below. ***Also, if you know of a family that would like to sign-up, please call 816-539-2144.*** Helping local families enjoy Christmas is truly a heartwarming experience. We look forward to you joining us and celebrating the 2020 Cameron Toys for Tots Holiday Season!

Tammy Clough |
President, Cameron Toys for Tots

Elizabeth Richards
Vice President, Cameron Toys for Tots

Cameron Toys for Tots is a tax-exempt non-profit corporation under section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Great gifts for the family foodie

The best holiday gifts are often those that encourage their recipients to pursue a passion or favorite hobby. Tickets to a ballgame might be right up a sports fan's alley while the family globetrotter would no doubt love a contribution to his or her travel fund.

When gifting the family foodie, that one person who loves to cook or simply can't get enough of his or her favorite cuisines, shoppers have a host of options at their disposal to ensure this holiday season brings a smile to their favorite foodie's face.

Spice rack: Few home cooks can get by without a vast selection of spices, so a spice rack that includes all the essential spices makes perfect sense for the family foodie. Some spice racks even come with several years' worth of free spice refills, so do your homework and find one that will have your friend or family member spicing things up for years to come.

Cooking lessons: Cooking lessons can be a great way for men, women and even children to cultivate their love for food. If your friend or family member prefers a specific type of cuisine, then find him or her cooking lessons where he or she can learn how to prepare and not just eat some favorite dishes. Cooking lessons also make a great opportunity to bond with a loved one. If you, too, want to expand your cooking horizons, buy your own lessons and go with your friend or family member.

A night out: If your favorite foodie prefers his or her meals made by someone else, treat that friend or family member to a night out at his or her favorite restaurant. You can give a gift card to the restaurant or take this special someone out yourself and enjoy a great meal and great company to boot.

Serving dishes: Many foodies not only love to eat but also love to serve up their favorite foods to family and friends. If your friend or family member has played host to guests many times in the past, surprise him or her with some new serving dishes. You probably have a sense of their serving style already, but if you don't, make a mental note the next time you visit or simply buy them a gift card so they can buy whichever dishes they need to make their next soiree a success.

Wine rack: A great bottle of wine completes a great meal, so why not buy your family foodie a place to store all of his or her bottles of wine? Wine racks can range from the simple, inexpensive standup models to more complex or expensive models that need to be installed. If the eventual recipient of your thoughtful gift rents rather than owns his or her home, avoid buying a wine rack that needs to be installed, as that might cause damage that will cost them some money when the time comes to move out. But if your friend or family member owns their home, then look for a wine rack that fits in with their established décor. You even can christen the new wine rack by supplementing your gift with a few bottles of your loved one's favorite vintages.

With so many potential gifts to choose from, shoppers often find foodies are fun to shop for come the holiday season.

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Gifts that can make social distancing more enjoyable

Exchanging gifts with loved ones is a holiday season tradition. That tradition figures to continue this year, though families will almost certainly have to adjust the ways they exchange gifts.

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 in the winter of 2019-20 changed how people across the globe live their lives. Social distancing guidelines encouraged people to limit get-togethers, particularly indoor gatherings. Experts anticipate restrictions on indoor gatherings will continue in the early part of the winter of 2020-21, which could force families to rethink how they get together during the holiday season.

Families also may want to think outside the box when buying gifts for their loved ones, targeting items that can make social distancing easier. The following gift ideas can make a socially distant holiday season that much more special for a loved one.

STREAMING SUBSCRIPTION

Movie theaters have been closed for months in many areas. But movie lovers still want to see their favorite flicks, so a streaming subscription to a service such as Netflix or Amazon Prime can be just what they need to stay entertained while social distancing this winter. For fans of classic films, including indie movies, foreign films and big studio productions, a subscription to the Criterion Channel might make the perfect gift. Curated by the Criterion Collection, this streaming service provides access to a library of more than 1,000 classic and contemporary films, making it an ideal gift for the family film buff.

