Compliments of Stacey Shanner

Good to Be HOME

issue 04

DID YOU KNOW:
The magazine is typically displayed in the home for 3–4 weeks per issue. Half of recipients rank it as the most valuable branded product they receive from businesses.

how to grow an INDOOR GARDEN

Increase flavor in your meals with garden-fresh herbs

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ISSUE 4
COVER PRICE $6.99
678
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678

Front of Tear Out Card 1

pretzel
TOFFEE BARK

6 oz. semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped

6 oz. milk chocolate, coarsely chopped

6 oz. white chocolate, coarsely chopped

1½ c. pretzels

½ c. toffee bits

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57 percent of readers save these tear out cards to reference recipes and other helpful tips and pass along your contact info to referrals.

Back of Tear Out Card 1

1. Line a quarter-sheet rimmed pan or 9-by-13-inch pan with parchment and set aside.
2. In a double boiler, heat water to just a simmer in bottom pan. Water should not touch top pan. Place semisweet and milk chocolate in top pan, taking care to not spill any water into the chocolate. Stir chocolate with a rubber spatula until melted. Remove top pan and wipe away any water that may have condensed there with a towel. Pour into prepared pan and spread evenly.
3. Repeat melting process with white chocolate. Take care to ensure top pan is completely dry before adding chocolate. Pour melted white chocolate on top of semisweet chocolate and spread as evenly as possible. Marble the two chocolates with a butter knife. Evenly top chocolate with pretzels, pressing lightly on each pretzel so it is at least halfway pressed into chocolate. Sprinkle toffee bits over chocolate.
4. Place tray in refrigerator for about 1 hour. Once the chocolate has set completely, remove from pan and break bark into chunks. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

Excerpted from ***Christmas Baking: Festive Cookies, Candies, Cakes, Breads, and Snacks to Bring Comfort and Joy to Your Holiday.*** © 2020 by Joyce and Laura Klynstra. Photography by Laura Klynstra. Used with permission of Good Books, an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing. All rights reserved.

SERVES 20

Dear Bill and Judy,

The phrase “home for the holidays” carries a lot of different meanings. For some people, it means returning to their hometown. For others, it means opening up their own home to friends and family. But in any case home is front and center. This issue of Good to Be Home honors that tradition of home as the focal point of the holidays.

One of the first tasks of the holiday season is decorating, and, while it can be an exciting process, it can also be time-consuming. Tips for streamlining your decorating can help you transform your home into a seasonal wonderland in no time.

While decor is important, the true focus of most holiday gatherings is food. Inside you’ll find recipes for a modern spread, with a maple-infused turkey, spiced squash, and a decadent, pound cake. Plus, get tips for properly storing your leftovers.

This time of year can be challenging for managing finances. Between shopping for gifts and preparing to host guests, your budget can be thrown off. The enclosed tips offer ways to actually save money this season instead of overspending.

Home security might not be the first thing you think of when talking about the holidays, but it’s actually one of the most important things to keep in mind. Learn easy ways you can boost your home’s security so your season can remain merry and bright.

Here’s wishing you and your loved ones a happy holiday season! As always, it’s a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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Add a personal letter to the front inside cover that speaks to your connections. This personalization leads 77 percent of recipients to better appreciate the sender.

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Online shopping can be helpful when searching for deals or making quick purchases. If you can’t find what you’re looking for in stores, it’s probably online. Many people continue to do a combination of online and in-store shopping during the holidays, but more people are shopping exclusively online—a trend that isn’t going anywhere for the foreseeable future.

DOWNLOAD THESE 5 TOP *money-saving browser extensions*

Consider these free-to-use, top-rated browser extensions that can take the work out of online shopping and get you the best deals across the web.

HONEY
joinhoney.com

Honey is a versatile tool you can download for all kinds of online shopping. Its Amazon price-comparison tool pops up next to each item while searching the Amazon site, telling you how the price compares with other retailers. When it comes time to check out, Honey will apply all available coupon codes until it finds the best discounts.

PRICEBLINK
priceblink.com/webcpns/browser-add-on/

Not sure where to shop? PriceBlink takes the guessing out of where to find the best deal. Downloading this extension enables you to see other websites that have the same product and offers options for where you can find the best savings.

RAKUTEN
rakuten.com

The slogan for Rakuten is “Shop. Get Cash Back. Repeat.” Who doesn’t like to get cash back for shopping? It’s easy, free money you shouldn’t turn down. Stores pay Rakuten a commission for the business it gets from users, and Rakuten shares the commission with you as cash back through PayPal or a check.

THE CAMELIZER
camelcamelcamel.com/camelizer

The Camelizer is perfect if you have your eye on a specific item for the future. It tracks “historic pricing” on Amazon and gives you access to those pricing records to determine the best time to buy. Additionally, you’ll be notified when an item you want drops in price.

CAPITAL ONE SHOPPING
capitaloneshopping.com

Enter your name, zip code, and email address (you can optionally link an Amazon Prime account), and Capital One Shopping will automatically search for relevant coupons and run price comparisons. Go directly to the Capital One Shopping website after creating an account for access to a search function for deals all over the web, which will save you the hassle of searching multiple sites.

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issue 04

easy ways to enhance YOUR HOME'S EXTERIOR SEASONAL DECOR

written by:
MATTHEW BRADY

photography by:
GETTY IMAGES, UNLESS NOTED

Venturing out to see how others have decorated their homes is one of the most exciting holiday activities. Doing so not only adds an air of excitement but also may inspire your own exterior holiday decor.

Perhaps the best place to start is your front porch, which is your home's holiday greeting to all who visit or pass by. Whether your style is glam and glitz or traditional and country, these tips will make it easy to decorate your porch to celebrate fall and then transition it seamlessly to winter holiday decor in no time!

Go for gold with glam decor.

Simple, clean, elegant decor never goes out of style. And nothing says glamour quite like the color combination of black, white, and gold, which can accentuate your style throughout these seasons.

