

# HOLIDAY

## GUIDE

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your pets

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MOVEMENT

Quad-City  
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# Bringing the light OF CHRISTMAS IN A PANDEMIC

**BRIAN WELLNER**  
CORRESPONDENT

**T**he Quad-Cities will not let the pandemic put a damper on its holiday spirit.

For the last few months festival and parade-goers in the Quad-Cities have been peppered with the news that their favorite holiday events were being canceled due to COVID-19. But that hasn't stopped local event organizers from finding other ways to spread some Christmas cheer through re-imagined holiday activities.

"So many things are happening this year that we're making it up as we go along to do the best we can in this incredibly unfortunate situation," Geoff Manis, Moline Centre Main Street manager, said.

He said alternatives to Moline's Lighting of the Commons are in the works. The event that typically draws around 10,000 people to the John Deere Commons had to be canceled because of social distancing concerns.



**Geoff Manis,**  
Moline Centre  
Main Street  
Manager

In its place, Moline Centre has partnered with MidAmerican Energy to create an experience of holiday related downtown scavenger hunts spread out over November and December.

Each day, Manis plans to release over Facebook different scavenger hunt opportunities. Participants will follow a series of clues, and if they find the correct destination, they're supposed to take a selfie and post it to Facebook to be entered in a special drawing for gift certificates to downtown Moline businesses.

"It's a way to draw people to downtown Moline while not having mega-events," Manis said.

Be sure to "like" the Moline Centre or Lighting of the Commons on Facebook to find out about the scavenger hunts.

## Santa will be in Geneseo

In Geneseo, plans are underway to turn the annual Christmas Walk into a walk-through, with stationary, lighted parade floats that people can walk up to for an up-close view.

Santa will make his return, but this time he'll be behind a glass window, and children can give him their wish lists via microphone. The Jingle Run will also return on the morning of the Dec. 12 Christmas Walk. Only 20 people will be allowed to participate at a time in the run.

"That's what makes me excited because people are itching to do things," Carla Evans with the Geneseo Chamber of Commerce said.

Possibly the biggest of the canceled events this year is the annual Quad City Arts Festival of Trees parade. This year's 35th annual Kwik Star Festival of Trees will not be an in-person event at the Davenport RiverCenter, but there will be a one-hour televised holiday special on KWQC during the Day of Giving, Nov. 21.

People can also visit the "pop-up gift shop" attached to the Quad City Arts' gallery, 1715 2nd Ave., Rock Island. The gift shop, with items including holiday gifts, décor, jewelry, tabletop decorations, and toys, will be open Nov. 21-29, and online shopping is available. Masks are required in the shop and gallery.

"This is a chance for the community to show their support," Kaleigh Trammell, Festival of Trees administrator, said.

Another Quad-Cities tradition that has fallen victim to the pandemic is the Village of East Davenport's annual Christmas in the Village. The Village of East Davenport is "still working to ensure that you and your friends and family have a festive holiday shopping season," said Julie Keehn with the Village of East Davenport Business Association.

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Look for smaller in-store events and social media promotions by following the Village of East Davenport on Facebook or on Instagram.

## Opening during a pandemic

838 Boutique, which opened Sept. 1 in Bettendorf's Duck Creek Plaza, is preparing for its first winter shopping season even as the COVID pandemic threatens to worsen.

"This is the unknown Christmas holiday year," owner Sherri Beyer said.

"This is different than anything anyone has ever experienced."

She plans to transform her women's clothing and accessories store into a winter wonderland scene for her customers. Small boutiques have at least one advantage over big box stores in a virus pandemic – no crowds.

Small, local, and family-owned businesses also offer more personalized customer service, and the products sold often are made locally.

"The Quad-Cities is unbelievably receptive to small businesses, especially if what you're doing is local," said Beyer, a registered nurse turned small business owner from Park View, Iowa.

"That means more to them than going into a store filled with stuff. This store is filled with people's time, effort, and love for whatever they do, and I think it shows."

She admits some thought she was crazy opening a store during a pandemic where besides fear of contracting sometimes life-threatening disease businesses were slowly coming out of government-mandated lockdown.

"I didn't let it stop me," Beyer said. "I didn't want the fear of that to hold me back, or to think people wouldn't want to come out. It surprised us how well we did even in our first month."

Downtown Davenport has added a new restaurant to its

already diverse lineup. Double Crown Bar and Grill, 217 Brady St., also opened in September.

Cheyenne George, marketing director for the eatery, said they opened with COVID in mind and all the protocols regarding social distancing, table spacing, and mask-wearing.

"This is our normal," George said.

Customers are discovering Double Crown through Facebook and word of mouth. The menu includes burgers, sandwiches, and steak dinners. The holidays will be an opportunity to show off a variety of new drink specials.

## Getting back to normal

Quad-City businesses have been slowly getting back to normal in light of pandemic concerns and new customer safety protocols.

"We're back to normal hours as long as people wear masks," Patricia Jahn, owner of Regalia, said.

The Rock Island company has been in business for 123 years and primarily makes award ribbons for county and state fairs. The business used to manufacture American flags during World War I and World War II. It still sells flags, many of which are made in Illinois.

For the winter, Regalia is selling seasonal flags that people can raise on the flagpole underneath the American flag or elsewhere in the garden. Coupons are also available.

Some local companies find themselves busier because of COVID.

Great Plains Blinds is offering gift certificates as well as 50 percent off ambiance products this holiday season.

"We're busier because of COVID," said Cindy Ward, manager of accounts payable, human resources, and advertising for the company that has been in business for 27 years. "We're swamped on appointments. Our phones are busy."

She said Great Plains Blinds is "a destination shop for Christmas ideas."



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# HOLIDAY DOLLARS SPENT IN QC STAY IN THE QC

**T**he Quad Cities Chamber wants you to shop locally year-round but especially during this critical holiday shopping season.

They have launched Keep It QC, an initiative to bring awareness to the power of doing business locally.

According to Chamber representatives, buying local has many verifiable economic benefits for the region, in addition to helping area businesses rebound faster from the financial impact of COVID-19.

“Businesses and individuals are encouraged to make a conscientious choice to buy as many goods and services in the Quad-Cities as they can,” Chamber President & CEO Paul Rumler said.

“Whether you’re buying clothes from a local boutique or commissioning a nearby architectural firm to expand your company’s headquarters, it all makes a positive impact on our local economy.”

“We know that every dollar kept in the Quad Cities increases our collective success as a region, which is why it’s so important to remember to Keep It QC as we head into the prime holiday shopping and gift-giving season,” said Chamber spokesperson Erin Platt. “Supporting local as well as giving the gift of local simultaneously improves our economy and community quality, which are some of the best gifts we can give ourselves.”

