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Home *for the* Holidays

A LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER PUBLICATION

WINTER 2021



Holiday Heirlooms

Families keep rituals alive

Events

Local holiday events are back
after last year's limitations

Feast in the Middle East

Celebrate love at first bite
with stuffed artichokes

Hanukkah

Hanukkah displays go
larger-than-life to spread the light



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ON THE COVER:

PHOTO BY MAL TAAM | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.

Emersyn Schwartz, 3, practices lighting a hanukkah with family history in Los Altos Hills. Emersyn's great-grandmother, Ellen – beloved as "Binky" – gave the Hanukkah menorah as an engagement gift to Emersyn's mother, Devra, to welcome her into the family, continue long traditions and start new ones.



HOLIDAY HEIRLOOMS

Families keep rituals alive

COMPILED BY MARY LARSEN

STAFF WRITER | maryl@latc.com

When thinking of the holidays, most people conjure up visions of family, whether near or far, living or deceased. Memories are evoked – of growing up, get-togethers, good times.

Often, religious traditions play a major role, with the birth of Jesus or the Feast of Lights taking precedence over Santa and his sack of goodies.

However we choose to celebrate, many families have a few special objects without which the season wouldn't feel complete. Rather than items bought a few years ago at a big-box store, they might be handed down through the generations, handmade by a child or other cherished relative, or perhaps purchased during a family vacation.

Following are several examples of holiday heirlooms – those “special somethings,” large or small, that make the holiday decor complete.

QUILTER SUSAN JORDAN of Mountain View has created dozens of wall hangings and bed coverings for gifts and personal use. In the photo above, dressed for an afternoon of mosaic-making, she displays a winter-themed quilt that adorns a guest bed at Christmastime. She started with a kit purchased at Sunnyvale's Granary Quilt Shop but had to do all the cutting, placing and sewing – a major undertaking. She noted that a kit with a different design is available this year.

Jordan's sister, Elisabeth Nilles of Holland, Iowa, creates whimsical figures from wooden eggs that she gives to family members for various holidays. Pictured at right is a Thanksgiving collection; she also makes them for Christmas, Easter, Halloween and other occasions. Jordan made the mosaic pumpkins, which also decorate the family's fall dining table. ➤



PHOTO BY MARY LARSEN. Mosaic pumpkins and wooden egg figures adorn the Jordan family's fall table.

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MARY LARSEN'S AUNT, NANCY DONOHUE, knitted personalized Christmas stockings for Mary and her brothers when they were babies. The design changed very slightly with each rendition, and the angora yarn on the two oldest ones lost some fluff in a dry-cleaning, but they are otherwise in perfect shape approximately 60 years later. The stockings are very large, so Santa had to be creative in filling them: an orange usually went into the toe, and then an assortment of items ranging from fun (toys, candy, books) to practical (stationery for thank-you notes, socks, Scotch tape). (Read more on Aunt Nancy in a story on page 10, "The Gift That Nancy Was.")



PHOTO BY MARY LARSEN. Personalized Christmas stockings knitted by Nancy Donohue for her niece and nephews are now family heirlooms.

Mountain View resident FLORA MORALES brought this nativity scene with her from El Salvador nearly 17 years ago. Her mother gave it to her, and it originally belonged to her mother's aunt. Morales said that each year she freshens up the roof with grass she has cut and dried.

She explained that in El Salvador, Christmas Eve is the main holiday, featuring Mass, Christmas pageants and re-enactments of the Holy Family's journey to Bethlehem ("Las Posadas") and nativity scenes ("Los Nacimientos"), as well as fireworks displays and much celebrating with family. ➤



PHOTO BY FLORA MORALES. This nativity scene, brought from El Salvador, belonged to Flora Morales' great-aunt.

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ELAINE BERSON of Los Altos Hills needlepoints ornaments for her grandchildren that are destined to become family heirlooms. So far, she's been making them for eight years for her grandson and five years for her granddaughter.



BILL BLOOM of Redwood City has a collection of several menorahs, including this one from Israel.

"This menorah was given to us by my mother-in-law 51 years ago," he said. "Every Hanukkah it is lit for eight nights, and it will be lit for many more years to come."