In the fall, take advantage of front-door planters by mixing autumn vegetables such as white gourds and cornstalks with pine cones. Plus, you can add a striking focal point by hanging a gold wreath on your door, which will maintain your glam theme.

As winter arrives, switch out the autumn vegetables for more seasonal ornament-style pieces, and forgo the usual pine wreath by opting for a clean gold straw wreath, to which you can add your own personal touches. Or you can minimize the look by opting for a standard wreath with gold ribbon to make your front door pop.

Cross-seasonal tip: Stringing pine cones around your door is an ideal transitioning tool—you won't have to switch them out during the change of seasons.

Keep it country with rustic decor.

The holidays evoke a sense of home and tradition, which is not only appealing to many people but also a hot design trend. You can reflect this style by implementing the tips that follow.

Similar to previous door suggestions, incorporate autumn colors with mini gourds, multicolored flint corn, and corn stalks. In addition, you could mix in some pine cones; and add a pop of white to contrast the oranges of autumn by including a white pumpkin in the mix. You can then bring it all together in a bronze-colored tub.

In the winter, switch out your traditional autumn colors with white items, and frost the pine cones from your fall decor to bring the holidays to your doorstep. Add a touch of green with some pine branches, which will welcome guests with their seasonal scent.

Finally, if you normally use candles in festive lanterns, fill them with colorful ornaments instead. Incorporate poinsettias, garland, and shimmery white Styrofoam balls (which make for excellent snowballs) in a crate or bin or the same bronze tub. You can even use a decorative tree stump to add height to your other decor pieces. To enhance this cozy look, add an outdoor blanket with faux-fur trim and accent pillows to a bench or chair, and string fairy lights on the porch. Your guests will feel welcome before even entering your home!

photo by: SHANA SMITH

photo by: SHANA SMITH

Keep Your Home *PROTECTED* This Holiday Season

written by: NATHAN SMITH

The holidays are a splendid time of year filled with fun, food, friends, and family. However, with gifts out in the open and time spent away from home, there are more opportunities for your home to become a target.

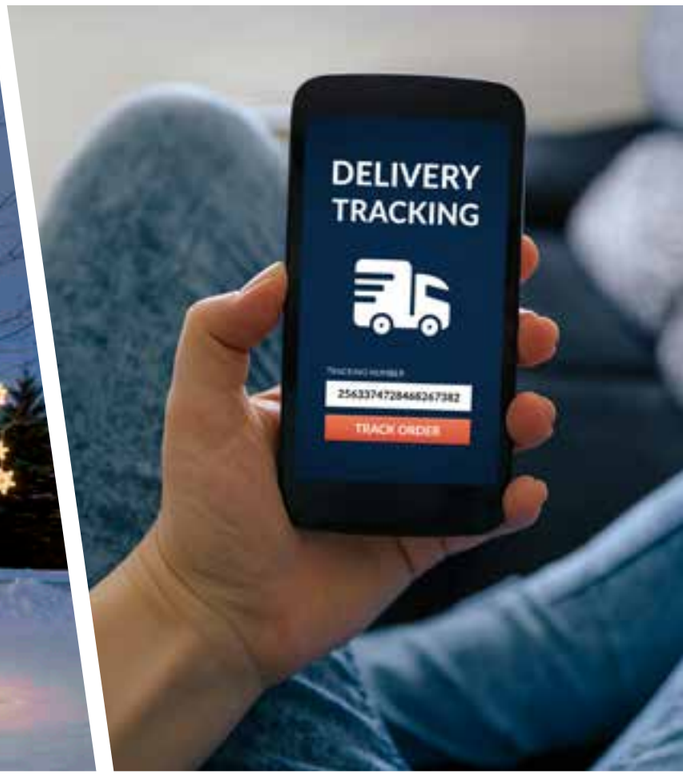
Nevertheless, you can have peace of mind this holiday season by taking steps to ensure your home's safety.

Let a neighbor know

Keep in touch with a trusted neighbor during the holidays to help increase your home security. Let them know if you're traveling, and ask them to keep an eye on your home and pick up your mail or any potentially important packages for safekeeping. Communicating with your neighbors about your home, and offering to help others, too, gives everyone some reassurance that they have a community of support nearby.

Upgrade to smart home devices

Smart devices can give the illusion that someone is home while you are away. Smart lighting allows you to turn your lights on and off while you're out of your house, either manually or by scheduling a time through your smart device. A smart doorbell provides video surveillance of anyone coming to your door, and outdoor lightning options can be motion-activated and provide video feeds to your phone. These measures make your home less of a target by immediately deterring any unwanted guests.



Keep your doors and windows locked

Even if you're at home, it is a good idea to always keep your doors and windows locked. Smart locks are a worthwhile investment as they can be controlled conveniently from your phone, so you won't be worried if you forgot to lock the door during the holiday hustle and bustle. Finally, don't forget about your garage door. Before leaving for a trip, turn off any automatic garage door openers, and install a clamp or padlock to make sure it can't be opened while you're away.

Give the illusion your home is occupied

You want to remove any signs that your home is not occupied while traveling—and there are a few tell-tale signs that you're not home. Before leaving town, arrange to have your sidewalk and driveway plowed or shoveled if it snows. Also, don't forget to have your mail and newspaper held or ask a trusted neighbor to take them inside for you.

Avoid social media posts

Many people like to update their social media when traveling, but you should avoid this. Posting when you're leaving, when you're coming back, or where you're going can give someone a time frame of when your home is empty. Even if you have private accounts on social media, it's better to keep this info offline. You can always post about your trip after you return.

Track your packages

Make sure to track online orders and be aware of the delivery date and times. Try to be home to receive the packages, or arrange to pick the packages up at the delivery service's facility.

Keep packages hidden

Avoid keeping wrapped packages near a window where a passerby may be able to see them. Also, don't put boxes from big-ticket gifts on the curb; break down and cut up the boxes when putting them out for recycling. Finally, avoid leaving gifts in your car in plain sight. Instead, keep packages locked in your trunk.