According to Platt, prioritizing spending locally doesn’t require more spending, just a change in where consumers and businesses are doing it, including when shopping



## Shop Local Benefits

**The economic benefits of Keep It QC include:**

**Increases GRP:** When businesses and consumers buy goods and services from companies in the Quad Cities, it increases the area’s gross regional product (GRP), an indicator of a region’s economic health.

**Better schools, roads, and more:** Local purchases also simultaneously support local roads, schools, parks, police and fire departments, and other quality-of-place projects because public infrastructure is funded, in part, by sales taxes and other taxes paid by the local businesses to the city, county, and state where they’re located. Those local taxes are what help fund upgrades to improve the community.

**Supports and creates jobs:** When a business is healthy, it can keep its doors open and sustain its workforce. Better yet, it can grow and hire more workers who also have individual spending power as consumers.

**Increases regional attractiveness:** Strong businesses also make for more vibrant, robust, and powerful Quad-Cities, which increases our attractiveness to companies looking to expand or relocate. Growth breeds growth.

online. Instead of ordering directly from a corporate website for delivery, consumers are encouraged to choose in-store pickup from the online retailer

in the Quad-Cities. The local store, which pays taxes, employs local workers, and helps fund local city, county, and state coffers, can often fulfill

**JESSICA GALLAGHER,**  
JGALLAGHER@QCONLINE.COM

Gail Van Gundy, right, carefully makes her selections with the assistance of Kaetly Arndt during a visit to Cookies & Dreams, 217 E. 2nd St., Davenport, in September.

the product order from their store inventory.

“Every dollar we keep in the Quad Cities increases our collective success, and by working together, we all win,” Rumler said.

For more information on ways to support Keep It QC visit [KeepItQC.com](http://KeepItQC.com).

About: The Quad Cities Chamber facilitates business growth and is dedicated to building a prosperous regional economy where all can thrive.



# SUPPORT ARTISANS AND EATERIES DURING PANDEMIC

## GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

**S**mall businesses across America have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As shopping restrictions have been put in place across the country, local businesses have found themselves getting creative in selling their goods.

One of the best ways you can support your local business community is by purchasing items from local artisans and restaurants.

### Support local artisans

Some of the most talented people in your community are artisans creating handmade — or even customized — gifts for people on your shopping list.

You may find artisans partnering with local businesses to sell their products at a storefront versus opening up their own display space. When you shop locally, you give these artisans the exposure and financial support they need to grow their business.



### Support local restaurants and food trucks

Can't decide what to eat this weekend? Search your local newspaper or Facebook restaurant groups to find great local options versus settling for chain establishments.

Local food trucks are also an option for enjoying unique cuisine while also supporting small business owners in your community.

These businesses have seen an uptick in business due to their flexibility in being able to set up at various sites.

Keep your eye out on social media for where food trucks are setting up during the holiday shopping season, and show your support by buying your meals locally.

### Customer service

What can you expect when you shop with local artisans and restaurants? Great customer service, for one. Many shoppers complain about customer service at the big chain stores during the holidays due to retail employees often being stretched too thin in their work schedules.

With local businesses, you can expect personalized customer service along with the unique food or items you'll find. That's because great customer service is the lifeblood of a small business owner.

They are depending on referral business from you and your community members. Many times, small business owners are able to craft and personalize products for their customers. This level of customization is another aspect of great customer service that is so critical for small businesses to deliver.

**Kwik Star Festival of Trees**  
**BELIEVE**  
*Festival "Re-Imagined"*  
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 Kwik Star Festival of Trees logo and Quad City Arts logo.

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**Visit [QCFestivalofTrees.com](https://www.QCFestivalofTrees.com) or call 309.793.1213 for more details!**





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# MAKE A PLAN TO AVOID BREAKING YOUR BUDGET

## GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

**I**f you're not diligent about your spending on Black Friday, there are many opportunities to stray from your budget.

Advertisements for big savings or offers for credit card deals can easily entice you to get off track financially. The key to staying on budget this holiday shopping season is having a plan and sticking with it.

### Credit card usage

According to the United States Federal Reserve, Americans have racked up more than \$420 billion in revolving credit card debt. Check out these facts about the state of credit debt in the country from the organization.

- The average household will pay an average of \$1,141 in interest annually.

- Overall, Americans with revolving debt face outstanding balances of \$6,929.

- Both revolving and outstanding credit card debt account to \$944 billion in America.

Credit cards can be a positive part of your overall financial plan if used wisely. Putting major luxury items on your credit card is not necessarily a smart move unless you plan to pay it off quickly. Try to keep your credit card balances low to avoid larger interest payments that you will never get back. Experts recommend when you're shopping this year, stick to buying items with cash instead of leaning on credit. This will help you plan and execute your shopping trip on budget.

### Save appropriately

Learning to save throughout the year can help you have a small nest egg saved for Black Friday and overall holiday season shopping. This will lessen the urge you feel to rack up credit card debt for the holidays and give you more confidence in having a financially smart shopping season. Consider opening a holiday savings account at the start of the new year. Speak to a local lender about finding an account that offers high interest returns so you can maximize the amount of money you're putting in.

You can also keep a better understanding on your spending habits throughout the year to help find extra money for savings. Take advantage of apps that track where your money is going to visualize a better strategy for your overall financial life.





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# FAST, FABULOUS

## CHRISTMAS GIFT-WRAPPING

**KATHRYN WEBER**  
Tribune Media Services

**W**hen December 25 looks like an approaching train, you know it's because you're overloaded with things to do.

Just shopping for gifts can be a monumental task, much less wrapping them attractively. What you need is a fast-wrapping strategy that will reduce that gift pile quickly. By using some simple techniques, you can have beautifully-wrapped presents and more time to tick off the rest of the things on your to-do list!

### Wrap and roll

Don't spend time on your hands and knees trying to find the presents you stashed under the tree for your in-laws before heading out for their holiday bash. Instead, use the 'stoplight' system: Wrap all presents you'll be taking to outside gatherings in green paper (green for 'go'). Wrap all presents to remain at home in red.

For maximum efficiency, wrap all the green presents with the same paper, and red gifts likewise. This will make your mountain of packages look more unified, simplify wrapping, and makes those gifts look oh-so-designer-chic. Before wrapping, be sure to separate your to-stay and to-go piles to streamline the process.

### Tag, you're it

When the time comes to pass out all those presents, one of the most time-consuming tasks can be determining who gets what. What you need is a way to identify every present at a glance — while adding some holiday flair to each.

Hate flipping gifts over and over to find the tag? The solution is to make your own tags and attach them to the front of every present. You can even make the process a family affair. Grab the kids and sit them at a table to make gift tags. Supply them with holiday-printed scrapbooking paper, hole punches and a bag of assorted color pipe cleaners.

