

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

# start HEALTHY

ISSUE 21

## 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.

HAPPY  
*New Year!*



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Shanners

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678

## Front of Tear Out Card 1

### SAVORY OLIVE AND ROSEMARY *bread pudding*

- 1 c. diced sweet onion
- 2 tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 loaf gluten-free bread
- 6 large eggs
- 2 c. plain almond milk, unsweetened
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- ½ c. sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained and chopped
- 1 c. black olives, sliced and drained
- 8 oz. plant-based cream cheese



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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. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and spray an oval casserole dish with non-stick cooking spray.
2. In a small skillet, sauté the onion and rosemary in the olive oil until the onions are soft, about 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat.
3. Cut the bread into cubes and place it in a large bowl.
4. Whisk together the eggs, milk, salt, and pepper.
5. Pour the egg mixture over the bread. Stir in the onion and rosemary mixture, the sun-dried tomatoes, and the olives.
6. Pour the bread mixture into the casserole dish. Crumble the cream cheese over the top of the mixture.
7. Bake for 35–40 minutes.



Gluten Free



Dairy Free

Excerpt from *Skinny Southern Baking: 65 Gluten-Free, Dairy-Free, Refined Sugar-Free Southern Classics* by Lara Lyn Carter. Photography © Lara Lyn Carter. Published by Familius LLC, 2020.

Dear Bill and Judy,

Every holiday season, longtime traditions greet us like the welcoming return of an old friend. This issue of Start Healthy delves into the impact of such time-honored holiday activities, including watching movies, shopping, and wrapping presents, and offers suggestions for making the most of them.

Perhaps more than anything else this time of year, watching holiday films makes us smile or shed tears of joy. But why do these movies move us so much? What compels us to watch them year after year? As it turns out, science has some answers.

Another staple of the holiday season is gift giving, which requires us to go shopping. Unfortunately, whether it's in person or online, this activity can quickly become stressful for many. Learn how to improve your experience with these tips that get to the heart of holiday shopping.

Of course, after you buy presents, you need to wrap them. However, wrapping paper often ends up in landfills. The eco-friendly wrapping tips inside will help you make a big impact on your gift recipients while making little impact on the earth.

And speaking of wrapping, be sure to check out the article on imperfection, which explains why you shouldn't get all wrapped up about being perfect during the holidays.

Wishing you all the best this holiday season. As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

**Stacey Shanner**



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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.



**Page 10**

## **Resourceful Wrapping**

Practical tips to ensure that your holiday wrapping adds joy to the season and not more waste to landfills.

## **02 A Healthier, Happier Holiday**

These seven tips will help you mind your health during the hustle and bustle of the season.

## **04 Holiday Shopping: Back to Basics**

Discover why we love seasonal spending and how to make the experience more enjoyable.

## **16 Going UP!**

A wintry adventure awaits in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

## **22 A Sweet and Savory Holiday**

Holiday eating just got healthier, thanks to these recipes without dairy, gluten, and refined sugar.

## **30 Envisioning a Better Future**

A look at vision boarding, an organizational tool that can help you reach your goals.

## **36 Pursuing Perfection**

Here's how to ease up and enjoy the season instead of trying to make it perfect.

## **42 Good Tidings They Bring**

The psychology behind our love for classic holiday films.

## **48 'Tis the Season for Pet Safety**

Here's how to keep your four-legged friend safe and sound during the holidays.

# A Healthier, Happier Holiday

written by: rebecca poole

The holiday season should be a time of joy, but all too often it is overshadowed by stress or regret. Don't let the most wonderful time of the year become the most challenging. Follow the tips below to help maintain good health and good cheer.



Each issue is filled with feel-good content that engages your audience and makes 80 percent of recipients more likely to do business with you.

## start HEALTHY



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All photos in Start Healthy are provided by Getty Images unless noted.



1. Wash your hands often and effectively. A good rule of thumb is to wash for at least twenty seconds.
2. Don't neglect annual doctor's visits just because you're consumed by the hustle and bustle. It's just as important to stay on top of your health now as it is any other time of year.
3. Keep the safety of your children and four-legged friends top of mind this time of year. From small toys to fire hazards to potentially harmful foods, there are more dangers around the house than you may realize. (Check out more pet safety tips on p. 48!)
4. Stay active. Whether you go for a quick walk or schedule in a midday workout, it's paramount for you to keep moving.
5. Monitor your alcohol intake. It's easy to overdo it during the holidays, but try to keep track of how much alcohol you're drinking. Remember to drink water between alcoholic beverages.
6. Do what you can do prevent a foodborne illness by cooking food to the recommended temperature, avoiding cross-contamination, cleaning cookware properly, and storing away anything perishable as soon as you can.
7. Manage your stress levels. Do you leave shopping until the last minute? Are you feeling anxious about family gatherings? Take a breath, and remember to get a good night's sleep and make time for yourself as you tackle these!

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# *Holiday Shopping:* **BACK TO BASICS**

written by: matthew brady

In 2020, we experienced a holiday season like no other. Because of COVID-19, we had to adjust our gatherings, our plans, and even our traditions in unexpected ways.

