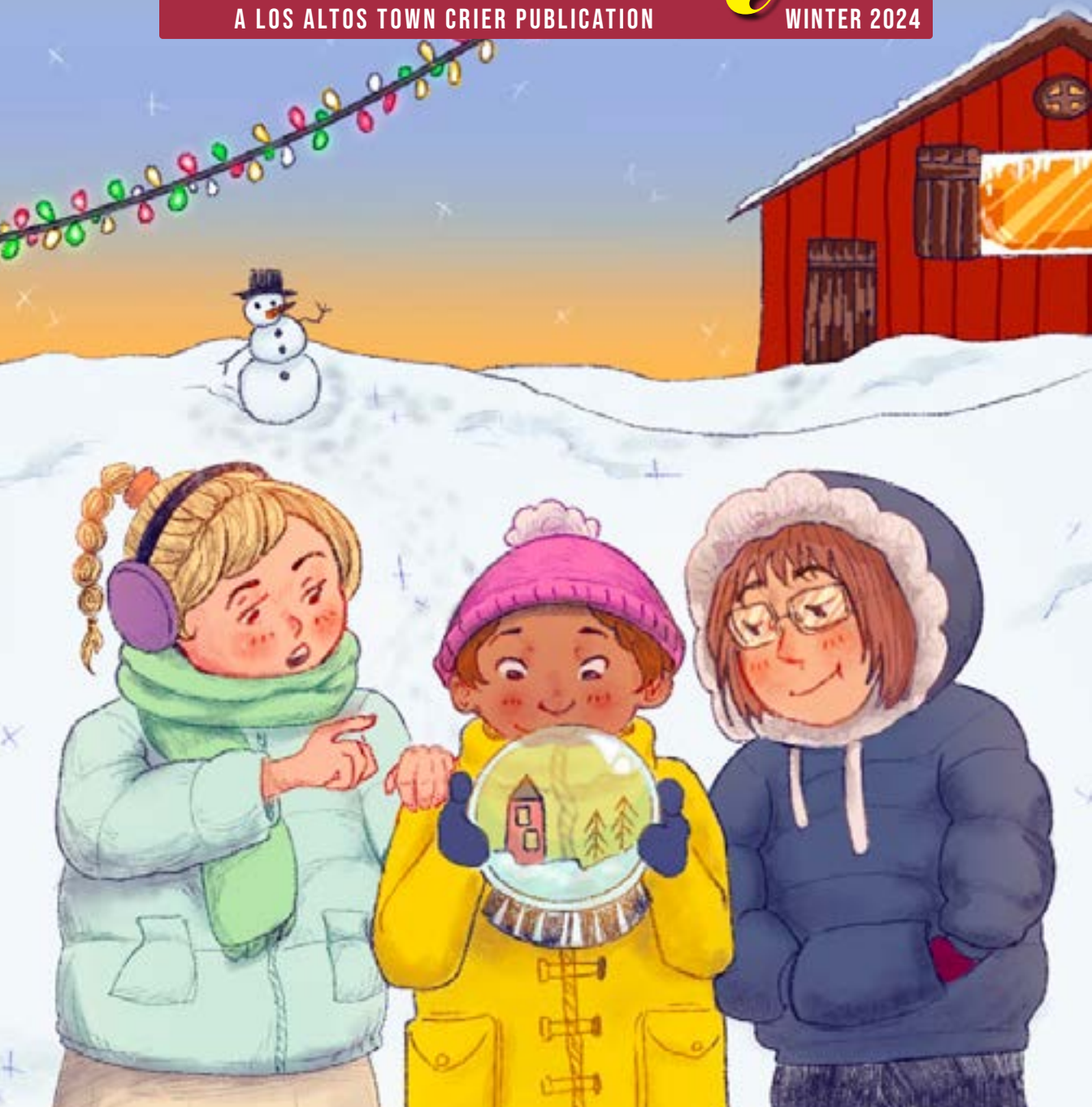


LOS ALTOS · LOS ALTOS HILLS · MOUNTAIN VIEW

# Home *for* the Holidays

A LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER PUBLICATION

WINTER 2024



HOLIDAY SPICE · ON TROPIC TIME · SNOW IN LOS ALTOS? · CHEERS TO YOU! · TRADITION · HOLIDAY TUNES · EVENTS



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138 Main Street | Los Altos, CA | 94022  
650.948.9000 | losaltosonline.com

**EDITOR**

Bruce Barton

**MAGAZINE EDITOR**

Brandon Roth

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Michel Y. Echeverría

**JR. GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Lucy Chen

**WRITERS**

Christina Casillas  
Mary Larsen  
Christine Moore  
Keara Morrow  
Brandon Roth  
Michael Shtrom

**PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Joy Sheerer  
Sergeant Ronkirby Deano  
Mary Larsen

**COPY EDITORS**

Vanessa Connell  
Mary Larsen

**MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING SALES**

Maria Crowder  
Janice Fabella  
Linda Monterrey  
Peggy Prendergast

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**

Melissa Rodriguez

**PRODUCTION STAFF**

Michel Y. Echeverría  
Lucy Chen

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
PUBLISHER**

Dennis Young

**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,  
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER**

Howard Bischoff

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**ON THE COVER:**

**ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL ARONSON**  
*Town Crier Editorial Intern*

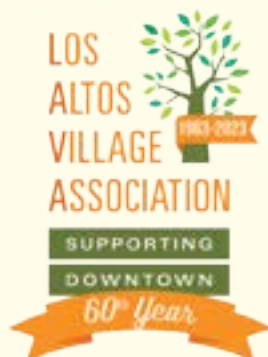




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Dear Reader,

What puts you in the holiday spirit? Is it donating toys, listening to music or decorating your home? Finding happiness this time of year is different for everyone, and this magazine will show you many ways to ease into the winter season.

Every year, I look forward to my family gatherings. We rejoice over our dessert baking competitions, eat Chinese food on Christmas and exchange white elephant gifts. It is a special time for us to relax and to be on our best behavior while playing a board game. My favorite memories are sitting at that dining room table with family and friends and having crazy conversations.

It is important to do what you like during the holiday season. It is a time to open presents but also to reflect on the memories of the past. Hold onto your traditions and take care of yourself.

Sincerely,

Brandon Roth

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# Gingersnaps:

## A CLASSIC FALL AND WINTER TREAT

BY MARY LARSEN

STAFF WRITER | NEWSROOM@LATC.COM

**T**o me, nothing says fall and winter like the spicy scent of ginger wafting from the oven.

Gingersnaps were apparently first created by German monks around 1296. They made their way around Europe and came over to America with the English colonists and have been popular ever since. An interesting bit of trivia: Zu Zu Ginger Snaps were first manufactured in 1901 by the National Biscuit Company, which later became Nabisco. The cookie's mascot was the "Zu Zu Clown," which was featured in ads, signs, costumes and dolls. In the 1946 film "It's a Wonderful Life," one of George Bailey's

daughters is named Zuzu. Towards the heartwarming end, when George rushes up the stairs and embraces his children; his little daughter joins them and he exclaims, "Zuzu, Zuzu, my little gingersnap!"

