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start HEALTHY

ISSUE 47

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MERRY
CHRISTMAS

ISSUE 47
COVER PRICE \$6.99



678

678

Front of Tear Out Card 1



CHRISTMAS TREE CUPCAKES

INGREDIENTS
24 cupcakes, in a flavor of your choosing

VANILLA BUTTERCREAM ICING
1 c. butter, softened
3 c. confectioners' sugar
2 tsp. vanilla extract
¼ tsp. salt
Green food coloring

TREE DECORATIONS
Decorating icing
Candy-coated chocolates
1 c. yellow candy melts



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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. Add the butter to a stand mixer, and beat until pale and smooth.
2. Mix in the confectioners' sugar 1 c. at a time until incorporated. Scrape the excess off the sides of the bowl, and add in the vanilla and salt. Beat on low for 15 seconds.
3. Increase the speed to high until the icing becomes whipped and smooth, about 5 minutes. Add in five drops of the green food coloring, and mix until fully incorporated.
4. Using a large star tip and piping bag, pipe some icing onto each cupcake.
5. For the lights, draw a thin line of the decorating icing across the green icing, and place the candy-coated chocolates vertically onto the line.
6. For the chocolate stars, line a baking sheet with wax paper, setting star-shaped candy molds on top. Place the yellow candy melts in a small bowl, and microwave for 45 seconds.
7. Pour the melted candy into the molds in a thin layer, and allow to cool before removing. Continue until you have enough for each cupcake. Then top your trees, and enjoy!



Dear Bill and Judy,

The holidays are filled with joy, celebration, and togetherness. This issue of Start Healthy offers suggestions to help ensure that you experience these to the fullest with tips for heart-healthy living, ways to enhance your home with festive scents, gift ideas that will thrill family and friends without breaking the bank, and more.

Good habits like eating nutritious meals, staying active, and managing stress can keep your heart beating strong, especially during this time of year. The enclosed recommendations can help you be more mindful, allowing you to enjoy yourself without jeopardizing your long-term health.

Aromas such as crisp pine, warm cinnamon, and earthy clove evoke a sense of coziness and holiday cheer. Discover all-natural methods for filling the air with such fragrances, bringing the essence of the season into every room and moment.

Oftentimes, the cost of a gift doesn't measure its true value to the recipient. From handmade crafts to personalized items that show you care, affordable presents can still be both thoughtful and meaningful. Check out the budget-friendly guide inside to get great options for loved ones.

Here's to a healthy and happy holiday season! As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

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



ISSUE
47

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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Recipes excerpted from *Adriatico* by Paola Bacchia, published by Smith Street Books, US \$35 | \$47 CAN, available now. Photography © Paola Bacchia.

Ways to Prevent HEARTBURN

written by: LAUREN KIM

Heartburn can be an unwelcome visitor, bringing a burning sensation in your chest after an indulgent meal. It typically occurs when stomach acid backs up into your esophagus, a condition known as acid reflux, and may worsen when you bend over or lie down. Fortunately, you can help prevent mild cases of it with certain steps.

EXERCISE **REGULARLY**

An active lifestyle has been proven to benefit digestive health, decreasing the odds of heartburn. It also assists

with weight management to mitigate pressure on the stomach, which can spur acid reflux. Try to engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise weekly for best results. A low-impact activity like walking is ideal; ones involving reclining, bending, or rapid movement can actually *cause* heartburn instead.

EAT **MINDFULLY**

The holidays often bring lavish spreads that make it easy to overindulge. One useful strategy is to opt for smaller portions throughout the day rather than three large

meals; overloading your stomach can push gastric juices up into your esophagus, causing discomfort. Additionally, aim to limit your consumption of common heartburn triggers, including oily treats like potato chips and highly acidic ones like tomato sauce. Pay close attention to which specific foods often result in pain, and reduce or cease your consumption of them.

TAKE CARE AROUND **BEDTIME**

Undigested food can worsen acid reflux at night, so avoid eating within two to three hours of going to bed. You can

also elevate your head with pillows or sleep on your left side to position your stomach lower than your esophagus, making acid backflow less likely.

Though simple, these changes can go a long way toward minimizing your odds of heartburn. And if all else fails, there are plenty of over-the-counter solutions, such as antacid pills, that may provide quick relief.

**If you experience frequent or severe chest-related pain, be sure to consult with a medical professional.*

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

MAKE A SPLASH written by: WITH AQUA FITNESS FAITH FIORILE

FITNESS FADS COME AND GO, BUT FEW HAVE ENDURED LIKE WATER AEROBICS.

No one should be surprised by the popularity of this approach—after all, it is an incredibly low-impact way to increase your strength, endurance, and flexibility, all in a revitalizing setting. Whether you're looking to launch your exercise journey or add variety to your current regimen, take a closer look at the upsides of aqua fitness along with tips for getting started.

Physical benefits that go below the surface

Working out in water is all about getting the most out of your efforts with the least amount of strain. Luckily, the nature of water makes this easy. The warmth of it helps your muscles relax, and your body's natural buoyancy while in it reduces the force on your joints, making your movements more fluid. As a result, you can exercise with much less risk of aggravating existing problems—which is ideal for seniors and those living with a chronic condition like arthritis.

However, that's not to say aqua fitness is a total breeze. Thanks to the natural resistance it provides, water has the ability to increase the intensity of even the most basic moves, helping to work your body harder without you necessarily having to push it to the limit. In fact, just about every muscle group is engaged during water aerobics, from your upper and lower body to your core. Strengthening the latter in particular will also help improve your balance and coordination, especially if you incorporate exercises specifically designed to go against the water's resistance. And, on top of all that, your cardiovascular endurance will improve as well, reducing your risk of issues such as high blood pressure and heart disease.



Thanks to the natural resistance it provides, water has the ability to increase the intensity of even the most basic moves, helping to work your body harder without you necessarily having to push it to the limit.

Riding the wave to better mental health

There are substantial mental benefits to water aerobics in addition to the physical ones. To start, many people find that simply being near water helps them unwind, an effect commonly known as “blue mind.” Submerging yourself in it causes a cascade of physiological reactions that alleviate stress, including increasing endorphins and decreasing the stress hormone cortisol. Spend just half an hour splashing around in the pool, and you may leave feeling dramatically calmer and relaxed, your daily worries washed away.