However, that didn't seem to hinder our holiday shopping much. Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that, even though retail sales were slightly down in December 2020 compared with the previous month, overall spending was up for the season as well as year over year.

What is it about the holidays that makes us so happy to spend on others—despite the crowds and other headaches, such as the massive shipping delays many experienced in 2020? And how can you maximize the experience to make it joyful instead of jarring? As it turns out, the spirit of the season, and your sanity, can be salvaged with some sound strategy.

## **WHY WE LOVE HOLIDAY SHOPPING**

Think about this: countless people are willing to forgo sleep, wait in line for hours, and cram into stores to buy holiday gifts—or, in the case of the stay-at-home shopper, scour Black Friday and Cyber Monday deals for hours on end. It's enough to ramp up the stress and anxiety tenfold, which seems antithetical to the holiday season. So why do we do it?

There are a few reasons. First, people innately love deals, and Black Friday is always seen as the Mount Everest of bargain-hunting. Also, every year, we're introduced to the "It" gifts out there that everyone's pining to get for loved ones, especially children's toys, and that often requires sacrifice. If you're able to score one, you feel the same adrenaline surge as you would when holding a winning lottery ticket.



And that feeling is only amplified by the omnipresent limited-time restrictions, whether it's a sale that ends on a Friday or special pricing that is only available until 10:00 a.m.

In short, there's more than one meaning for the term "holiday rush."

There's also the social aspect of it. Perhaps shopping on Black Friday is an annual tradition for you and your best friend. Or it might be a good way to get out and enjoy yourself with family members after being cooped up inside all day on Thanksgiving. And then there's the overall community experience when you're out shopping: everyone is there together for the same reason and seeking the same enjoyment, similar to being at a concert or a sporting event. On top of it all, you're inundated with the sights, smells, and sounds of the season. Who could resist that?

## SIX KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Actually, it's not so much about resisting as it is staying in control. With the aforementioned sensory, social, and sales overloads, it might be difficult to avoid losing yourself in holiday bliss—and regretting it later when the bills pour in.

So perhaps the best way to control your holiday shopping is to revisit certain basic questions, commonly known as the five Ws: Who? What? When? Where? and Why? as well as their cousin, How? You may very well be surprised by how doing so can make your holiday shopping less stressful and more enjoyable.

### ***How will you go about this?***

The primary "How?" question—How will you pay for all this goodwill?—will relate to all the other answers you discover. Make sure to set a reasonable budget from the get-go, set a limit for each person, and, if possible, use cash only.

### **Who are you out there for?**

Answering this question may be harder than you think. Your immediate family and close friends will probably make the list, but where is the cutoff? Before you shop, take as much time as possible to feel comfortable with your decision. Otherwise, you may experience major angst.

Just as important, don't forget about you. Remember that you're out there to enjoy yourself. Be sure to dress comfortably and stay hydrated. And if you see something you'd like for yourself as you're shopping, take note and leave a suggestion for someone else to buy it for you.

### **What are you planning to buy?**

In contrast, this may actually be the easiest question to answer if you do your homework, make a list (and check it twice) based on your spending limit, and don't deviate from it. While you're at it, make a Plan B for your shopping wish list, just in case certain items are sold out or not available.

### **When will you shop?**

I used to think people who started holiday shopping in September were odd, but now I understand their wisdom. However, even if you plan to shop during the season, keep an eye out for good sales throughout the year based on inventory. In October, for example, you can find good deals on items like jeans, while you can avoid the rush and wait until January to get great deals on TVs.

The day of the week may be meaningful as well. Sure, both Black Friday and Cyber Monday offer great sales, but you and your gift recipients may get even more joy

out of giving back, which shopping on Small Business Saturday and Giving Tuesday allows. And you won't be alone in your community focus: both events achieved record numbers in 2020, despite the pandemic.

Wherever you go, avoid peak shopping times. If you're planning to shop at a local strip mall that has extended hours until midnight, for example, go later—there should be fewer people and less competition.

### **Where will you shop?**

The most basic decision is whether you opt for online shopping, in-person shopping, or a little of both. Whatever you choose, do so with a plan. For example, if you are driving to different stores for must-have gifts, map out your trip beforehand: know approximately what time you want to arrive and how much time you want to spend at each store before you leave.

### **Why are you shopping?**

Finally, we get to the most important question of all. Is it out of obligation? Is it to check something off your massive holiday to-do list? Is it a competition to give the best gift?

The simple answer: joy. The best way to minimize the stress of holiday shopping is to always remember that, like everything holiday-related, giving gifts is about happiness. The happiness of the shopping experience. The happiness you'll bring to others (just for thinking of them). And the happiness you'll get from giving to others.

Ultimately, that's truly what the season is all about.



# resourceful *Wrapping*

written by: matthew brady

Ask any kid what his or her favorite part of the holiday season is, and “gifts” will likely be one of the top answers. But that response isn’t relegated to just young ones. As grown-ups, who among us doesn’t smile while staring at a present that someone so thoughtfully bought (or made) and took the time to wrap for us? (Other than Ebenezer Scrooge.)