This recipe – modified slightly from a decades-old Yankee Magazine (to which my New England-born mother faithfully subscribed) – never disappoints. Crispy but with a bit of chewiness and full of dark flavor, this cookie is a favorite wherever I share it. An added bonus is that they're easy! Young children will enjoy being involved in rolling the dough into balls and coating them with sugar.



A festive plate of gingersnaps, ready for sharing. | PHOTO BY MARY LARSEN

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ginger
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 3/4 cup Crisco vegetable shortening
- 1 cup sugar plus more for rolling
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup molasses (I use Grandma's)

## DIRECTIONS

- Sift together flour, ginger, cinnamon, salt and baking soda.
- In another bowl, cream the shortening and sugar. Add egg and molasses and mix well.
- Add the dry ingredients to the wet. Mix thoroughly.
- Divide dough into two mounds; wrap in foil or waxed paper and chill at least two hours.
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a baking sheet with shortening.
- Roll dough into 1-inch balls (or, as my grandmother's cookie recipes say, "the size of a walnut").
- Roll balls in a bowl of sugar until lightly coated all over. Place at least 2 inches apart on greased cookie sheet.
- Bake for 12 to 15 minutes (check after 10 minutes). I also like to rotate the baking pan in the oven after about 8 minutes. Cookies puff up and then fall, forming the crinkles that given gingersnaps their distinctive look. Transfer to wire racks. Cookies will continue to firm up as they cool.
- Makes approx. 30 cookies.
- Arrange a few on a decorative paper plate and share! 🍪





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# TOYS FOR TOTS

## guarantees children toys during the holidays

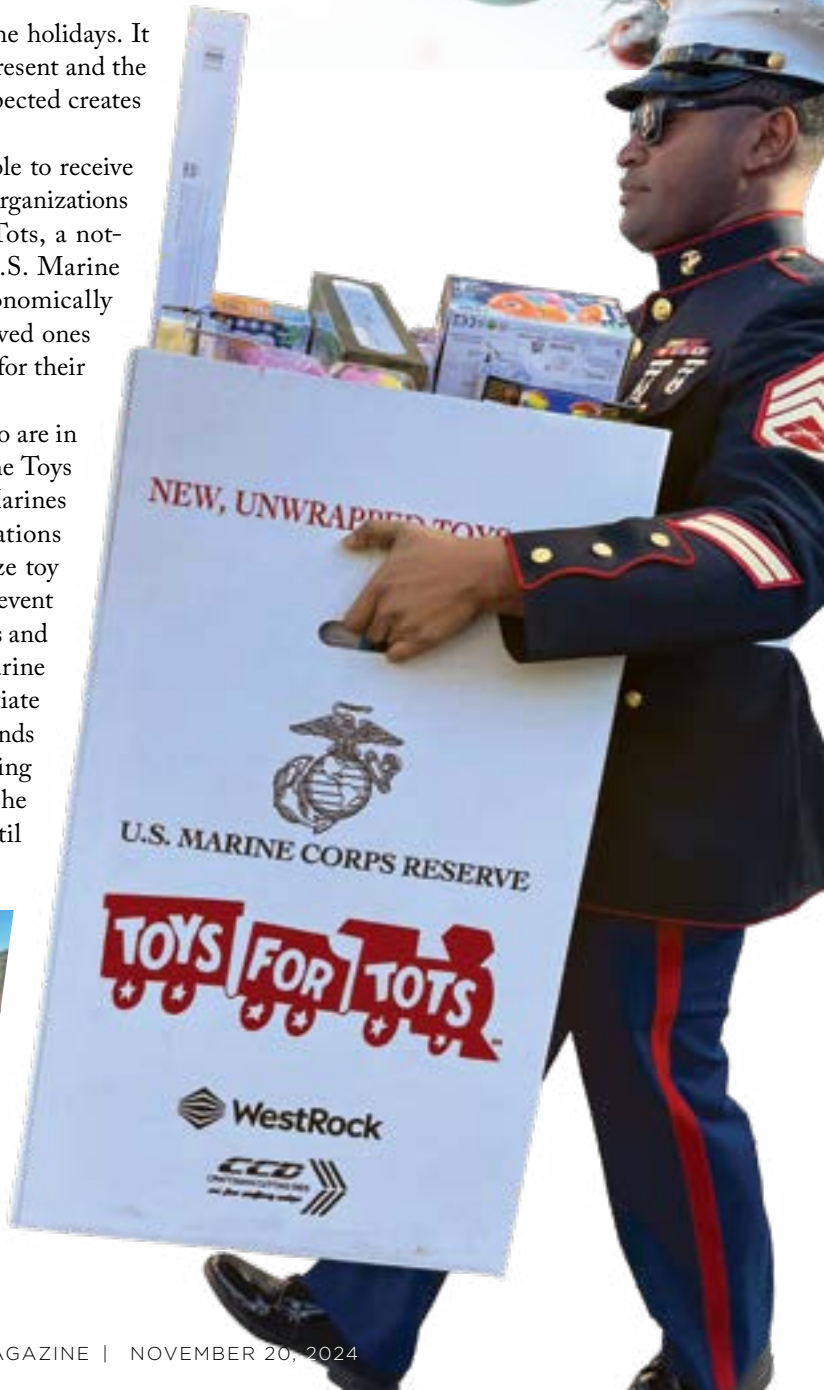
BY BRANDON ROTH

STAFF WRITER | BRANDONR@LATC.COM

Every child deserves a gift during the holidays. It is a magical experience to open a present and the feeling of getting something unexpected creates the best memories.

Many children, however, may not be able to receive every wish list item this year – that’s where organizations such as Toys for Tots step in. Toys for Tots, a not-for-profit public charity created by the U.S. Marine Corps in 1991, assists children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and allows loved ones to request a doll, stuffed animal or toy set for their child in times of need.

Every year, community coordinators who are in the Marine Corps Reserve put together the Toys for Tots annual Holiday Program. The Marines oversee outreach and work with corporations and local community members to organize toy drives. Staff Sergeant Ronkirby Deano, an event coordinator with the San Jose Toys for Tots and an inspector-instructor staff with the Marine Corps Reserves, said the toy drives alleviate stress from parents who are trying to make ends meet. It is a sigh of relief for them while living in an environment with high living costs, he said. The event is ongoing and will last until the middle of December. >





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SSgt. Deano said there are more than 15 Marines stationed at his site where they serve over 400,000 children in the county. In his position, he works closely with individuals who file event requests either on their website, by email or over the phone. He helps them with fulfilling their donation goals, learning about the type of toys they are seeking from people and where they want to donate their toys. Each request is different and varies in the number of toys donated.

“Apple has an end-of-the-year Christmas party and since 2022 they have been the biggest organization that has contributed to the cause,” he said. “In 2022 they gave roughly 25,000 toys and then 2023 I think was 40,000 out of the 235,000 that we collected last year.”

He said Toys for Tots recommends people bring unused, wrapped toys. Organizations may sometimes accept used toys, but that is rarer, he said. Other items such as books or clothes are sometimes collected, but they usually contact other organizations and local libraries, respectively, to handle the items.

