

Compliments of Stacey Shanner

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 138

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.

serve up joy
THIS SEASON



Stacey Shanner
REALTOR®

**WHAT'S YOUR HOME
REALLY WORTH?**



**SCAN TO SEE
YOUR ESTIMATED
HOME VALUE!**



Front of Tear Out Card 1





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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.

ITALIAN MARKET STUFFING

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Back of Tear Out Card 1

ITALIAN MARKET STUFFING

INGREDIENTS	INSTRUCTIONS	Serves 6-8
6 tbsp. butter ½ lb. Italian sausage, casing removed, crumbled 4 garlic cloves, minced ½ c. yellow onion, minced ½ c. celery, minced 1 c. broccoli rabe, chopped ¾ c. roasted red peppers, chopped 6 c. cubed and toasted focaccia bread 1 tbsp. Italian seasoning 1 tsp. salt 3 c. chicken or turkey broth ½ c. Parmesan, grated	<p>1 / Preheat the oven to 350°F.</p> <p>2 / In a large sauté pan, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Sauté the sausage, garlic, onion, and celery together until the sausage is cooked, about 4 minutes, stirring frequently.</p> <p>3 / Stir in the broccoli rabe, peppers, and focaccia until combined. Season with the Italian seasoning and salt, and pour in the broth. Spoon the mixture into a 9" x 13" casserole dish.</p> <p>4 / Cover the casserole with foil, and bake for 20 minutes.</p> <p>5 / Remove the foil, increase the temperature to 400°F, and bake for an additional 10 minutes or until the top is golden brown. Let rest for 10 minutes and top with the Parmesan before serving.</p>	



AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Dear Bill and Judy,

The holidays are a time for creating cherished memories and traditions with loved ones, which can take many forms. This issue of American Lifestyle provides inspiration for making (or continuing) them with a look at a famous baked goods company, a guide to visiting our nation’s capital, suggestions for setting up and storing away decor, and more.

Certain sweets are closely associated with this time of year, including fruitcake. Learn how Collin Street Bakery, the industry’s longtime leader, got its start and why its signature product has become a seasonal staple across the globe for generations.

Between its history and culture, Washington, DC, is a popular destination anytime, but it’s especially magical now. Discover all there is to do and see, from ice-skating to visiting the Smithsonian’s lit-up zoo to witnessing the National Christmas Tree in all its glory.

Yuletide is often marked by home transformations. To get yours started, you’ll find a trio of tree-decorating styles to consider. And when the fun comes to a close, the enclosed storage tips can make the process easier.

Here’s hoping you have a joyous 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.



AMERICAN LIFESTYLE
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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.

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TERRIFIC TREE- DECORATING STYLES

Written by **Lauren Kim**
Photography by **Getty Images**

Trimming a Christmas tree is like crafting a work of art—every light, ornament, and ribbon is essential to setting the overall mood. Check out these ideas for creating your own magical expression of holiday cheer!

Sweet and nostalgic

A traditional approach involves showcasing ornaments your family has collected over the years, weaving a beautiful tapestry of Christmases past. To deepen the sentiment, embrace vintage decor and crafts, such as by creating your own ornaments or popcorn garland, draping old-fashioned tinsel on your tree's branches, or topping it with a homemade star.

Rustic and enchanting

If you love the tranquility of a quiet winter forest, you could bring its serene beauty into your home by embracing its natural beauty. Start by stringing white lights and a burlap garland through your tree's foliage, then add pine cones,

wooden ornaments, and charming bird or animal figurines. Finish with a rust-colored star and a fluffy, snowflake-themed blanket around its base for an ideal amount of cozy charm.

Bold and happy

Fully embrace the cheerful energy of the season by going all out with vibrant decorations. Choose bright LED lights that change hues or flash patterns with the touch of a remote. Pair them with shiny metallic or glass ornaments that will complement and reflect the glowing colors, creating a playful scene. To fully capture the festive spirit, add a Santa hat at a playful angle atop your tree for a cheerful and whimsical touch.

Above all, have fun! Whether your tree is massive, petite, or even a unique hue like blue, white, or pink, you can explore countless ways to perfectly dress it.



Merriment at a **MIDWESTERN MUSEUM**

Written by **Andre Rios**

Photography courtesy of **Griffin Museum of Science and Industry**

Muse fondly about the holidays, and certain iconic imagery like twinkling lights and glistening snowflakes may string through your mind. As universal as these sights may seem, though, this time carries a distinct feel depending on where you live, with scenery and celebrations being as diverse as our world itself. If curiosity compels you to explore some wonderfully different takes during the season, look no further than the Kenneth C. Griffin Museum of Science and Industry.

Going to the Griffin

Located in Chicago's expansive Jackson Park just steps from the shores of Lake Michigan, this museum is a wonderful reprieve from the Windy City's characteristically snowy, chilly winters. Amid renowned displays dedicated to subjects such as space travel,



battleships, and neural science is its annual spotlight on multicultural festivities: *Christmas around the World* and *Holidays of Light*. These highly regarded exhibits run from mid-November through the first week of January, during which the institution devotes its grand rotunda and much of its first floor to its festive showpieces. And, as a bonus, access to the exhibits is included with regular admission.

What's on display

The museum website states that the *Christmas around the World* exhibit “began in 1942 with a single tree.” This original evergreen was newly decorated daily for twelve days as a nod to the dozen countries that fought alongside our nation in World War II. But as humble as an adorned tree may sound, it is no ordinary household centerpiece. The spectacle today centers on a four-story Grand Tree,

a designation it certainly earns due to its impressive height, brilliant lights, and breathtaking array of opulent handmade ornaments.

Around the Grand Tree in the rotunda, you'll find a veritable forest of over fifty artfully decorated trees—reflecting the collective efforts of volunteers from the Chicago metro area. In prior years, these works have featured trimmings such as international flags, angels, ornate bows, and even miniature exotic birds, though the exhibit changes annually. Strolling through the entire scene is an immersive experience, and each individual tree displays unique embellishments celebrating a fascinating culture, so they all warrant close inspection.