Get rid of hidden keys

Many people keep an extra key somewhere handy on their property in case they are locked out. However, you should get rid of that key until after the holidays, especially if you're leaving home for an extended period of time. Give the copy to a trusted friend, family member, or neighbor.

Ensure you and your loved ones have a safe and fun holiday season by heeding these precautionary tips.

How COVID-19 Has Changed *the Face of Home Design*

written by: CHRISTY MURDOCK EDGAR

When COVID-19-related closures began in March 2020, many people hit big-box stores to prepare for a couple weeks of inconvenience. Instead, they found themselves working from home permanently while supervising virtual classes and trying to safely take a stroll around the neighborhood. The days that followed brought swamped medical resources, a stratospheric real estate market, and a host of generation-defining paradigm shifts, which have created permanent changes in the way we think about our health and our homes.

As we are navigating life post-COVID, many homeowners are thinking about ways to make their homes better suited to their new realities. Here are a few of the ways that everyone, from experts to individuals, are rethinking interior and exterior spaces, home design, and daily living for the post-pandemic world.

Goodbye open concept, *hello flex spaces*

For many years, the chopped-up, old-fashioned interior home layout has been out of favor and the open-concept, free-flowing floor plan has been preferred by homebuyers in virtually every category and market. However, the new reality of post-COVID living—including working from home for multiple family members, virtual classrooms, and the need for privacy when spending every minute of every day under the same roof—means that more homeowners are looking to transition their wide-open spaces into discrete, purpose-driven environments.

For some, this may be as simple as putting up a wall to enclose a little-used formal dining room. For others, it may mean adding walls and sectioning off existing open living spaces into a series of smaller rooms for a variety of uses. If you want to keep the option to have it both ways, consider adding French doors, pocket doors, or sliding barn doors to extra-wide doorways so that you can open up the space as needed.

Create separation between *out there and in here*

Before COVID, many people thought little about the transition between the great outdoors and interior spaces. However, months of wiping down groceries and careful handwashing have made many people more mindful of the guests, objects, and germs in our interior environments.

One popular addition to post-COVID home styles is the transitional space, either in an existing foyer or as an add-on to a side or rear entrance. These spaces are good for added shoe storage, coat hangers, after-school cubbies, and other fixtures to keep more of the outdoors away from the interior of the home. In addition, a handwashing station or a small powder room make for ideal places to wash up before interacting with other family members.

For families who depend on delivery services more than ever before, small, covered, enclosed porches are increasingly popular. These provide a sheltered spot for grocery or package delivery without compromising home security.

Air purifying and ***cleaner living***

Like commercial building owners and transportation providers, we've all started thinking more about the quality of indoor air. There are a variety of ways to ensure that your home's air quality is as good as it can be:

- When possible, take the opportunity to replace the air in your home with fresh outdoor air. Turn off the AC or heat, open windows, and use ceiling and tabletop fans to circulate new air.
- Replace HVAC air filters frequently with the highest-quality filters possible to minimize pollutants.
- Invest in greener products for home building, design, decor, and maintenance. Aim for fewer toxic chemicals in cleaning products, low-VOC-emitting paints and fabrics, and fewer pesticides.
- Make sure you are up to date on maintenance of your HVAC system, or consider replacing it, if needed, to make sure it's operating at peak efficiency.

Outdoor spaces take ***center stage***

The large movement from cities to the wide-open spaces of suburban and rural markets was driven by a desire for more outdoor space. After all, with the closure of entertainment and fitness venues, the ability to spread out and enjoy a more active lifestyle was partially dependent on the size of a lot or backyard.

Now, many homeowners may prefer a backyard cookout instead of having guests all seated around the same table or milling about in one room of the home. In addition, with families spending the majority of their time in close proximity, there is even more need for outdoor spaces to stretch out, work out, get away, and play.

Exterior features and ***accessory buildings***

As more families seek to convert their existing properties into suitable environments for living, working, and playing, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), guest houses, and other exterior buildings have become sought-after options for creating space, privacy, and a delineation between work and home. These structures provide space for separate home offices, rental properties, or living quarters for immediate and extended family members.

Storage buildings, pool houses, and other recreational facilities are becoming more important as homeowners seek to optimize their outdoor living options. Increasing demand for pools, sports courts, and workout facilities promises a similar demand for equipment and storage space to support a more active lifestyle at home.

Preparing for ***what's next***

This new normal is encouraging people to do more from home and rethink the way they live for the long term. It only makes sense to ensure that your home is prepared to support more conscientious living—both now and in the future.

Give Your Holiday Table
A MAJOR UPGRADE

recipes by:
PATTERSON WATKINS
photos by:
SHANA SMITH

It's time once again to break out the festive tablecloth and good tableware—the holidays are here! That means it's also prime time to start planning for the biggest meal of the year. Sure, going the traditional route is safe, but it can be worthwhile to try something new.

Try your hand at the recipes here—maple-glazed turkey, spiced winter squash, and fruit-topped pound cake—which are guaranteed to give you the picture-perfect table.

Maple-Garlic ROAST TURKEY | SERVES 6–8

Ingredients:

Maple-garlic butter:

1 cup maple syrup

1 stick butter, softened

8 garlic cloves, peeled and minced

½ cup parsley, chopped

1 tablespoon rosemary, chopped

1 tablespoon sage, chopped

½ tablespoon thyme, chopped

1 tablespoon salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

Turkey:

10- to 12-pound whole turkey

2 bulbs garlic, tops removed

2 cups turkey broth or vegetable broth

1 lemon, sliced

1 orange, sliced

Extra parsley, rosemary, sage, and thyme

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together maple-garlic butter ingredients until blended.
3. Place turkey in a roasting pan, and brush with ¼ cup butter mixture. Place whole garlic inside turkey, and pour broth into the bottom of the roasting pan. Cover with aluminum foil, and roast for 1 hour.
4. Remove turkey from the oven, and brush with another ¼ cup of the butter mixture. Cover, return to the oven, and roast for 1 hour.
5. Remove turkey from the oven, and brush with remaining butter mixture. Increase oven temperature to 425°F and roast, uncovered, for 30–45 minutes or until turkey is cooked completely and golden brown.
6. Let rest for 30 minutes before slicing and serving. Remove garlic from inside the turkey, and add it to the platter as a garnish along with citrus fruits and herbs. Pour pan drippings over sliced turkey.