Besides its impact on certain hormones, aquatic exercise may also increase neurochemicals that reduce inflammation and arterial stiffness in the brain, which, in turn, enhances blood flow. These factors have been shown to support greater cognition as well as stronger memory. Combined with the aforementioned physical benefits, this may just make it one of the best approaches to working out you could try.



Simple, effective beginner exercises

There's no need to be intimidated if you've never done aqua fitness before. The key to maximizing your experience is to ease into it and gradually increase your stamina. Consider these basic exercises to help you get started.

Water walking

Just as you would on land, walk across the shallow end of the pool, about waist-deep, moving your arms at your side in a natural swinging motion. Keep your posture upright, and engage your core to maintain your balance as you move. To make the exercise more challenging, gradually transition into deeper water. This will increase the resistance on your muscles without straining your joints.

Treading water

A staple of swimming classes, this activity can provide a surprisingly decent cardio workout. Venture far enough into the deep end where your feet can't touch the bottom, then use a combination of flutter kicks and arm sweeps to remain buoyant. Continue for one to two minutes at a time, increasing the length as your strength improves.

Arm circles

Standing in water at shoulder height, lift your arms straight out to the sides and move them in circles; start with small rotations that gradually increase in size. To boost the

intensity, alternate between fast and slow circles or add resistance with water weights. Be sure to keep your arms submerged to engage the muscles in your upper back, arms, and shoulders effectively.

Leg lifts and kicks

In waist-deep water, stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart. Extend one leg forward, then to the side, and finally to the back, holding each position for a couple of seconds. Your movements should be slow and controlled to work the different muscle groups in your legs and core. Another option to strengthen your hip flexors and glutes is flutter kicks, which involve holding a kickboard or the side of the pool as you kick your legs rapidly behind you.

Aqua fitness provides a low-impact alternative that anyone can enjoy, from exercise novices to workout champions. Dive into this activity, and you can unlock a world of benefits that are as refreshing as they are effective.

**Consult with your doctor before starting any new exercise routine, especially if you have existing pain or medical conditions.*



Heart-Healthy Habits for the Holidays

written by:
LAUREN KIM

YOU LIKELY KNOW THAT EATING WELL AND STAYING ACTIVE ARE ESSENTIAL FOR A strong heart, but it can be challenging to prioritize it this time of year amid all the festivities. Luckily, just a few simple lifestyle adjustments can help you protect your well-being while also savoring the season.



Enjoy good food

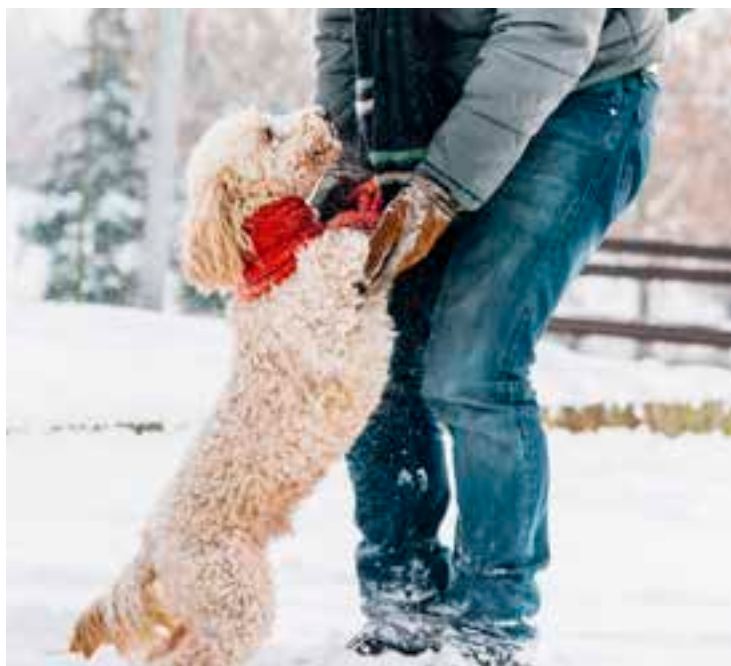
The holidays are a time for coming together to share delicious meals, something most everyone looks forward to. But such occasions can often lead to overindulging in foods and drinks that are filled with saturated fats, salt, and sugar. You don't have to miss out on all the fun, however, to do your heart a favor. Instead, fill most of your plate with nutritious options like salmon or lean turkey breast, salad greens, and baked sweet potatoes, reserving only a small section of it for more decadent treats. As for your beverage, a cup of fragrant apple cider is an excellent alternative to rich, and possibly boozy, eggnog. If you do allow yourself a holiday cocktail, moderation is key—drinking alcohol, even in small amounts, can increase your triglycerides, a type of fat in your blood.



Foster good connections

A major upside of this season is the opportunity to nurture social bonds, which various research shows can reduce your risk of serious conditions such as heart disease and stroke. And these benefits aren't confined to your personal relationships; being part of a community may be just as impactful. So besides your typical family dinners and parties with friends, consider hosting a fun group event like a neighborhood potluck or volunteering at a local gift or food drive. Each can provide a sense of fulfillment and joy to bring an extra boost to your spirit.

That said, some interactions can spark stress and, in turn, potentially set off inflammation, a harmful response linked to coronary artery disease and other complications. Therefore, carefully manage your holiday schedule, filling it with events that lift you up instead of dragging you down.



Connect with your pet

Of course, planning for the season can be enough on its own to incite a certain level of stress. While there are many strategies that can help you manage it, an especially comforting one is spending quality time with your furry companion. Studies indicate that pet owners generally have lower blood pressure than others, in part because of the feel-good hormones such moments produce. Your four-legged friend can also encourage you to be more physically active and offer companionship that helps combat loneliness—both of which contribute to your overall well-being. Don't have a pet? You can enjoy similar upsides by volunteering at an animal shelter or pet sitting for a neighbor who will be out of town for the holidays.