In the second seasonal exhibit, *Holidays of Light*, you can explore artifacts that represent other



worldwide occasions, from solemn religious events to boisterous celebrations. Inside glass cases interspersed throughout the institution's main floor, you'll find eye-catching imagery from Chinese New Year, Diwali, Kwanzaa, Ramadan, Hanukkah, and more. As different as each may be, though, their unifying theme is illumination, and the exhibit makes a concerted effort to display twinkling artifacts alongside in-depth facts about each occasion's history and ongoing importance.

If you're seeking an enlightening and thought-provoking way to spend the season, consider the

Griffin Museum of Science and Industry an essential stop. It is jam-packed with family-friendly exhibits, and *Christmas around the World* and *Holidays of Light* may just be two of its most inspiring. No wonder guests flock to the museum year after year to explore these spectacles and reflect on what holiday festivities mean to all of us.

For more info, visit msichicago.org

SPREADING JOY ONE GIFT AT A TIME

Written by **Allison Gomes** / Photography courtesy of **Toys for Tots**

The holiday season is about more than just presents—it's about fostering connection and spreading kindness and joy. One organization driven by such a mission is Toys for Tots, which brings hope and happiness to children in need throughout the nation via the gift of new toys.

The history

Founded in 1947 by Marine Corps Reserve Major Bill Hendricks, the nonprofit began as a small endeavor in Los Angeles. Hendricks's wife, Diane, had some handcrafted dolls she wanted to donate to underprivileged children and asked him to find an agency that would distribute them. Unfortunately,

he was unable to—so he and his fellow marines took on the initiative themselves, collecting and delivering 5,000 toys in the area that season.

Recognizing the widespread potential of this effort, the US Marine Corps turned Hendricks's local efforts into a national community-action program the following year. Since then, it has grown into one of the most recognized and

respected charitable organizations in the country. Campaigns are now conducted in over eight hundred communities in all fifty states as well as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the US Virgin Islands.

The impact

During its seventy-five-plus year history, Toys for Tots has collected more than 708 million toys from generous donors and distributed them to over





While Toys for Tots' core mission is to collect and distribute toys, its impact goes far beyond the gifts themselves. The program fosters a spirit of community and compassion, bringing people together for a common cause.

314 million children, ensuring that they experience the magic of the holidays. In 2024 alone, the organization provided 30 million toys to 13 million children.

In addition to its seasonal toy drive, it operates year-round programs like its Foster Care Initiative, which provides foster children with toys, books, and other items to take with them as they move, and its Literacy Program, which gives books and educational resources to economically disadvantaged kids. These

efforts allow the organization to both help young people overcome obstacles and bring hope in stressful times.

How to help

Toys for Tots relies on the kindness of individuals and businesses alike, and there are several different ways to get involved during these months. To start, you can purchase new, unwrapped toys and drop them off at a designated location as listed on its website from October to December; if your community doesn't have a local toy drive, consider



applying to become a coordinator and manage a campaign yourself.

Business owners, meanwhile, can volunteer their stores to be toy drop-off sites and storage centers for the items until they're distributed. The organization also relies on volunteers to collect, sort, and deliver the toys to children in their respective areas. And, of course, it also accepts monetary donations, with 97 percent of every donation going directly toward purchasing new items.

While Toys for Tots' core mission is to collect and distribute toys, its impact goes far beyond the gifts themselves. The program fosters a spirit of community and compassion, bringing people together for a common cause. For so many children, receiving a gift from the nonprofit serves as a reminder that they are valued, bringing extra joy when they need it most.

For more info, visit toysfortots.org





A FRUITCAKE *Phenomenon*

Interview with **Hayden Crawford** / Written by **Matthew Brady** / Photography courtesy of **Collin Street Bakery**

Hayden Crawford, a partner in **Collin Street Bakery**, shares the fascinating story of the nearly 130-year-old business, what makes its world-famous fruitcakes unique, and what's next for the company.





HOW DID COLLIN STREET BAKERY BEGIN?

August Weidmann, a German immigrant who settled in Corsicana, Texas, founded it as a small bread and pastry bakery in 1896. A few years later, a local entrepreneur partnered with him, and they soon moved it to another location with a second-floor hotel and bigger production facility.

My business partner's family, the McNutts, headed a group that bought it from them in the 1940s. In 1951, after many years in the regional bread business, the company moved out of that increasingly competitive industry and shifted its attention to fruitcake. The rest is history.

HOW DID YOUR FRUITCAKE BECOME SO POPULAR?

In the 1890s, Corsicana became the largest oil producer in the world, enticing people and businesses to pour in. Among our hotel's visitors were celebrities such as John Ringling, who purchased our fruitcakes and gave them out as gifts when he traveled with his circus. Those recipients then contacted us for more, and our mail-order business—one of the first in the country—began, allowing people to order from practically anywhere in the world.

That was also possible because of the fruitcake itself: it's dense, so it would last much longer than other foods at the time. We could even ship the product overseas; despite taking a month to arrive, it'd still be fresh and tasty when it did. People would store it in cellars until the holiday season.

JOHNNY CARSON FAMOUSLY JOKED ABOUT FRUITCAKE. WHAT KIND OF EFFECT DID THAT HAVE?

The jokes and skits on his show in the 1980s brought in an era of fruitcake negativity. Before then, Collin Street Bakery had a very strong corporate business. But in the years following, we saw such sales continually decline—no doubt



“Almost one-third of every fruitcake we produce is pecans, which are harvested locally, and it's filled with fresh fruits like pineapple, papaya, and cherries.”