Have your crew cut the paper into various shapes, punch a hole in each, add a pipe cleaner and affix a tag to the front of every present. As a fun alternative, use scissors to make scalloped edges on the tags and add cut-out holiday shapes (available in craft stores). Attach these with adhesive foam dots to make the tags three-dimensional.

### Assembly line

This last tip will really speed up your wrapping operations. Put all presents in boxes and affix a sticky note indicating the recipient and the giver. Separate gifts into 'to-go' and 'to-stay' piles. Grab your green paper and wrap all the 'go' presents first, making sure to put the sticky note on the wrapped gift. When all the boxes are wrapped, add ribbons and bows, plus your custom-made gift tags.

For more information, contact Kathryn Weber through her Web site, [www.redlotusletter.com](http://www.redlotusletter.com).



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# HOMEMADE SPICE MIXES make great gifts

**KATHRYN WEBER**  
Tribune Content Agency

Shopping at warehouse stores can be fun. The problem is we often end up with giant bottles of garlic power, pepper and oregano that take three years to use up.

This year, put some of those extra spices to good use by making up your own spice seasoning mixes to give as quick holiday presents. Using up your abundance of spices will give you a unique gift, and you'll also clean out your spice cabinet at the same time.

Pick up some pretty jars and cute gift tags (to write down the name of each mix and instructions on how to use them) for your mixes, and you've got a homemade gift you can put together in minutes without a lot of fuss. Double or triple the recipes for the number of gifts you'd like to make.

These spice mixes are perfect as a hostess gift or teacher thank-you, or you can drop off some holiday cheer at a neighbor's house.

## Italian spice mix

Perfect for dipping oil. Add one tablespoon of spice mixture to  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of quality olive oil. Mix to combine, and serve with crusty bread for dipping.

- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon lemon pepper
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning blend
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- $1\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon sea salt

**For you to make:** Mix all spices together in a spice grinder. Pulse once or twice to combine. Store in airtight container.

## Pizza topping mix

Store in the refrigerator. Add to shaker jar with sprinkle fitting when making pizza.

- 2 tablespoons red pepper flakes (halve for less heat)
- 2 tablespoons dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning blend
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup bottled grated Parmesan cheese

**For you to make:** Mix all spices together or put into a spice grinder (pulsing once or twice to combine). Be sure to store mix in the refrigerator.

PATRYK KOSINSKI VIA  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE



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# DECORATING WITH TRAYS

**KATHRYN WEBER**  
Tribune Content Agency

**M**ore than just a means of serving coffee or bringing breakfast in bed, trays can be used in a variety of ways in your decor. Just consider now how many tray styles there are. Trays can be found in a wide range of material from wood to metal to acrylic to mirror, and there's virtually no design style that can't use a tray of some type. Whether you use it for utility or decoratively, trays make great accents in your home.

## 1. Bar tray

Be your own mixologist with a home bar set up on a tray. Arrange bottles on a tray with legs or on a tray with sturdy handles so you can take your bar wherever the party is in your home.

## 2. Photo tray

Not sure what to do with all those itty bitty family photos? Put them all together on a tray. If your tray is silver, try putting your photos in silver frames for a rich and elegant look.

## 3. Guest or bedside tray

Make it a treat when guests come to visit by adding a tray to the foot of the guest bed filled with fluffy towels, lotion, magazines, chocolate or other treats. A waiting guest tray is a welcoming gesture. Next to the bed, trays can hold jewelry, lotion and bedside flotsam and jetsam.

## 4. Trays as wall art

Many trays are oversized and look just as great hung on a wall as they do sitting atop a table. Group small trays on a wall for a unique twist. Consider a tray as your artwork accent.

## 5. Tray your ottoman

Today's living rooms often use large ottomans in place of a traditional coffee table. Use a tray here to corral the

TV remotes, make a solid spot to put a drink down or create a vignette with accent pieces for something more decorative.

## 6. Bathroom counter tray

Add a sleek mirrored tray to your bathroom counter to hold all your supplies and perfume bottles beautifully. The tray will help reduce visual clutter of having the items spread all around.

## 7. Foyer accent tray

Place a tray on your foyer console. Besides looking pretty, it's a good spot to place keys or mail when you come in.

## 8. Candle tray

Use trays to create a candle garden. The effect is pretty and will help protect furniture from candle heat and wax drips.

## 9. Tray display

Use trays to create unique and unusual displays. Add in jars or accent pieces like glass balls, shells or potted orchids.

## 10. Tray height

Trays don't have to sit flat on a table. Look for a tray with feet or even legs to create a unique way to hold accessories or work as a stand-in for a side table.

For more information, contact Kathryn Weber through her website, [www.redlotusletter.com](http://www.redlotusletter.com).

**SILVANO REBAI,**  
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# Celebrate with your FURRY FRIENDS

## GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

**D**on't leave your fur babies out when you're planning your holiday celebrations. Here are some ways you can bring Fluffy and Fido into your festivities.

### Add pet treats to your holiday baking

Making a tasty cookie for your four-legged friends is just as easy as making a delectable dessert for your human friends. This recipe pleases cats, dogs and everything in between.

- 3 jars baby food, meat or veggies
- 1½ cups wheat germ or cream of wheat

**Directions:** Mix ingredients together. Drop by the spoonful on a

wax paper-covered plate. Seal with wax paper over the top and microwave for 5–8 minutes. Check that treats are formed and firm, then store in the fridge for a quick snack.

### Take a picture with Santa

Many humane societies and rescue organizations offer Santa pics as a fundraiser during the holiday season. Dress your pet up in their best and have a pic snapped for a great cause.

Sometimes, mall and department store Santas will also set aside a time for pet pictures. Check your local community calendars for more information.

### Make a pawprint ornament

Use a salt dough recipe and make paw print ornaments. Personalize it with the year for a special keepsake.

### Stockings and presents

Add stockings full of tasty treats and toys just for your favorite pets to your giving list. And don't forget donations to rescue organizations and shelters.

The holidays can be a tough time for these organizations. Your contribution or even your time might be a huge help for them.

### Stay safe

The holidays can be a tough time for your pets, too. Keep them safe with these tips from the ASPCA:

- Anchor your Christmas tree to keep curious cats and dogs from knocking it over. Also keep pets away from candles and light displays.

- Avoid mistletoe and holly. These festive plants are pretty, but they can be toxic to pets. Use artificial plants instead.

- Keep the people food out of reach, especially bones, cocktails, pork dishes, raisins and grapes, nuts and nutmeg. All of those can make your pet sick or even kill them.



ADOBE STOCK VIA GREEN SHOOT MEDIA



# Three *money-smart* gifts for children

## KIPLINGER'S PERSONAL FINANCE

Sure, a sweater is an OK present for a birthday or holiday. But if you really want to make an impact on a child's future, consider one of these gift ideas:

### 1. Fund a 529 college savings account

Your contributions to a 529 plan grow tax-free, and withdrawals are not taxed if you use them for qualified college expenses. In most states, you can also withdraw up to \$10,000 a year tax-free to pay school tuition for kindergarten through 12th grade.