Get moving

It's understandable for your regular workout routine to take a back seat during these months, but even if you don't have time to fit in the recommended 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week, try to incorporate more activity throughout your day. This is especially important if your job requires long hours at a desk or on your feet; remaining in one position for too long can negatively impact your cardiovascular health. At least every hour, engage in simple movements such as stretching your arms and legs, which can improve your circulation and reduce the risk of problems like blood clots.

Additionally, make the most of your downtime to mitigate your time spent sedentary. For example, try doing aerobic exercises while watching holiday movies rather than sitting on the couch. And take advantage of seasonal events that get you moving—a simple walk to admire your neighborhood's festive lights is a great way to get your blood flowing.



Establish a sleep routine

Though prioritizing sleep can be tough amid the hustle and bustle, it is absolutely essential. Studies show that people who maintain consistent, restful sleep tend to have stronger, healthier hearts. To improve your rest, establish a bedtime routine that allows for at least seven hours of sleep a night and adjust your sleeping environment to make it as cozy as possible. So if you've been eyeing some extra-comfy pillows or a plush new comforter, treat yourself to an early holiday gift! Further, try to stay off your devices two to three hours before bed

since their blue light can suppress your body's sleep-inducing melatonin cycle. Instead, read a book or listen to a calming podcast to wind down.

Don't let your well-being fall to the wayside this holiday season. Make your heart a priority as you celebrate with family and friends, and you'll not only start the new year feeling healthy but also arm yourself with habits to help safeguard it for years to come.



Alexandria

Where to Travel

written by: ALLISON GOMES
photography: AS NOTED

IN EVERY SEASON

FROM THE VIBRANT FLOWERS OF SPRING TO THE serene beauty of winter, every season brings its own unique allure, offering fresh opportunities to explore some of America's most breathtaking destinations. Whether you're seeking outdoor thrills or a relaxing retreat, each of these locations may just provide the perfect backdrop for your next getaway.

SPRING

Alexandria, Virginia

Located on the Potomac River just south of Washington, DC, this town comes alive in spring as the cherry blossoms bloom, adding a touch of magic to just about any activity. History buffs, for instance, can visit Gadsby's Tavern Museum, which served George Washington and other major figures, or Carlyle House Historic Park, a Georgian mansion tied to the American Revolution. The latter also offers walking tours on select dates exploring the city's wide range of architectural styles, from Victorian homes to midcentury modern gems. Or simply stroll through Old Town, a nationally designated historic district, to peruse the various boutiques and cafés. And don't forget to check out the waterfront, where you can get your blood pumping with a kayaking or paddleboarding excursion or settle in to savor some stunning river views.

Fairbanks, Alaska

While the state is known for its cold winters, spring in this city offers a particular experience thanks to the occurrence of two seasons: aurora and midnight sun. The first runs until April 21, during which you can catch the awe-inspiring northern lights as they paint streaks of color across the sky. The second follows immediately after and features extremely lengthy days, with the area experiencing twenty-four hours of sunlight from about May 17 to July 27—seventy-plus days straight! Whichever time you prefer to visit, be sure to take advantage of the magnificent scenery by embarking on a hike, wildlife tour, or leisurely drive through the surrounding wilderness. Prefer to stay indoors on a chilly day? Stop by one of the many museums, including the University of Alaska Museum of the North and the Pioneer Air Museum, to get a closer look at what makes this state and its people so special.

Fairbanks

SUMMER

Boise, Idaho

Idaho may not be at the top of your travel list, but Boise is an underrated gem for those who appreciate a combination of city life and outdoor adventure. The warm summer months are ideal for enjoying numerous activities, including biking and hiking through Camel’s Back Park and floating down the Boise River in a raft, tube, or kayak. Meanwhile, downtown

is filled with farmers markets and art galleries and features an acclaimed food scene, with restaurants like KIN, home to Idaho’s first James Beard Award-winning chef, taking center stage. Perhaps best of all, nights come alive with open-air events including Alive After 5, a free concert series that brings live music to Grove Plaza every week.

Boise



Mackinac Island



Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau

Mackinac Island, Michigan

With warm days and cool nights, summer on Mackinac Island is an experience like no other. Known for its Victorian charm, this car-free sanctuary located in Lake Huron offers beautiful landscapes just waiting to be explored by foot, bike, or even horseback. Visit in early June to participate in the ten-day Lilac Festival, which celebrates the abundance of beautiful

flowers that grace the land during this season. Of course, there’s still plenty to do if you come later, including exploring the historic Fort Mackinac, home to the oldest building in the state, and taking a boat ride on the sparkling waters. Cap your trip off with treats from any of the seven fudge shops on the island, and you’re sure to head home more than satisfied.



Getty Images

FALL

Jackson, New Hampshire

Nestled in the heart of the White Mountains, Jackson is a storybook destination this time of year due to its renowned vibrant foliage. Visitors can experience autumn's brilliance on hiking trails like the Boulder Loop Trail or via scenic drives on Kancamagus Highway and Mount Washington Auto Road. In town, the annual Return of the Pumpkin People festival adds a touch of whimsy for October travelers, with homes and businesses throughout the community creating elaborate and quirky pumpkin displays. Indulge in hearty meals at local favorites like the Red Fox Bar & Grille, and when it's time to unwind, Jackson's inns each provide a cozy retreat—the Christmas Farm Inn & Spa and the Inn at Thorn Hill, for instance, both offer inviting amenities like fireplaces, spas, and beautiful mountain sights.

Leavenworth, Washington

Although this Bavarian-inspired village in the Cascades is primarily known as a holiday paradise, it is equally worth a visit in fall, when it transforms into one of the most picturesque destinations you could ever visit. Take the Cascade Loop National Scenic Byway as you approach to get your first look at the golden leaves of the area's renowned larch trees. Then, for a more immersive experience, embark on the Enchantments Trail or Icicle Gorge Trail for an unforgettable hike surrounded by fiery oranges, yellows, and reds. And come October, revel in Leavenworth's famed Oktoberfest, which features authentic German beer, traditional music, and dishes like bratwurst, pretzels, and schnitzel. All in all, you couldn't ask for a more complete autumn experience.