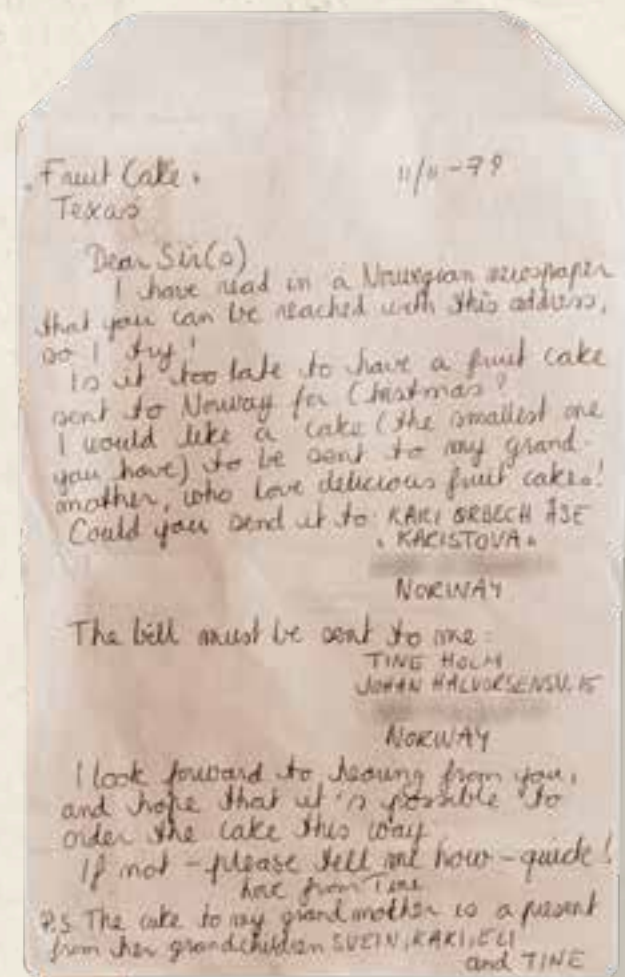
because these companies were concerned about how their gift might be perceived. Here's how bad it got: even perception was going against us. We'd ask people, “Do you like fruitcake?” and most would say no—but when we asked the same folks whether they had ever tasted it, the answer would also be no. That stigma lasted for years. Luckily, with that stigma a few generations behind us, corporate sales have since returned.

WHAT MAKES YOURS SO SPECIAL?

First, it's a wonderful product. Almost one-third of every fruitcake we produce is pecans, which are harvested locally, and it's filled with fresh fruits like pineapple, papaya, and cherries. In addition, we emphasize consistency so customers know that this year, next year, and a decade from now, they're getting what they expect and love. And yet every DeLuxe cake is hand-decorated, making each one of a kind.

WHEN DID YOU BEGIN EXPANDING YOUR OFFERINGS?

For the longest time, we had one item: our original DeLuxe fruitcake. But when the gags started, we wanted to create another option that had a different look since its appearance was apparently the issue. That led to the Texas Blonde, a pecan cake that has no red and green fruits on it, followed by an apricot pecan cake.



More recently, we've branched out to all sorts of other products, including pies and cheesecakes.

HOW IN DEMAND ARE COLLIN STREET BAKERY'S FRUITCAKES TODAY?

We produce about a million pounds per year and deliver them to all fifty states and around 190 countries—almost every single nation you can ship into. For many people, it has become a tradition through

multiple generations. We even published a book of customer testimonials about how our DeLuxe Fruitcake or company has positively affected their families and holiday traditions.

We certainly have some amazing stories. A guy who worked at the South Pole ordered a fruitcake to help his team celebrate the holidays. A Kilimanjaro climber arranged for his to be delivered up the side of the mountain by a Sherpa. Another customer told us he smuggled one through the

Berlin Wall so he could share it with friends on the other side. We count many celebrities as customers, too, including Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan, singer Lyle Lovett, Vanna White, and Chuck Norris.

DOES YOUR FRUITCAKE HAVE ANY HEALTH BENEFITS?

Despite having “fruit” in the name and being chock-full of it along with healthy nuts, people always wonder if it's bad for you.

“We produce about a million pounds per year and deliver [fruitcakes] to all fifty states and around 190 countries—almost every single nation you can ship into.”

It is cake, after all. But in recent years, we've gotten interesting feedback—bicyclists told us they eat our fruitcake because it's a calorie-dense product that gives them long-lasting energy.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR COLLIN STREET BAKERY?

Based on those athletes' feedback, we created a new item: energy bars. I'm also excited to say that we've started rolling out our foods into grocery stores across the country, so keep an eye out for them! Overall, though, we're still a family business making baked goods that mean so much to so many. That's why we love coming to work every day.

For more info, visit collinstreet.com





CRAFTING A MODERN SANCTUARY

Interview with **Judi Lee-Carr**
Written by **Allison Gomes**
Images by **@shelbybournephoto**

Judi Lee-Carr, owner and principal designer of Jubilee Interiors in Southern California, discusses how she transformed a newly built Ventura townhome into a warm, inviting space.

How did you get started in interior design?

I was born and raised in Singapore, and my background is actually in fashion merchandising and marketing. I was going to school for it, but I dropped out because I got a great job in luxury retail, where I transitioned into visual merchandising and designing the visuals in the stores. One day, while working on an installation, a customer commented on my work and asked me to design his home. That led to further opportunities, including working on hotel projects in Indonesia, where I lived for a year and a half.

Eventually, I moved to London to complete my degree before moving back to Singapore, where I took on more interior design projects. In 2018, I relocated to California to be with my husband. I secured a job as an interior designer for a local builder, but when the pandemic hit, I took the leap to start my own business because work opportunities were so limited. It turned out to be the perfect timing since people were spending more time at home and realizing the importance of creating comfortable, functional spaces.

I also framed his photography in the living space to create a gallery wall around the TV, which functions as an art display as well.



What was it like opening a design firm during the pandemic?

It was a steep learning curve, especially as an immigrant still navigating a new country. Initially, I focused on channeling my creativity and helping people make their houses feel like homes. However, I quickly realized that being a business owner involves much more than just design—there's marketing, accounting, inventory management, and client relations. It was challenging, but I truly believe in the importance of the human element of running a business and creating homes for people, so it was all worth it. It was an incredible privilege to be invited into people's homes during such an uncertain time, helping them create spaces that felt safe, comforting, and truly theirs.