RICK WOLFROD of Mountain View and his sister Mary Budris of Pebble Beach have preserved a large collection of family Christmas ornaments, many of them dating back several generations.

"I grew up with all of them," Wolfrod said.

The paper balls hail from Denmark. "They come apart," he noted, "and were filled with chocolates and other treats."

The metal- and glass-colored balls "came from the Scandinavian side of the family ... still in pretty good shape after 140-plus years," he continued. "The Merry Christmas one was given to me. When we decorated, it was the last ornament I put up before either a star or angel on the top – we had both. The bells are mostly metal and most still ring. More childproof than the glass. Before we could decorate, my parents put a lot of them at the bottom of the tree."



PHOTO BY MARY BUDRIS. Ornaments from Denmark are part of a family collection.

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CHERYL CALIGARIS of Los Altos has amassed a treasure trove of ornaments from her family's travels.

"Since the late '90s," she said, "each year when my husband and I (and now children) travel, we purchase an ornament to remind us of our vacation. From Vail to Maui, Virginia to Wisconsin, we have traveled the USA extensively, as well as Mexico and the Caribbean. Each year when we hang the ornaments on the Christmas tree, we reminisce about our vacations and it brings us closeness as we head into the holiday season." ❁



PHOTO BY CHERYL CALIGARIS. The Caligaris family brings back Christmas ornaments from their travels, reminding them of special times together.

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The Gift That Nancy Was

BY MARY LARSEN

STAFF WRITER | maryl@latc.com



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARY LARSEN. Nancy Donohue relaxes on Sachuest Beach in Middletown, Rhode Island.

If I could have my much-loved Aunt Nancy back for one day, or one season, it would be Christmas.

Nancy didn't do things halfway, and Christmas was cause for lavish celebration. There were elaborately decorated sugar cookies; Spode Christmas china; carefully chosen gifts wrapped in thick foil paper and enormous ribbons, topped with coordinating Christmas ornaments. An art teacher, Nancy knew how to create beauty – and she did.

When my brothers and I were babies, Nancy knitted us each personalized Christmas stockings (we have them still) – great big ones with angora Santas knitted in and a jingle bell sewn on the toe.

Nancy was an opera lover, and I remember the Jessye Norman Christmas album playing over and over again – “Ave Maria,” “O Come, All Ye Faithful,” “Joy to the World.”

Although Nancy loved to buy, she mostly liked to give – to family, to

neighbors, to countless charities, to homeless people. When Nancy visited us one Christmas season, we went to San Francisco's Union Square. The atmosphere was festive, with music playing and crowded sidewalks. A local news station was filming and interviewing people on the street about their Christmas shopping. I remember my aunt saying something like, “Fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly, I gotta shop.” They ate it up, and it made it on the air. We all thought it was great, but I think Nancy was embarrassed. A colorful quote, but it didn't express her true feelings at all – the importance of family, the birth of Jesus, goodwill toward all. But that probably wouldn't have made the 6 o'clock news.

Nancy was very religious and, though she enjoyed the fun of the season, she knew what the real Christmas gift was. I recall once quietly whispering to her during Mass at St. William Church, “Do you want to leave right after Communion?” A stern headshake

was the reply. Why did I ask? What would five extra minutes matter in the dinner preparations? This was her day, and this hour was the highlight of it.

I don't have many tangible things left of Nancy: a couple of her oil paintings of the Newport waterfront; a wooden Our Lady of Guadalupe figurine and a straw crucifix she bought in Mexico; a striped LL Bean tank top; a beautiful beach-glass bracelet she splurged on for me; and, of course, my Christmas stocking.

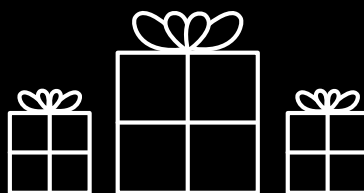
But I can look back on beaches and vacations; plays and churches; coffee shops, cats, art projects and laughter.

Like most people, Nancy had her share of challenges in life – perhaps more than her share. But throughout it all, she held on tightly to her faith and managed to maintain her generosity and sense of humor.