COOKING CLASSES

Many people have spent the last several months honing their culinary skills. Gift givers can help them take those skills to the next level by enrolling them in online cooking classes. The options are endless and some even include access to legendary celebrity chefs like Gordon Ramsay. Many online cooking classes feature monthly memberships or single classes, making them ideal for loved ones of all skill and interest levels.

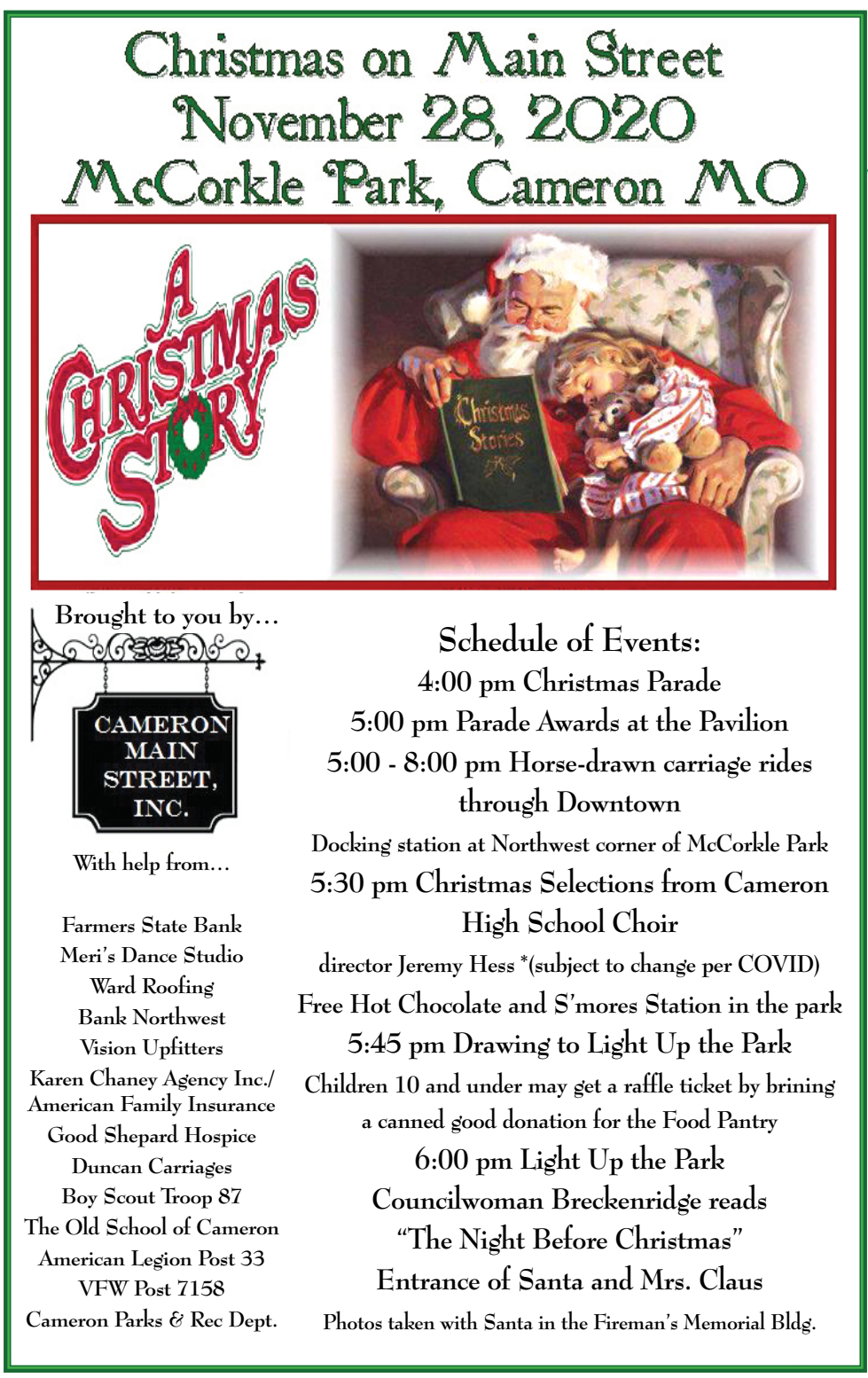
TECHNOLOGY

Technology has helped many people stay connected with friends and family while social distancing, so a new tablet, laptop or desktop computer can be just what people need to fully engage in family Zoom sessions or weekly virtual happy hours with coworkers and friends. If a new tablet or laptop stretches your budget, consider a pair of noise-canceling headphones, which can make it easier to concentrate while working remotely in a crowded house.

CRAFTING KIT

Hobbyists may have had their passions for crafting reinvigorated while social distancing, making a crafting kit an ideal gift to help them fill their downtime. Beginner's kits also can make an ideal gift for novices looking for an engaging, time-consuming hobby.

Certain gifts can be a perfect fit during a socially distant holiday season.



How to host virtual holiday celebrations

The 2020 holiday season figures to be vastly different than seasons past. The novel coronavirus COVID-19 has transformed daily life in many ways. The public has become accustomed to wearing masks while shopping, limiting the number of people in public venues and keeping their distance from friends and loved ones. Many events have been reimagined as virtual celebrations because of social distancing protocols. For those with large families or people with inherent risk factors that make them more susceptible to illness, sharing the holidays over video conferencing apps may be the safest way to go in 2020.

The following tips can help holiday hosts make the most of a virtual holiday experience.

PICK A BRIGHT, FESTIVE SPOT

Set up your tablet, smartphone or computer in a bright area with a festive backdrop. You'll want others who join the virtual hangout to be able to see you clearly. A Christmas tree or a decorated fireplace in the background can set the scene.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONFERENCING APP