Would you describe your design philosophy?

My design ethos revolves around organic modern living: a balance of neutral, earthy tones that feel cozy and timeless. That said, design is inherently opinionated, and we sometimes pivot from our signature aesthetic to better align with our client's vision. Whether designing personalized spaces for homeowners or curated interiors for model or spec homes, our focus is always on creating practical, timeless environments that feel like sanctuaries. For homeowners, we take the time to understand their daily habits, favorite places, colors, and even the little details that make a space truly personal, which allows functionality and individual preferences to shape the final design.

Tell us about this Ventura townhouse project. What was the vision?

The townhome is a modern, California Spanish-style new build, and we wanted to ensure that the interior reflected the exterior. But the clients were also really interested in coastal living and a more transitional style that incorporated their cultural heritage. We worked together to bridge these different aesthetics and interests to design rooms that felt cohesive and unique.

What was the design process like?

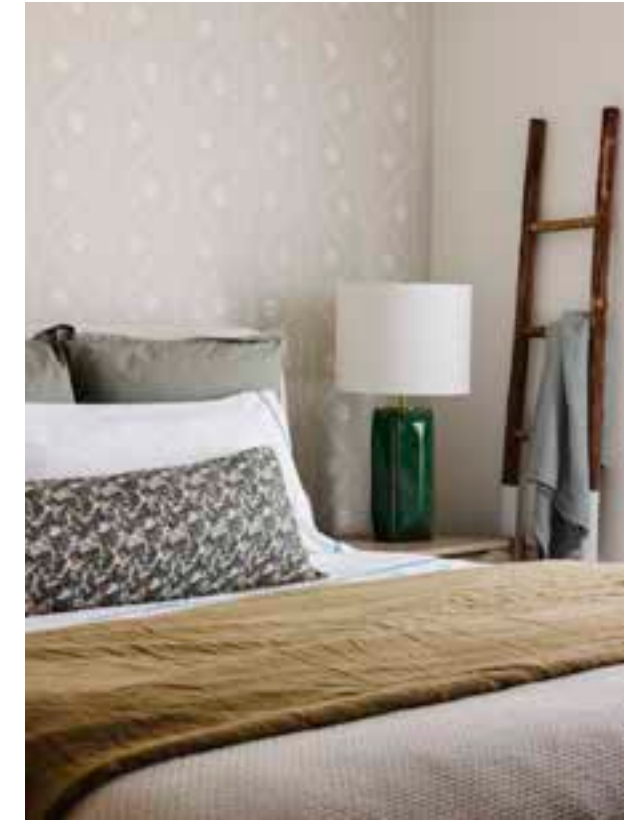
I started by creating a concept board to help me better understand what kinds of colors they like using and the type of art they appreciate. The husband is into photography, so he really enjoys a lot of architecture, black and white, and symmetrical proportions, which initially didn't align with the more transitional style they had envisioned. So I worked to incorporate these elements in a way that felt harmonious with the home's overall style.

I chose a neutral color palette with white walls and medium walnut accents throughout the home, including on the kitchen range hood, fireplace mantel, and stairwell, that matched the home's exterior. A lot of the furnishings are a more simple, transitional aesthetic. They're timeless pieces that are very classic, so they worked well with the clients' goals and our design philosophy. I also framed his photography in the living space to create a gallery wall around the TV, which functions as an art display as well.



How did you decide what elements to include?

Generally, I consider what resonates with me and my design style. While trends come and go, I focus on incorporating timeless pieces, such as neutral colors and classic silhouettes, with materials that feel enduring. Take the light fixture in the dining room, for example. It's a key piece to the room's design, and I'm obsessed with it. It features a raffia-woven material that ties in perfectly with the rest of the space, adding character without overpowering the room. The natural organic silhouette of this pendant complements the overall design, and it's a piece that won't feel outdated in a few years.



What role did the stairwell's wallpaper play in the design?

That wallpaper was one of the most impactful decisions in the overall design. It ties in beautifully with the townhome's unique location—the ocean is on one side and the mountains on the other. The blue and green in it naturally echo the serene, earthy tones of the landscape, as does its rich seagrass texture. I had actually kept this particular wallpaper in my sample library for years, waiting for the perfect opportunity. Once I saw this space, I knew it was the right fit!

How did you connect it to the rest of the home?

We used the colors from the wallpaper to honor the natural beauty they are surrounded by, scattering pops of blue and green throughout the home, as you can see in the wallpapers in the guest bathroom



and primary suite and also in the tiles on the kitchen island. We wanted the spaces to not only complement each other but also feel very different.

We opted for a green, more geometric wallpaper in the powder room but then went with a coastal vibe in the primary bedroom and bathroom, incorporating more of the blues there because they face the sea. On the kitchen island, we used a green-and-white terra-cotta tile that features the Spanish star; it's a very strong element that ties in with the architecture of the home as well. These aspects helped us create a very cohesive design that reflects the uniqueness of the townhome's architecture and location while also catering to the clients' preferences.

For more info, visit jubilee-interiors.com



On the kitchen island, we used a green-and-white terra-cotta tile that features the Spanish star; it's a very strong element that ties in with the architecture of the home as well.





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Get the rest of
the recipes here!