The difference is that adults tend to get as much out of giving as receiving—and that includes wrapping all those presents. In fact, on average, people voluntarily dedicate an estimated three to four hours every year wrapping presents during the holiday season.



*According to the American Forest  
and Paper Association (AF&PA)*

## **plastic-coated wrapping paper isn't recyclable,**

*nor is foil paper, cellophane  
paper, or glittery paper.*

“ ”

And then there's the flip side: after those carefully wrapped presents are torn open. What happens to all those piles upon piles of paper? There's a good chance that they end up in trash bags and out in the trash can without a second thought.

Unfortunately, that's a huge problem for the planet. In fact, according to Earth911 estimates, Americans alone use 4.6 million tons of wrapping paper annually—and half of it ends up in landfills. Other estimates suggest that a quarter-million miles of wrapping paper is trashed worldwide during the holidays. That's a lot of trees being used and trash not degrading.

You may be thinking, "If I recycle other paper year-round, why can't I just recycle wrapping paper? Well, it has to do with the broad definition of "paper" in wrapping paper—and all that's added to it to make the season bright.

According to the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), plastic-coated wrapping paper isn't recyclable, nor is foil paper, cellophane paper, or glittery paper. All these truths certainly narrow down the earth-friendly options. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to make your gift wrapping as eco-friendly as it is delightful.



### **Do DIY Wrapping**

Give second life to items you already have lying around your home, such as brown paper bags or newspapers, for your gift wrap.

### **Support Companies That Care**

Some of the big players in the industry, such as Hallmark, do make sustainable, recyclable wrapping paper for the holidays; you just have to hunt it down.

And, believe it or not, some companies have been in the business of making environmentally friendly wrapping paper for years. Hawaii-based Wrappily tops

this list, printing its line of products on 100 percent recycled newspaper print and offering over a dozen fun holiday designs. And another, Triumph Plant Company, helps you to give the gift that keeps on giving—its wrapping paper contains wildflower seeds, so it can be planted rather than placed in the trash.

### **Make Simple Changes**

The best thing you can do to help the environment is start with yourself, your choice of gift wrap, and how you dispose of it and the boxes within it. Being intentional about the wrapping paper you use, as discussed earlier, is a good place to start. But there are other easy ways to make a difference, too.

### **Know your stuff.**

Being educated about recycling is a good practice overall, but it's especially true during the holidays. Simply contact your disposal company to find out what it will and won't recycle. Another way to determine whether you should trash or recycle your paper? Do a scrunch test. The AF&PA recommends scrunching the paper up in your hand—if it stays in place, it can be recycled; however, if it expands, it likely can't be.

### **Bag it.**

By their nature, gift bags are made to be reused—so take advantage of this alternative, if possible. Fabric bags, in particular, are a hot option: they're elegant yet eco-friendly since they can be used for years. And, of course, paper gift bags can be recycled.

### **Don't put a bow on it.**

Well, usually not. Bows aren't generally recyclable, but they are reusable with a little glue or well-hidden tape. Likewise, ribbons can't be recycled. Inside the box, though, feel free to make use of tissue paper, as long as it's not foil.

### **Flatten cardboard.**

This simple—yet often neglected—task can make a big difference in the recycling process, especially with a record number of packages being delivered during the holiday season last year.

*As you can see, options abound when it comes to being more eco-friendly this time of year. So give yourself—and Mother Nature—the ultimate gift this season. Consider alternate means of concealing your gifts to loved ones to truly make your holidays treasure-filled rather than trash-filled.*



# *Going UP!*

written by: alexa bricker

photography by: national park service

If you venture north of some of Michigan's most populous cities, past Ann Arbor, Detroit, and Grand Rapids, you'll reach the state's Upper Peninsula, or UP, as it is aptly known. The UP is one of the most well-preserved pieces of wilderness anywhere in the

contiguous United States, and it is the epitome of a winter paradise. The area spans fifteen counties and hits its northernmost point in Isle Royale National Park, which grazes the border with Canada.





## PAINTING THE PICTURE

Pictured Rocks was established as the country's first official national lakeshore in 1966 and, thanks to its protected status, it has remained a pristine place to view some of the most interesting geological formations in the country. These enormous rock formations, made up mostly of sandstone, began forming hundreds of millions of years ago. The rugged, colorful cliffs have been slowly degraded by the wind and water from Lake Superior, creating interesting configurations like arches, spires, and even caves that are visible from the park's forty-two miles of coastline.

There are a number of popular spots to visit within the park's stretch of cliffs, including the Jacobsville Formation (the oldest in the park), which is made up of layers of red quartz sandstone contrasted with white rock, and the Munising Formation, with layers of gray and white minerals. These color variations form when water is forced out of the rock and sends minerals like iron, copper, and manganese traveling downward—hence the name Pictured Rocks.



Thanks to its close proximity to Lake Superior, most of the towns across the UP receive a minimum of fifty inches of snow per year. Houghton, one of the area's northernmost towns, juts out into Lake Superior and gets an average of 207 inches per year.