Certain programs may work better than others depending on your needs. For example, if everyone has the same operating system platform (iOS or Android), you may be able to use an app inherent to that system, which won't require a separate download or login.

Apps also may be chosen depending on how many people can be invited in, as some set limits. Do your homework and conduct a test run prior to the holidays.

KEEP PROPS NEARBY

If the goal is to open gifts virtually, be sure to have everyone gathered and gifts nearby so no one is scrambling in and out of view.

POSITION THE CAMERA AT EYE LEVEL

Try to set up the camera so you're not looking up or down. Practice looking straight into the camera instead of at yourself in the minimized window or even others on the screen. This way you'll appear engaged.

USE MUTE WHEN NOT SPEAKING

Muting yourself (and encouraging others to do the same) when you are not speaking will limit the amount of background noise. As the host, serve as the moderator and encourage everyone to speak one at a time. Choose a visual cue to signal when someone has the floor to speak, such as raising a hand or even showing a festive picture.

TUNE INTO VIRTUAL WORSHIP

While some places of worship have reopened to some capacity, others may still be offering hybrid services. If your place of worship offers services via YouTube or another video platform, gather around and watch together and participate just as if you were there in person. Better yet, share the link with other family and friends so they can tune in as well.

SHARE DINNER 'TOGETHER'

Set up your camera source so it captures the holiday table. All parties gathering virtually can then sit down to the holiday meal as one and enjoy one of the season's more endearing traditions.

Virtual celebrations may continue through the holiday season. Adapting with some video conferencing tips can ensure everyone enjoys the festivities.

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How to give holiday gift cards

Nearly every man or woman has hit that all too familiar wall when holiday shopping for friends and family. While many people might be a cinch to shop for, there always seems to be one stickler on holiday shopping lists, and finding the right gift for that person can be an exercise in patience and perseverance.

But even the most patient shopper has his or her limits, and many people find themselves giving gift cards to those friends or family members who seemingly have everything already. Such cards make great gifts, but only when gift givers employ a few tricks of the gift card trade.

Buy directly from the retailer.