SWEETS FOR THE SEASON

Recipes by **HEATHER HARDCASTLE**
Photography by **ERIN SCOTT**



MAKES
9–12 BARS;
COOK TIME:
40–45 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups gluten-free rolled oats
1½ cups brown rice flour
⅓ cup tapioca starch
1¼ cups brown sugar
½ tsp. kosher salt
½ tsp. baking soda

½ cup chopped walnuts
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
¾ cup coconut oil, melted
¾ cup fruit preserves
2 cups fresh or frozen berries

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1/** Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line a 9 x 9-inch pan with foil. Spray the foil with baking spray and line the foil with parchment, cut to fit the size of the pan with a 1-inch overhang on all sides. The layer of foil will allow you to lift the bars out of the pan cleanly and the parchment will keep the bars from sticking to the foil.
- 2/** Put rolled oats, brown rice flour, tapioca starch, brown sugar, salt, baking soda, walnuts, and cinnamon in a large bowl. Toss with your hands or a wooden spoon to combine. Add coconut oil and mix, using your hands or a wooden spoon, until the crumble mixture holds together in large clumps.
- 3/** Spread two thirds of the crumble mixture in the bottom of the pan and press down firmly to create an even layer, making sure the mixture reaches into the corners as well. Spread the fruit preserves over the crust, leaving ½ inch of space around the edges. Scatter the berries over the jam. Sprinkle with the remaining crumble, leaving space so that the berries show through.
- 4/** Bake for 40–45 minutes, rotating between upper and lower oven racks halfway through baking, until the bars are golden brown and the berries are bubbling. Allow to cool completely in the pan before transferring to the refrigerator to chill for at least 2 hours before cutting the bars.

Note:

Keep the crumble recipe handy as it's a great topping for all manner of fresh fruit. I make a large batch of the crumble topping and store it in a zip-top bag in my freezer. Toss whatever type of fresh or frozen fruit you have on hand with a little tapioca starch, sugar, and lemon juice. Place the fruit in a baking dish, top with the crumble, and bake it for a perfect fruit crisp in no time!



MAKES
24 COOKIES;
COOK TIME:
ABOUT
12 MINUTES

TRIPLE- CHOCOLATE *flourless cookies*

These cookies are for those of us, me included, who really, really love chocolate. They're ultra rich, fudgy, and decadent in every way. I use a bittersweet chocolate (70 percent cacao) here as I prefer a darker, more bitter flavor. If you prefer a sweeter flavor, try using a semisweet chocolate (54–60 percent cacao). Since the chocolate is really the star of the show, the quality you use will make a big difference in flavor. Use Valrhona chocolate if you can find it but Guittard and Scharffen Berger are also great, and readily available at most well-stocked supermarkets.

INGREDIENTS

1 stick butter	2 cups brown sugar
4½ cups bittersweet chocolate, chopped	¾ cup cocoa powder
6 large eggs	1 cup chocolate chips

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1/** Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Melt the butter and chopped chocolate together in the microwave or over a double boiler. Stir every 45 seconds or so, taking care not to burn the chocolate. Whisk the melted butter and chocolate to combine.
- 2/** Meanwhile, in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip together the eggs, brown sugar, and cocoa powder until tripled in volume, 5–7 minutes.
- 3/** Pour the whipped sugar and egg mixture into a large mixing bowl. Add the melted butter and chocolate and gently fold the two mixtures together, taking care not to deflate the egg mixture. When the mixtures are evenly combined, gently stir in the chocolate chips.
- 4/** Using a 2-ounce cookie scoop (#16, or about ¼ cup), scoop the batter onto the prepared baking sheets, leaving 2 inches of space between the cookies. You will fit about 8 cookies per sheet. These cookies spread a lot during baking! Depending on the size of your oven and how many baking sheets you have, you may need to work in batches.
- 5/** Bake for 8 minutes, rotate the sheets between upper and lower oven racks, and bake for another 4 minutes until the edges are just barely set and the middle still feels quite mushy. Take care not to overbake. You want these fudgy and soft. They will firm up as they cool. Repeat with the remaining dough. Depending on the size of your oven and how many baking sheets you have, you may need to work in batches. Store at room temperature for up to 2 days or in the freezer in a zip-top bag up to 1 month.



LEMON & BLUEBERRY

coffee cake

I'm a big fan of the humble Bundt cake. There's something so old-fashioned and homey, yet impressive, about its appearance. I collect vintage Bundt pans and some of the designs are so intricate! Look for them at your local flea market or garage sales. A little scrub is all it takes to bring them back to life. I like this cake for so many reasons, most notably because it's ultra-light from the whipped eggs and sugar, which add so much airy goodness to the finished cake.



SERVES 10–12;
COOK TIME:
40–45 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

6 large eggs	1 tbsp. baking powder
1½ cups white sugar	½ tsp. xanthan gum
1 tbsp. vanilla extract	1 tsp. kosher salt
1 tbsp. lemon zest	1 stick butter, melted
1¼ cups brown rice flour	½ cup vegetable oil
½ cup millet flour	1 cup blueberries, fresh or frozen (not thawed)
¼ cup tapioca starch	

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1/** In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whip eggs, sugar, vanilla, and lemon zest on high speed for 3–5 minutes until the mixture has doubled in volume and thick ribbons fall off the end of the whisk when lifted.
- 2/** Add brown rice flour, millet flour, tapioca starch, baking powder, xanthan gum, and salt and mix on low speed until just combined.
- 3/** Slowly add the melted butter and vegetable oil, mixing on medium speed until well combined, about 2 minutes.
- 4/** Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for about 20 minutes to allow the proteins to rest and the batter to thicken.
- 5/** Preheat the oven to 325°F. Thoroughly spray a 10-cup Bundt pan with nonstick spray.
- 6/** After the batter has rested, gently fold in the blueberries, taking care not to overmix or the batter will be streaky.
- 7/** Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 40–45 minutes, rotating the pan halfway through baking, until the cake is golden brown and springs back when touched. Let cool in the pan at least 30 minutes before unmolding. The cake will keep tightly wrapped in plastic wrap in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.



VEGAN OATMEAL

raisin cookies

I have no willpower when it comes to these cookies! I love the butteriness that comes from the ground nuts and the pops of bursty currants and warm spices. The only sweetener is maple syrup and they're entirely vegan, so in my opinion they're practically a breakfast cookie, not that I've ever tried eating them for breakfast or anything.