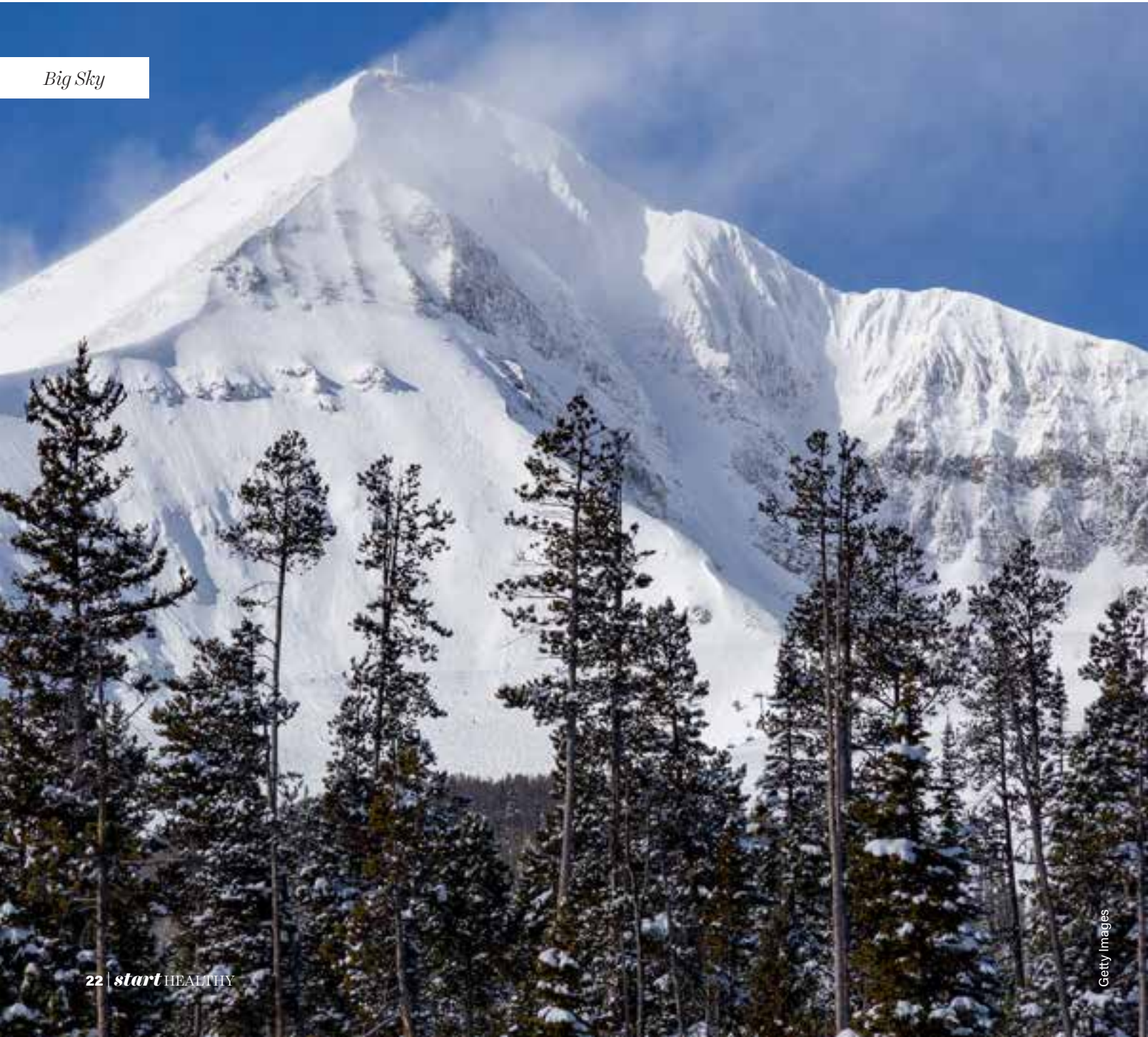
Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce

WINTER

Big Sky, Montana

Sitting near Yellowstone National Park, this city is famous for its world-class ski slopes, making it a prime destination for skiing and snowboarding. But for those seeking a different adventure, try snowshoeing through peaceful forests, dogsledding across snow-covered plains, or ice-skating on pristine outdoor rinks. You can also venture out on a

snowmobile tour for a more exhilarating way to explore the area's vast wilderness or go winter fly-fishing in its rivers for a tranquil afternoon. When you're ready to call it a day, unwind at any of the luxurious spas or cozy local lodges. With a little something for everyone, Big Sky is a great choice for winter travelers seeking to embrace the magic of the season.



Big Sky

Getty Images



Visit Sarasota County

Sarasota, Florida

Alternatively, if you need an escape from the cold, the mild temperatures, sunny days, and smaller crowds found at this Sunshine State city make it the perfect spot for a winter retreat. Lounge on the soft, white sands of Siesta Key, which is consistently ranked among the most beautiful beaches in the country, and enjoy the clear waters via snorkeling, boating, or even a simple swim. In addition to its natural beauty, Sarasota boasts a multitude of cultural hubs, such as the Selby Gardens Downtown Sarasota

campus and Sarasota Opera's Winter Opera Festival. For peak relaxation, though, spend a day unwinding and recharging at one of the area's many spas, like Colibri Day Spa and Beauty Shop or BlueAloe Day Spa.

Ultimately, these picks only scratch the surface of what our country has to offer. No matter which season or locale speaks to you most, you're sure to have an adventure that creates memories to last a lifetime.

5 END-OF-YEAR money moves

written by:
ANDRE RIOS

AS ANOTHER YEAR WINDS DOWN, you might pause to look back on personal challenges, areas of growth, and fond memories you've amassed in the prior months. But rather than merely waxing nostalgic, take action by implementing impactful financial plans that can help set you up for better success in the upcoming year. Here are five tips for managing your money before the calendar flips over.