Horseradish-Spiced WINTER SQUASH | SERVES 4

Ingredients:

Horseradish mixture:

½ cup prepared horseradish

2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced

¼ cup yellow onion, peeled and chopped

1 tablespoon fresh rosemary

1 teaspoon fresh thyme

1 teaspoon fresh sage

1 teaspoon salt

Vegetables:

1 acorn squash, seeds removed and cut into wedges

1 butternut squash, seeds removed and cut into wedges

1 small pumpkin, seeds removed and cut into wedges

Garnishes:

Fresh thyme

Fresh rosemary

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. In a food processor, combine horseradish mixture ingredients. Blend until smooth, and set aside until vegetables are ready to roast.
3. Toss cut vegetables with the horseradish mixture, and arrange on parchment-lined baking sheets. Roast for 25–30 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
4. Garnish with thyme and rosemary before serving.

RYE POUND CAKE
with Stone Fruit Compote and Hard Cider Syrup | SERVES 6–8

Ingredients:

Cake:

1 pound (4 sticks) butter, softened

3 cups sugar

6 eggs

4 cups rye flour

¾ cup milk

1 teaspoon almond extract

Compote:

1 cup cherries, pits removed, and chopped

1 cup peaches, pits removed, and chopped

1 cup plums, pits removed, and chopped

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 lemon, zested and juiced

1 teaspoon cinnamon

Syrup:

12 ounces hard apple cider

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon cornstarch (diluted with 2 tablespoons of water)

Powdered sugar

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Using an electric mixer fitted with whisk attachment, whip butter until fluffy. Continue to whip butter while adding in the sugar, one cup at a time, until blended. Whisk in eggs until combined, and slowly add in flour one cup at a time. Whisk in milk and then almond extract until batter is smooth.
3. Grease a Bundt pan with nonstick spray, and spoon in batter. Bake for 30–35 minutes or until cake is cooked thoroughly. Check for doneness using a toothpick: pierce the cake, and if the toothpick comes out clean, the cake is done. Let rest for 30 minutes.
4. While cake is resting, combine compote ingredients in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a simmer, stirring frequently, and cook for 15 minutes or until fruit is tender and sauce has thickened. Let cool to room temperature.
5. In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, bring hard cider and sugar to a simmer, whisking frequently, for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low, and whisk in cornstarch until combined and thickened. Let cool to room temperature.
6. Carefully remove cake from Bundt pan, and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Top with compote, then drizzle with syrup.

Tips: The compote and cider syrup will continue to thicken as they cool to room temperature. Store covered in the refrigerator for up to a week for easy prep.

SOLUTIONS *for storing your holiday leftovers*

written by:
NATHAN SMITH

With its tantalizing appetizers, filling main course, and decadent desserts, there's nothing better than a holiday dinner. However, leftovers always seem to linger. To help this extra food last longer, make sure to follow these holiday leftovers storage tips.

REFRIGERATING

You should begin packing up and refrigerating your leftover food within two hours of the meal being served. Most of your holiday favorites can be stored in your fridge for up to four days, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

When packing your food, use shallow containers or sealable plastic bags instead of one large container to help the food cool quickly. Make sure to remove any meat from the bone and carve it into smaller portions before storing it away. If you cooked your turkey with stuffing inside, remove it from the bird and place it into a separate container.

As you move the food into the fridge, avoid stacking the containers. This can trap heat, and exposing more of the container to cold air can help it cool down faster. Once you've stored your leftovers, try to keep the fridge closed until the food has completely cooled.

FREEZING

If you want your food to last even longer, freezing is a great option to prevent the growth of bacteria. If your leftovers are frozen at 0°F, the USDA says you can store them almost indefinitely, but food tastes better the less time it spends in the freezer.

Make sure to let the food cool down for a few hours in the fridge before moving it to the freezer, and avoid stacking containers until they are frozen solid. Here are a few additional tips:

- Side dishes like mashed potatoes should be stored in airtight, freezer-friendly containers or freezer bags.
- Meat should be sliced so it can defrost evenly, placed in freezer paper or foil, and sealed in plastic freezer bags. Add gravy to your meat before freezing to keep it moist. Liquids like gravy will expand slightly when frozen, so leave a little space at the top of the storage container.
- Label and date your leftovers so that you can easily identify and eat them before they go bad.
- If you store leftovers in a glass container, let them defrost in the fridge before heating. Glass can be damaged or break if it goes from cold to hot too quickly.

When using your leftovers in future meals, only prepare what you'll be eating, as food loses flavor and moisture each time you reheat and store it. Leftover turkey can be used in recipes like turkey noodle soup or turkey potpie, and mashed potatoes are perfect for pierogi filling and gnocchi.

By properly storing your leftovers, you can relive the delicious memories of the holiday for days, weeks, or even months.

STORAGE RECOMMENDATIONS

FOOD	FRIDGE	FREEZER
Meat	3–4 days	3 months
Gravy	3–4 days	3 months
Cranberry sauce	7 days	2 months
Cooked stuffing	3–4 days	2 months
Mashed potatoes	3–4 days	4 months
Sweet potatoes	3–4 days	4 months
Cooked vegetables	3–4 days	3 months
Pumpkin pie	3–4 days	2 months

A Mantel makeover

written by:
MATTHEW BRADY

Filling your home with festive decor is one of the best ways to get into the spirit of the holiday season—and the perfect place to accentuate this is on a fireplace mantel. A deservedly popular focal point of any room, the mantel evokes feelings of coziness, warmth, peace, and nostalgia. It's where embers crackle and the stockings are hung with care, and it helps a house truly feel like a home.

There are so many ways to get creative and experiment with colors, textures, and accessories, and it's surprisingly easy to use basic decor principles that work for both fall and winter. Here are just a few ideas to get you started.