MAKES
18 COOKIES;
COOK TIME:
ABOUT
20 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

4 cups raw pecans or walnuts	¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
2 cups gluten-free rolled oats	½ tsp. ground cardamom
1½ tsp. baking powder	½ cup olive oil
1 tsp. kosher salt	½ cup maple syrup
1 tbsp. tapioca starch	1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. xanthan gum	1 cup currants
1 tsp. ground cinnamon	

INSTRUCTIONS

1/ Preheat the oven to 325°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. In a food processor, grind nuts until very finely ground, 3–4 minutes. You are looking for the texture of almond flour, a fine meal. Take care not to blend too far or you will make nut butter.

2/ In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, put the ground nuts and the rolled oats, baking powder, salt, tapioca starch, xanthan gum, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cardamom. Mix on low speed, just to combine, about 1 minute. Add olive oil, maple syrup, and vanilla and continue mixing until ingredients are evenly moistened and the mixture starts to hold together, about 2 minutes more. Stir in currants on low speed until just combined.

3/ Using a 1.5-ounce scoop (#24, or about 3 tablespoons), scoop dough balls onto the prepared baking sheets, leaving 2 inches of space between them. You will need to press the dough firmly into the cookie scoop, so it forms a tight ball when scooped onto a baking sheet. If the balls are not tight enough, the dough will not hold together when pressed in Step 4.

4/ Bake cookies for 10 minutes. Remove sheet pans from the oven and using a piece of parchment paper or a large spatula, press cookie balls into flat disks. Return the pans to the oven and bake another 10 minutes until cookies are the lightest golden brown and feel set at the edge. They will firm and crisp up as they cool.

MUST-HAVES FOR *Effortless Entertaining*

Written by **Lauren Kim**
Photography by **Getty Images**

GATHERING WITH FAMILY

and friends is one of the most cherished traditions of the holiday season, but it can also require a fair amount of prep if you're hosting. Here are some serving essentials that can help you present delicious meals, impress your guests, and make cleanup effortless, leaving you more time to enjoy the festivities.

Covered charcuterie board

A stylish platter filled with meats, cheeses, and snacks is a perfect centerpiece for any get-together, and a covered one will help keep everything fresh and presentable. Pair your board with elegant serving utensils like cheese knives, spreaders, and small forks to make it easy for guests to sample its tasty offerings.

Slow cooker

This convenient set-it-and-forget-it appliance will keep everything from hearty chili to mulled wine heated and ready to serve. Look for a slow cooker with a Warm setting to maintain



the ideal serving temperature without overcooking its contents. Additionally, an oval-shaped one will be the most versatile because it can accommodate larger cuts of meat and a variety of dishes. If you expect to host a crowd or multiple events, consider acquiring two vessels, such as a seven-to-eight-quart one for your main

course and another with sections for appetizers like cheeses or dips. Slow cookers can also simplify cleanup since their pots are usually nonstick and dishwasher safe.

Dinnerware

A versatile collection of white plates will not only make your food look great but also match just



A versatile collection of white plates will not only make your food look great but also match just about any holiday tablescape.

about any holiday tablescape; add a few similar serving dishes to elegantly present everything from fresh crudités to pastry-wrapped hot dogs. However, just be sure that your choices are made of a durable material like porcelain so they last year after year.

You could then add stainless-steel flatware in silver or even gold or matte black for a modern touch of elegance, accompanying it with eight-ounce tumblers, which are ideal for both cocktails and mocktails. Finally, complete the look with colorful cloth napkins of your choice for an extra dash of festivity.

Cleanup products

To make packing up and storing leftovers as simple as possible, have a collection of glass containers with lids on hand. And consider gifting yourself a robot vacuum so it can clean your floors after your guests are gone—providing you with well-deserved time to relax and bask in a job well done.



FROM ADVERSITY TO ARTISTIC SUCCESS

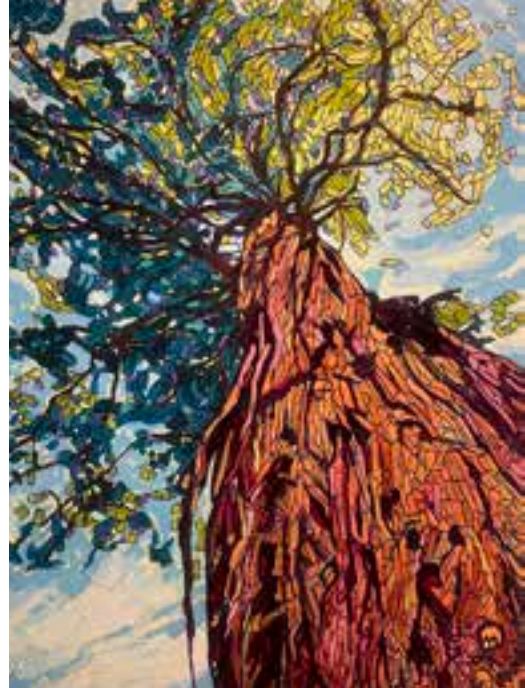
Interview with **Thérèse Légère**
Written by **Matthew Brady**
Photography courtesy of **Thérèse Légère**

Quebec-born Napa Valley painter Thérèse Légère discusses her idyllic upbringing, life challenges, artistic style, and outlook on life.

Where did you grow up? Did you always want to get into art?

As a child, I lived in a neighborhood south of Montreal within the beautiful Richelieu Valley. The region was a stimulating place to grow up and has inspired many Quebec artists, though I was initially more of a dancer, having done ballet from age five. My earliest memory of being interested in art was making intricate 18" by 24" drawings of the *Peanuts* gang.

I later completed an extensive two-year college fine arts program. However, it had taken me three tries to be accepted to a college, so from the get-go, I had some mountains to climb. And as great as my years there were, I also experienced negativity—primarily hearing from others that it was difficult to make a living as a painter, especially for women. As a result, I decided that I wasn't going to even try that after graduating. Since I



enjoyed weaving as well (and my grandmother was a weaver), I instead threw myself into all things fiber for a decade and kept painting and drawing on the side. I still weave, though, in addition to being a painter.