At the heart of all the ice and snow of a UP winter lies a truly magical place: Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore—a paradise for the season's adventure seekers.

While the cliffs are stunning on their own, one of the park's most unique features is its perched sand dunes, aptly named because they are literally perched on top of the cliffs. These dunes at Pictured Rocks are one of the best examples of their kind in the world, according to the National Park Service, and they stretch across five miles. The natural beauty of the lakeshore and plethora of beaches and water activities make it a popular destination in the summer months, but winter is a rare treat in its own right for one breathtaking reason.

## A FROZEN PLAYGROUND

Pictured Rocks is well-known for its many waterfalls. However, as winter approaches and temperatures dip below freezing, these waterfalls turn into massive, glacier-like ice structures. Even places that don't have moving water in warmer months will begin to form thick layers of ice from the water that seeps out of the sandstone. Although it is dependent on the weather, ice typically begins to form on the rocks in mid-December and lasts until early to mid-spring.

Susan Reece, chief of interpretation and education for Pictured Rocks, says the park service doesn't plow the majority of the roads in wintertime. However, Sandpoint Road is typically passable by vehicle and provides a view of the Pictured Rocks escarpment, a rocky cliff a few hundred feet from the road that is home to one of the best ice curtain formations in the park.

And you can bet that all this ice doesn't just bring tourists into the park for photo ops. Pictured Rocks has become a mecca for ice



climbing. The state has even created a festival, held just a short distance from the park, around the activity—the Michigan Ice Fest. The Michigan Ice Fest usually takes place in late January or early February, although it was canceled in 2021 due to COVID-19. The event provides an opportunity for expert climbers to show off their skills and novice climbers to learn a few things through one of the many demonstrations and classes offered. The festival is BYOG (bring your own gear), but gear is also rentable for the entire weekend for demonstrations and one-time-only rentals for classes. In 2022, the Ice Fest is expected to take place February 9–13.

If ice climbing isn't your thing, there are a plethora of other winter adventures to be had at Pictured Rocks

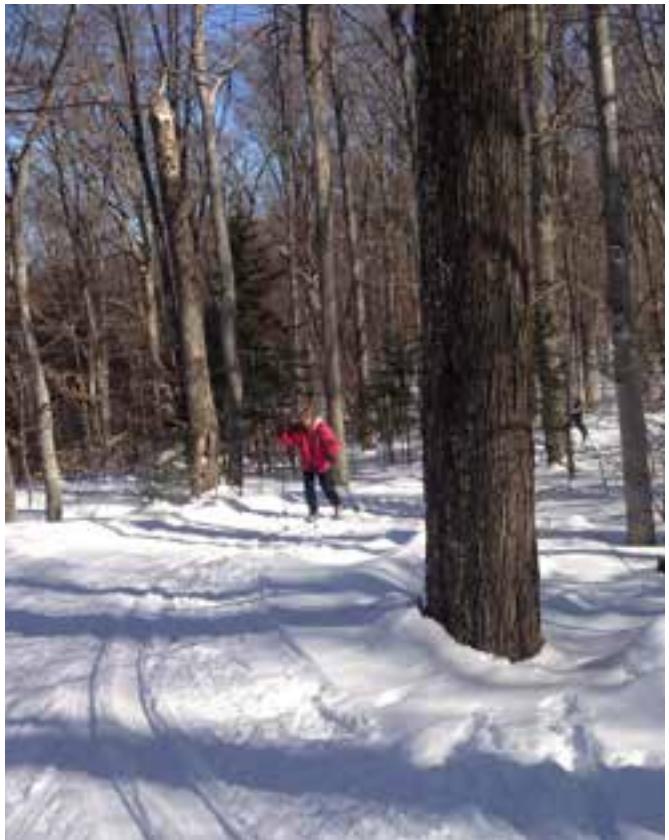
and the surrounding area. Because of the immense depth of snow and lack of plowing, Reece notes that the park is also a popular snowshoeing and cross-country skiing destination. Most designated snowshoeing trails are marked, but you can snowshoe virtually anywhere, with the exception of roads open to vehicles and the ski trails. For cross-country skiing, the park offers twenty miles of groomed trails open only to skiers, so you are guaranteed to have pristine snow and plenty of peace and quiet.

Although most of the park isn't open to cars in the winter, snowmobiles are the preferred mode of transportation on designated routes. If you're planning to stay at one of the park's campgrounds, you'll need to

travel this way, as they aren't accessible by car. Deep snow and wide-open spaces also provide the perfect concourse for recreational snowmobiling as well.

*Whichever activity you choose, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore is a destination like no other. The park offers a rare opportunity to see winter's beauty in its purest form, as Mother Nature turns the colorful sandstone cliffs into miraculous amphitheaters of ice and snow, the same way she has for millions of years.*

*For more info, visit [nps.gov/piro](https://nps.gov/piro)*



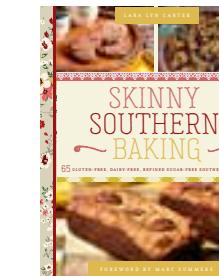
# A SWEET AND savory holiday

## ALL RECIPES:

- GF Gluten Free
- DF Dairy Free
- V Vegetarian



Excerpted from *Skinny Southern Baking: 65 Gluten-Free, Dairy-Free, Refined Sugar-Free Southern Classics* by Lara Lynn Carter. Photography © Lara Lynn Carter. Published by Familius LLC, 2020.