Be intentional with colors

Certain colors are closely associated with the time of year. So utilize colors like reds, golds, and shades of white to evoke the warmth and comfort of these seasons for both fall and winter. Items like candles, throw blankets, and pillows in these shades are great options to keep around between now and the end of the year. Space out a few candles (in candlesticks for added elegance) on your mantel, and keep the cozy accessories in a basket nearby on the floor.

When people are reminiscing about home life, you'll often hear that they're longing for hearth and home, so the connection between the two is unmistakable. Make sure to use these tips to visually emphasize the fact that—especially at this time of year—it is indeed good to be home.

Bring the outside in

Fall and winter are perfect times to showcase a rustic, outdoorsy look. Reflect the changing seasons by incorporating pieces like red and yellow leaves, hay, and pumpkins for autumn. Then switch these items out with pine branches, pine cones, and holly in winter. And don't be afraid to go bold with your foliage; incorporating vases filled with autumnal flowers or poinsettias can make a statement that you're all-in for the holidays.

Add filled containers

Glass canisters can be filled with fall decor pieces such as painted acorns, leaves, branches, or tiny pumpkins, all of which will instantly give your mantel a classic look. The very same jars can then be filled with small pine cones, faux cranberries, or peppermints to add an even more festive feel to the holiday season.

Make a double-duty sign

You don't necessarily need completely separate items for autumn and winter decor; one statement piece can serve a dual purpose. A good example of this is a reversible wooden sign. You can easily create one by painting a seasonally appropriate message or design for autumn on one side and another for the holiday season on the other. Display the fall side on your mantel first, and then flip it over as the holiday season approaches.

Personalize it

There may be no better way to show your love for your family than by featuring them above your fireplace. When you start receiving holiday cards, consider saving three to five of your most appreciated, and display them on your mantelpiece. Better yet, you can personalize this area by adding a holiday greeting or a customized wall decal with your family name and the year. Either of these is sure to be eye-catching for guests entering the room.

homemade FOR THE HOLIDAYS

photos by:
SHANA SMITH

Decorating the tree is one of the highlights of the holiday season for many people. Oftentimes, ornaments are reused year after year and are passed down through generations, making them some of the most highly prized decorations.

Whether you want to start a new tradition or simply add a little personal touch to your tree, these DIY ornament ideas will make the perfect addition to your holiday decor.

apple-cinnamon ORNAMENTS

materials:

Baking sheet

Parchment paper

Stand mixer
(with paddle attachment)

1 cup applesauce

1½–2 cups cinnamon, plus extra for dusting

1 tablespoon ground cloves (optional, for fragrance)

Rolling pin

Cookie cutters

String

directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 200°F, and line the baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, combine the applesauce, cinnamon, and cloves, if using. The dough should begin to form a ball but should not be too sticky, so add more cinnamon if necessary.
3. Sprinkle your rolling surface with cinnamon, and use the rolling pin to roll the dough to ¼-inch thickness.
4. Cut into desired shapes, and place on the sheet to bake. Make a small hole at the top of each cutout for string to hang.
5. Bake for about 1½–2 hours or until the ornaments are very hard. Once cool, pull string through each ornament, and tie to hang.

upcycled sweater ORNAMENTS

materials:

Patterned sweater

Scissors

3-inch embroidery hoops

String, for hanging

directions:

1. Cut out 4-inch by 4-inch pieces of fabric from the sweater—one for each embroidery hoop.
2. Pull the pieces of fabric into each embroidery hoop, and trim the edges if needed. Make sure the fabric is pulled tightly.
3. Secure the string to the top of each hoop, and tie to hang.

Alternatives to the Traditional Christmas Tree

written by: NATHAN SMITH

THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY SOMEONE MIGHT CHOOSE TO FORGO A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE. TREES CAN REQUIRE A LOT OF WORK TO KEEP ALIVE, MAY BE HAZARDOUS FOR PETS, AND CAN TAKE UP A LOT OF SPACE.

However, these Christmas tree alternatives will allow you to display your holiday cheer in an unconventional way.

Branches

Collect some branches from the outdoors or buy some artificial branches from a craft store for a natural-looking Christmas tree alternative. Add the branches to a decorative vase with a few ornaments to create a minimalist look. Conveniently, removing the holiday baubles makes this a reusable piece of decor all year long.

Books

If you're a bookworm, use some of your favorite literature to decorate for the holidays. Stack a variety of books on top of one another until you achieve a tree-like shape. You can even add a strand of lights to illuminate your book tree.

Cards

If you have some old or extra Christmas cards lying around, they can make a space-saving tree alternative. Find an open wall, and place the cards into the shape of a tree using tape or string to hold the cards in place. The position of the cards matters, so make sure they form the shape you want. Add stickers and lights to make your card tree a focal point.

Photos

Use a variety of framed photos of friends and family to form a tree design on a wall or table. Best of all, this option will be filled with the faces that make your holidays special. Make it a tradition by giving your holiday-party guests a parting gift of a picture of you together with the photo tree.

Gifts

Gifts are traditionally kept under the tree, but you can use them as decor, too! Use either wrapped gifts or fake a few by gift-wrapping empty boxes. Get creative with a variety of wrapping paper patterns and colored bows. Add the names of people in your household or other loved ones to

the boxes using paint or a marker in their favorite color.

Print

Technology can come in handy if you want to opt for a customized, reusable piece of tree art. Order a print or create one at an office supply store that you can hang as a canvas, tapestry, or peel-and-stick wallpaper.

Tomato cage

Whether or not you're a gardener, using a tomato cage as a tree can be a space-saving and festive option. Take the tomato cage, flip it upside down, and your tree alternative is ready to decorate with ribbon, tinsel, and ornaments.

Ladder

If you have space, take a ladder out of storage and dress it up. Wrap lights around the beams and steps to add a touch of shimmer. By using clear string, you can create the illusion of floating ornaments around the ladder. Remember to use string of various lengths to make the ornaments stand out.