Know your net worth

While reviewing your budget may be best reserved for January following holiday spending, an important step to take now is calculating your net worth, which is the

difference between your total assets (cash, investments, real estate, etc.) and liabilities (loans, credit card debt, and other negatives). To find your figure, list all your assets and estimate their current values, referring to documents like your mortgage statement for accuracy. Then compile your liabilities and subtract them from the assets total. Once you have this calculation, you can better assess your overall financial health, identifying challenges like excessive debts and establishing strategies for overcoming them as well as general objectives to strive for. In turn, you can proceed into January with more confidence about building future wealth.





Increase your returns

If you have lofty goals following examining your net worth, it may be worth seeking other ways to increase the earnings on your current capital aside from typical savings accounts. For a relatively low-risk option, consider enrolling in a certificate of deposit or money market account, by which you hand over funds to a bank or credit union for a predetermined duration in exchange for appealing returns. You can also research some other potentially more profitable, yet less stable, investments to buy into at the start of the new year, like a stock portfolio, real estate, and peer-to-peer lending.

Utilize your health benefits

Health care may represent a major portion of your spending, but perhaps one of the greatest ways to stifle hefty fees is to leverage any cost caps at the end of the year. If you've met your deductible or out-of-pocket maximum, your insurer may pay up to 100 percent of your remaining health services through December. (An exception would be if you've also hit your annual maximum benefit, or the limit on how much your insurer will pay for covered care in a year.) So confirm your progress toward health, dental, and vision caps, and squeeze in any services you may need while they're practically free. And if you opted into a flexible spending account, you'll definitely want to put any remaining funds to use since you may not be allowed to carry them over into next year.



Reach the retirement cap

Contributing the full amount permitted to your retirement fund each year could help better secure your future. Many such accounts, like 401(k)s, offer tax advantages—including decreasing your taxable income—to help reduce your tax burden for the year. Additionally, investing the maximum amount ensures that you take full advantage of employer matching, if available, which is essentially free money for retirement. See what extra contributions you may be able to make before the end of this year, then factor it into your future budgeting to help ensure that you don't miss out on potentially significant breaks in the next one.

Talk to a pro

When it comes to your finances, you have a dizzying array of moves available to you, so consider meeting with a financial professional, who can help you tend to your current needs while also making plans to grow your savings. In fact, taking such a step ahead of the new year can be one of the wisest ways to weigh your options and enact fiscally sound strategies that can get it off to healthy start.



Foods Fit *for a* Feast

recipes and photos by:
PAOLA BACCHIA

Pasta with Walnut and Rocket Pesto *with Vincotto*

SERVES 4 AS A FIRST COURSE OR 3 AS A MAIN

As you drive north along the Adriatic coast, rows of grapevines become part of the scenery from the northern reaches of Puglia, through Molise, Abruzzo and into Le Marche. At the time of grape harvesting, in late summer and early autumn, vincotto (also known as 'sapa') is made by reducing filtered grape juice (grape 'must') over many hours into a thick, sweet syrup. Vincotto can be used in desserts, but also pairs well in savoury dishes with walnuts, which are ready to be harvested at the same time as the grapes.

The sauce is a type of pesto, and should have an even balance of sweetness and nuttiness, with a hint of acid. Make sure you add plenty of parmesan to balance the inherent sweetness of the vincotto.

measure

- 14 oz. spaghetti or linguine
- 1 cup walnuts
- 2 cups rocket (arugula), plus extra to serve
- 1 small garlic clove, crushed
- 3 fl. oz. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon vincotto (see Note)
- 1½ oz. grated parmesan, plus extra to serve
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

make

1. Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil and cook the pasta until al dente, following the instructions on the packet. Drain, reserving a little of the pasta water in a cup.
2. Meanwhile, finely grind the walnuts in a mini food processor. Add the remaining ingredients and 2 tablespoons water and pulse until combined, adding a splash more water if the consistency is too thick. Taste and season as needed with salt.
3. Return the pasta to the pan it was cooked in, along with a splash of the reserved pasta water and the pesto. Stir briefly over medium heat until the pasta is well coated and the sauce is warmed through.
4. Divide the pasta among warmed bowls or plates and finish with a generous handful of parmesan, a few rocket leaves and a dash more olive oil if you like.

scan here



to get the full
Adriatico cookbook.

Note: Look for vincotto in Italian delicatessens and check the label for vinegar, which should be avoided.



Flourless Almond and Lemon Cake

SERVES 8-10

This light, gluten-free cake can be loosely attributed to Zia Liliana, aunt of Signora Enrica from Otranto, in southern Puglia. I add extra lemon zest to my version, to give this flourless cake a real tangy hit.

measure

- 2½ cups almond meal
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 6 eggs, separated
- 7 oz. caster (superfine) sugar
- Finely grated zest of 2 lemons
- ⅓ cup milk
- 1 teaspoon natural vanilla essence
- ⅓ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Pinch of salt
- Icing (confectioners') sugar, for dusting

make

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F conventional. Line the base and side of an 11 in. springform tin.
2. Place the almond meal and baking powder in a bowl and whisk briefly to combine and remove any lumps.
3. Place the egg yolks and caster sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle or whisk attachment and beat for several minutes until the mixture becomes pale and light. Add the lemon zest, milk, vanilla, lemon juice and salt and beat until combined, then add the almond meal mixture and beat until incorporated.
4. Place the egg whites in a clean bowl and whisk until medium-firm peaks form. Working in batches, gently fold the whites into the batter with a spatula, folding from bottom to top so you don't lose aeration. Make sure the batter is well combined, but don't overmix it.
5. Carefully pour the batter into the prepared tin and bake for 35–40 minutes, until the top of the cake is golden and a skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean. Allow to cool in the tin for a few minutes before turning out onto a wire rack to cool completely.
6. Dust the cake with icing sugar and serve at room temperature with a cup of tea or coffee. The cake will keep in an airtight container for a couple of days.



Pan-Cooked **Fish and Potato Stew**

SERVES 4

The marshy waters that run through the lowlands of Emilia-Romagna could be called 'acque di mezzo' (waters that lie between land and sea). They are home to varieties of seafood that can tolerate lower salt levels, such as squid, eel and mullet.