It's easy to be duped by a counterfeit gift card, which can be embarrassing for both the gift giver and its eventual recipient. Counterfeit gift cards are big business for criminals who prey on gift givers during the holiday season. Only buy gift cards directly from the retailer, as cards sold by other sources, such as an online auction site, may be stolen or counterfeit. You don't want to be the person who gave a stolen or counterfeit card, and your friend or family member does not want to be subjected to an inquiry as to why he or she is attempting to use a stolen or counterfeit card.

Examine the card before leaving the store.

Once a cashier or customer service employee hands you a gift card, examine it for tampering before leaving the store. Some criminals gain access to gift cards, even those that appear to be behind lock and key, to learn the PIN number associated with the card. Once they have the PIN, recipients can then recreate their own card, using the stolen PIN to activate and make purchases on their counterfeit cards long before the real card is sold to you. If you detect any damage, ask for a new card before leaving the store.

Include a gift receipt with the card. When giving a gift card, don't forget to include the gift receipt. The gift receipt not only verifies the value of the gift card, but also includes the date the card was purchased. That's important information, as many companies begin to charge fees, some of which may be exorbitant, on unused cards after a predetermined period of time. Recipients who have the gift receipt won't have to haggle with retailers about the value of the card should that ever be in dispute, and the receipt also can serve as a reminder that the recipient needs to use the card before a given date to avoid fees.

Consider a general purpose gift card.

If that stickler on your holiday shopping list is especially difficult to shop for, then you might want to consider a general purpose gift card issued by a company such as American Express, MasterCard or Visa. These cards generally allow recipients to use their gift wherever they choose, whether it's to put gas in their tank or buy groceries. That versatility is valuable if you truly have no idea what your friend or family member needs or where he or she likes to shop. One notable disadvantage to general purpose gift cards is that they tend to come with more fees than more traditional gift cards purchased directly from specific retailers. Investigate these fees and find a card that charges no fees or only minimal fees.

Gift cards make great gifts and can bail out frustrated holiday shoppers who simply can't find that perfect gift for a friend or family member. But when shopping for gift cards, be sure to exercise caution before buying a card so your loved is not put in an embarrassing or costly situation.

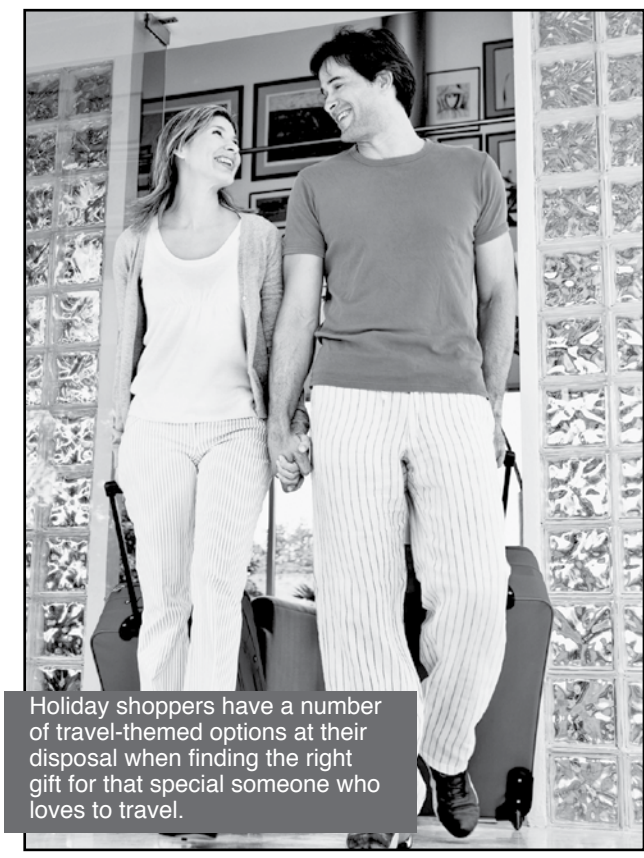
Unique gift ideas for the family globetrotter

A passion for traveling leads many people to go abroad and experience other cultures or explore the sites closer to home. Those with an avid traveler in their midst can tie into this love of exploring and give travel-themed gifts.