As I get older, I understand a few things better, and value what I have – and had. I now truly appreciate the gift that Nancy was. 🌻

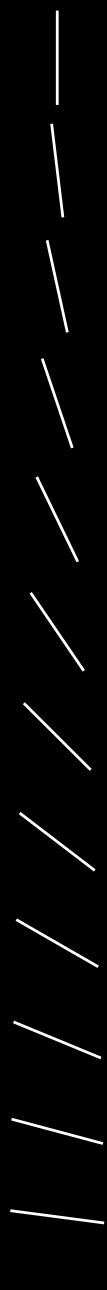
Home for the Holidays

Few words in the English language carry as much feeling as the word "home". We at Compass hope that you are able to safely share your home, wherever that may be, with at least one more family member, one more friend, and one more neighbor this holiday season.



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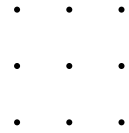
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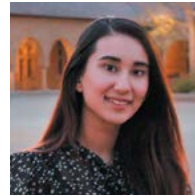
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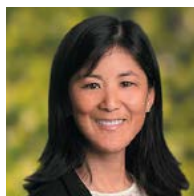
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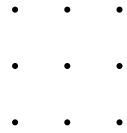
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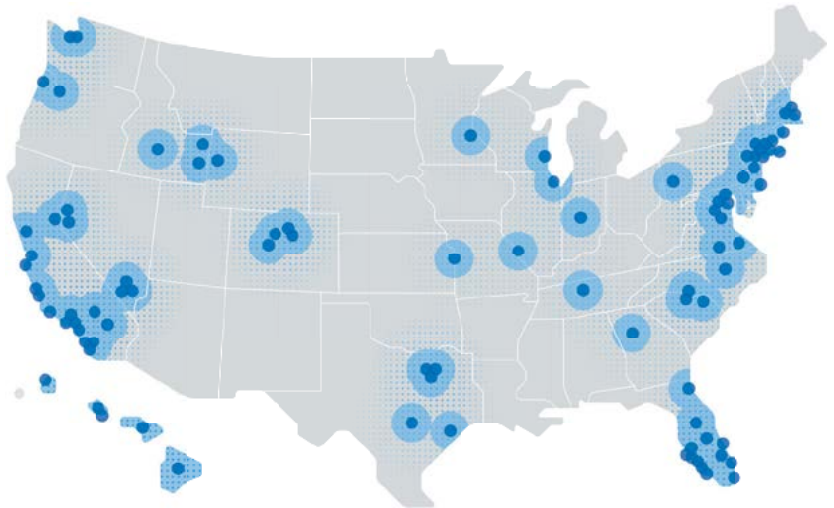


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Hanukkah displays go larger-than-life to spread the light

BY ELIZA RIDGEWAY
STAFF WRITER | elizar@latc.com

Hanukkah comes early this year – the lunisolar holiday begins at sundown Nov. 28, precisely the same time Los Altos’ Festival of Lights Parade is set to return after several years of tribulations. The arc of the larger eight-day festival of lights includes candle lighting, decadent food and, for many families, small presents and acts of caring that mark a holiday about community resilience and a light that endures against the darkness.

Los Altos Chabad plans to light a new 12-foot silver menorah each night of Hanukkah at Veterans Community Plaza, at the corner of Main and State streets in downtown Los Altos. The season begins with a gathering 5:30 p.m. Nov. 29, with music, kids activities and likely doughnuts and latkes, though the precise details were still being nailed down as of press time, as the event intends to be fully in line with COVID protocols as they evolve.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALYSSA ZAGORIE – Local Hanukkah events will look different this year – more masks, more outdoor gatherings – but Jewish groups continue the tradition of inviting the community to learn the rituals of light and hope this season.

Ezzy Schusterman, rabbi of Los Altos Chabad, said lighting the menorah in a public setting celebrates great thanks for life “in a free society, where we can be free to practice our religion.”

Hanukkah commemorates not just a miracle in the temple, but also the story of Jews who studied the Torah and Commandments during a time when that practice of faith was repressed.

“There’s a mitzvah on Hanukkah of ‘pirumei nisa’ – spreading the miracle – and when you light the menorah in a public setting, it is more of a spreading the miracle,” Schusterman said. “That’s why we do it every year – to engage the community, let those who are Jewish celebrate their Judaism and those who are not to participate and to see the beauty of what Judaism has to offer.”

Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills will be marking Hanukkah to some degree every night, according to Rabbi Jonathan Prosnit, but the big celebration is scheduled Dec. 4. Families will gather outdoors at the synagogue, weather permitting, for all of the traditional holiday trappings: latkes, dreidels, chocolate, songs, and the event is open to all.



COURTESY OF CAROL BOOTH. Do-it-yourself Hanukkah menorahs are less portable to local events, but they allow for artistic expression among celebrators young and old.

The Jewish Baby Network, which serves interfaith and Jewish families on the Peninsula and has expanded across the Bay Area, is set to host a Zoom party 10:30 a.m. Dec. 5. Experienced families can use the opportunity to launch the season and invite relatives scattered around the world to join in and watch the celebration, and families who are just learning the traditions to get practice lighting their hanukkiyot together and to learn blessings and songs associated with the holiday. ➤



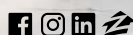
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Expect puppets, stories and songs, and a chance for children to dance and share the event with their favorite stuffed animals, according to Carol Booth, the network's founder. She said that last year, grandparents prevented from holiday travel tuned in to watch their little ones light the candles, and noted that you can pin and highlight the participants you want to focus on at events like this one.

SYMBOLS OF THE NIGHT

Rabbi Prosnit's family lights a multitude of hanukkiyot, including an elegant wedding gift, a dinosaur (menorahsaurus rex) and a zebra.

"We have a 7-, a 4- and a 1-year-old, so it's not always easy, but we generally light them all together and we each have a hanukkiah that we light," Prosnit said.

One year Erin Gleeson, Prosnit's wife and local author of "The Forest Feast" cookbook series, arrayed a series of four limes, halved, around one-half of an orange for an edible relic of winter fruit.



"She's a foodie to her core, and it's citrus time," Prosnit said.

For families building their own collection, the local Judaica store bob and bob closed, for those many years ago, but BK Collections on State Street in downtown Los Altos carries a few ornamental Jewish pieces each year. Prosnit said the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco has a shop for those open to a day trip, and creative artists can be found doing beautiful work on Etsy.

COURTESY OF ALYSSA ZAGORIE. Local Jewish families gather to light candles together and repeat - or learn - the traditional blessings for Hanukkah each year.

Rabbi Schusterman's family also lights an assortment, from the silver menorah his wife bought just after their marriage to the current year's school-crafted menorahs.

Mountain View resident Sylvie Barak went big last year with her family's hanukkiah, lighting tiki torches in their front yard to illuminate the night. >



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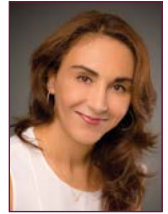
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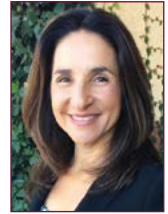
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“I grew up in Europe, where Christmas is a big thing – you can’t escape Christmas – and my mom was adamant: ‘No lights, no tree, we are Jewish, we will get a hanukkah and that is it,’” Barak recalled.

Now that she leads her own family, there’s more to the lights – blue and white light strings are easy to find these days. And this year the Baraks again plan to set up an enormous menorah of torches in their front yard.

“I don’t want my kids to feel like they’re missing out, because we have a culture that’s amazing in its own right,” Barak said of the traditions they’ve built around Hanukkah that are both embedded in Judaism and reminiscent of other rituals of the season – for instance, her eight-day collection of small gifts that’s laid out like a Jewish Advent calendar.

“It’s the most amazing holiday ever – you get fried sweet food and light candles all over the place; you get to play games, win coins, eat latkes, which are delicious with applesauce and sour cream; and you get gifts



COURTESY OF ALYSSA ZAGORIE. The weekly candle lighting of Jewish Shabbats takes on an outward-facing emphasis during Hanukkah, when traditions are made to be shared.

every day for eight days,” she said. “The joy is prolonged, and we usually had people ’round at the house every night, and the boys get really excited about that – they loved the hosting.”