Nearly all states sponsor at least one 529 plan. If your state offers a tax deduction or credit to residents who invest in its plan, using your state's 529 may be the best bet. If your state has no tax break or provides a break no matter which state's plan you pick, explore your options from other states, too. Find information on 529 plans nationwide at [www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com).

### 2. Help pay student loans

Payments and interest on federal student loans have been suspended for 2020. If your child or grandchild has federal student loans, now may be an

especially good time to give him or her cash to put toward loan payments because the full payment will go toward principal during the period that interest is waived. That will allow the borrower to repay the loan faster.

Even if the borrower has private student loans, an extra \$1,000 can make a dent. If a borrower is two years into repaying a loan with an original five-year term, a \$10,000 balance and a 6% interest rate, a one-time, \$1,000 payment would decrease total interest paid by about \$176 and shortens the repayment timeline by six months.

### 3. Start a Roth IRA

If your kid or grandkid is still in high school, saving for retirement probably isn't on his or her priority list. But stashing money for retirement while you're young pays off. If you sock away \$1,000 in a retirement account when you're 16, make

no more contributions and get an 8% annual return on your investment, you'll have about \$50,650 when you're 67. Making a \$100 contribution each month drastically increases total savings by age 67, to nearly \$800,000.

To be eligible to contribute to a Roth IRA, your child must earn income — from a summer job, for example. You can open a custodial Roth IRA for a child younger than 18 or 21, depending on the state, and put in money on his or her behalf, as long as total contributions to the account don't exceed the amount the child earns. For 2020, the annual IRA contribution limit is \$6,000 for those younger than 50.

A nice perk is that although a Roth IRA is designed for retirement savings, you can withdraw contributions (but not investment earnings) anytime without paying taxes or penalties.



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# APPETIZERS AS MAIN ATTRACTION

## Christmas dinner can be all about starters

BY ANDREA WEIGL  
The News & Observer

**I**n my family, holiday eating was all about the appetizers.

The family lore is this: My mother got fed up one year after we gorged ourselves on the appetizers and barely touched the full Christmas dinner. From then on, it became a feast of only appetizers.

I remember shrimp cocktail, St. Andre triple-cream brie and a popular Pittsburgh hors d'oeuvre called "Polish mistakes," a sort of sausage and Velveeta

combo on toasted slices of cocktail rye bread. My sisters remember deviled eggs, a relish tray, Buffalo chicken dip and a failed stuffed mushroom recipe that involved the microwave.

I believe my mother still whipped up a batch of soup if people got hungry later.

I've come to value my family's appreciation for a good appetizer buffet. These small bites are the workhorse this time of year with so many family gatherings, holiday open houses and parties.

For me, a good appetizer selection offers each of these notes: warmth, crunchiness and freshness.

Warm, to me, means dips (think Buffalo chicken or creamy artichoke or Southern Living's Sausage, Bean and Spinach Dip

that was a hit at my garden club's holiday party) or cocktail meatballs.

Crunch can be those classic cheese straws, Ina Garten's Parmesan Crisps, cocktail nuts or anything you serve to eat with those dips, including pita or tortilla chips.

Fresh means fruits and vegetables or a cold dip that is the opposite end of the rich indulgent warm dips; think hummus, guacamole or the New York Bagel Dip that we share with this story.





Some dishes do double duty, like anything you serve on a crostini, offering both crunch and/or warmth or freshness.

It's clear to me that my mom had the right idea. Sometimes it is perfectly all right for the opening act to steal the show.

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## Sausage, bean and spinach dip

**Yield:** about 6 cups

- 1 medium-sized sweet onion, peeled and diced
- 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and diced
- 1 pound hot ground sausage
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 (6-ounce) bag fresh baby spinach, coarsely chopped
- 1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup (2 ounces) shredded Parmesan cheese
- Corn chip scoops, red bell peppers, pita chips and/or pretzels

From "The Southern Living Community Cookbook," by Sheri Castle (Oxmoor House, 2014)

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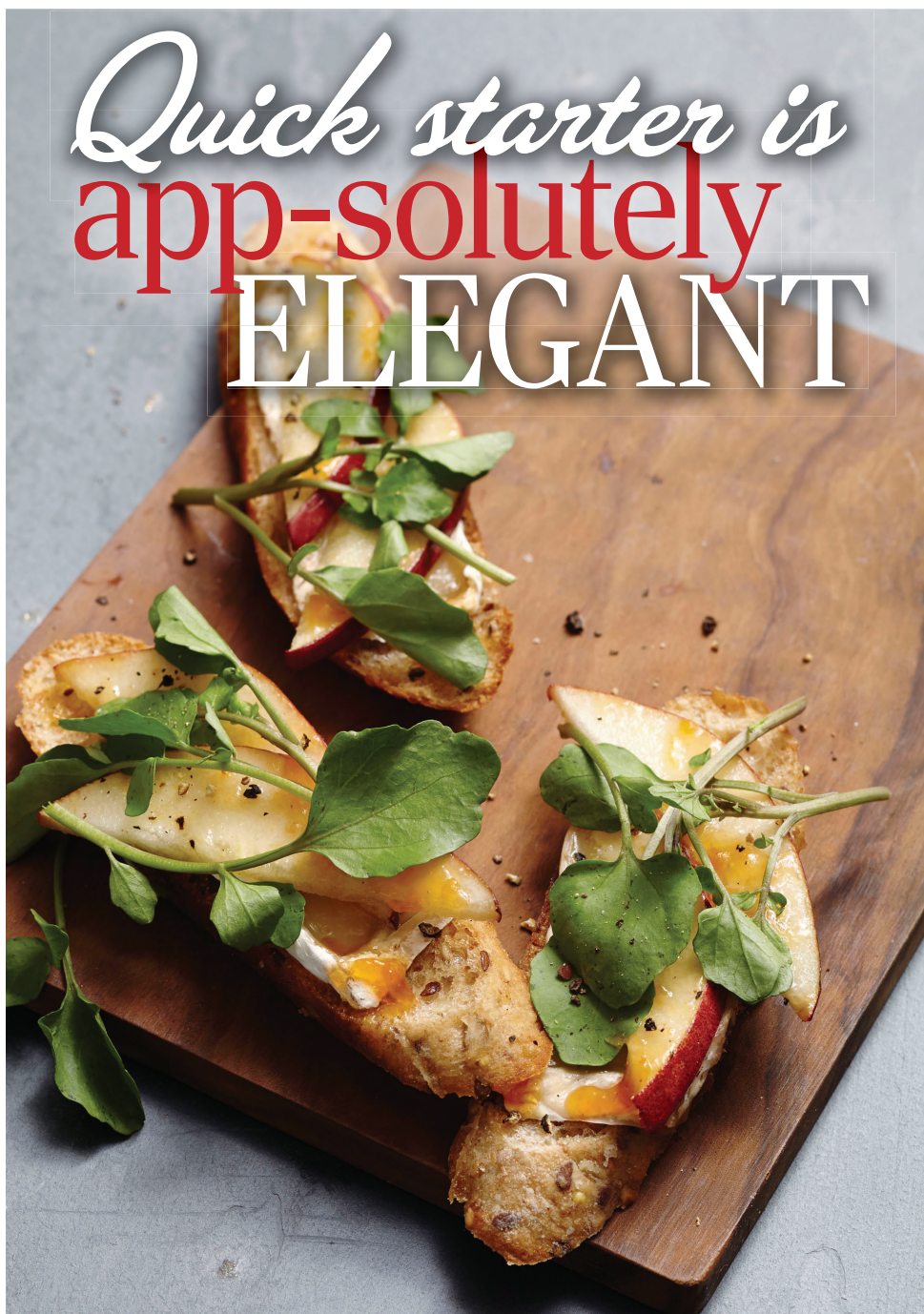
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# Quick starter is app-solutely ELEGANT