A Christmas tree is the centerpiece of many holiday celebrations, but it doesn't need to be a traditional tree. By using one of these creative ideas, you'll have somewhere for friends and family to gather to open their presents.

HOLIDAY LIGHT *secrets*

written by: MATTHEW BRADY

Stringing up holiday lights has always been a popular seasonal activity, and that's become even more true in recent years; there are even television shows dedicated to the tradition. While some take the practice as seriously as an Olympic sport, others would rather the task be limited to a few hours of decorating.

No matter how you feel about lights, there are many ways you can experiment with them to create a display worthy of any light-show competition—and without putting in hours of effort. Just as important, there are surefire methods that can help you to take proper care of your lights. Use these tips to lighten your workload as you're lighting up your home and neighborhood.

CREATIVE TIPS

Create a lighted backdrop

You can go from a plain wall to a starry night in a matter of minutes with nothing more than a piece of poster board and string lights. Mark a pattern or scene out onto the board, and poke the lights through in your chosen spots. When you plug them in, the lights will illuminate to create a backdrop that will look wonderful just about anywhere.

Hang a festive room divider

Sure, icicle lights look gorgeous outdoors, but they can look even better when strung up at the entrance to a room, especially for a holiday party. Hang a row or two from a door frame to add an instant whimsical touch to the space or along a wall as a sparkling backdrop.

Brighten a vase or votive

Holiday tables can really pop with just a little glow, which is easy to achieve by placing a ball of lights in a decorative glass jar or votive. There is no wrong or right way to do it, so experiment with different colors and vase shapes, or try a series of vases for an extra bright and cheery setting.

Send a seasonal message

You can pay a pretty penny for illuminated letters, or you can create your own for far less! Outline a word or phrase along a blank wall, and trace the lines with lights to form the letters. This idea also works great for holiday gatherings.

Combine light and rustic

Take a cue from the environment and incorporate barren winter branches into your decor. Wrapping the branches with lights adds just the right amount of seasonal charm. Place the branches in a pot or vase, lay it in the middle of a table as a centerpiece, and tie it up with a bright red ribbon.

PRACTICAL TIPS

Avoid burnout

There's nothing quite as frustrating as putting up a set of lights and then realizing that one or more bulbs are out. To avoid this, always test your lights before using them, and make sure you have the exact same kind of replacement bulbs handy. (You'd be surprised how easy it is to notice even a slightly different shade of white light.) It will also be worth your time to check that the lights are screwed tightly into the strand, especially for larger outdoor bulb sets. What may seem like a burned-out bulb may just be a loose light.

Have a plan

Whether you're adding lights inside or outside, you must use sound strategies. If you're putting them on the family tree, keep a few things in mind. First, you'll likely need at least a few one-hundred-light strands, depending on your tree size. As a general rule of thumb, use one hundred lights for every foot of tree; so, for example, you'd want six hundred lights for a six-foot-high tree. It's also wise to check your lights' packaging or the tags on the strands themselves to learn how many can safely be connected. (It's generally four or five sets.) And when you wrap them around the tree, begin at the bottom and work your way to the treetop.

As far as outdoor lights are concerned, it's of the utmost importance that yours are actually made for the outdoors; C7 and C9 are two of the more popular options. For safety reasons, use the ubiquitous plastic clips rather than screws or nails to attach them to your roof. Also, if you're connecting multiple strands, make sure to wrap the connectors securely with electrical tape to keep the elements out. And speaking of connections, ensure that your outdoor outlet for your display is covered and grounded with a ground-fault circuit interrupter to prevent an electrical mishap of *Christmas Vacation* proportions.

Keep them at arm's length

One of the most frustrating parts about holiday lights is that they get easily tangled. If you've experienced this before, you probably feel like untangling strings of lights is more difficult than solving a Rubik's Cube.

However, there's a simple way to prevent this. When it's time to remove them from your roof or tree, grab one end of the strand, and then bend your arm at a 90-degree angle. Wrap your lights vertically, from elbow to hand, around your forearm, until you reach the end of the strand. Remove your neatly wrapped lights from your arm, and voilà—they're ready for storage and easy unraveling next year.

Be eco-friendly

If you decide to get a new set of lights, don't just trash the old ones. Holiday lights are particularly difficult to recycle and need special care to do so, so check to see if there's a local organization that has holiday light drop-off locations you can deliver them to.

GROWING AN INDOOR herb garden

written by:
NATHAN SMITH

If cooler temperatures have brought an end to your outdoor gardening, you can still put your green thumb to work indoors. An herb garden can be a great indoor project—you'll not only add some greenery to your home but also enjoy fresh herbs in your cooking.

Herb growing tips

Just like an outdoor garden, your herb garden will take work and planning to be fruitful. By following these tips, you'll be growing flavorful herbs in no time.

Watering and feeding

Make sure to feed your herbs regularly as the soil's nutrients can quickly be used up—organic fertilizer and plant food are great options to replenish the soil. Water your herbs in small amounts when the top of the soil is dry, and make sure the pots you use have plenty of drainage. You can either use pots with drainage holes or drill a hole into the bottom of a plastic planter. Only water your plants in the morning because watering at night can cause fungal growth.

Pruning

Herbs have unique pruning needs—some plants require a lot, while others need very little—so always research what is best for the varieties you have. If you notice a flower growing, you should pinch it off. This will allow the plant to use its energy to grow leaves instead of flowers.

Sunlight

The amount of light herbs need to grow will vary, but you should typically choose a spot that offers between

WATER YOUR HERBS IN SMALL AMOUNTS WHEN THE TOP OF THE SOIL IS DRY, AND MAKE SURE THE POTS YOU USE HAVE PLENTY OF DRAINAGE.

four to eight hours of sunlight per day. If you're trying to figure out where to put your indoor herb garden, try finding a spot near a window in your kitchen for convenient harvesting while cooking.

What herbs to grow

When selecting herbs to grow, go with those you'll use most often in your cooking. Here are four popular and versatile herbs to consider.