Gifting the family globetrotter is not always easy, however. Travelers tend to bring home mementos of their trips and make it seem as if they already have everything they need. Gifts purchased at the local store may seem to pale in comparison to more exotic trinkets. But gifting travelers doesn't have to be difficult. The following gifts should make great gifts for your favorite adventurer this holiday season.

Travel journal: Many people love to document their trips, describing journeys to exotic locales or simply a family trip to a nearby campground. Travel journals make great gifts for those travelers who want more than just visual memories of their trip. Be sure to buy a journal that's sturdy enough to handle all the bumps and bruises that accompany a nomadic lifestyle. Leatherbound or hardcover journals should suffice.

Travel kit: Travelers know the value of a good travel kit, which can help them freshen up during long layovers at the airport or once they arrive at their destinations. In addition, a travel kit allows travelers to pack some of the comforts of home, such as moisturizer, shaving gel or a particular type of toothpaste, that might not be readily available at their destinations. When gifting a travel kit, place some of those favorite products, such as travel-size mouthwash or some luxury moisturizing creams, inside the kit for a special gift-within-the-gift.



Holiday shoppers have a number of travel-themed options at their disposal when finding the right gift for that special someone who loves to travel.

Noise-cancelling headphones: A set of noise-cancelling headphones is a gift no globetrotter should go without. These headphones reduce ambient noise and can make it easier to doze off comfortably on a flight or to enjoy a music playlist while sightseeing in a busy city.

Maps: Domestic travelers may be able to rely on their smartphones for directions, but overseas travelers may need to keep their phones off when traveling overseas to avoid heavy surcharges. In such instances, maps make great gifts, especially if you find out in advance where your special traveler will be visiting next and gift a map of that particular locale.

Gas card: For some, the joy of travel stems from getting behind the wheel and hitting the open road. If that's true of your favorite travel afficionado, consider a gas card that can alleviate some of the cost of his or her next trip. Gift cards to filling stations can be purchased in just about any denomination, and your loved one will appreciate their free pass at the pump on their next road trip.

Christmas on a Budget:

The average American spent over

$1,000

on holiday gifts, goodies and travel in 2019, according to the National Retail Federation. Consumers celebrating on tighter budgets this year can consider secondhand shopping and homemade gifts to help trim holiday expenses.

Shopping Secondhand Safely

With some thrift shopping enthusiasts expressing concern over whether or not it's safe to shop secondhand in the midst of the pandemic, experts agree that the likelihood of a secondhand item carrying coronavirus on it is no different than that of new merchandise. That said, following these basic safety precautions can help you stay as safe as possible when shopping secondhand stores, or anywhere else:

- Many thrift stores are taking extra measures to promote a safe shopping environment, such as "quarantining" donations before putting them out on the floor and implementing enhanced cleaning protocols. Ask your preferred secondhand shops what they are doing to promote safe shopping.
- Consider wearing gloves when handling merchandise, removing them immediately after shopping then sanitizing hands.
- Wash your hands before and after shopping, or bring hand sanitizer along with you.
- Avoid touching items unnecessarily.
- Make a list to shop more efficiently and limit your time indoors.
- Wash or sanitize your purchases (and your reusable tote if you are using one) when you get them home.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a mask while shopping,and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between yourself and others.

Homemade for the Holidays

DIY GIFT IDEAS

For those who want to give with a personal touch while saving on shopping expenses this holiday season, apps like Pinterest and DIY sites around the web feature countless handcrafted gift ideas and video tutorials. Here are a few suggestions to jump start your search:

Botanical Bath Soaks

Layer soothing Epsom salt with colorful dried botanicals and fragrant essential oils in a decorative jar.