When a toy drive has too many toys for a charity organization to accept, Toys for Tots handles the overflow and stores them in its warehouse. He said there were more than 2,000 toys left from last year’s events. The leftover toys provide them a safety net in case there is ever a shortage of donations from community members or even bad weather, but it is not enough to help serve the entire county. >



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*happy holidays*

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Ryan.Gowdy@TheAgencyRE.com  
408.309.8660  
Lic. #01322889  
@ryangowdy  
The Agency Los Altos

Hi there, my name is Ryan Gowdy. I am a second-generation Los Altos realtor who lives, breathes, and loves everything Los Altos. My children attend our local schools and I am a proud sponsor of LAEF. I still live in the wonderful community where I was raised. I take great pride in providing exceptional service to my clients who trust me for guidance in all things real estate. If there is ever anything that I can do to support you with your real estate needs, please don't hesitate to reach out.

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“In 2023, we had more toys than the year prior – maybe more people felt like giving,” he said. “I can’t say this year is going to be great, just because anything can happen – financial hardships or layoffs. In 2022, it was the worst year for Christmas in the Park, because that day it was just a downpour. It was an outdoor event, so the weather does affect if people want to go out or not.”

Toys for Tots is also allowed to purchase toys for community members with a limit of \$35. He said it is easy to spend that amount on a young child, but a teenager makes the money tight – many of them ask for items such as Legos or videogames. Toys for Tots relies “heavily on the community and various technology companies” participation in the toy drives to help fulfill people’s wishes.

SSgt. Deano said it is important to note that the Holiday Program allows anyone to fill out an application to receive a toy. The application does not require a first and last name but requires the applicant to include their age and gender. An applicant can also put comments on their request.

“We don’t base it off demographics,” he said. “It doesn’t matter how much you make – if you put in a request, we will fulfill it to anyone. There’s no verification for an ID or a kid’s birth certificate.” ☆

*To learn more about Toys for Tots or to organize an event, visit [toysfortots.org/programs/holiday-programs/](https://toysfortots.org/programs/holiday-programs/).*



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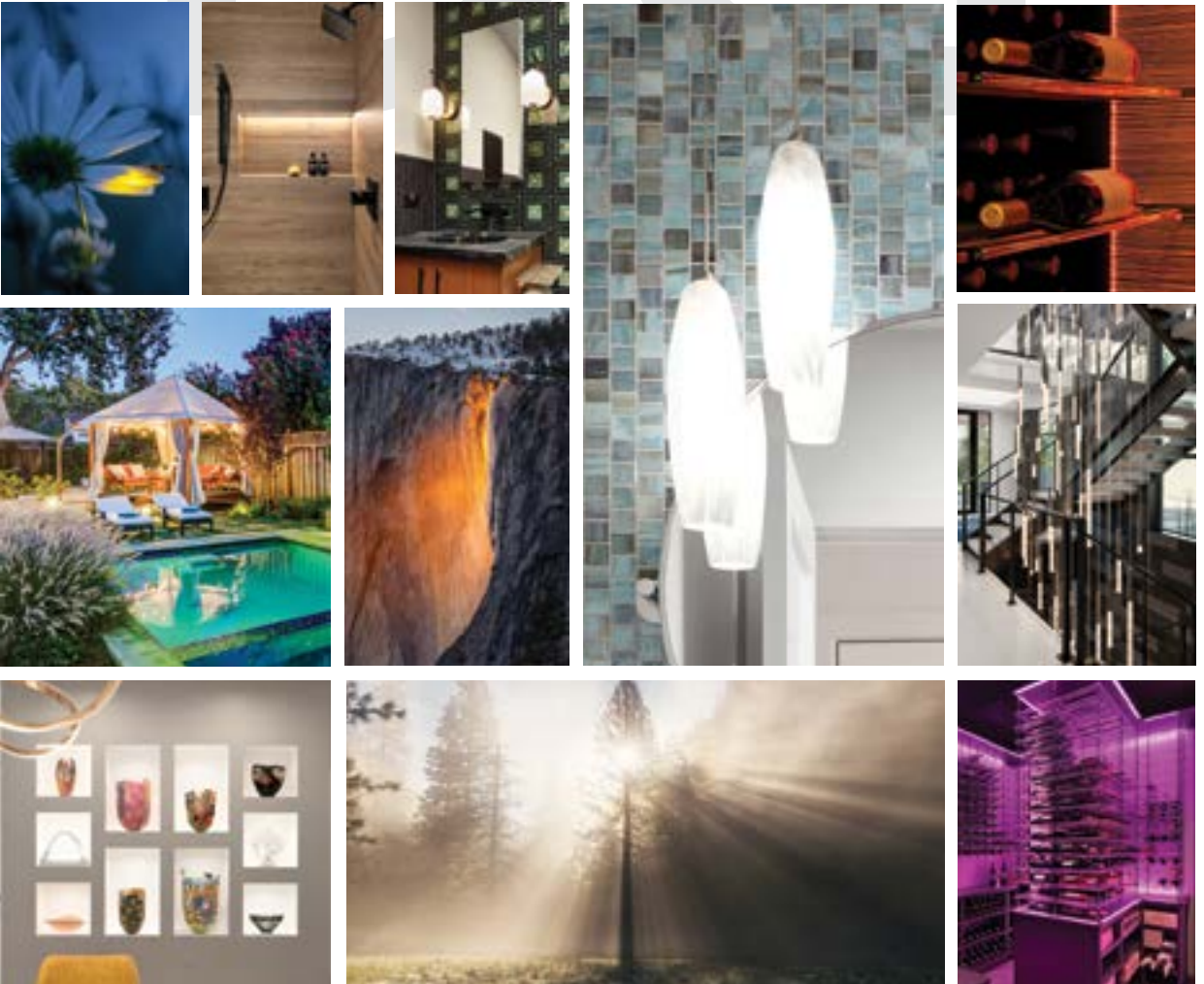
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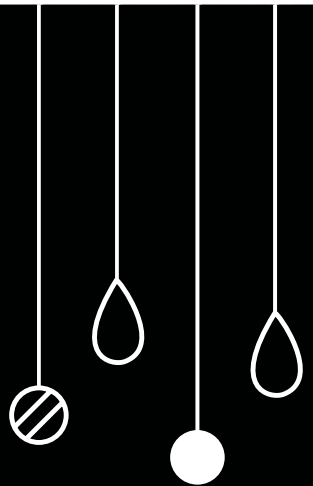


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650.417.1985  
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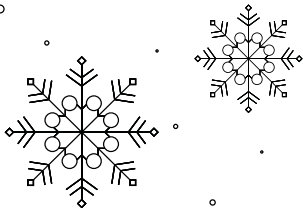
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650.823.0002  
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**PARNIAN KABOLI**  
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408.274.4218  
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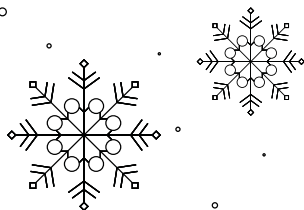
**SABRINA SONG**  
415.342.8716  
DRE 02008794



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*Have yourself a tropical little*

# COCKTAIL Party

Let your drinks be rum based and jolly

BY CHRISTINE MOORE

I treasure that the holiday season is one in which we deck our homes with all things merry and bright. It is a tradition that has always made good sense to me – longer nights and colder conditions outdoors benefit from a counterbalance of sparkling, twinkling and warming details indoors.