Throughout the pandemic, they have been baking challah as a family and hosting live Friday evening Shabbats online to include their diasporic

COVID community in a ritual of candle lighting and prayer. This year, the Hanukkah season allows for a more hybrid approach, but the live online events include family across Europe and Israel as well as friends still impeded by virus mitigation as well as geography when it comes to celebrating together. 🌟



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FEAST IN THE MIDDLE EAST OF RULERS AND ROYALTY: CELEBRATE LOVE AT FIRST BITE WITH STUFFED ARTICHOKES

BY BLANCHE SHAHEEN

Back in ancient times, people of the Far East declared the artichoke a forbidden vegetable, thought to contain an aphrodisiac or other mystical powers.

Greek mythology texts stated that Zeus, the virile and strong chief of all gods, was responsible for the creation of the artichoke. After a beautiful young woman rejected Zeus, he turned the woman into a thorny thistle, or artichoke. Meanwhile, the last queen of Ancient Egypt, Cleopatra, feasted on artichokes, legumes, grains and fish.

Fast forward to the 16th century – women were not allowed to eat artichokes. The vegetable was still

considered scandalous, and somehow only men were allowed to partake in aphrodisiac foods. However, members of Italian royalty like Catherine de Medici rebelled and ate them openly, and in large quantities. Henry VIII of England was also fond of them and consumed the vegetable in generous quantities.

Throughout history, royalty and rulers of kingdoms had a special fondness for artichokes, also called “ardi’shoke” in Arabic, which means “thorn of the ground.” While this thistle was only accessible to the ruling class, today, thankfully, artichokes can be enjoyed by all – turned into a festive dish for any special occasion. >

We wish you and your family the happiest of holidays.



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Artichokes have a flavor profile that resembles asparagus, Brussels sprouts and even turnips all in one. A native of the Mediterranean region, the artichoke is a perennial in the thistle group of the sunflower family. One medium to large artichoke will yield only approximately 2 ounces of edible flesh. However, part of the fun is taking the artichoke apart and dipping the leaves and heart into a variety of dressings or sauces, making for a sensorial eating experience.

As part of a family tradition, my mother would prepare these special Middle Eastern-spiced, stuffed artichokes for us during the holiday season, whether in the spring for Easter or in the winter for Christmas. The buttery hearts in the interior are the perfect complement to the savory blend of rice, lamb and allspice cooked in a lemony broth and topped with toasted pine nuts.

I personally think Cleopatra, Zeus, Queen Catherine or King Henry would fall in love at first bite with this aromatic and rich dish. While some might find artichoke preparation intimidating, there are only a few steps you need to transform artichokes into edible bowls ideal for savory fillings. >



COURTESY OF BLANCHE SHAHEEN. Blanche Shaheen, left, and her mother, Vera Araj, prep artichokes for stuffing.

Blanche Shaheen is a journalist, host of the YouTube cooking show “Feast in the Middle East” and cookbook author. To purchase her cookbook, visit FeastInTheMiddleEast.com. To check out her cooking video tutorials and other recipes, follow her on YouTube at youtube.com/user/blanchetv or Instagram at [@BlancheMedia](https://www.instagram.com/BlancheMedia).



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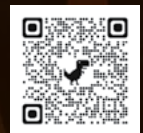


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MIDDLE EASTERN-STYLE STUFFED ARTICHOKES

- 4 artichokes
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1/2 cup rice
- 1 1/2 tablespoons melted butter
- 3/4 cup diced lamb (or chickpeas, or any kind of meat you prefer)
- Salt to taste
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- Lemon pepper to taste
- 1 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic (1-2 cloves)
- 2 cups chicken broth (or veggie broth)
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted in skillet until browned

To prepare artichokes, cut off stem and approximately 1 inch of pointy tip. Using kitchen shears, cut off thorny tips of each leaf. Now, artichoke is safer to core. Using melon baller or spoon, carve out fibrous fuzzy choke in middle to reveal heart below.

Add juice of one-half lemon to bowl of water and place cored artichokes in bowl before preparing stuffing. This prevents artichokes from browning.

In another bowl, combine rice, lamb, butter, garlic with salt and lemon pepper to taste. Divide into four parts and stuff each artichoke with quarter of rice and lamb mixture.