Spa-Style Scrubs

Jar recipes for at-home facials or body scrubs using natural ingredients from your kitchen.

Sweet Spoonfuls

Dip stirring spoons in melted chocolate or caramel then coat with candy, cool and wrap for enjoyment in coffee or hot **chocolate.**

Cooking Sauces, Soups & Rubs

Jar dry spice blends and sauces for grilling, or layer dry ingredients for your favorite soup recipe.

Infused Oils & Spirits

Jar flavored herbal oils for cooking and dipping, or infuse spirits like vodka or whiskey with fruit and herbs.

Baking Mixes

Layer dry ingredients in decorative jars, labeled or tagged with baking instructions.

Scented Sachets

Sew squares of scrap fabric to create pouches of potpourri, lavender or uncooked grains of rice soaked in essential oils.

Christmas checklist

To avoid holiday mayhem, you need to remain organized in the days and weeks leading up to the main event. Here's a checklist that will help you keep track of everything that needs to be done before Christmas.

ENTERTAINING
- Choose a theme for your party if you're having one
- Make reservations (caterer, event space, restaurant, cleaning crew, Santa Claus)
- Send out invitations
- Decide on a menu (don't forget to consider your guests' allergies and dietary restrictions)
- Make separate grocery lists for what can be purchased weeks in advance and what must be bought in the days before
- Start cooking (make dishes in advance and freeze them)
- Make a seating plan and choose the table decorations
- Obtain any extra dishes, napkins or chairs you need
- Choose the music and plan party games
- Clean the house from top to bottom
- Prepare a room for overnight guests
- Make sure your driveway and walkway are clear

BUYING GIFTS
- Organize a gift exchange
- Start shopping early to avoid crowds
- Make note of what to buy for each person on your list
- Write Christmas cards and send them out early to ensure they arrive before the holiday
- Help your kids write their letters to Santa and send them off
- Buy wrapping paper, ribbons and bows
- Wrap gifts as you buy them to avoid doing it all at once, and hide them until the big day

DECORATING THE HOUSE
- Go through your decorations and throw out and replace anything that's broken
- Hang outdoor decorations before the cold weather arrives
- Decorate the inside of your house
- Don't set up your natural Christmas tree until a week or two before the day (or it will be dry by the time Santa arrives)

GETTING YOURSELF READY
- Make your appointments early (hair, esthetics, makeup, nails) to be sure you get the time slot you need
- Shop for your party clothes and visit the tailor if adjustments are needed

Keep this checklist handy to make sure you don't forget anything this season.

Cranberry, mascarpone and white chocolate verrines

This dessert is equal parts sweet and tart, making it a perfect way to end a hearty holiday meal.

Start to finish: 25 minutes (not including cooling time)
Servings: 10

INGREDIENTS

Ganache
- 1-1/2 cups whipping cream, divided
- 1 vanilla bean or 3 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 200 grams white chocolate, melted
- 250 grams mascarpone cheese

Cranberry gelatin
- 350 grams frozen cranberries, divided
- 1 cup white sugar
- 1 cup cranberry juice
- 1 package cherry gelatin powder
- 1 cup cold water

DIRECTIONS
1. In a small pot, heat 1/2 cup of the cream with the vanilla. Pour 1/3 of the heated mixture over the melted chocolate, mixing well with a spatula. Repeat twice more until combined completely.
2. Add the rest of the cold cream to the mixture, stir to combine thoroughly. Place a piece of plastic wrap directly on top and refrigerate overnight.
3. The next morning, lightly beat the mascarpone using an electric mixer. Add the cream mixture very slowly, beating constantly until it's firm. Refrigerate.
4. In a large pot, heat 300 grams of the cranberries. Add the sugar and cranberry juice, stirring well and taking care not to crush the fruit. Add the gelatin powder and stir until it's completely dissolved. Add the cold water and mix well.
5. Pour equal amounts of the gelatin mixture into 10 small glasses and refrigerate for at least 6 hours.
6. Take the gelatin out of the refrigerator and carefully top with the ganache. Garnish with the remaining cranberries and serve with a small Christmas cookie or shortbread.