I have realized, with age, that the way we decorate our homes this time of year reveals something more profoundly true about life: Regardless of how much darkness a season may hold, we have the capacity to shine from within.

Just as our homes illuminate a brilliant reminder of hope and renewal for all to see, we have the capacity to shine goodness into the lives of others. This human attribute to support and care for neighbors, family and friends is perhaps the ultimate reminder of the value of the holiday season. We are together in this life, even in times of darkness. In fact, our togetherness is the brightest of stars.

## CHILLED-OUT COCKTAIL PARTY

The winter may be our very-most festive time of year, but all the holly-jolliness often means we're navigating a jam-packed calendar. A thoughtful gift for the special people in your life would be an evening of comfort and ease. I can think of no better festival to throw for achieving this goal than a cocktail party with island flavors and tropical aesthetics. Inviting the tropics into your home will encourage guests to take a pose of much-needed chill during the hustle and bustle of the season.

What's more, a cocktail party with a tropical emphasis celebrates what comes naturally to us when we are enjoying a sunny vacation – the importance of taking care of ourselves, one another and our world. Begin by letting friends know that this will be a party of relaxed, quality time together. Then pick a few tropical cocktails to serve. When I consider beach-side drinks, I immediately think of rum. >

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Rum's association with beach days and lingering sunsets is in the spirit's favor. Warming and alluring in its multi-layered flavor profile, rum is perhaps the most underrated bottle in your home bar. Lean into the sunny stance of rum with my island-inspired holiday cocktails.

Using best, freshest ingredients will always add to the

luxury of any party. The cocktail recipes I'm sharing feature fresh fruit and seasonal flavors, but what makes them unforgettable is the use of locally-made Sergeant Classick's Gold Rum. The complexity of this passionately distilled aged rum is remarkable. Made of fermented Hawaiian molasses, Sergeant Classick's Gold Rum entices immediately with aromas of ripe fruits and brown sugar. On the palate, vanilla, nutmeg and cinnamon attributes make Sergeant Classick's Gold Rum the most festive of

holiday spirits. This rum is exactly what you need to flavor your holiday season with goodwill and grace.

Producer Essential Spirits ([essentialspirits.com](https://essentialspirits.com)) is a craft-distillery located in Mountain View. Since 1998, the Classick family have been distilling boutique spirit bottlings. Current offerings include craft rum, bierschnapps, grappa and eau de vie. Their early entry into the craft-distillery world, when there were just six craft-distilleries on the West Coast, sets Essential Spirits firmly in the movement that would become the craft cocktail renaissance of the late 1990s and early 2000s. What makes their spirits so extraordinary is their passion, precision and their custom-made alembic still. Their unique still was smithed and installed by third-generation French still makers whose coppersmithing has been recognized as a cultural treasure in France.

I learned from Dave Classick, Jr, a chief distiller, that stills are as distinguishable as fingerprints, each producing a truly bespoke bottling. The alembic pot still of Essential Spirits is what Classick, Jr. refers to as the "Rolls-Royce of stills."

Sergeant Classick Gold and Silver Rum borrows its name from master distiller and co-founder of Essential Spirits, Dave Classick, Sr., who is a highly decorated Vietnam veteran. To purchase Sergeant's Classick's Gold and Silver, or Essential Spirits' other liquors, visit Ava's Downtown Market in Mountain View. >

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With the holiday season upon us, now is a great time to review our ***"Be Ready, Be Prepared for the Holidays"*** presentation. Learn how to get your home and family ready for this holiday season!

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## MAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT

While some parties benefit from make-ahead efficiency, I like to shake or stir each cocktail to order. This approach sets a much-needed slower pace and gives me one-on-one time with each guest. Since this is cocktail party, there

is no need to serve a sit-down meal. Instead, I order platters of fresh sushi and tempura from our favorite sushi restaurant. Then all that is left to do is to answer the doorbell's ring with a wide smile and open arms. >

### *Rum Pum Pum Punch*

- 2 ounces Sergeant Classick's Gold Rum
- 2 ounces pomegranate juice
- 1/2 ounces freshly squeezed lime juice
- Ginger ale

*Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add rum, pomegranate and lime juice. Shake well, strain and serve over ice. Top with a mild ginger ale, such as Canada Dry.*

### *Tingle Rum Ro*

- 2 ounces Sergeant Classick's Gold Rum
- 1 ounce St-Germain
- 1/2 ounce Amaro Montebello
- 1 ounce pineapple juice

*Fill cocktail stirring glass with ice, add ingredients and stir well. Strain into a chilled glass over crushed ice with a garnish.*

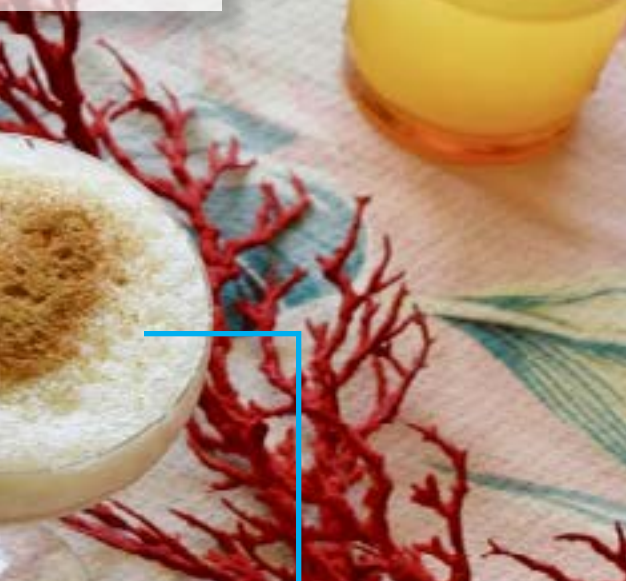
### *Santa's Spiced Manhattan*

- 1 1/2 ounces Sergeant Classick's Gold Rum
- 1/2 ounce Italian Amarena Cherries and its juice
- 1 dash of sweet vermouth
- 1 dash angostura bitters

*Fill cocktail stirring glass with ice. Add gold rum, cherry juice, vermouth and bitters. Stir a few times until combined. Strain into a chilled glass with large cube of ice and garnish with cherries, sugared cranberries or sugared rosemary.*



cks  
 ssick's Gold Rum  
 tenegro  
 e  
 with ice. Add all  
 Strain and serve  
 garnish of fresh fruit.