## EATINGWELL

**U**p your appetizer game with this fruit-topped cheese crostini recipe. Warm preserves give the pears a shiny glaze and prevent them from browning.

### Pear and Camembert Crostini

**Serves:** 12 | **Serving Size:** 1 crostini

**Total Time:** 20 minutes

- 12 diagonal slices whole-grain baguette (½-inch thick)
- Olive oil cooking spray
- 12 slices Camembert or Brie cheese (¼-inch; about 3 ounces)
- 1 medium firm ripe pear, cut into 24 slices
- 2 tablespoons apricot or plum preserves, warmed
- 1 cup watercress or arugula
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

**1.** Preheat oven to 400 F.

**2.** Arrange baguette slices on a baking sheet and coat both sides with cooking spray. Bake, turning once, until toasted, 10 to 12 minutes. Top each with a slice of cheese. Bake until the cheese is melted, about 2 minutes more.

**3.** Top each crostini with 2 pear slices, brush with preserves and top with greens and a generous grinding of pepper.

**Recipe Nutrition:** Per serving: 90 calories; 2 g fat (1 g sat, 1 g mono); 5 mg cholesterol; 15 g carbohydrate; 1 g added sugars; 3 g total sugars; 4 g protein; 2 g fiber; 159 mg sodium; 43 mg potassium. 1 Carbohydrate Serving(s) Exchanges: 1 starch

— EatingWell is a magazine and website devoted to healthy eating as a way of life. Online at [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com).



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# Setting the holiday table with THE PERFECT WINE

**CARSON BODNAREK**  
qctimes.com

**G**rowing up my family always cherished the holidays and the time spent around the dinner table.

In setting the table, I find selecting the wines for your holiday meal is just as important if not more, as deciding dishes to be served, linens to be used, or centerpiece to be displayed. If selected just right these wines can create the perfect nuances of holiday magic.

## The Rule of 30

For white wines, take bottles out of the fridge 30 minutes before serving. If the white wine is too cold, you will lose some of the aromas and bouquet in the wine and it will seem rather flat. For red wines, open or decant the wine 30 minutes before serving. After red wines have been in a bottle for three or more years they need a little bit of love before the flavors emerge and develop in your guests' glasses. If arranging as a tasting with each course, arrange the wines from light white to dark red from left to right for ease of enjoyment for your guests.

Price points are outlined with the following: \$ for ev-

eryday wines, \$\$ for premium finds, and \$\$\$ for splurge buys.

## Pinot Noir

Pinot Noir is a great addition to any Thanksgiving or holiday meal. Moderate body and the complexity of the wine is great to pair with darker cuts of turkey or with ham, yet is flexible enough to pair with your sides of stuffing, and anything doused in gravy. Delivering red fruit flavors complemented by hints of plum mixed with subtle earthy elements, this a great crowd-pleaser.

- Calera Pinot Noir Central Coast, California, USA—\$
- Domaine Daniel Rion & Fils Cote de Nuits Villages, Burgundy, France—\$\$
- Archery Summit "Summit Vineyard" Pinot Noir, Oregon, USA \$\$\$

## Riesling

For those looking for fruitier crisp qualities in their wines, Riesling packs a punch and drives fruit-forward flavors of apple, citrus, apricot, and in some cases honey and beeswax. In addition to turkey, Riesling is a great accompaniment to sweeter roasted vegetables like squash and carrots, and any dishes that utilize baking spice to offer a fruity balance.

- Chehalem Riesling, Oregon, USA—\$
- Selbach-Oster Zeltinger Schlossberg, Mosel, Germany—\$\$
- Scharzhofberger Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese, Mosel, Germany \$\$\$

## Chardonnay

Chardonnay wines offer a crisp refreshing option for your Thanksgiving table because it carries notes of apple and citrus, pineapple, and in some cases buttery flavors. Chardonnay wines are perfect for pairing with herbal qualities found in your meal from sage to thyme, and even to roasted vegetables and turkey.

- Trefethen Chardonnay, Napa

Valley, California \$

- Penfolds Cellar Reserve, Adelaide Hills, Australia \$\$
- Bernard Morey et Fils Les Embrazees, Burgundy, France \$\$\$

## Zinfandel

For richer, red meats at your holiday dinner, look to try pairing Zinfandel with your table spread. This bold wine is perfect to accentuate dark jammy fruit flavors but also highlighting spices used in rich dressing (stuffing) complete with caramelized onions, spice-rubbed rib roasts, and tomato-paste based gravies. Flavors of dark berries, strawberries, and spice notes of cloves, cinnamon, allspice, and tobacco give this wine a full, robust, and rich quality.

- Oak Farm Zinfandel, Lodi, California—\$
- Peachy Canyon Zinfandel, Paso Robles, California \$\$
- Williams Selyem Bacigalupi, Sonoma, California—\$\$\$



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ADOBE STOCK VIA GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

## Fudge always a great treat for the holidays

### GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

Fudge is a type of candy that's made by mixing sugar, butter, milk and usually chocolate, then heating it to 240 degrees, or the soft-ball stage, then beating it as it cools to form a smooth, creamy candy.

Even though fudge is usually chocolate, it can take on many flavors, including brown sugar, peanut butter and vanilla. It can also be enhanced with fruits, nuts and other flavors after the candy is made but before it sets. Fudge shouldn't be hard and never crackly or crisp.

Also, when you're cooking, resist the urge to scrape the sides of the pot into your candy mixture. This can interfere with the proper crystallization of the candy.

## Fantasy Fudge

Recipe is from Kraft. Makes about 40 servings.