You mentioned challenges. What others have you faced?

Seven years ago, I was involved in a bad car accident. I sustained a brain injury, had to stay home for months, and couldn't drive. It took me a while to heal, but



I'm better now. I obviously wish the accident hadn't happened, but I'm grateful for the time and energy it forced me to put into my art—I did hundreds of acrylic paintings on paper. All in all, I've learned from my challenges and gotten stronger through them.

Nature clearly inspires you. Would you elaborate on its importance?

Nature has always been part of my life because of my environment. It has continually been a place to quietly contemplate, whether I was living in Canada or Massachusetts or here in Napa Valley with its abundant sunshine and greenery. Nature is a nurturing, beautiful entity, and that's why I've featured it so much.

How did you create your defined impressionism style?

One day, I started looking at the lower left part of a painting I was working on and wondered how a stained-glass effect would look. So I gave it a shot by highlighting certain





brushstrokes, and that style ended up being what I'm known for today. And it all happened because I was inquisitive enough to ask, "Where else can this go?"

How is your life reflected in your art?

In many ways! For example, my husband, Norman, is an award-winning recording engineer, so our home is filled with artistry. He is also genuinely a partner in my career, inspires me, and has even written a song based on one of my paintings.

I've experienced a lot of personal growth, too, whether it was spiritual, emotional, mental, or therapeutic; my development is a

thread that runs through my art. So many times, the brain makes you second-guess yourself, such as "I shouldn't use that color there." But I no longer do that—I just let things flow, experiment, and stay curious. Eventually, something exciting emerges.

Overall, I've had a bit of an uncommon life. Because of my accident, I essentially lost five years of it in some ways, so I'm always in catch-up mode with a mindset of every day being a gift. I'm sixty-seven, an age when many people are retired, yet I feel like I'm just getting going.

For more info, visit legereart.com



I've experienced a lot of personal growth, too, whether it was spiritual, emotional, mental, or therapeutic; my development is a thread that runs through my art.



A CAPITAL

holiday escape

Written by **Andre Rios**
Photography **as noted**

From its vibrant lights to its energetic events, Washington, DC, is one of America's best destinations for savoring the spirit of the season. This high-profile political city and its surrounding area offers a unique blend of entertaining activities, deep-rooted traditions, and dazzling displays, making it appealing to a wide range of ages and interests. Once you discover its sheer breadth of festivities, you may find yourself eager to pack your suitcase and snow boots for an absolutely heartwarming excursion.

Holiday scenery

Our nation's capital offers no shortage of awe-inspiring visuals, and many of its iconic landmarks amp up the holiday cheer. Be sure to include these essential stops on your itinerary.

The Ellipse

The lighting of the National Christmas Tree, scheduled for late November, has been a cornerstone of DC's festive events since 1923.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WASHINGTON.ORG



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This stunningly tall structure located in the Ellipse, a huge, oval park south of the White House, features ornaments representing all fifty states and several US territories. Due to its popularity, only ticket-lottery winners can attend the event—so visit [visit recreation.gov](https://www.visitrecreation.gov) to register as soon as possible. But don't fret if you miss the affair; visitors can enjoy the glowing conifer and nightly musical performances throughout the following month.

If you're a Hanukkah celebrant or simply looking for another brilliant installation, be sure to seek out the world's largest menorah. Also located on the Ellipse, this regarded symbol will be lit for all eight nights of the season.

Norwegian Christmas Tree
Every year since 1997, Norway has gifted a tree to the United States as a symbol of friendship and gratitude for its assistance during World War II. Displayed at the famous Union Station, it is adorned with over seven hundred decorations, many of which reflect the Nordic country's culture and history. You can attend a free lighting ceremony to experience its reveal and indulge in authentic Norwegian cuisine.

ZooLights
The Smithsonian's National Zoo transforms into a winter wonderland during its annual ZooLights event—open for two to five days each week from late November to early January. This family-friendly celebration showcases thousands of environmentally friendly LED

lights, glowing lantern animals, and winter-themed activities such as train and carousel rides. Unfortunately, attendance doesn't include a tour of the zoo's wildlife exhibits, so it's highly recommended that you stop by during the day for animal encounters and return at night for ZooLights.

Holiday strolls
In the height of winter, Washington is one of the finest places to take a long, leisurely walk. These are some of the must-see destinations to experience on bicycle or foot.

DowntownDC Holiday Market
For those seeking unique gifts and festive treats, this outdoor marketplace is an indispensable activity. Open from late November through late December, it is situated in the Penn Quarter–Chinatown

Every year since 1997, Norway has gifted a tree to the United States as a symbol of friendship and gratitude for its assistance during World War II.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WASHINGTON.ORG

neighborhood, whose streets are closed for a three-block radius so visitors can peruse over seventy shops freely and safely. Browse the diverse array of handcrafted items, artwork, and specialty foods, or select souvenirs to remember your trip by. Live entertainment and seasonal refreshments top off the experience for a wholly cheerful atmosphere.

Holiday Boat Parade and Party

District Pier, a popular waterfront promenade, comes alive with the Holiday Boat Parade early each December. Over sixty festively decorated vessels sail along the Potomac River in succession, creating a stunning spectacle of lights on the water. The event also showcases live music, fireworks, and activities for children, such as photos with Santa, for a festive outing that will delight the entire family.

Historic Alexandria

Just across the Potomac River, Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, welcomes shoppers to walk its charming cobblestone streets and observe its picturesque colonial architecture. During winter, it features festive decorations for a setting right out of a greeting card and local boutiques provide unique gifts and themed merchandise. On the first Saturday of December, the neighborhood also hosts the Scottish Christmas Walk Parade, where tartan-clad marchers trek

through Old Town to the tune of live bagpipe music, celebrating the city’s Scottish origins.