In his online recipe booklet Ricette di Cucina delle 'Acque di Mezzo' Sandro Bignami describes some of the dishes of the lowlands, combining elements of the land and the sea. This recipe is taken from the book, slightly tweaked. It's one of those one-pot dishes that make cooking for a group so easy. Pancetta, onions and butter are slowly braised to make a well-seasoned base for baby potatoes and bites of tender fish. Serve from the pan at the table, adding a good sprinkling of parsley and spring onion at the end.

If you cannot find mullet, trevally or snapper makes a good substitute.

measure

- 1¼ oz. butter
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 oz. pancetta, finely diced
- 1 large brown onion, finely diced
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 12 oz. small new potatoes, halved
- ⅓ cup tomato passata
- 1 lb. 2 oz. mullet, trevally or snapper fillets, skin and bones removed, cut into bite-sized pieces
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley and sliced spring onion (scallion), to garnish
- Crusty bread, to serve

make

1. Place the butter and olive oil in a large frying pan over low heat. When the butter has melted, add the pancetta and cook for 5 minutes or until softened and starting to release its fat. Add the onion and cook gently for about 20 minutes, until well softened but not coloured. Add the garlic and cook for a couple of minutes until fragrant, then add the potato, passata and 1 cup of water. Increase the heat and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, for 15–20 minutes, until the potato is just cooked through but still firm.
2. Add the fish and cook, covered, for another 10–15 minutes, until cooked through. Remove the lid for the last 5 minutes or so if there is too much sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Garnish with parsley and spring onion and serve with crusty bread to mop up the juices.



Venetian Apple Cake

SERVES 10–12

Most Venetian families will have a recipe for apple cake that their nonna or grandmother used to make; a simple recipe, using pantry ingredients, that can be whipped up in a short time. This is one such cake. I like to use tart green apples, which balance the sugar nicely, and sprinkle a good teaspoon of cinnamon on top. The cake remains moist for days—although it will probably have all disappeared by then. . .

measure

- 4 tart apples
- Juice of 1 small lemon
- 3 eggs
- 5½ oz. caster (superfine) sugar, plus 2 teaspoons extra
- 1 cup plain (all-purpose) flour
- 1 oz. cornflour (cornstarch)
- 1 scant teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 2¾ oz. unsalted butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon natural vanilla essence
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

make

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F conventional. Line the base and side of a 9 in. cake tin with a removable base.
2. Peel and core the apples and cut them into quarters, then cut each quarter into four or five slices, depending on how big the apple is. Place in a bowl, add the lemon juice and toss so the slices are coated (this will prevent them turning brown). Set aside while you prepare the batter.
3. Beat the eggs and sugar with an electric mixer until the mixture is pale and fluffy. Place the flours, baking powder and salt in a bowl and whisk briefly. Fold the dry ingredients into the egg mixture until well incorporated, then add the butter and vanilla and fold until well combined.
4. Divide the apple slices into two portions: one of about 9 oz. and the other of about 5½ oz. Cut the larger portion of apple slices in half, then fold them into the batter, including any juice from the bowl. Leave the remaining 5½ oz. apple slices uncut and set them aside.
5. Spoon the batter into the prepared tin and smooth the surface. Arrange the remaining apple slices in a circular pattern on top of the cake, pressing them down gently so they partially sink into the batter. Sprinkle with the cinnamon and the extra sugar.
6. Bake for 50 minutes or until the top of the cake is golden and a skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean. Serve warm or at room temperature.



A Natural Approach written by: LAUREN KIM TO WINTER SCENTS

THE HOLIDAY SEASON BRINGS TO MIND ENCHANTING aromas—think freshly baked cookies, spiced apple cider, and crisp evergreens. While store-bought fragrances and candles can quickly bring these delightful notes into your home, they may also increase indoor pollution and pose health risks, such as by irritating your respiratory system. The good news is that there are plenty of other techniques you can use to infuse your spaces with wonderful natural scents and create a cozy atmosphere.

CREATE A SIMMER POT

Is there anything better than the richness of a delicious meal filling the air as it cooks? You can get similar results with seasonal smells by simmering a potpourri of various ingredients in water, either in a large pot on the stove or in a slow cooker. The first step is picking your combination of fruits, spices, and herbs. A classic option is orange slices, cinnamon sticks, and whole cloves, or you can go more woody with fresh pine needles, pear slices, and sprigs of rosemary. A good ratio is one whole fruit per eight cups of water and the equivalent (or slightly less) of the other items, depending on how strong you want the pot to be.

When ready to start, fill your cooking vessel three-fourths full with water, add your ingredients, and bring everything to a boil. Then reduce the heat to low, checking occasionally and adding more water as needed; you'll want to keep the pot at least half full to prevent scorching or a fire hazard. Maintain it carefully, and you're sure to enjoy its comforting scent for hours on end.

HANG GARLANDS

Draping natural garlands in your home can lend not only a traditional touch but also a fresh, festive fragrance. For example, fir, pine, and spruce needles release woody notes that evoke the season's warmth, making them perfect choices to use as decor. You can forage for branches in your backyard or ask for leftover boughs at a local evergreen lot—many give them away for free. Once you have enough, tie their lengths together with floral wire, wearing thick gloves to protect your hands from their sharp needles and sap. To get your ideal look, shape the edges with scissors and add decorative elements like holly leaves and berries. The finished creation will make for a beautiful focal point along a banister, fireplace mantel, or wherever else you prefer.

Another equally charming option is to create a decorative chain of dried oranges to perfume the air with a sweet, citrusy smell. To begin, slice the fruit no more than a quarter-inch thick—otherwise, they'll take much longer to dehydrate. Place the slices on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, and bake them in the oven at 200°F for about three hours or until they're completely dry, flipping them every thirty minutes. Make sure to let them cool before working with them.

Next, cut several four-inch lengths of twine, enough for every slice, as well as a longer strand to attach them to. Poke a hole with a toothpick through the flesh just below the rind of each slice, thread a short piece of twine through it, and knot the ends. The last step is to tie them onto the longer twine, spacing them out evenly and as close or as far as together as you'd like. Hang your garland in a highly visible spot, such as across a doorway or draped around your Christmas tree, so friends and family can fully appreciate its fragrance and beauty.