Basil

Basil is great on top of pizza, blended into sauces, and pureed in soups. If the leaves begin to wilt, you might not be watering the basil enough, or the soil may be draining slowly. Harvest basil by snipping the stem just below the point where two large leaves meet. If this is your first herb garden, basil is a good place to start due to its heartiness and ease of growing.

Cilantro

A staple in Mexican cuisine, cilantro thrives with full sun in the morning or afternoon, but it should be shaded during the warmest part of the day. Make sure to regularly trim your cilantro, or it will drop seeds and continue to sprout new plants. Harvest your cilantro by cutting near its base, but do not remove more than a third of the plant at once.

Oregano

Oregano is a popular herb in Italian, Mexican, and Mediterranean cuisines. While oregano needs to be watered regularly, you should allow the soil to dry a bit between watering—this allows the plant to remain compact while still producing leaves. Harvest your oregano by cutting just above the base of a set of leaves. Remember, oregano becomes more flavorful once it's dried. To do so, place the cut leaves onto a baking sheet, and dry in a preheated oven at 200°F. Leave the oven door open slightly to circulate air, and flip the leaves every two to three minutes. Turn the oven off after fifteen minutes, but leave the oregano in the oven until it cools.

Parsley

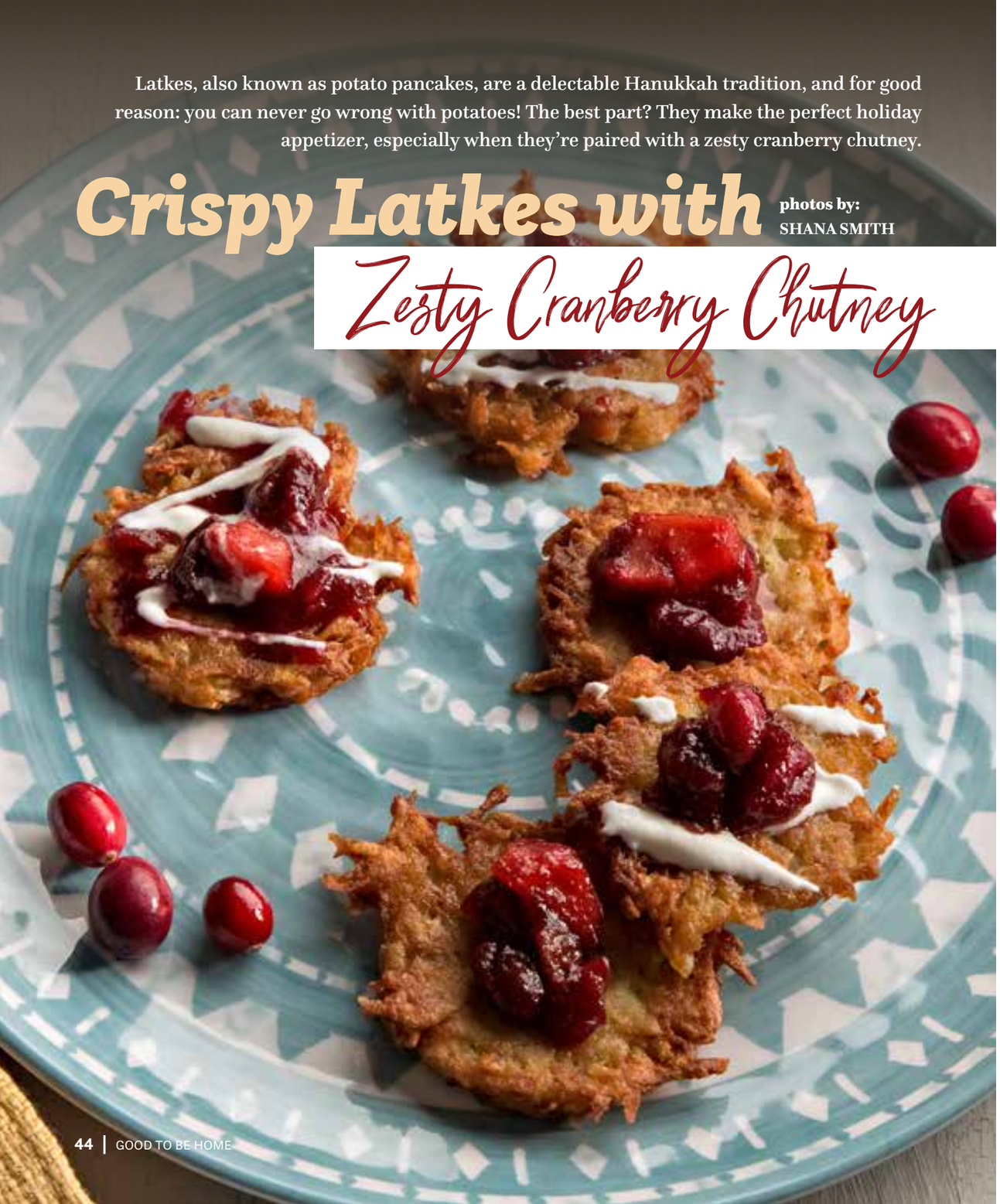
Parsley is a versatile herb that's perfect for use in salads, soups, and pasta dishes. Make sure to plant your parsley in a deep pot of at least six to eight inches in depth to give its long roots room to grow, and keep it in a well-lit area for at least six hours per day. Harvest parsley by cutting the stems at the base, but be sure to leave two inches of the stem so it can continue growing.

An indoor herb garden provides a satisfying and easy way to add garden-fresh taste to your culinary creations!

Latkes, also known as potato pancakes, are a delectable Hanukkah tradition, and for good reason: you can never go wrong with potatoes! The best part? They make the perfect holiday appetizer, especially when they're paired with a zesty cranberry chutney.