### Sweater Weather

- 2 ounces Sergeant Classick's Gold Rum
- 1 ounce Amaro Montenegro
- 1 ounce apple cider
- 2 dashes angostura bitters
- 1 dash maple syrup
- Egg white

Fill cocktail shaker with ice. Add all ingredients and shake well. Strain ice off, and discard ice. Add cocktail back to the "dry" shaker. Shake vigorously to really froth the egg white. Strain into a coupe and finish with a sprinkle of cinnamon.

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*Christine Moore is a Mountain View resident. To read more food and drink tips from her, visit [writeyum.com](http://writeyum.com).*





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# Chilly scenes of *Winter* ...in Los Altos!

Go back in time and to see what old Los Altos looked like during the winter season.

COMPILED BY MARY LARSEN

**T**here have been a few exceptions to the normally mild Bay Area winters over the decades, notably – as shown in these photos of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills – in 1962, 1976 and 1978.

Snow angels, anyone?

## Courtesy of Robin Chapman

Robin Chapman and her sister Kimberly Chapman play in the snow in Los Altos on Jan. 21, 1962. “That pose suggests I just threw a snowball, while my sister holds one above her head, ready to go.” – Robin Chapman

In her blog ([robinchapmannews.blogspot.com](http://robinchapmannews.blogspot.com)), Chapman continues: “... Snow covered the ground on the San Francisco Peninsula (one of only 10 such days since 1852, according to the U.S. Weather Service). I remember the day so clearly. My mother had a friend over and as they talked, I kept pointing out the window at the snow falling. The visiting neighbor was from Minnesota and my mother was from Spokane. They found a dusting of snow a big yawn. We kids were native Californians and thought it was a delight. We were lucky that it all happened on a Sunday, when we had a free day to frolic in this unusual weather phenomenon.” >

**Courtesy of the  
Los Altos History Museum Collection  
#1978.014.002**

A Los Altos orchard, shown in 1978, looks especially peaceful with a dusting of snow. This photograph was donated to the Los Altos History Museum by artist Anna Knapp Fitz, who lived on Los Altos Avenue and whose family had a farm and orchard. It’s not known whether this was their orchard.



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**Courtesy of the  
Los Altos History Museum Collection  
#2016.065.003**

This 1976 photo of Westwind Barn, nestled in snow, gives the impression of a mountain scene.



**Courtesy of the  
Los Altos History Museum Collection  
#NN.2015.0033**

A lone driver braves a slushy El Camino Real. It being a Sunday in 1962, most of the businesses, now lost to time, would have been closed.

**Courtesy of Ward Willats**

This beautiful snow-covered tree is the one that Lone Oak Drive, off Magdalena Avenue, was named after, according to Ward Willats. He said sadly the tree is now gone, as is his parents' house there from around 1955-1966.



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**Courtesy of the  
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Sevilla Avenue, Los Altos, 1962, looks tranquil in the snow. (The back of the photo has a handwritten note saying it is Avenue, not Drive.)



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**STEVE  
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408.775.4285  
LIC. #02084163  
steve.barkley@theagencyre.com



**VAHE  
BARONIAN**

650.906.0098  
LIC. #01373114  
vahé.b@theagencyre.com



**MELISSA  
BEAMES NAPPO**

650.580.3574  
LIC. #02182700  
melissa.nbeames@theagencyre.com



**JAVIER  
BES**

470.449.3281  
LIC. #02086869  
javier.bes@theagencyre.com



**RURIK  
BEST**

310.862.0012  
LIC. #02180372  
r.best@theagencyre.com



**PAM  
BLACKMAN**

650.823.0308  
LIC. #00584333  
pam.blackman@theagencyre.com



**LIZ  
BLANK**

650.814.2773  
LIC. #01887904  
liz.blank@theagencyre.com



**CINDY  
BOGARD-O'GORMAN**

650.924.8365  
LIC. #01918407  
cindy.ogorman@theagencyre.com



**JUDY  
BOGARD-TANIGAMI**

650.207.2111  
LIC. #00298975  
judy.bogard@theagencyre.com



**JANE  
DEW**

650.996.0123  
LIC. #00927794  
tori.atwell@theagencyre.com



**FRED  
FALLAH**

650.888.2612  
LIC. #01457716  
fred.fallah@theagencyre.com



**EMILY  
FANG**

650.888.2612  
LIC. #01854906  
emily.fang@theagencyre.com



**VICKI  
FERRANDO**

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LIC. #01418802  
vicki.f@theagencyre.com



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**PATRICIA  
KAROUBI**

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LIC. #01396914  
patricia@theagencyre.com



**ELAINE  
KLEMM**

650.269.1035  
LIC. #00972243  
elaine.klemm@theagencyre.com

**THE AGENCY LOS ALTOS**  
160 Main Street, Los Altos, CA 94022

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NORTH**

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l.north@theagencyre.com



**SUZANNE  
O'BRIEN**

650.996.9898  
LIC. #01467942  
suzanne.obrien@theagencyre.com



**SOLI  
SAATCHI**

650.996.9364  
LIC. #00925744  
soli.saatchi@theagencyre.com



**NISHA  
SHARMA**

650.492.9263  
LIC. #01746077  
nisha.s@theagencyre.com



**TIANA  
SILVEIRA**

650.405.5202  
LIC. #02224542  
tiana.silveira@theagencyre.com



**SUSAN  
SIMS**

650.743.1838  
LIC. #01408349  
suan.sims@theagencyre.com



**RENEE  
SPOONER**

650.477.5484  
LIC. #02208188  
renee.spooner@theagencyre.com



**YVETTE  
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650.208.4510  
LIC. #01461495  
yvettestout@theagencyre.com



**ELIZABETH  
THOMPSON**

650.823.8904  
LIC. #01382997  
elizabeth.thompson@theagencyre.com



**BRETT  
WEITZMANN**

650.495.2903  
LIC. #02000635  
brett.w@theagencyre.com



**LINDA  
WANG**

650.930.7956  
LIC. #01703792  
linda.wang@theagencyre.com



**RICK  
ZEA**

408.205.8050  
LIC. #00880772  
rick.zea@theagencyre.com

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# HOLIDAY VISITORS

BY BRANDON ROTH  
STAFF WRITER | BRANDONR@LATC.COM

Oh my, what do I see?  
Is it really five little elves shivering under the pine cone tree?

They seemed polite, I waved them inside.  
It would be rude to ignore them, I could not leave them aside.

Their skin was pale and blue, but their outfits were even more hard to ignore.  
They dressed in bright colors and adorned with bells galore.

I grabbed their coats and placed them all on a rack.  
They all sat in one armchair, they were very jam-packed.

I gave them hot chocolate and prepared them a fire.  
We talked for some hours into the night, I am not a liar.

They sounded high-pitched when they began speaking.  
They cackled with laughter, but their stories were misleading.

They soon fell asleep, it must have been quite a day.  
I wonder where they came from and how long will they stay.

When I awoke on the sofa alongside a ray of bright light,  
I blinked a few times and turned to my right.

The five little elves were gone, leaving no note of goodbye.  
They came for a reason, but I will never know why.






# Have a holly jolly toasting season: giving the gift of love and appreciation this season

An opportunity to say nice things amongst company

BY CHRISTINE MOORE



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Years ago, a German friend insisted that we make eye contact when clinking our glasses together and proclaimed "Cheers!" She explained it is believed bad luck not to sustain a mutual gaze during the act of toasting.