In large pot, pour in broth, season with dash of salt and add juice of one-half lemon. Place artichokes in broth, then fill with enough water to reach height of 75% of artichokes. Cover and bring to boil, then simmer 45 minutes (might need an hour if artichokes are extra large).

Sprinkle top of each artichoke with toasted pine nuts. 🌻



For a video tutorial on how to make this dish, visit youtu.be/kWiTtW1JD4Q.

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Local holiday events are back after last year's limitations



COURTESY OF CHANTICLEER. "A Chanticleer Christmas" is scheduled Dec. 16 at Stanford's Memorial Church.

BY VAISHU SIRKAY

TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN

As the holidays begin, a host of seasonal events, performances and activities are scheduled in the area. The list below includes new virtual events as well as the return of traditions from pre-pandemic days.

"THE NUTCRACKER" – Various Studios

NOV. 26-30, DEC. 10-12

Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts

Two local dance academies perform the popular holiday ballet.

- Pacific Ballet Academy: 6 p.m. Nov. 26, 1 and 6 p.m. Nov. 27, noon and 2 p.m. Nov. 28 (one act only)
- Western Ballet: 7 p.m. Dec. 10, 1 and 7 p.m. Dec. 11, 1 p.m. Dec. 12

For more information, visit pacificballet.org or westernballet.org.

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS PARADE

6 P.M. NOV. 28

Downtown Los Altos

A Los Altos tradition for more than 40 years, the Festival of Lights Parade returns along Main and State streets after last year's pandemic-related cancellation. Parade highlights include illuminated floats, characters, marching bands and an appearance by Santa. The theme is "A Child's Holiday Fantasy." Admission is free.

For more information, visit losaltosparade.org.

GINGERBREAD HOUSE EXHIBIT

NOV. 30 THROUGH DEC. 9

Los Altos Community Center

The Los Altos Recreation and Community Services division sponsors the 34th annual Gingerbread House Exhibit, a 10-day event that invites visitors to view gingerbread houses created by local residents. Admission is free.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/4z77t5j4.

THEATREWORKS' 'IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE: A LIVE RADIO PLAY'

DEC. 1-26

Lucie Stern Theatre in Palo Alto and online

TheatreWorks stages its take on "It's a Wonderful Life," presented as a 1940s radio play. The show will be offered in person several times in December, as well as on-demand virtually. Tickets start at \$25.

For times, tickets and more information, visit tinyurl.com/wszt7t4.

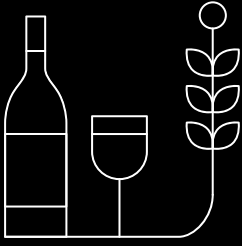
SMUIN CONTEMPORARY BALLET'S 'THE CHRISTMAS BALLET'

7:30 P.M. DEC. 2, 7:30 P.M. DEC. 3, 2 AND

7:30 P.M. DEC. 4, 2 P.M. DEC. 5

The two-hour performance of "The Christmas Ballet" features a variety of dance styles, including ballet, contemporary, jazz and tap. It is suitable for all ages. Tickets begin at \$59, with a discount available for students.

For tickets and more information, visit tinyurl.com/cfv9daat. ➤



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COURTESY OF KBB PRODUCTION COMPANY. 'A Celtic Christmas' takes the stage Dec. 22 at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts.

LOS ALTOS ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

6-8 P.M. DEC. 3
Veterans Community Plaza

The Tree Lighting Ceremony, organized by the Los Altos Village Association in partnership with Los Altos First Friday, includes refreshments, holiday music and a visit from Santa at 6:30 p.m.

For more information, visit downtownlosaltos.org.

'HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS': PREPARING SIDE DISHES WITH CHEF LAURA STEC

2 P.M. DEC. 4
Online

Chef Laura Stec teaches participants how to plan parties, arrange table displays and incorporate time-saving strategies. She also will share recipes for side dishes. Participants must register in advance for the free Santa Clara County Library District event.

To register and for more information, visit tinyurl.com/szd678c9.

SANTA VISITS
5:30-8:15 P.M. DEC. 4

Santa makes 15-minute personal visits to the homes of Los Altos residents with children up to age 12. Organized by the Los Altos Recreation & Community Services division, visits cost \$125.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/ynpp3njt.