Crispy Latkes with Zesty Cranberry Chutney

photos by:
SHANA SMITH



MAKES 10–12 LATKES

Ingredients:

For the cranberry chutney

4 cups fresh cranberries
1 cup raisins
½ cup white sugar
¾ cup packed brown sugar
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger root
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup water
½ cup onions, minced
½ cup chopped Granny Smith apples, peeled and cored

For the latkes

1 small onion, peeled
2–3 russet potatoes, peeled
1 egg, whisked
½ cup flour
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
Salt and pepper, to taste
Canola oil

Instructions:

For the chutney

1. In a medium saucepan, combine all ingredients except for the onions and apples. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, and then reduce to a simmer until the cranberries begin to pop, about 5–7 minutes.
2. Add the onions and apples, continue to cook, and stir until the mixture begins to thicken, about 5–10 minutes.
3. Transfer to a container, and refrigerate overnight to allow the flavors to combine.

For the latkes

1. Using the large side of a grater, grate the onion and potatoes.
2. Wrap both the onions and potatoes in a dish towel, squeeze out the excess liquid, and transfer to a large mixing bowl.
3. Add the whisked egg, flour, butter, salt, and pepper to the grated potatoes and onions, and stir to combine.
4. Heat the canola oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Once hot, scoop small amounts of the batter into the pan, making sure the latkes don't touch each other while frying.
5. Cook for 3–4 minutes per side or until golden and crisp on both sides.
6. Line a plate with paper towels, and transfer the fried latkes onto the plate to soak up the excess oil.
7. Serve immediately with the chutney.

Budgeting for a *Joyful* HOLIDAY SEASON

written by: RACHEL STEVENS

Consumers spend more on retail during the holiday season than they do at any other time of the year. While gift-giving can be a rewarding experience and a way to wrap up the year in gratitude, the extra spending can be detrimental to your bank account.

Use these strategies to get creative with your gift list and set a limit on your spending without limiting your seasonal joy.

Check your list twice

The inevitable feeling of gift-giving guilt starts to kick in around the holidays, and that perceived obligation to give everyone a gift or return the favor to anyone who gives you a gift is just that—a perception. Try to think about the purpose behind your gifts, and narrow your list down to the core loved ones you feel deserve your time, effort, and money.

Start a fun gift-giving family tradition

Most people think of buying presents for their immediate family first. If this is you, consider talking with your partner about only spending on your children, if you have them. Instead of exchanging gifts with your partner, you can plan a fun adventure somewhere you both want to go, like a new restaurant or a theater in town.

You can also propose a gift exchange for your extended family. Adults can write down their names and draw from a hat to determine who will buy them a gift this year. Consider setting an appropriate spending limit so that no one feels like they got the short end of the gift-giving stick. Exchanges are a fun, easy way to ensure everyone gets something without purchasing a huge pile of gifts.

Show your friends heartfelt appreciation

Shopping for friends can quickly get pricey, especially for people with a large social circle. You can propose the same gift exchange outlined above, or agree to only send heartfelt cards to one another. A handwritten letter and homemade cookies can go a long way!

Stay realistic and flexible

People understand that it can be hard to splurge on others when you need to make ends meet for your household. Your friends and family are probably in the same boat as you when it comes to tough holiday season decisions, so stay realistic with your gift ideas and get creative. Spending money isn't the only path to a memorable gift.

Calculate a solid budget early on

It's never too early to start budgeting for the holidays. According to a 2019 Bankrate Holiday Gifting Survey, 51 percent of Americans say they feel pressured to spend more than they are comfortable with on gifts during the holidays. Never spend more than you can afford because presents are not worth the debt. Financial experts say a good rule of thumb is to put aside no more than 1.5 percent of your annual gross income for holiday spending at the end of the year.

Give the gift of time and talent

If you have a knack for art, music, or woodworking, for example, make inexpensive gifts that will speak volumes to your loved ones. Additionally, you can offer your time by making a home-cooked meal or helping with a home improvement project.

Don't miss the deals

Stores count on holiday shopping to generate a large portion of yearly revenue, so many places will offer discounts and specials to incentivize consumers. However, there are many great deals throughout the year as well. If you strategize, you can pick the best time of year to shop for a discount on the items you want.

- **Home decor and furniture:** Presidents' Day and Labor Day
- **Tech and clothing:** Amazon Prime Day and Black Friday
- **Video games and toys:** New Year's Day and Cyber Monday
- **Sports and outdoor gear:** Saint Patrick's Day and Black Friday

The inclusion of useful tips is one of the top reasons 58 percent of recipients have referred the professional who sent them the magazine in the past 12 months.

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Front of Tear Out Card 2

vegetable and egg SKILLET

1 tbsp. olive oil

2 tsp. butter

3 c. shredded potatoes

1 medium red onion, peeled and chopped

2 bell peppers, cored and chopped

1 c. spinach, chopped

1 c. grape tomatoes, sliced

Salt and pepper, to taste

7 eggs

2 scallions, sliced

1 tbsp. chopped cilantro, optional

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Back of Tear Out Card 2

SERVES 6

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Heat oil and butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add shredded potatoes and cook for 5 minutes, scraping the bottom of the pan to keep them from sticking. Reduce to medium heat and add onion and peppers. Cook for another 4 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in spinach, tomatoes, salt, and pepper.
3. Make 7 wells in the vegetable mixture. Crack one egg in each well. Sprinkle a little more salt on each egg. Using hot pads, place skillet in oven. Bake 14 minutes for soft yolks or 18 minutes for hard yolks. Top with scallions and cilantro, if using, and serve immediately.

Excerpted from ***Christmas Baking: Festive Cookies, Candies, Cakes, Breads, and Snacks to Bring Comfort and Joy to Your Holiday.*** © 2020 by Joyce and Laura Klynstra. Photography by Laura Klynstra. Used with permission of Good Books, an imprint of Skyhorse Publishing. All rights reserved.

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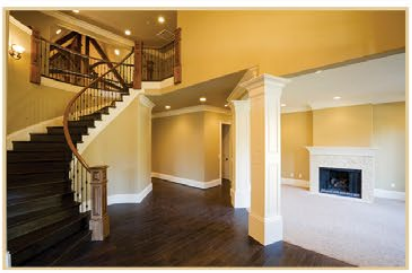

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