I'm not a particularly superstitious person, but I am a devotee of anything that heightens time spent with friends. I took her guidance to heart. I have indeed run with it – going out of my way to create opportunities to look into the eyes of anyone I'm enjoying social time with. I've been known to toast afternoon cups of tea, morning doughnuts, even a cardboard tray of stadium nachos has warranted a salute and, albeit somewhat lackluster, clinking together.

When the holidays roll around, you can perhaps imagine just how jazzed I am to toast the season. Words matter. They matter a lot. The holidays provide an opportunity to offer the most important people in our lives our very most heartfelt words.

We all know cheers, salud, sláinte, prost, skol, kanpai or whatever cultural heritage-specific proclamation you make while raising a glass, is shorthand for all manner of well wishes. We're putting hopes for good health, good time and good fortune into the universe when we say our preferred toast. The holidays offer an opportunity to expand on the jam-packed meaning of a single word tribute. In fact, a meaningful toast can be a treasured gift and set a tone of celebration at any seasonal function. >

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Not making a toast at an event can be a real miss to maximizing the spirit of generosity that defines the season.

your toast can express communal hopes and best wishes of all present.

For a dinner party, I like to give a toast when everyone has been seated at the table but has not yet begun to eat. Keep your toast short, specific and upbeat. Look around the table and make eye contact with each person. Then offer a few words of reflection on

what has transpired over the year while welcoming what is to come. You and your loved ones may have endured challenges in the months preceding. Rather than rehash these hard times, a loving acknowledgement that life is better lived together with the folks gathered around the table will honor both the hardship and the truth of our connectedness.

For larger parties, offer the toast as soon as most guests have arrived. Let everyone know they matter to you with perhaps a witty quote or quick retelling of a shared humorous moment. The toast can provide an opportunity to offer any practical tips, such as where food stations, bathrooms and drinks are located.

I think it's nice to invite others to offer a toast as well. If that appeals, I suggest toasts are given throughout the evening rather than all at once. This will allow revelers or diners to get the festivities going and can even result in a building on othe fun as guests take one another's words into account when they offer their own tribute. ➤



### Be the host with the toast

If you're hosting a party at your house, raise your glass to let attendees know how much they mean to you. Whether an intimate dinner or a jam-packed bash, expressing your love for your guests sets a tone of gratitude, connection and jubilation. As attendees likely know one another,

*Wishing you and your family  
the best of the holidays!*



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## Business casual

At a work function, the toast can be important in setting the tone. Senior members of the team can help attendees transition from formal work vibes to the informal festivities. Toasts to colleagues should be upbeat and celebratory. Express gratitude for the work your team has completed and avoid making a speech about missed goals or bottom lines – this is a time to rest and renew for the new year. A toast should underscore that message.

Calling out a few groups that have gone above and beyond is appreciated, but be sure to cast a broad net in your kudos. Consider members of the team



that may be overlooked but whose efforts are as critical as anyone's. Perhaps employees who make the lives of others more manageable but do so without much fanfare.

## Making spirits bright

The actual act of toasting is fun. Folks turn to one another, wide smiles on their faces and clink their glasses in happiness. The clinking together of stemware is core to the act of toasting. It was once thought that the clinking sound would ward off evil. It certainly can't hurt and, at the very

least, it demands that guests interact with one another. So be sure not only to raise your glass, but also to turn to those around you and clink away.

The beverage you toast with matters, too. Historically, making a toast using

water was thought to bring bad luck to toasters and toastees alike. Sparkling wine or sparkling non-alcoholic cider, on the other hand, are ideal because both are drinks associated with merriment, gratitude and celebration.



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Christopher Radko This Teddy Is For You!  
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The 48th annual Los Altos Festival of Lights Parade, arguably the community's most popular event, is scheduled for 6 p.m. Dec. 1 in downtown Los Altos.

The parade features colorful floats, costumed holiday characters, marching bands, dance groups and other performers. Thousands attend the event, which usually runs under an hour.

Organizer Nancy Schneider said this year's parade will have 62 entries, including eight marching bands and 23 floats (including a new one this year based on "Alice In Wonderland").

The Festival of Lights Parade was the creation of three downtown Los Altos merchants, Hope Higbee, Marion Jackston and Jack Huston along with friends Bob Grimm, Ed Hilton and Ted Johnston who were inspired by the Disneyland light parade. In 1977 these merchants and community members convinced the Los Altos Village Association to stage a parade Thanksgiving evening that would promote good will and begin the holiday spirit in the village.

Soon the parade grew so large that a group of community members took over the management of the parade and formed the Los Altos Festival of Lights Association, an all-volunteer, nonprofit group that would produce the parade for our community each year. The parade now is presented on the Sunday night after Thanksgiving. >





Z

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Seeing what a community building event the parade is, the Los Altos City Council designated the parade as a Heritage Event and, as such, provides police, infrastructure, and waste management services that we could not do without.

The theme of the parade, “A Child’s Holiday Fantasy,” takes more than 125 behind the scenes volunteers to help put the parade together on the Sunday after Thanksgiving each year. They transport floats to the staging area, repair lights, maintain our costumes, dress, and apply make up to our costumed characters, orchestrate the parade’s entrants, push, or drive the floats in the parade. In addition, there are hundreds of volunteer performers which include the local high school bands, dance groups and entertainment.

The volunteers love helping put on this parade, and delight in the fact that as the parade time nears the route is lined with chairs and blankets of families marking their favorite viewing location. At 6 p.m., the parade begins on First and State Street traveling down to State Street to Main Street, across First Street, down Whitney Avenue and across Third Street.

During the year preceding each year’s parade the board of directors of the Festival of Lights Association organizes the next parade. It raises money to put on the parade, repairs, and refurbish floats and costumes.

Through contributions and grants we raise the almost \$45,000 it costs to put on this free event for the community. The board of directors is always looking for new volunteers to work on this community event.

The Los Altos Festival of Lights Parade Association welcomes volunteers. For more information, visit [losaltosparade.org](http://losaltosparade.org). 🌟

Note: The Homestead High School Marching Band, a perennial Festival of Lights participant, also will be performing at the 2025 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena. ... This year’s Festival of Lights parade will be shown in real time on KMVT Comcast Channel 15.c



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LOS ALTOS FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS ASSOCIATION



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*Start a new holiday tradition:*

# Miniature Christmas towns bring families together

Create new heartwarming memories with this Christmas town guide

BY CHRISTINA CASILLAS  
STAFF WRITER | CHRISTINAC@LATC.COM



I don't remember exactly when my biological father left my family – I only know it was around the time I was 5 or 6 years old – but I can recall the impact his absence had on my family.

My mom, essentially left by herself to provide for four of her five children who still lived at home, had responsibilities and mounting worries. But one thing I remember was her dedication to still making the holidays special and memorable for us.