- 3 cups sugar
- ¾ cup butter or margarine
- 1 5-ounce can evaporated milk, or about ⅔ cup
- 1 7-ounce jar marshmallow creme
- 3 4-ounce packages semi-sweet baker's chocolate, chopped, or 12 ounces chocolate chips
- 1 cup nuts, optional
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

**1.** Line a 9-inch square pan with foil. Leave the ends extending over the sides.

**2.** In a three-quart saucepan over medium heat, add the sugar, butter and evaporated milk. Bring to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Cook for four minutes, or until a candy thermometer reaches 234 degrees, stirring constantly.

**3.** Remove from heat and add the chocolate and marshmallow creme. Stir until melted, then add the nuts or other add-ins and vanilla, and mix well.

**4.** Pour into prepared pan and spread to cover. Cool completely. Use the foil handles to remove the fudge easily, then cut into 1-inch squares.

**Tip:** Interesting flavor combinations to try include white chocolate with peppermint extract, dark chocolate with orange extract and zest, and milk chocolate with mint extract. Caramel and cappuccino chips, if you can find them, also work great. Be careful when adding liquor or any other liquids; you don't want to upset the delicate balance of the candy.



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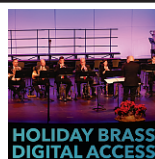
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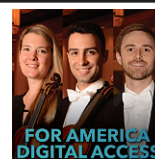
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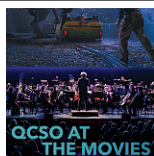
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## Pull-apart lobster rolls

**Yield:** Makes 12

**Preparation time:** 15 minutes

**Total time:** 30 minutes

- 1 pound cooked lobster meat (from 3 lobsters or 4 good sized lobster tails), chopped (2½ cups)
- ½ cup good quality mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh chives
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped chervil, plus more for serving
- Coarse salt
- ¼ teaspoon Old Bay seasoning or more to taste
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 12 pull-apart sweet dinner rolls, such as King's Hawaiian Sweet (do not separate)

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, stir together lobster, mayonnaise, lemon juice, chives, chervil, 1 teaspoon salt, Old Bay and cayenne in a large bowl.

Split rolls across tops; brush generously with some of the melted butter. Heat in oven on a baking sheet until warmed through, 3 to 5 minutes.

Divide lobster salad among rolls, drizzle with remaining butter, sprinkle with more chervil and serve.

From "Martha Stewart's Appetizers" by Martha Stewart (Clarkson Potter/Publishers, \$27.50).

Tested by Susan Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

## Spinach puffs

**Yield:** 12

**Preparation time:** 20 minutes

**Total time:** 1 hour

In this recipe, spinach and feta are bundled in tiny puff-pastry packages.

- 1 package (10-ounce) frozen chopped spinach, thawed
- ½ cup crumbled feta
- ¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- ½ cup minced onion
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon chopped dill
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 large eggs
- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry (from a 17.3-ounce package), thawed, rolled out to a 12-inch square, kept chilled
- Have ready a 12-cup mini muffin pan.

Using your hands, squeeze spinach until dry, forcing out as much water as possible (too much water will make for a soggy filling; you should have about ⅔ cup well-drained spinach). In a medium bowl, mix spinach with feta, mozzarella, onion, olive oil, dill and garlic. Season to taste with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, beat 1 egg to blend; fold into spinach mixture.

Cut the puff pastry into 12 equal square pieces. Place a square in each muffin cup, pressing into bottom and up sides and leaving corners pointing up. Divide filling among cups. Fold pastry over filling, pressing corners together to meet in center. Spinach puffs can be assembled 3 hours ahead. Cover puffs and chill.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Beat remaining egg to blend in a small bowl. Brush pastry with egg wash (this will give the pastry a nice sheen). Bake until pastry is golden brown and puffed, about 25 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack; let puffs cool in pan for 10 minutes. Run a sharp paring knife around pan edges to loosen; turn out puffs onto rack to cool slightly before serving.

Adapted from Bonappetite.com

Tested by Susan Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

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## Pepperoni and cheese caprese bites

**Makes:** 24

**Preparation time:** 35 minutes

**Total time:** 35 minutes

- 24 mini mozzarella balls
- 24 basil leaves
- 24 pepperoni slices (about 2 inches in diameter)
- 24 cherry or grape tomatoes
- 24 small (3- to 4-inch) skewers
- ½ cup or more as needed Italian vinaigrette

Thread the mozzarella ball first, then fold the pepperoni in half and half again and thread onto the toothpick. Next add the basil leaf and finally the tomato. Place on a serving platter and drizzle with the vinaigrette.

Adapted from several recipes at [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)  
Tested by Susan Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

## Crostini with whipped feta tomatoes

**Yield:** 20 to 25 appetizers **Prep time:** 30 minutes

**Total time:** 45 minutes

- 6 ounces good-quality feta, crumbled
- 2 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ⅔ cup good olive oil, divided
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons minced shallots
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled, minced
- 2 tablespoons good red wine vinegar
- 2 ripe heirloom or cherry tomatoes, ½-inch-diced
- 3 tablespoons julienned fresh basil leaves, plus extra for serving, optional
- 20 to 25 (½-inch-thick) diagonal baguette slices, toasted
- 2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts

In the bowl of a food processor fitted with the steel blade, place the feta and cream cheese. Pulse until the cheeses are mixed. Add ⅓ cup of the olive oil, the lemon juice, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and process until smooth.

For the tomatoes, up to an hour before you're serving, combine the shallots, garlic and vinegar in a medium bowl. Set aside for 5 minutes. Whisk in the remaining ⅓ cup olive oil, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Add the tomatoes, stir gently and set aside for 10 minutes. Stir in the basil and taste for seasonings.

To assemble the crostini, spread each slice of bread with a generous amount of whipped feta. With a slotted spoon, place the tomatoes on top. Put the crostini on plates and scatter with the pine nuts. Sprinkle with extra basil and serve.

From "Barefoot Contessa Foolproof" by Ina Garten (Clarkson Potter, \$35).  
Tested by Susan Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.



## Gracious grapes

**Yield:** Serves 10 | **Preparation time:** 20 minutes  
**Total time:** 45 minutes

The only trick to this recipe is making sure the grapes are very dry so the cream cheese mixture sticks. You can easily cut the recipe in half. The grapes keep for several days in the fridge.

- 1½ pounds seedless red or green grapes (regular or reduced-fat), softened
- 2 cups toasted walnut pieces
- ¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
- 8 ounces block cream cheese
- 4 ounces Roquefort or other crumbly blue cheese
- 4 to 5 tablespoons heavy cream

Remove the grapes from the stems (you should have about 4 cups). Wash and dry the grapes very well, placing them on a rimmed baking sheet lined with a kitchen towel to dry completely.