PENINSULA YOUTH THEATRE'S 'THE ELVES AND THE SHOEMAKER'

1:30 P.M. DEC. 11
Online

Peninsula Youth Theatre stages a modernized version of the classic "The Elves and the Shoemaker." The performance is recorded, but the cast and production staff will be available live after the showing to answer audience questions. Tickets are \$10.

For tickets and more information, visit pytnet.org/box-office. >



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'A CHANTICLEER CHRISTMAS'

7:30 P.M. DEC. 16

Memorial Church,
Stanford University

Chanticleer, a men's vocal ensemble from San Francisco, performs its annual Christmas concert, "A Chanticleer Christmas," featuring a new program of music. Tickets are \$65.

For tickets and more information, visit live.stanford.edu/calendar.

BAYER BALLET COMPANY'S 'THE SNOW QUEEN'

7 P.M. DEC. 18, 3:30 P.M. DEC. 19

Mountain View Center for the
Performing Arts

Bayer Ballet Company stages a ballet about a quest undertaken by one child to save a friend who falls under the spell of the Snow Queen. The 2 1/2-hour performance is suitable for all ages. Tickets start at \$38.

For tickets and more information, visit bayerballet.com/onstage.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

10 A.M. DEC. 18

Gate of Heaven Catholic Cemetery,
Los Altos

Participants honor veterans by laying remembrance wreaths on the graves of the country's fallen soldiers and saying the name of each veteran aloud. Participation is free.

For more information, visit wreathsacrossamerica.org.

KBB PRODUCTION COMPANY'S 'A CELTIC CHRISTMAS'

7 P.M. DEC. 22

Mountain View Center for the
Performing Arts

"A Celtic Christmas" showcases traditional Irish Christmas music, dancing and stories in a re-creation of an old-fashioned, rural Irish Christmas. Tickets start at \$53 for adults.

For tickets and more information, visit tickets.mvcpa.com.

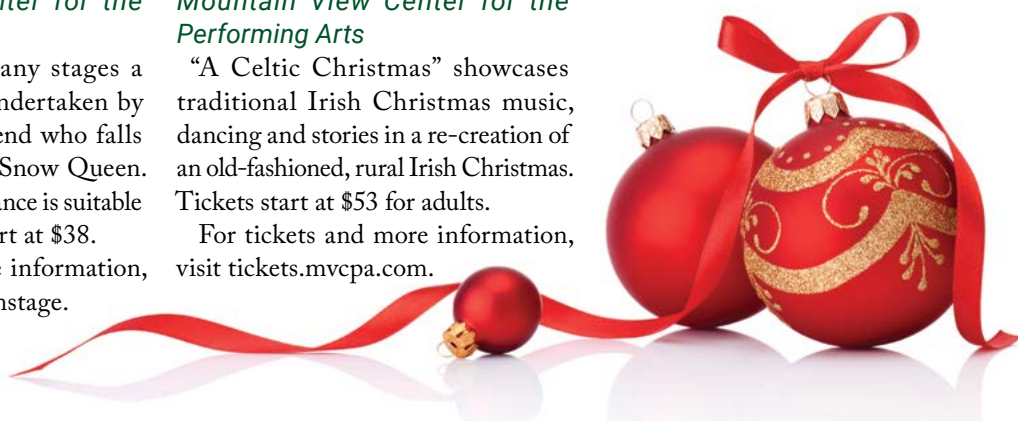
NEW YEAR'S DAY FUN RUN

9 A.M. JAN. 1

Downtown Los Altos

The noncompetitive 5K run, hosted by the Los Altos Recreation & Community Services division, is an annual tradition. Participants do not need to run – walking and cheering are encouraged. Participation is free. Online registration is open; in-person registration closes 9 a.m. Jan. 1.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/ys28cdz2.



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DARK CHOCOLATE LIGHTENS THE SPIRITS

COMFORT FOOD CAN OFFER HEALTH BENEFITS

BRANDPOINT



Throughout the pandemic, people have turned to their favorite foods to bring them joy. However, with a new focus on wellness, people are taking a fresh approach to classic comfort foods. Chocolate is the perfect example – as sales soar globally, dark chocolate is emerging as a top food trend, offering indulgence you can feel good about.