That is, of course, for me, mostly. All my siblings who still lived at home were in their mid-to-late-teens and Christmas wasn't as magical to them as it was for little me. I still believed in Santa, and I still lit up as brightly as the pine in my living room on Christmas morning as we all opened gifts and drank hot cocoa.

But my mom knew that was going to change. I don't remember what the first Christmas without

my biological father felt like, but I remember the excitement I felt when my mom unveiled a new holiday project we were going to work on: A miniature Christmas town.

One of the first buildings we added to the town was a toy factory. The miniature, which topped out at about 15 inches tall and 10 inches wide, lit up and had a conveyor belt of toys that went in circles, a jack-in-the-box who moved up and down, and a sound box that called out to the people of the village to “Come and see the most amazing toys in all the world.”

Then we added an ice-skating rink, which came with ice skaters that moved around the rink with the use of magnets.

It started off small, only taking over the length of a small desk we used to have in the kitchen. But as the years progressed, my mom, her husband (he raised me and I will refer to him as my dad throughout the rest of this story) and I added to the collection. ➤



HAPPY

# *Holidays*

The holidays are a time to show appreciation to those who are important to you. Here at DeLeon Realty, our thoughts turn to our amazing clients. You are a big part of our success, and have helped to make us one of the top real estate teams in Silicon Valley.

With sincere gratitude, we wish you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season, and a healthy, prosperous New Year. Cheers to a great 2025!



One of the best aspects of collecting over the years is how there's always a chance a new release will connect to your life in some way; a few years into building our collection, we found a store with my sister's name on it, "Melissa's Pet Shop." My grandfather Ronald loves fishing, and we were delighted when we found "Ron's Fish and Tackle." My favorite find of all, though, was "Christina's Christmas Shoppe."

Currently, we have around 15 houses and buildings that take up a whole corner of the space between the kitchen and living room.

My dad, the ultimate enabler, created a town table that we keep in a shed outside. Every year he puts the 2-foot-deep, 13-foot-long L-shaped table together, and every year my mom and I serve as city planners and decide the town layout.

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ALEX ZUBIRA - ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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## How to start

If you've been thinking about getting into building miniature Christmas towns, this is your sign. It's my second-favorite holiday tradition (after cutting down our own Christmas tree) and will bring any family as much joy as it brought mine. If you're interested in starting your own town, here are a few tips:

- Start early. Collectibles start appearing in Michaels Stores and home improvement stores like Lowe's and Home Depot in October; while it's a niche collection, collectors are dedicated and the number of buildings sold are limited. You can also check out what they'll be debuting online to prepare in advance.
- Lemax and Carole Town are two of the biggest Christmas town manufacturers. While we have both, Lemax is our preferred brand. In my experience, Carole Town has bigger pieces that aren't to scale with Lemax and while they can coexist, they don't necessarily mix well in the same town for the more picky collectors.
- Know how you're going to store them. The packaging can be bulky as the buildings are made of ceramic, so knowing where they can be stored safely after the season is something to keep in mind before starting.
- Have fun with it! It's supposed to be exciting, and you can personalize a town however you like.

I'm just as giddy and excited about the town now as I was when growing up. My mom knows how to make the holidays bright, and of the traditions I intend to take with me when I start my own family, starting my own Christmas town will be one of them. 🧑‍🎄







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V  
02

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Offerings from Carey and Clarkson  
make my list of the best Christmas songs

BY MICHAEL SHTROM  
TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN

The holiday season is fast approaching, and the jingle bells and jolly choruses of Christmas music are coming right along with it.

But such music can often range in quality from “Merry Christmas to All” to “Bah Humbug.”

As such, it is important to recognize the best of the best Christmas songs, whether they come from the world of modern pop or the 1960s. These songs are at the top of my list every Christmas, and here’s why.

**Mariah Carey**

“All I Want for Christmas is You,” 1994

Whether you have grown absolutely sick of this song or, like me, play it at midnight on Nov. 1 every year, it is hard to deny that this is a Christmas staple. To me, the chorus of this song playing in every department store and on every street indicates the start of the Christmas season, a wonderful reminder that, for a least a week or two, I can put aside my worries and enjoy the holiday spirit. For its universal appeal and association with the idea of Christmas itself, “All I Want for Christmas is You” stakes the top spot.



**Kelly Clarkson**

“Underneath the Tree,” 2013

Staying firmly within my comfort zone of pop music for now, this choice is quite special to me. I first heard it a few Christmases ago when I was stressing about a big project, and it has since maintained its association with feelings of relief and comfort for me. With a similar sentiment, but vastly different structure and delivery to that of Carey’s classic hit, “Underneath the Tree” feels like home to me. Every time Clarkson bursts into that chorus, it’s like she is welcoming me into a place of warmth, comfort and love and what’s more Christmas than that? ➤

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Happy holidays from my family to yours!

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YOU AND YOURS MANY SEASONS CHEERS

*Elizabeth Thompson*



### **Bing Crosby**

**“It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas,” 1951**

While my first two choices represent the Christmas season, “It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas” represents Christmas day to me. It’s an opportunity to take a break from the upbeat hustle-and-bustle side of Christmas and pause. It’s the song you hear when you’re surrounded by family, enjoying your connection to each other and truly taking in the moment. Under its layers and layers of presents and commercialization, this song reveals what Christmas is really about.

### **John Lennon, Plastic Ono Band and Yoko Ono**

**“Happy Xmas (War is Over),” 1971**

More than any other song on my list, this one makes Christmas feel triumphant. It makes me feel like I have survived yet another long year on Earth and can finally take the time to celebrate and enjoy time with family. The inclusion of the Harlem Community Choir gives it the perfect sense of innocence and joy to bring Christmas to mind immediately. Coupled with its incredibly interesting backstory as the culmination of Lennon and Ono’s protest efforts against the Vietnam War, this song is the perfect addition to any Christmas playlist.



### **Darlene Love**

**“Christmas (Baby Please Come Home),” 1962**

Love’s Christmas classic rounds out my list, making it the third entry that paints Christmas as a backdrop for longing for a loved one’s presence, after the Carey and Clarkson entries. This song is perfect to listen to outside on a snowy day, the kind which Los Altos rarely ever sees. Its sentiment and choral repetition of the word “Christmas” make it the absolute epitome of a Christmas song, earning its place on every Christmas playlist this holiday season. 🎵



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🌿 HAPPY HOLIDAYS 🌿



# Array of activities in store for holiday season

A host of holiday-related local events and shows are on the horizon as winter approaches. A rundown of performances and activities follows.



NOV.  
29

THROUGH

DEC.  
22



## “A Christmas Story: The Musical”

8 p.m. at Bus Barn Theater, 97 Hillview Ave.

The Los Altos Stage Company stages “A Christmas Story: The Musical,” adapted from the 1983 classic film about Ralphie Parker and his desire for the holiday gift of his dreams – an official red Ryder toy BB gun. The musical contains adult-themed content. Tickets are \$28-\$51.

For more information, visit [losaltosstage.org/a-christmas-story](http://losaltosstage.org/a-christmas-story).