Activities and adventures

While the DC metro area is certainly scenic, visitors also jump at the chance to enjoy its more immersive experiences. The following options invite families to let loose and embrace the seasonal cheer.

Ice-skating

If you’re eager to lace up some skates with your family, take to the ice at the National Gallery of Art’s Ice Rink at the Sculpture Garden, which typically operates from late November to early March, weather permitting. This picturesque showcase invites you to glide gracefully (or perhaps slip and slide humorously) among festive

For those seeking unique gifts and festive treats, [the DowntownDC Holiday Market] is an indispensable activity.



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NATIONAL CHRISTMAS
TREE IN WASHINGTON, DC

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decorations and magnificent sculptures by revered artists. If you need a rest, you can warm up with hot cocoa and a fresh meal from the nearby Pavilion Café. Once you've had your fill, make your way to the National Mall to view the Washington Monument, US Capitol Building, and other famed sights—all conveniently located just steps from this famous park.

Performing arts

Washington, DC, lays claim to one of America's most vibrant theater scenes, especially in winter. Look no further than the iconic John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to catch seasonal shows ranging from orchestral concerts to choral recitals and more. Local performance companies also stage remarkable shows, including the ever-beloved *A Christmas Carol* and *The Nutcracker*. And for a thoroughly moving musical occasion, step inside the majestic National Cathedral on Christmas Day for its traditional organ recital.



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MOUNT
VERNON

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Mount Vernon celebrations

For an experience you can't find outside the area, book a colonial tour at George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, the first president's home. During the holidays, Mount Vernon by Candlelight invites visitors to step back to 1775 for a glimpse into the era's festive traditions, complete with period-appropriate decorations, caroling, and storytelling. The event is only held for seven days total in November and December, so tickets may be hard to come by, but alternative occasions warrant a visit, including the Winter Glow light show, Christmas Illuminations fireworks

display, and charming Holiday Afternoon Tea featuring a special menu.

If you can secure tickets to Mount Vernon by Candlelight, though, you won't want to miss it. This special event provides insight into how our capital's namesake would have celebrated the season, and the pleasantly lit tour under the stars easily makes this one of the most charming ways to spend a chilly evening with those you love.

For more info, visit washington.org

ESSENTIAL HOLIDAY STORAGE TIPS

Written by **Lauren Kim** / Photography by **Getty Images**

Everyone agrees that stowing away festive decor isn't nearly as much fun as putting it up. But how you go about the task is important—with proper care and organization, your keepsakes will be easier to unpack next season and may even last longer.

Prepping and packing

First, think carefully about where you'll stash your seasonal items. Stackable containers are best for shelves, whereas ones with handles will allow you to capitalize on wall space. In addition, check your lights and other trimmings for damage, and repair or replace any as needed. And before you start packing, give your items a wipe with a clean cloth to remove any dust. (For a menorah, fill a bucket with warm water to remove wax, then towel dry it.)

Next, check to see if you still have your decorations' original packaging; since it's custom-made for them, it maximizes space and protection. If you don't, try an ornament bin with compartments to safeguard fragile pieces.

Also, for easier access later, keep related objects together—for example, put all your ornament boxes in one container and your gift wrap and bows in a wrapping-paper organizer. Pack heavier treasures separately or at the bottom of their vessels to prevent them from breaking more fragile items.

Storing your bins

Now that the time-consuming part is done, you can put your packed bins away. Label them for easier identification, and consider keeping a simple inventory list for your holiday storage space on your computer or phone. Stack everything in a clean, dry space out of direct sunlight to prevent damage, putting the essentials—such as your tree stand—at the top or in front for quick access when it's time to welcome the holiday season all over again.



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.



5 STRESS-BUSTING *Holiday Hosting Tips*

The holidays can be a special time, creating long-lasting memories packed full of food, fun, and family. However, they can also be a demanding experience when you're hosting loved ones. Use these tips to help you throw a stress-free celebration this year!

Prepare food ahead of time

Instead of waiting until the date of your event to make the food, prepare some side dishes or chop your vegetables beforehand. Doing so can save yourself prep time and free up valuable counter space.

Make it a potluck

Another way to reduce your meal-prep work is to ask your guests to contribute a side or dessert. This can make the food you prepare go further and help save on grocery costs. Just make sure to be specific with your requests to avoid having a table full of desserts with no sides.

Set your table early

Though an elaborate table setting can enhance the celebratory atmosphere, putting out plates, glasses, and silverware for every guest can be tedious. Aim to get everything in place the night before to save time the day of; this can also help you notice if you're running low on certain utensils or other supplies.

Prepare a drink station

Having friends and family wander into the kitchen searching for refreshments while you're cooking dinner can be distracting. To prevent this, create a drink station in another room of the house, stocking it with everything your guests may need, such as water, wine, beer, and soda. Be sure to include a bucket with ice and plenty of cups next to it.

Accept help

Some of your visitors may offer to help you in the kitchen once they arrive. Don't turn them away! The extra hands can make your day much easier. Even basic tasks like filling appetizer plates and placing rolls in a basket can be delegated to free your time to focus on cooking.

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Your back covers are a great place to draw attention to an upcoming seminar or community event of your choosing.

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A Proper Holiday Table Setting

Being a host comes with a vast array of responsibilities, and while cleaning the house and prepping the meal are naturally top priorities, don't overlook the importance of a proper table setting. Take your feast to the next level with this easy-to-follow guide.

utensils

All forks being used should go on the left side of the plate, with the one you're using first on the outside. The knife and spoon should then sit to the right.

glasses

The water and wine glasses should both be placed to the right of the plate. Set the latter slightly closer and further right. And if a champagne glass is needed, it should go directly in front of the water glass.

charger

This European-style decoration dish isn't used for food but is the prime distinction between formal and informal affairs. It serves as the base for other dinnerware.

entrée plate

This is where the main course will go, and it should be placed on top of the charger.

napkin

There are various ways to fold a napkin, but no matter what method you choose, it should be set on the entrée plate instead of under the silverware.