WHAT IS DARK CHOCOLATE?

Chocolate features cocoa powder, which comes from the cocoa bean. The powder is unsweetened and bitter before being used as a main ingredient in recipes. Traditional milk chocolate adds high amounts of sugar and fat, but dark chocolate has higher levels of cocoa powder and fewer unhealthy additions.

According to the Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health, dark chocolate contains 50-90% cocoa solids, cocoa butter and sugar, while milk chocolate contains 10-50% cocoa solids, cocoa butter, milk in some form and sugar. Some innovative chocolate companies are even coming out with sugar-free dark chocolate options.

“As more everyday occasions call for celebrations with chocolate and we snack more at home, we wanted to offer a guilt-free and delicious option,” said Crystal Thomas, Kohler Original Recipe Chocolates chocolatier and production manager at Destination Kohler. “We dedicated over a year to

source the best chocolate from France with the highest content of cacao for optimal health benefits and flavor.”

Without the excessive additives, dark chocolate can be a nutritious part of a balanced diet and provide numerous benefits. Cocoa beans have flavanols, a type of phytonutrient with health-promoting properties. The Mayo Clinic points to research that the ingredients in dark chocolate can help reduce inflammation, lower risk of heart disease and reduce blood pressure.

HOW TO ENJOY DARK CHOCOLATE

Because of its healthy characteristics and indulgent taste, dark chocolate is a top food trend. The following tips provide some classic ways to enjoy it, as well as ideas for fresh inspiration.

- **Serve chocolate for dessert.** Dark chocolate is a decadent dessert that impresses. It’s also a time-saving option because there’s no kitchen prep needed. Just plan ahead by buying high-quality dark chocolates and confections and serve a single piece or several on a small plate to each person.
- **Create a chocolate board.** Much like a cheeseboard or charcuterie tray, a chocolate board presents a variety of dark chocolate and accompaniments in a visually impressive way. Start with a large tray or serving dish, fill with several varieties of dark chocolate grouped in an eye-pleasing way and add extras such as nuts, pretzels and fresh berries.
- **Enjoy chocolate for breakfast.** Chocolate can be a nutritious part of breakfast when you keep unsweetened cocoa powder on hand. Try sprinkling the powder on top of cereal, oatmeal or toast in the morning. You also can add some to your morning smoothie for a chocolatey boost.
- **Make it a mocha.** Melt a single piece of dark chocolate in your coffee in the morning for a rich mocha taste you can feel good about. Place a small piece in the bottom of your cup, pour coffee on top and then mix with a spoon. To speed up the process, microwave the chocolate for 10 seconds in your cup first to start the melting.
- **Try different pairings.** The flavors of dark chocolate can be a wonderful pairing to other foods for a tasty snack or dessert. Try dark chocolate with nuts like almonds, sweet fruits like bananas or aged cheeses like Gouda. Dark chocolate also pairs nicely with coffee or a glass of red wine.
- **Give dark chocolate gifts.** Whether as a hostess gift or to celebrate a special occasion, dark chocolate can be the ideal present. 🍫

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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 \$3.6 million since its inception. The money has been distributed to local charities that tirelessly make a difference for families in our community with special needs, addressing education, literacy, social issues, drug abuse and general well-being.

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Each year about 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.losaltoscf.org/lac-holiday-fund or by mailing a check made out to LAMV Community Foundation, with "LATCHF" on the memo line. Mail to LAMV Community Foundation, 183 Hillview Ave. Los Altos, CA 94022.

Contributions are 100% tax deductible and every dollar helps bring a smile to someone in our community.

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CHAC (Community Health Awareness Council)

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Community School of Music and Arts Artistic Intelligence Program

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Help One Child

Hidden Villa

Los Altos Youth Theatre/Los Altos Stage Company

Mentor Tutor Connection

MERIT Program (Making Education Relevant and Interactive through Technology)

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Sky's The Limit Fund

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WomenSV



The Town Crier wishes happy holidays to our readers, subscribers, advertisers and supporters. We appreciate all the support we've received. **Thank you!**

Here's to a wonderful 2022!

The Town Crier Staff



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