The holiday table doesn't get any easier—or more delicious—than these gluten-free, dairy-free, refined sugar-free recipes from Lara Lynn Carter's *Skinny Southern Baking*. Packed with healthy, natural ingredients and flavor, they're sure to be a hit this season!

## GINGER *cookies*

These ginger cookies are soft, delicious, and full of the spices we think of at Christmas. They also freeze great, so make an extra batch and save them for a rainy day.

### make measure

- 2½ cups almond flour, tightly packed
- ½ cup coconut sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon clove
- 2 teaspoons ginger
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup molasses
- ¼ cup coconut oil

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Combine the dry ingredients and break up any clumps in the flour or sugar with a fork.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the wet ingredients.
4. Slowly stir the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and mix well.
5. Shape the cookies into circles and arrange them on the baking sheet.
6. Bake for 12–15 minutes.
7. Cool completely and enjoy!

# SAVORY OLIVE AND ROSEMARY ***bread pudding***

I created this recipe for my husband, Chris. He loves olives dearly, so I decided to combine them into a delicious savory bread pudding. This makes a wonderful side dish.

**measure**  
.....  
**make**

- 1 cup diced sweet onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 loaf gluten-free bread
- 6 large eggs
- 2 cups plain almond milk, unsweetened
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup sun-dried tomatoes in oil, drained and chopped
- 1 cup black olives, sliced and drained
- 8 ounces plant-based cream cheese

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and spray an oval casserole dish with non-stick cooking spray.
2. In a small skillet, sauté the onion and rosemary in the olive oil until the onions are soft, about 5 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat.
3. Cut the bread into cubes and place it in a large bowl.
4. Whisk together the eggs, milk, salt, and pepper.
5. Pour the egg mixture over the bread. Stir in the onion and rosemary mixture, the sun-dried tomatoes, and the olives.
6. Pour the bread mixture into the casserole dish. Crumble the cream cheese over the top of the mixture.
7. Bake for 35–40 minutes.





## TOFFEE *bars*

*The ultimate in a homemade candy bar: sweet, salty, and chocolaty all in one!*

### *measure*

- 1 cup dairy-free butter
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 cup coconut sugar
- 1 cup almond flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup coconut flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 cups refined sugar-free chocolate chips
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped salted and toasted pecans

### *make*

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees and grease a 9x13 baking pan.
2. Cream the butter, egg yolk, and coconut sugar together; mix well. Add the almond flour, coconut flour, and vanilla, beating until well mixed.
3. Spread the mixture in the baking pan and bake for 25 minutes.
4. Remove the pan from the oven and spread the chocolate chips over the hot crust. Once the chips are melted, sprinkle the pecans over the chocolate.
5. Allow the bars to cool completely and harden before cutting.

# CHICKEN AND PORTOBELLO MUSHROOM *pot pie*

When it comes to savory baking, I love to go for a comfort food that reminds me of my childhood. Forget peas and carrots and put a new spin on the classic with this recipe.

*measure*

## FOR THE FILLING

- 1 cup sweet onion, diced
- 2 cups baby portobello mushrooms, sliced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups boneless, skinless chicken breast, cooked
- 8 ounces plant-based cream cheese
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 teaspoon herbs de Provence

## FOR THE TOPPING

- 1 cup almond flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon fine sea salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon herbs de Provence
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup plain almond milk

*make*

## FOR THE FILLING

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and spray a large cast-iron skillet with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Cook the onion and mushrooms together in the olive oil over medium heat until they are tender.
3. Shred the chicken and set aside.
4. Stir in the cream cheese and broth with the onions and mushrooms until well blended. Stir in the chicken and herbs de Provence.
5. Remove from the heat and pour the chicken mixture into the bottom of the skillet.

## FOR THE TOPPING

1. In a medium bowl, mix all of the ingredients together with a whisk.
2. Pour the topping over the chicken mixture and bake for 30 minutes.



# envisioning a BETTER FUTURE

written by:  
rebecca poole



**T**here's something about visualizing your goals that makes them seem all the more attainable. Do you aim to buy a home in the next year? Have you been putting off a renovation project that you finally want to get to? Are you itching to run a half marathon?

Well, with just a few supplies and a Pinterest account, you can achieve these goals. A vision board is a powerful tool used to—you guessed it—visualize your future. You can create a generic one, with imagery and words related to *all* of your goals, or you can make specific boards for each individual goal. Use the following tips to get started.