DEC.  
1



## Festival of Lights Parade

6-8 p.m. in downtown Los Altos

Starting on First and State streets, the Festival of Lights Parade is an annual tradition in Los Altos that features marching bands, a visit from Santa Claus and illuminated floats. The parade is appropriate for all ages. Admission is free.

For more information, visit [losaltosparade.org](http://losaltosparade.org).

DEC.  
5

AND

DEC.  
22



## Holiday Market

4-8 p.m. on State Street in downtown Los Altos

The annual Holiday Market features live music, holiday decoration and warm seasonal drinks for shoppers. The event also includes baked goods and treats from Los Altos Farmers' Market vendors. Admission is free.

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/2fhz3v67](http://tinyurl.com/2fhz3v67). >



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DEC.  
5

THROUGH

DEC.  
8



### Smuin’s “The Christmas Ballet”

7:30 p.m. Dec. 5

7:30 p.m. Dec. 6

2 and 7:30 p.m. Dec. 7

2 p.m. Dec. 8

At the Mountain View Center for Performing Arts, Main Stage

The Smuin Contemporary Ballet stages its annual run of “The Christmas Ballet,” featuring choreography by Michael Smuin. The two-hour-long performance has one intermission and is appropriate for children. Tickets are \$31-\$117.

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/3btvd7tw](http://tinyurl.com/3btvd7tw).



DEC.  
6



### Holiday Tree Celebration

6-8 p.m. at Veterans Community Plaza, Los Altos

The Los Altos Village Association invites community members to the Holiday Tree Celebration, featuring music and performances by local students. The event includes the arrival of Santa Claus, who will be available for pictures until 8 p.m.; cameras will not be provided. Admission is free.

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/k9phadn2](http://tinyurl.com/k9phadn2). >



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*Happy Holidays!*



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DEC.  
7



## Pictures with Santa

2-4 p.m. at the Enchanté Boutique Hotel, 1 Main St., Los Altos

*Santa Claus takes time out of his busy holiday schedule to visit downtown Los Altos for a photo-taking session at Enchanté, 1 Main St. Admission is free.*

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/yv3debyf](https://tinyurl.com/yv3debyf).

DEC.  
7



## Breakfast with Santa

9-10:30 a.m. at the Redwood Hall at the Mountain View Community Center, 201 S. Rengstorff Ave.

*Santa hosts a festive, catered breakfast for families of Mountain View. Breakfast with Santa features holiday-themed performances on the Sugar & Spice Stage, craft activities in the Holly-Jolly room and pictures with Santa and his elves. Registration is \$18 in advance; tickets will not be sold at entry.*

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/yc6u3ykt](https://tinyurl.com/yc6u3ykt).



DEC.  
7



## Holiday Barn Lighting

2-5 p.m. at the Westwind Community Barn, 27210 Altamont Road, Los Altos Hills

*A holiday tradition in Los Altos Hills, the annual event features baked goods, hot cider and wine. Children's activities include seasonal games, arts and crafts, face painting, petting zoo and pony rides. The barn lighting countdown starts at 5 p.m. Admission is free.*

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/2ram38ef](https://tinyurl.com/2ram38ef).



DEC.  
7



## Winter Holiday Robotics

9 a.m. to noon at the Mountain View Community Center, 201 Rengstorff Ave.

*Children ages 6-13 can explore robotics through holiday-inspired robots. This educational robotic workshop includes mechanical components, building and programming. Registration costs \$78.*

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/4c2dfan5](https://tinyurl.com/4c2dfan5).



DEC.  
9



## Community Tree Lighting Celebration

5:30-8 p.m. in downtown Mountain View

*The Community Tree Lighting Celebration features local performances and tributes to multicultural traditions. Children can participate a variety of activities including arts and crafts, train rides, story time with Mrs. Claus and an appearance by Santa. It is encouraged to bring new and unwrapped toys or canned food to donate to Cops that Care and Community Services Agency. Admission is free.*

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/5686h9jn](https://tinyurl.com/5686h9jn).



DEC.  
12



## Winter Wonderland Workshop with LEGO Materials

9 a.m. to noon at the Mountain View Senior Center.  
266 Escuela Ave.

Children ages 6-13 use engineering, architecture and creativity to build a LEGO Winter Wonderland. The activity features motorized contraptions, including snowmobiles and gondolas, along with hilltop villages. Registration is \$46.

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/5n78b6cj](http://tinyurl.com/5n78b6cj).



DEC.  
14



## Santa's Workshop

9 a.m. to noon at the Mountain View Senior Center, 266 Escuela Ave.

At Santa's Workshop, children ages 6-11 are welcome to build holiday-themed crafts, including ornaments, stockings, snow globes and more. Santa's elves guide participants through their toy-making process. Registration is \$47, which includes materials.

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/5n9xkt4c](http://tinyurl.com/5n9xkt4c). >

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DEC. 20 THROUGH DEC. 22



## “Snow Queen”

7 p.m. Dec. 20  
7 p.m. Dec. 21  
3 p.m. Dec. 22

At the Visual and Performing Arts Center at De Anza College, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino

*Mountain View-based dance academy Bayer Ballet performs the two-hour “Snow Queen,” appropriate for all ages. The ballet, based on the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, celebrates friendship, love and courage.*

For more information, visit [bayerballet.com/onstage](http://bayerballet.com/onstage).

DEC. 22



## Christmas Caroling Party

6-9 p.m. at Ananda Community, 240 Monroe Drive, Mountain View

*The Christmas Caroling Party strolls down the neighborhood of Ananda Community to sing carols. Children and adults are welcome. Lyrics to the carols are provided. After caroling, participants are invited to a sweet and savory potluck at Chela Balva. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight. The event is free.*

For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/ya7efmnn](http://tinyurl.com/ya7efmnn). \*

COMPILED BY  
Keara Morrow/  
Town Crier Editorial Intern





# Los Altos Town Crier

## *Holiday Fund 2024*

The Los Altos Town Crier Holiday Fund was launched in 2000 to raise funds for hands-on nonprofits throughout Silicon Valley, particularly those serving families and children. Most recipient organizations rely on many volunteers and maintain low overhead in their efforts to touch the lives of those in need.

The Holiday Fund has raised more than four million dollars since its inception. The money has been distributed to local charities that tirelessly make a difference for families in our community, addressing education, literacy, social issues, food insecurity, housing, mental health, drug abuse and general well being.

### **DONATE NOW!**

Each year more than 400 local donors support the Fund. All contributions are tax deductible through our fiscal partner, the LAMV Community Foundation. Contribute by phone with a credit card at (650) 949-5908, online at [www.lamvcf.org/lafc-holiday-fund](http://www.lamvcf.org/lafc-holiday-fund) or by mailing a **check made out to LAMVCF**, with "LATCHF" on the memo line. Mail to LAMV Community Foundation, 183 Hillview Ave. Los Altos, CA 94022.

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Company

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# COMPASS

## Your Los Altos Holiday Calendar

December 1st - Festival of Lights Parade  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

December 5th - Holiday Market  
4:00 PM - 8:00 PM

December 6th - Holiday Tree Celebration  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

December 7th - Pictures with Santa  
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM



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