Here's how to use whole vanilla bean. First, split the pod by slicing it vertically with a paring knife. Then, scrape the seeds out with a spoon or the dull side of the knife. For best results, use the seeds immediately. Also, remember that one full pod equals about three teaspoons of vanilla extract.

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Holiday baking gets even sweeter with brownies

What would the holidays be without delicious foods to share with loved ones? In fact, crafting elaborate meals and baking goodies is par for the course once the weather begins to cool and decorations turn up on businesses and homes.

Many people have tried-and-true recipes they rely on each year, but there's always the possibility to give new tasty tidbits a try. There are so many tantalizing desserts to tickle the tongue, but this recipe for "Rocky Recchiuti Brownies" from "Chocolate Obsession" (Stewart, Tabori & Chang) by Michael Recchiuti and Fran Gage yields rich and chewy brownies that no holiday celebrant will be able to resist.

Rocky Recchiuti Brownies
Makes 16 brownies

5 1/2 ounces 100 percent unsweetened chocolate, coarsely chopped, divided
10 tablespoons (5 ounces) unsalted butter with 82 percent butterfat, cut into 1-inch slices.
2/3 cup (3 1/2 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
3 extra-large eggs, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract, preferably Madagascar Bourbon
1 1/3 cups granulated cane sugar
1/3 cup walnut halves, roasted and roughly chopped
6 Tahitian Vanilla Bean Marshmallows, each 1 1/2 inches square, cut into quarters (see recipe below)

Preheat the oven to 325 F. Line the bottom of an 8-inch square baking pan with parchment paper and liberally coat the paper and the pan sides with flavorless vegetable oil.

Put 3 ounces of the chocolate and the butter in a medium stainless-steel bowl and set over a pot of simmering water. Heat, stirring occasionally, until the chocolate and butter melt and are fully combined and the mixture is smooth. Lift the bowl from the pot. Set aside.

Sift the flour and salt together into a bowl. In another bowl, combine the eggs and vanilla extract and whisk together by hand until blended. Whisk in the sugar.

Whisk the egg mixture into the chocolate. Add the flour and the remaining 2 1/2 ounces chocolate to the batter and, using a rubber spatula, mix well. Then mix in the walnuts.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Spread it evenly with a small offset spatula. Scatter the marshmallow pieces evenly over the surface and push them halfway into the batter. The tops should remain uncovered.

Bake on the middle shelf of the oven until the marshmallows are browned and a skewer inserted into the center of the brownie sheet comes out with some batter clinging to it, about 45 minutes. Let cool completely in the pan on a wire rack, then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until cold.

Run a table knife around the edge of the pan to loosen the sides of the brownie, and then slide the brownie, still on the paper, onto a work surface. Using a ruler to guide you and a sharp knife, cut into sixteen 2-inch squares. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks.

Tahitian Vanilla Bean Marshmallows
About 40 marshmallows

Flavorless vegetable oil for the pan
3 3/4 teaspoons unflavored gelatin
3 tablespoons water
2 cups granulated cane sugar, divided into halves
1 1/2 cups light corn syrup
4 extra-large egg whites, at room temperature
1 Tahitian vanilla bean, split horizontally
About 3 cups powdered cane sugar for finishing

Line the bottom of an 8-by-12-inch sheet pan with parchment paper and lightly coat the paper and the pan sides with flavorless vegetable oil. Put the gelatin in a small bowl. Add the water and stir. Set aside to soften.

Combine 1 cup of the sugar with the corn syrup in a large, heavy-bottomed pot. Use an unlined copper pot if you have one. Place over medium heat and cook, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until the sugar melts. Then continue to cook, without stirring, until the mixture reaches 230 F on a candy thermometer. If any crystals form on the sides of the pan and the mixture heats, wash them down with a wet pastry brush.