CRAFT A WREATH

Alternatively, you can use those dried oranges to make a holiday wreath for your door or wall—all you need is a hot-glue gun and a bamboo or wooden floral hoop. Start by applying a drop of the adhesive to the surface, then firmly press a slice on it. Continue adding more in the same fashion, allowing them to overlap slightly, until your form is totally covered. Finish by adding a festive ribbon at the top to serve as a hanger and offer an extra touch of decoration.

For a softer scent than citrus, consider utilizing natural branches of eucalyptus as your base instead, bending them around a circular wire frame and attaching them with twine or floral wire. Tuck in some bay leaves or rosemary sprigs for an herbal, woody note, and the end result will smell like the fresh air of a winter forest.

A bonus to any of these fragrant crafts is the opportunity they provide to spend quality time with loved ones putting them together. Try one this season, and it may turn into a wonderful tradition you'll enjoy for years to come.

The Benefits of SLOW COOKING

written by:
MATTHEW BRADY



IT'S BEEN SAID THAT TIME IS OUR BEST FRIEND

and worst enemy, and that duality is clear in many aspects of everyday modern life, especially when it comes to food. Sustenance is so easily accessible in America that most people don't even need to leave home to obtain it—a clear perk in a fast-paced world.

The downside of this convenience? Such items are usually rather unhealthy. So instead of thawing a frozen meal or placing a fast-food order, consider doing a 180 and taking the slow-cooking route. Already associated with a sense of coziness, this time-tested technique provides a surprising number of health benefits and more.

A brief history

Technically, gradual cooking has been a method of choice virtually since homo sapiens discovered fire. Recorded variations of it go back tens of thousands of years, and it spans many cultures worldwide. In more recent history, the Dutch oven emerged in the 1600s and quickly spread across Europe, gaining its now-ubiquitous moniker in 1707.

For centuries, that was the primary slow-cooking tool for most home chefs until the invention of the Crock-Pot, an electric version that exploded onto the culinary scene in 1971 and soon became a must-have in American homes. Today, that mantle is now shared by the Swiss Army knife of the kitchen, the Instant Pot.

The nutritional benefits

The primary lure of this process has always been its convenience. When you slow cook, the only real effort required on your part is prepping the ingredients. You can then let the device do the bulk of the work over several hours—no need to constantly watch over your culinary masterpiece or have any special knowledge of complicated techniques.

In comparison to its ease, the method's nutritional benefits have largely been undervalued, yet they are as plentiful as the ingredients typically put in the pot. First off, perhaps

more than any other form of meal prep, you control the components you include. Are you looking to cut down on salt? You can choose to add just a pinch. Seeking to avoid the fat often necessitated when using a pan? Slow cooking requires only minimal oil and the like.

But that's not all. This process also naturally retains foods' nutrients better than other methods while tenderizing tougher meats and softening root vegetables, which can help you digest them better. As a final bonus, slow cooking can get the veggie-adverse eaters in your home to eat healthier since sitting in the pot for hours infuses such produce with the other ingredients' hearty flavors.

Other practical perks

The pluses don't end with your physical health, however. For instance, consider the time factor: without having to spend hours in the kitchen, you can enjoy relaxing activities or tackle essential tasks with less stress. In addition, slow cooking offers a rare opportunity in the twenty-first century to both practice patience and indulge in the art of savoring a meal. And since it's generally considered to be a steady, more efficient type of cookery, it can potentially save you money on electricity—especially since it encourages batch cooking, where you make a meal that can be stored and eaten over several days.

Slow cooking has survived eons for a reason. Around the world, people have long recognized that when you take your time with your food, your health is likely to benefit. So pull out your Dutch oven, Crock-Pot, or Instant Pot and give yourself and your loved ones the gift of leisurely prepared dishes both this season and all through winter.



An Affordable written by: ANDRE RIOS HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Satisfying SUBSCRIPTIONS

Everyone could use occasional diversions to break from daily stress, so give a loved one the perfect way to enjoy some with a membership to a premium music or streaming service. For instance, you could buy them three months of access to Apple Music's tremendous listening library for just over \$30. Or purchase YouTube Premium for only \$14 a month for ad-free music and video streaming in one. Even a temporary plan makes for weeks of ongoing entertainment your recipient will delight in.



Handcrafted CREATIONS

While expensive presents may be flashy, effort is often more impactful than money. If you were gifted with artistic skills, pay them forward by crafting decorative items for someone special. Simply acquire the tools you need, such as Artist's Loft's \$30 watercolor painting set, and put some fun patterns, portraits, or scenery to paper. If your creativity and budget are both limited, though, try scrolling Etsy for an affordable custom art print. Your friend or family member will be glad to showcase such an original piece as a conversation starter in their home or office.

AS HEAVY AS THE SOCIAL OBLIGATION TO GIVE

generous gifts might feel, you don't necessarily have to spend big bucks to embrace the spirit of the season. And you don't have to settle for subpar selections like impersonal gift cards or simple socks either! This assortment of ideas wraps thoughtful treats and budget friendliness into a neat little bow.

Boutique BEAUTY BASKETS

Who doesn't love gifts that are as useful as they are thoughtful? Curate sample selections of lotions, soaps, lip balms, and other beauty supplies for your recipient, seeking options from independent sellers like local novelty shops. Pick products in compatible scents and colors, then arrange them in festive baskets. Just be careful with your selections, avoiding products that treat a specific issue like "very dry skin" or "damaged hair." No one wants to receive a potential underhanded insult as a present.



Scrumptious SNACKS

For easy and low-cost delights, consider collecting snacks like chocolates and nuts and organizing them into gourmet gift boxes—a DIY approach may be less expensive than purchasing a prewrapped set. You could even select a couple of cheese wedges or wines themed around a certain country or region for an added personalized touch. Rare is the individual who would decline free food or drink, and gifting someone a set of delicious delicacies is sure to whet their holiday appetite.



how to decipher Ingredient Lists

written by: ALLISON GOMES

Navigating the maze of ingredient lists can sometimes feel overwhelming, but knowing what’s in the food you eat is vital to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. With this basic info, you can become a savvy shopper and avoid harmful elements.