## CARVING A PATH

A vision board can take the physical form of a poster board with printed out images, quotes, words, and mantras to help you pinpoint exactly what you want to achieve in the next year, five years, or even ten years. Or you could create a vision board digitally using a website like Canva, which has templates for a collage, a business website, desktop wallpaper, or simple poster

designs to help you get started. Pinterest is a great tool whether you're creating a physical or digital board. With curated images tailored to you and your lifestyle, this social media platform makes it easy to create boards for any type of professional or personal goal you can imagine.

Once you create an account, you can start saving pins to boards and naming them after specific goals you have. For example, if you want to run a half marathon in the next few months, you could name a board "Half Marathon" and start searching for images that relate to that goal. Or, for a more generic approach, name your board "Vision Board" and save images that relate to all of your goals. Either way, this digital approach is an easy way to create a board if you're not DIY-inclined.

To produce a physical vision board, you could still create collages digitally and then print them out and tape or glue them to a poster board. If you have old magazines lying around, page through them and cut out anything that stands out to you. The best thing about vision boarding is that there aren't any hard-and-fast rules—it's all about constructing something that makes sense to you and your future. You'll know you're done when you look at your board and feel inspired.

## THE BENEFITS

You may be wondering: if you know your goals, why go to all the trouble of cutting out images or making a digital collage? Simply put, it encourages you to actually follow through with your goals. Visualization is a powerful tool.

Your mind can help you visualize and affirm where you see yourself in your future and



what you see yourself doing, which is a way to cognitively manifest your goals into existence. By putting your goals onto a physical or digital board, you're taking this manifestation one step further. This is why vision boarding can be especially useful if you're someone who typically struggles to stick to your goals. By turning them into something you spent time creating and that you'll see often, it will be easier to remember your aspirations.

For a vision board newbie, it may be more helpful to have one central board focusing on different areas of your life, such as your career, health and wellness, home, finances, travel, personal relationships, and spirituality. Or, if you're feeling ambitious, you can split these categories into separate boards. Either way, your intentions will be set.

For example, a health-focused board could include images, motivational quotes, and words related to fitness, nutrition, mental health, and wellness trends you follow. Maybe you struggle with eating too many sweets, so you might include images on your board of green juice, fruits, and veggies to be reminded of healthier eating habits you want to implement. Or, as mentioned earlier, if your goal is to run a half marathon, your board may be more word-centric, with infographics and specific running times you're aiming to hit as you train.

*The best thing about vision  
boarding is that*

## **there aren't any hard-and- fast rules—**

*It's all about constructing  
something that makes sense  
to you and your future.*



### **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

To create a physical vision board, choose from the supplies below:

- A poster board, corkboard, or pinboard
- Double-sided tape, washi tape, a glue stick, or pins, depending on the type of board
- Scissors
- Images, quotes, and words that inspire you, either cut out from magazines or printed
- Pens or markers
- Decorative elements, such as glitter, memorabilia like ticket stubs, plane tickets, ribbons, etc.

As you craft your physical vision board or sit down to digitize one, put on a playlist of your favorite songs and put careful thought into your board. Once you finish, place it somewhere you'll see it often. For example, a physical one can be put on your nightstand or hung on a wall, and you can make a digital one the wallpaper for your phone or computer.

Oprah Winfrey once said, "Create the highest, grandest vision possible for your life because you become what you believe." A vision board brings you one step closer to making that vision a reality.

# PURSUING *perfection*

**written by:** matthew brady

The holiday season ushers in many wonderful feelings each year, including joy, goodwill, and a sense of excitement. But these feelings can quickly and easily get overshadowed by negative ones. One in particular is the perceived need for perfection.



To illustrate this all-too-frequent reality, take a moment and ask yourself how you honestly feel about the following scenarios:

- After hours of work, the tree is finally decorated and looks fantastic ... but then a row of lights flickers off.
- You've bought (and wrapped!) a great gift for your niece ... but then notice a tear on the side of the wrapping. Or worse, you stumble upon an even better present.
- You bought the cutest sweater for a Christmas party ... only to find out after you wash it that the stitching is splitting a tiny bit under one arm.

seeking perfection during the holidays. People may strive to buy the perfect gifts, make sure they are wrapped flawlessly, and hope that the tree they're under is set up impeccably. Some may try to choose just the right card with just the right sentiment. Many will want their home to be the embodiment of the holidays, which would include a Rockwell-worthy holiday meal and place setting to match.

### The Problem with Perfection

So why do some people strive for perfection, especially during a season that's already associated with hustle and bustle? Many experts agree that it is likely a result of compensating for some sort of self-doubt or insecurity, a sense of never being good enough.



- The cookies you made for the holiday get-together smell heavenly ... but come out of the oven slightly burnt.

If any of those scenarios makes you cringe, you're not alone. After all, there are ample opportunities for

Ironically, by trying to make ourselves perfect, we can make ourselves feel worse, especially during the holidays. For others, it's trying to recapture an essence of the season they felt when they were younger but no longer do—and this is only exacerbated during the holiday season, which can quickly lead to anxiety,





stress, and unhappiness when the unrealistic ideal isn't met.