Meanwhile, put the egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whip attachment. Scrape the seeds from the vanilla bean into the bowl.

When the sugar syrup reaches 240 F, start to beat the egg whites on medium speed. When the whites form very soft peaks, add the remaining 1 cup sugar and continue beating.

When the sugar syrup reaches 250 F, remove it from the heat and stir in the softened gelatin. The syrup will foam up and triple in volume. Switch the mixer to high speed and slowly pour the syrup into the beaten egg whites, aiming for the side of the bowl. The whites will almost double in volume. Reduce the speed to medium-high and beat until the whites (not the outside of the bowl) are lukewarm to the touch, about 114 F, about 15 minutes.

Scrape the marshmallow mixture into the prepared pan and, using a small offset spatula, spread it evenly to the sides. Let cool completely at room temperature.

To cut the marshmallows, sift about 1/2 cup of the powdered sugar onto a work surface in a rectangle the size of a sheet pan. Sift another 2 cups powdered sugar into a large bowl. Run a thin-bladed knife around the edge of the pan to loosen the marshmallow. Invert the pan onto the sugared surface to unmold, then lift off the pan and peel off the parchment paper. Sift about 1/2 cup powdered sugar evenly over the top. Using a ruler to guide you and a lightly oiled sharp knife, cut the marshmallow sheet into 1 1/2-inch squares. It is easier if you use a pressing motion, rather than pull the knife. After cutting, toss the marshmallows, a few at a time, in the bowl of powdered sugar, coating them lightly.

Gourmet bruschetta

Warning: this version of bruschetta is piled so high with toppings you may need a fork and knife to eat it

Start to finish: 25 minutes
Servings: 4

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 6 basil leaves, chopped
- 2 (190 grams) packages cherry tomatoes
- 4 slices thick crusty bread
- 1 (226 grams) package pre-sliced mozzarella
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Whole basil leaves (to use as garnishes)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375 °F (190 °C).
2. In a small bowl, combine olive oil, garlic and basil.
3. Place the tomatoes in an oven-safe dish and pour the olive oil mixture on top. Season with salt and pepper. Roast for 10 minutes or until the tomatoes start to brown and crack.
4. Meanwhile, toast the bread. Make sure not to overcook it. It should still be a little soft.
5. Cover each slice with cheese and top with the tomatoes. Drizzle a little more olive oil on top and season with salt and pepper. Serve warm and garnish with a basil leaf.

To make the bruschetta easier to eat, you can cut the tomatoes in half before roasting them. This will shorten the cooking time, however, so keep an eye on them.

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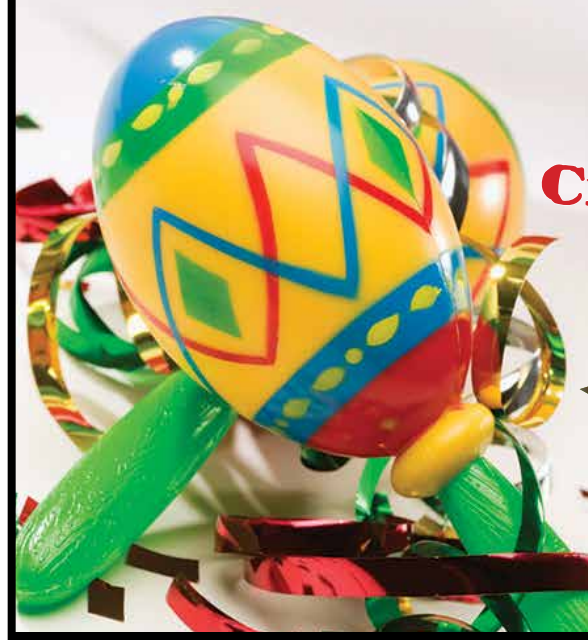
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