Understanding the format

On packaged foods, ingredients are typically listed in descending order of concentration, meaning the first few are the most prominent. As a general rule, if the list is long or filled with names you can’t pronounce, it could indicate that the product is heavily processed or laden with chemicals.

Red flags to look for

Various health organizations, both national and global, agree that certain ingredients aren’t good for you. Here are just a few of the most common ones to watch for:

Artificial additives and sweeteners

FOUND IN: processed foods and snacks

RISKS: may disrupt metabolism and hormone production and cause allergic reactions

Partially hydrogenated oils

FOUND IN: packaged baked goods, fried foods, and margarine

RISKS: increase the chances of heart disease

High-fructose corn syrup

FOUND IN: sodas, snacks, and other processed foods

RISKS: linked to obesity, diabetes, and fatty liver disease

Potassium bromates

FOUND IN: flour of packaged baked goods

RISKS: possess carcinogenic properties

Sodium nitrite/nitrate

FOUND IN: processed meats like bacon and hot dogs

RISKS: can form carcinogenic compounds

Simplify your choices

When shopping, it’s best to follow this basic rule: the fewer the ingredients, the better. Prioritize whole, minimally processed foods, and stock up on fresh fruits, veggies, and grass-fed meats. If you’re unsure about an item, check resources like the Yuka app, which rates products according to their nutritional value, number of additives, and organic status. By taking the time to assess ingredient lists, you’ll be able to make more informed choices that benefit your overall well-being.

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

REAL or Fake

The real versus artificial Christmas tree debate is a long-standing one. While each type has its pros and cons, the right one for you will ultimately depend on your lifestyle. Take this quiz to help you nail down your decorating.

1. Do you enjoy the smell of fresh pine?

- A Yes, I look forward to it every year!
- B A scented candle does the trick for me.
- C No, it gives me a headache.

2. Do you travel for the holidays?

- A Only if you consider taking a trip downstairs as traveling.
- B Yes, but only locally to visit family.
- C Absolutely—I love to get away!

3. Do you have any pets?

- A Does a goldfish count?
- B You might consider my house to be a zoo!
- C No, animals aren’t really my thing.

4. Do you suffer from allergies?

- A No, just the standard winter germs.
- B Yes! Everything makes me sneeze.
- C Eh, it depends on the season.

5. How much space do you have for a tree?

- A I’m always willing to redecorate to make space!
- B I have a little wiggle room.
- C None at all—I don’t want to change my current setup.

MOSTLY A:

Keep It Real

You’re a true Christmas lover! Your appreciation of the smell of pine, lack of pets, and willingness to make space to decorate are key indicators that you’ll enjoy a real tree.

MOSTLY B:

Fake It ‘til You Make It

Real Christmas trees drop an abundance of pine needles, making them a pain for your allergies and risking your animals ingesting something hazardous. It also doesn’t help that you’re limited in where you can position it. All in all, an artificial tree might be best.

MOSTLY C:

Skip the Tree

Since you typically spend the holidays away from home, it may make sense to focus on arranging other seasonal decor. But don’t worry—forgoing a tree won’t make you a Scrooge!

Front of Tear Out Card 2





YOUR PHOTO HERE



CRISPY LATKES WITH ZESTY CRANBERRY CHUTNEY

Latkes – better known as fried potato pancakes – are a delectable tradition, and for good reason. They make for the perfect holiday appetizer, especially when paired with this zesty cranberry chutney.

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Back of Tear Out Card 2

ZESTY CRANBERRY CHUTNEY

4 c. fresh cranberries	¼ tsp. ground cloves
1 c. raisins	1 c. water
½ c. white sugar	½ c. onion, minced
¾ c. packed brown sugar	½ c. Granny Smith apples, peeled and chopped
2 tsp. ground cinnamon	
1 tsp. minced fresh ginger root	

1 / In a medium saucepan, combine all the ingredients except for the onion and apples. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce to a simmer until the cranberries begin to pop, about 5–7 minutes.

2 / Add the onion and apples, and continue to cook. Stir until the mixture begins to thicken, about 5–10 minutes.

3 / Transfer to a container, and refrigerate overnight to allow the flavors to combine.

CRISPY LATKES

Makes 10–12 latkes

1 small onion	3 tbsp. unsalted butter
2–3 russet potatoes, peeled	Salt and pepper, to taste
1 egg, whisked	Canola oil
½ c. flour	Sour cream, for serving

1 / Using the large side of a grater, grate the onion and potatoes onto a dish towel. Squeeze out the excess liquid, and transfer to a large mixing bowl. Add the egg, flour, butter, salt, and pepper, and stir to combine into a batter.

2 / Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Once hot, scoop small amounts of the batter into the pan, making sure the latkes don't touch each other while frying. Cook for 3–4 minutes per side or until golden and crisp on both sides.

3 / Line a plate with paper towels, and transfer the fried latkes onto it to soak up the excess oil.

4 / Serve immediately with the chutney and sour cream.

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the story of **POPULAR HOLIDAY TRADITIONS**



KWANZAA CANDLES

Established in 1966, Kwanzaa lasts for a week in late December. It focuses on seven principles ranging from the value of being with loved ones to acknowledging important achievements. To honor each tenet, participants light one of seven candles daily—three green, three red, and one black.



CHRISTMAS CARDS

These special messages were popularized in England in the late 1800s when patron of the arts Henry Cole had a dilemma: he simply had too many friends. He enlisted an artist friend to help him craft unique greeting cards for each of them, and the rest is history.



DIWALI LANTERNS

Celebrated by several religions, this holiday takes place anywhere from late October to November. A popular Hindu tradition is to light *diyas*, small earthenware lamps, during the evening on the new moon to appeal to certain deities, which may include Lakshmi, the wealth goddess.



HANUKKAH DREIDELS

There are many theories surrounding the origin of this spinning toy. Some believe that it comes from India, while others hold firm that it began in Germany. Either way, dreidel games are a widely celebrated Hanukkah tradition among children and adults to this day.

Ring in the season with this guide to some of the festive and meaningful customs that make this time of year special across the world.