Part of the blame, of course, can also be attributed to Western culture. Our society emphasizes flawlessness, as seen on magazine covers and in videos and commercials. In many ways, this is why people love celebrities, who seem to embody not only physical perfection but also impeccable lives, homes, and even cars.

Holiday art and entertainment also embody such idealism. For example, Thomas Kincaid's paintings have been hugely popular because of his seemingly perfect winter scenes, and Hallmark and Lifetime movies crank out examples of awww-inspiring, impossibly feel-good holiday romances. These can elicit smiles and joy about the season, yet they can also lead to disappointment if we compare them with our own lives, which will never meet such an ideal.

It all begs the question: How do we stop striving for everything to be perfect?

### The Perfect Solutions

Philosophers, physicists, politicians, and other leaders have pondered perfection for ages, so let's see what we can learn from them to set healthier standards, both during the holidays and beyond.

*“Perfection is the enemy of progress.”*

—Winston Churchill

What is your ultimate goal, improvement or perfection? This simply comes down to which you're more likely to achieve and will thus make you happy. Take wrapping presents, for example. You may take hours getting that done, making sure that they look amazing: precisely aligned, with bows and ribbon right in the middle of each gift. They may be Instagram-worthy, but how

could you have used that time better? Spending it with loved ones, perhaps? Or maybe getting something else checked off your to-do list?

Making any progress should be your ultimate goal, not something unattainable. Churchill's bit of advice is especially poignant once the New Year—and diet season—arrives. Most experts believe that, instead of rushing into immediate, unrealistic fitness resolutions, you're more likely to have success by setting shorter, manageable goals. Despite what we often hear nowadays, slow and steady does indeed win the race.

*“Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.”*

—Vince Lombardi

There are two key takeaways from the coach's famous saying above if you want to achieve a healthier well-

being. First, acknowledge that perfection isn't possible (and, if it were, it wouldn't last). Then, in that context, seeking it can be a useful tool for getting the best out of yourself or others. It's all about the goals you set and how realistic you are about them, especially during the holiday season.

After all, the memories of the journey and of the imperfect people who help create them—including yourself—are what truly matter. The same truth holds true whether it's about a present you wrapped or what you see when you gaze into the mirror: it's what's inside that counts. You're only human, after all. If you aim to be the best one you can be instead of the ideal one, you'll likely find the happiness you seek.

*So with the holidays upon us and another New Year on the horizon, embrace that thought in your less-than-perfect mind, give your less-than-perfect self a break, and enjoy the holiday season with your less-than-perfect loved ones for all it is worth.*

# GOOD TIDINGS THEY BRING



written by: alexa bricker

If you're the type of person who gets giddy at the first mention of the holiday season, you're not alone. As the year comes to a close, these feelings of good cheer can be a welcome break from the humdrum (or humbug) of everyday life and bring back cherished memories from holidays past.

Aside from decking the halls and picking out perfect presents, there's one time-honored tradition that perhaps brings us more joy than any other—watching holiday movies.

Holiday films run the gamut from funny and lighthearted to emotional and even inspirational in content, making them the perfect way to celebrate the season. But are there larger forces at play that contribute to our love of these movies? As it turns out, there's some science as to why they make us feel so good.

## Picture It

Movies have always been a way for us to briefly escape our own reality in favor of the reality in the film. They are entertaining because they are fantastical and let us forget about our problems for a while. The same rules apply to holiday films, but, unlike horror movies or action movies, for example, holiday movies are chock-full of feel-good moments and sentiments that you're more likely to see in genres like romance and comedy.

Holiday films make up just a small percentage of the movies we watch annually, but many children and adults alike would name a holiday-themed film among their favorites. And the predictability and comfort of them might explain why. According to *Psychology Today*, the familiar plots of holiday movies are what make us feel good. We recognize the characters' mistakes, sympathize with their hopes and dreams, and see ourselves in the family relationships on screen. There are only occasional moments of suspense or distress—with the exception of *Die Hard* (but that's a debate for another time).

Upon watching a beloved holiday movie, our brains respond in a similar way to when we get a hug from a friend or eat a piece of chocolate—they are flooded with happiness. The plots of these movies are so often about love, teaching important lessons about giving to others, and emphasizing the meaning of community. In 2020, when traditional holiday activities like caroling and gathering with friends were largely not possible, bingeing holiday movies became an especially important respite from the difficulties of the world outside, even if only for a moment.

This type of visual and mental "transportation" can even have a therapeutic effect. Cinematherapy, as it's

been called, has been backed by a number of studies on people with anxiety and depression. People who have experienced these mental health obstacles were found to be engaged and soothed by watching movies and TV and discussing the emotions they experienced afterward. Holiday movies are no exception, providing viewers with an overwhelming sense of comfort.

This calming effect and the positive emotions we get accustomed to experiencing every year is also why we tend to gravitate toward the same films. If you take a look at the lineup of movies played by major networks during the holidays, it's almost always the same standbys—*Home Alone*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, etc.—because that is what makes viewers happy and coming back time and time again. How else could you explain the twenty-four-hour marathon of *A Christmas Story* that has been going on since 1997?