Finely chop the walnuts by hand so they are chopped, but not pasty. Put the chopped nuts in a shallow bowl, stir in the parsley and set aside. With a hand-held mixer, mix the cream cheese and Roquefort in a medium bowl until smooth. Add the heavy cream, a tablespoon at a time, until the mixture is the consistency of softened butter.

Using a fork or spoon, roll the grapes in the cream cheese mixture a handful at a time until they are completely coated, then roll in the nuts. Place the grapes on a parchment-lined baking sheet while you roll the remaining grapes. Chill the grapes until the cheese is firm, about 1 hour.

From "Farmhouse Rules" by Nancy Fuller (Grand Central Life & Style, \$30).  
Tested by Susan Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.



## Spicy Thai-inspired shrimp

**Yield:** 36 | **Preparation time:** 15 minutes | **Total time:** 1 hour

Chili paste and fish sauce give these shrimp a Thai-inspired flavor. Both are available in the ethnic food aisles at most grocery stores.

### For the sauce:

- 1 teaspoon finely grated lime zest
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice (from 3 to 4 limes)
- 1 tablespoon Asian fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon Asian chili paste (such as sambal oelek)
- ½ cup sugar
- Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon fresh chopped cilantro, optional

### For the shrimp:

- Vegetable oil
- 36 large shrimp (about 3 pounds), peeled and deveined (tails left intact; optional)
- Coarse salt
- 18 wooden skewers soaked in water for 30 minutes to prevent charring

**To make the sauce:** Bring sugar and lime juice to a simmer in a small saucepan. Cook, stirring, until sugar dissolves, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in lime zest, chili paste and fish sauce. Season with salt, and stir in chopped cilantro if using.

Preheat the grill to high or preheat the broiler. Brush grill grates with oil. Thread 2 shrimp onto each skewer; season with salt. Divide sauce in half; reserve half for serving. Grill or broil the shrimp for 1 minute; brush with sauce. Flip, and grill for 1 minute more; brush with sauce again. Flip, and grill, brushing occasionally with sauce, until opaque, 1 to 3 minutes more or until shrimp are cooked through. Serve with reserved sauce.

Adapted from "Martha Stewart's Appetizers" by Martha Stewart (Clarkson Potter/Publishers, \$27.50).



## Baked brie with maple, walnuts and dates

**Yield:** Serves 16

**Preparation time:** 10 minutes

**Total time:** 30 minutes

The original recipe called for 3 quartered fresh figs, but they are not widely available, so we substituted sweet dates.

- 1 wheel brie (8 ounces), well-chilled
- ¼ cup chopped toasted walnuts
- 5 medjool dates, quartered
- 3 tablespoons warmed maple syrup
- Crostini or crackers for serving

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Coat a small ovenproof dish with nonstick cooking spray. Cut the rind off the top of the brie and place the cheese, cut side up, in the prepared dish. Press walnuts into the cut side. Arrange the dates over the top.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until warm and just starting to ooze around the edges. Remove from the oven, let cool about 5 minutes, drizzle with syrup and serve with crostini or crackers.

Adapted from "Maple: 100 Sweet And Savory Recipes Featuring Pure Maple Syrup" by Katie Webster (Quirk Books, \$22.95).  
Tested by Susan Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

## Italian antipasto cups

**Yield:** 24

**Preparation time:** 15 minutes

**Total time:** 30 minutes

- 24 slices Genoa salami, ¼ inch thick (see note)
- 1 cup artichoke hearts, drained and finely chopped
- ¼ cup finely chopped roasted red peppers
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil, plus more for garnish, optional
- ½ cup mini fresh mozzarella balls, cut into quarters

- 1 can (2.25 ounces) sliced black olives, drained
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ¼ cup Italian dressing

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Using two 12-cup muffin tins, place one salami slice in each cup. Press salami into cups so it lines the cup. Bake 6 to 8 minutes, or until salami is crisp. Remove from oven and let cool, then place on serving platter.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, mix together the artichoke hearts,

roasted peppers, basil, mozzarella, olives, Italian seasoning and Italian dressing. Fill salami cups with artichoke mixture and garnish with extra basil. Serve immediately, or chill until ready to serve.

**Cook's note:** The thickness of the salami is important; if it's too thick or too thin, it won't hold its shape once it's baked.

From "Wheel of Fortune Collectible Cookbook" (Mr. Food Test Kitchen; \$21.95).  
Tested by Susan Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.



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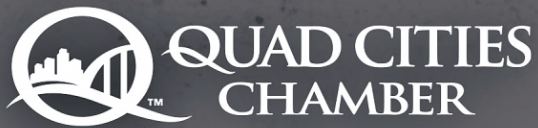
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## Bark Four Ways

Recipe is from Ghirardelli Chocolate.

### For the chocolate bark base

- 3 60% cacao baking bars, or 12 ounces, chopped

### For the peppermint bark base

- 1 10-ounce package peppermint baking chips, divided, or chunks of crushed peppermint candies
- 2 ounces white chocolate, chopped or chips

### For the orange pistachio bark

- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- ¾ cup coarsely roasted, salted and shelled pistachios
- Orange peel strips

### For the great tea and sea salt bark

- 12 ounces white chocolate, chopped or chips
- 1 tablespoon matcha
- 2-3 teaspoons sea salt or kosher salt

### For the deconstructed candy bar bark

- ¾ cup honey-roasted peanuts, divided
- ¾ cup sweetened shredded coconut, divided
- ½ cup caramel baking chips
- 1 teaspoon shortening

1. Line a baking sheet (one sheet per batch) with parchment paper. Set aside.

2. To make chocolate bark base, place chocolate in the top pan of a double boiler over hot but not boiling water. You can also make a double boiler by placing a glass or metal mixing bowl on top of a saucepan half filled with water. Allow the chocolate to melt, stirring occasionally.

3. Remove from heat and let stand for 15 minutes. Stir again until smooth.

4. To make peppermint bark, stir in half the peppermint baking chips or chunks of peppermint candies. Pour into the prepared sheet and spread evenly. Top with the remaining chips, chunks or candies. Melt the white chocolate and drizzle over the bark.

5. To make the orange pistachio bark, stir orange zest into the chocolate base. Pour the mixture onto a prepared baking sheet and sprinkle with pistachios and orange peel strips.

6. To make the green tea and sea salt bark, make the chocolate base but substitute white chocolate. Divide the chocolate and half and add matcha to one half. Spread both chocolates onto the baking sheet and swirl with a spatula, then spread evenly. Sprinkle with salt.

7. To make the candy bar bark, make the chocolate bark base. Stir in ½ cup peanuts and ½ cup coconut. Pour the mixture onto the baking sheet and spread evenly. Top with remaining peanuts and coconut. Combine the caramel chips and shortening in a microwave-safe bowl, then microwave on medium power for one minute. Remove and stir; return to the microwave if not melted. Drizzle the melted caramel over the bark.