## Let's Watch!

Now that you've learned about some of the reasons why holiday movies are so beloved, you're probably ready to start watching. Below are just a few ways to make your holiday movie viewing even more memorable.

### *Make a schedule.*

So many movies ... so little time. If you're feeling overwhelmed by the sheer number of holiday-themed movies there are available to watch before the new year, make a list of your top choices and create a realistic schedule to plan when and where you'll watch them. If you plan to visit family and friends, you could save some of your top choices for those dates and reserve the rest for other nights.





#### Make sure the mood is set.

Who wants to watch holiday movies without lights and cozy blankets? Before you hit Play, be sure to turn off any overhead lights in favor of string lights and candles, and, if you have a tree, keep its lights on, too. Other fun options include forgoing the furniture and laying a pile of pillows and blankets on the floor or having everyone break out their sleeping bags. This will help ensure everyone is fully cozy and in the holiday spirit!

*From animated classics like *A Charlie Brown Christmas* to tear-jerkers like *Jack Frost* and laugh fests like *Scrooged*, holiday movies and TV specials will forever hold a special place in our hearts and minds. They fill us with the fun and the familiar and help us envision a world where it's the most wonderful time of year all year long.*

#### Start something new.

Instead of just watching the movie, why not turn it into a full-fledged holiday bonanza? Request that everyone wear their favorite holiday sweaters or pajamas and that each contribute a special treat you can all enjoy. Want to get even more creative? Specify a theme based on the film you're watching. For instance, if you're planning to watch *A Christmas Carol*, you can ask that your family or guests dress in their Dickensian best.

#### Turn it into a game.

A little competition never hurt anyone! Websites like Pinterest are full of printable games to play alongside your holiday movies, whether it's holiday-movie-themed bingo, trivia, or a fill-in-the-blank movie quotes quiz. You could also think outside the box and come up with your own game based on the movie, such as charades based on the characters or themes. And, if it's an adults-only party, you could even turn it into a drinking game.

# 'Tis the Season for PET SAFETY

written by: matthew brady

One of the best parts about the holidays is that everything *shines*. People love the lights, the glitter, and the adornments that accompany the season—and so do your pets. They are largely curious by nature, which can be especially hazardous at this time of year.

So, if you don't already, help your four-legged friend stay safe this season by following some simple, commonsense tips.

## CUISINE CONCERN

Food is everywhere during the holiday season, which means more opportunities for your pet to eat or drink something he shouldn't. The most potentially dangerous holiday foods and drinks to keep an eye on include chocolate, nuts (especially macadamias), candy, raisins, onions, garlic, fatty meat, bones, and alcohol.

## TREE TROUBLES

For many, the Christmas tree is the focal point of the home, and it might just be for your pet as well. Trees are naturally bottom-heavy, but that can be offset by a flimsy base, so make sure your tree is solidly attached to its base to help prevent it from toppling over.



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.

Why is your pet so attracted to the tree? There are many shiny things on it! Among the problematic items are glass ornaments (which can break and cause cuts); tinsel, garland, and ribbons (all ingestion dangers); and lights. You can help minimize the impact of these potential hazards by hanging all of them higher on the tree.

## PLANT PROBLEMS

Real plants add a special ambience to the holiday season, but they can also be poisonous to your pet. If possible, forgo mistletoe, poinsettias, holly, and lilies (for cat owners) in your home, or opt for plastic versions.

## ADDED ANXIETIES

Be mindful of fire hazards that you may normally take for granted, such as wires, candles, and fireplaces. And then there are your guests, who may make your pet nervous. Make sure to establish ground rules if friends and family come over, such as no feeding, and consider keeping your pet in a closed-off room to help him feel safe.

## recommendations & referrals

are the core of my business and always greatly appreciated.

*Thank you for your continued support!*



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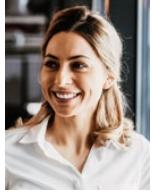
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## Front of Tear Out Card 2

### TOFFEE bars

- 1 c. dairy-free butter
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 c. coconut sugar
- 1 c. almond flour
- ¼ c. coconut flour
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 c. refined sugar-free chocolate chips
- ½ c. chopped salted and toasted pecans



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## Back of Tear Out Card 2



1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees and grease a 9x13 baking pan.
2. Cream the butter, egg yolk, and coconut sugar together; mix well. Add the almond flour, coconut flour, and vanilla, beating until well mixed.
3. Spread the mixture in the baking pan and bake for 25 minutes.
4. Remove the pan from the oven and spread the chocolate chips over the hot crust. Once the chips are melted, sprinkle the pecans over the chocolate.
5. Allow the bars to cool completely and harden before cutting.

**(GF)** Gluten Free    **(DF)** Dairy Free

Excerpt from *Skinny Southern Baking: 65 Gluten-Free, Dairy-Free, Refined Sugar-Free Southern Classics* by Lara Lyn Carter. Photography © Lara Lyn Carter. Published by Familius LLC, 2020.

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Stacey is truly a very impressive person. She works fast, efficiently, and effectively. Her services are top of the line and we were very satisfied with her work. We love Stacey!



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