8. Chill the bark for 30 minutes or until firm. Use parchment to lift the bark, then break into pieces and store in airtight containers.



ADOBE STOCK  
PHOTOS VIA GREEN  
SHOOT MEDIA

# Chocolate bark ONLY NEEDS TIME AND IMAGINATION

### GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

With this candy, you're limited only by your imagination. If our other recipes seem intimidating, try this one on for size.

Chocolate bark takes minutes and there are thousands of flavor combinations for you to try. When you're making your bark, think of how the colors can go together. White chocolate, for example, with green pistachios and jewel red cherries or cranberries make for a gorgeous holiday palette.

You can also pair milk chocolate with chunks of dried fruit, which look like sweet jewels. You can swirl different kinds of chocolate or combine chocolate with other candies.

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# Peanut brittle a timeless favorite

## GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

With peanut brittle, we're going back to hard candies. Brittle is a thin layer of candy studded with nuts, usually pecans, cashews, almonds or peanuts. In other parts of the world, brittle is made with pistachios or sesame seeds.

No matter what nut you choose, the basic process is the same. So go nuts and whip up cheerful batches of this easy-to-make candy. The good news here is that you're not scooping piping hot, sticky candy. Brittle is mixed and then poured out onto a flat surface until cool, then broken into pieces.



## Golden Buttery Peanut Brittle

Recipe is from Land O Lakes butter. It makes just over two pounds of candy.

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- ½ cup water
- 1 cup butter, cut into chunks
- 2 cups raw peanuts
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

1. Butter two 15x10x1-inch baking sheets and set aside.
2. Combine sugar, corn syrup and water in a heavy saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 8-12 minutes or until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture comes to a full boil.
3. Add the butter and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, for 15-25 minutes or until a candy thermometer reaches 280 degrees or a small amount of candy dropped into ice water forms a hard but pliable strand.
4. Stir in the peanuts. Continue cooking, stirring constantly, for 10-12 minutes or until the candy reaches the hard-crack stage. This is greater than 300 degrees on the candy thermometer or until a small amount of candy dropped into ice water forms a hard, brittle strand. You may hear a cracking sound from the candy when it's dropped into the cold water.
5. Pour the mixture immediately into the prepared baking sheets. Spread it evenly to about ¼-inch in thickness. Cool completely.
6. Break the candy into pieces and store in an airtight container with a tight lid.

**Tip:** Peanut brittle makes a great gift.

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# Transitional METALLICS

perfect for the holiday season

**KATIE LAUGHRIDGE**, Tribune News Service

If you are just not ready to start thinking about Christmas, or you don't have the time or desire to decorate, the transitional metallic look for you.



## Let classic elegance be your cornerstone

This flexible design, with gleaming golds and a sophisticated stylishness that is both dramatic and welcoming, is perfect to take you through the whole holiday season without a lot of labor. The cornerstone of the display is classic elegance. By focusing on texture and finishes instead of color, it allows for a dynamic spread that isn't overwhelming to the eye.



DREAMTIME VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE PHOTOS

## Put up the tree early?

The sharp lines and glass ornaments used on the Christmas tree tie in gorgeously to the table setting and create a continuous story throughout your home. While it's definitely nontraditional to have a tree up during Thanksgiving, it ties so beautifully in with the table and mantel you will be tempted to get it up early! I'm a "put the tree up on Nov. 1" kind of gal myself.



KASPER NYMANN, DREAMTIME VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

## A take home for the guests

The table is reminiscent of 1920s glamour with a show-stopping tablecloth, beaded and pearl accents and intricate patterns. The gold-rimmed plates and glasses bring festiveness to an otherwise straightforward setting. Top off each place setting with an ornament and label with names to act as place cards and a little treat for guests to take home.



## Keep centerpiece size low to allow for table chit chat

The true superstar in my eyes is our gorgeous table-escape. We kept the centerpiece low and the candles high. Not only do the varying heights add balance, but the candelabras are also a perfect dramatic touch that still allows plenty of across-the-table chit chat.

DREAMTIME VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

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## White and gold throughout

The sparkling white and gold accents create a rich atmosphere that shines. Perfect for tablescapes, mantel displays and tree decor, it is a versatile look that can be used throughout the home.

**SEBASTIAN CZAPNIK,  
DREAMTIME VIA TRIBUNE  
NEWS SERVICE**

## Sparkle through the seasons from Thanksgiving to the Christmas holiday



From the table to the mantel, the golden pumpkins and gourds create a beautiful and impactful display. The lack of traditional fall colors like brown, orange and yellow allow for a transitional look into the Christmas season. After the Thanksgiving feast, it's as simple as switching out the metallic autumn accents for something with some Christmas sparkle. Sit a Santa on the centerpiece, some ornaments on the mantel and bring up the trees!

**SEBASTIAN CZAPNIK,  
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# MAKING MEMORIES

## through crafts with the kids

### GREEN SHOOT MEDIA

This holiday season, get little hands involved in making their own ornaments for the tree using an old favorite recipe: salt dough.

### What to do with your salt dough

**Doughnuts:** Cut circles using a shot glass or other tiny circle, then cut out the middle. Adorn with teeny salt dough sprinkles. Bake and paint your favorite delicious colors.

**Christmas trees:** Cover your tree with tiny trees using no more than a tree-shaped cookie cutter, some paint and some imagination. Use bits of mosaic glass for extra bling.

**Handprints:** With a little imagination, tiny handprints can become Santa (think of the thumb as the trail of his hat) or a troll doll (have the fingers be the wild hair). Or keep it simple with a mitten and pressing a bitty hand into it. Trim with faux fur.

**Monogram it:** Use cookie cutters to make salt dough into your family's initials.

**Stars:** Shine bright with a simple star. Make it your own by cutting out the center, using ombre paint, or using a simple dipped paint. Or all three. Go big or go home.

**Gingerbread everywhere:** Make legions of gingerbread men and women

### Making salt dough

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup cold water

Mix the flour and salt in a bowl and slowly add water a few tablespoons at a time until the dough is smooth and easy to handle.

Knead the dough for 10 minutes and let rest for 20 minutes.

Form the dough into the desired shapes and bake for 2 hours at 250 degrees. Allow to cool completely before handling.

Don't forget to poke a hole to string the ornaments for hanging.

march all around your holiday decorations. For a neat garlanded look, punch two holes in the chest to run twine through.

**Your own twist:** Make two thin rolls of dough and twist them into candy canes. Or three and braid it. Instead of using a hole, wrap a ribbon around the crook to hang it.

### Make it shine

If the matte look of plain salt dough isn't your thing, you can glitter it up and cover with a shiny decoupage glue.

After paint and before decoupage is also when you want to add any embellishments to your design, like sequins, microbeads and metallics.





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