## HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE IV



# Sleigh the holiday décor

There's something magical about the winter holiday season -- perhaps it's the moments spent with loved ones, the aroma of sugar cookies and peppermint, or the cozy, twinkling lights. But when it comes to decorating, there are hundreds of different styles and determining your personal holiday aesthetic can be difficult.

Whether you're looking to simply spruce up for guests or go all out with elaborate centerpieces, well-trimmed trees and accessorized mantels, try creating the right ambiance by decorating based on your personality. From festive finishes to colors that are merry and bright, here's a list of top trends and how to bring them to life this holiday season.

1. Mix metals. If you love combining gold

with stainless or bronze with nickel in your everyday décor, there's no need to stop mixing metals when it comes to holiday decorating. The glitzy combination of copper and silver or black and chrome look festive without overwhelming your year-round color palette. Consider combining various metallic accents through garland ornaments and holiday tablescapes.

2. Infuse farmhouse vibes. If you gravitate toward shiplap, exposed brick and a rustic, cozy design vibe, you can still transform your home into the "Fixer Upper" of your dreams without a sprawling farmhouse. Infuse this charming style in your space with plaid accent blankets and reclaimed wood signs that spread holiday cheer. Consider adding





in vintage elements, like decorative plates, cross-stitched tablecloths and clear vases filled with pinecones for a wintery look. This trend is sure to give your space that down-home feeling and radiate comfort for holiday guests.

3. Create an industrial aesthetic Traditional red and green décor may not be for you, but you can still deck the halls, even with an industrial-chic style. The key to creating an edgier holiday look is to combine utilitarian design with worn textures from raw materials. Think galvanized metal accents, Edison bulb string lights, copper pipe candle holders and upcycled pieces.

If you're in the market for a new kitchen faucet to help with holiday feast preparations and meal cleanup, a modern matte black faucet offers a commercial kitchen look with the reach, flexibility and functionality required for residential use.

4. A minimalist makeover. Those that embrace the KonMari lifestyle with minimalism can easily extend the "less is more" mindset to holiday décor. Achieve an uncluttered style by decorating only a few areas, or incorporate a simple and modern, yet feminine, gold and white palette. The powder room is a great space to adorn, as it will likely see heavy holiday traffic from guests. Delicate details, like Brushed Gold drawer pulls and accessories from Moen paired with well-placed greenery offer a simple design that speaks volumes.

'Tis the season for your home to be jolly, so put a festive twist on your interior updates to create a warm, inviting environment that reflects your individual design personality.

(StatePoint)

### Tips for gifting kids mobile devices this holiday season

Buying children mobile devices this holiday season? You're in good company. Fifty-three percent of children own a smartphone by age 11, and 84 percent of teenagers have their own phones, according to Common Sense Media.

While there are many great benefits to being digitally connected at a young age, there are certain issues families should address. Once the dust settles after your child receives their gift, consider these suggestions for safer, more responsible mobile device use:

- 1) Discuss Privilege and Trust. Have a casual, openended chat about the privilege and responsibilities of device ownership. Ask questions about whether their friends own devices, and what they're most excited to use it for
- 2) Set Clear Agreements. Setting clear rules about device usage is essential. Depending on your child's age, you may agree that the device only to be used for certain purposes (for example: contacting you, FaceTiming relatives, doing homework). Even with older kids and teens, it's important to discuss appropriate online behavior, healthy digital habits and "screen etiquette." Consider putting together a "contract" to be displayed somewhere visible.
- 3) Buy a Protective Case and Warranty. Devices are easy to lose or break -- especially by kids. Consider



buying a durable case and screen protector as additional presents, and definitely purchase a warranty through your carrier or a third party. Finally, make sure you have a location monitoring app installed on your child's device, which offers peace of mind, saves headaches coordinating pickups and can help you locate lost devices in a pinch.

- 4) Download a Parental Guidance App. Download a parental guidance app onto your own device, such as OurPact, which allows you to install a simple profile on your child's device. Then, you can remotely set up automated schedules for when internet and apps are unavailable, or block access manually to the device for a specified period of time. With such features as URL whitelisting and blacklisting, daily screen time allowances and iMessage/SMS blocking, you can be engaged with how your child uses their device, letting you enjoy the peace of mind knowing they aren't playing Angry Birds or Fruit Ninja past bedtime when they should be snoozing. Available at the iOS App Store and Google Play Store, parents can also sign up for an account at www.ourpact. com.
- 5) Screen Applications for Quality. Make sure all apps installed on your child's device pass your approval. It's good practice to have the App Store blocked using a tool like OurPact. This way, when your child wants to install a new app, you can research it together.
- 6) Practice What You Preach! Kids are more likely to respond to actions over words, so make sure that you're setting a good example. Don't send emails at the dinner table. Never text and drive. Make eye contact when you talk. Last but not least: always put relationships -- especially with your children -- before devices.

(StatePoint)







## THE WINTER SOLSTICE



octurnal animals and human night owls may rejoice during the winter solstice. On the winter solstice, people can witness the Earth's longest night and shortest day of the year for their respective hemispheres. For individuals living in the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice generally occurs between December 20 and 23 each year. Those in the southern hemisphere experience the winter solstice between June 20 to June 23.

In 2019, the northern hemisphere's winter solstice occurs on December 21. The solstice may come and go unnoticed, but it's an interesting day on the calendar.

1. Not only will the winter solstice occur on a specific date, it also occurs at a specific time when the Earth's semi-axis tilts furthest from the sun. This corresponds to when the North Pole is

aimed away from the sun on the 23.5 degree tilt of the Earth's axis. At this point, the sun also shines directly over the Tropic of Capricorn. The information and trivia site Mental Floss says the solstice happens at the same moment for everyone on the plane. However, the hour it occurs depends on your time zone.

2. Areas of the Northern Hemisphere can have varying lengths of day and night on the solstice. For example, New York City may have nine hours and 15 minutes of sunlight on the winter solstice. If that upsets New Yorkers, they may be happy to be outside parts of Finland, some of which get less than six hours of sunlight on the solstice.

3. The word "solstice" is derived from Latin and means "sun stands still." It was chosen to describe this cosmic phenomenon because the solstice sun seemingly appears in the same position at noontime for several days before and after the winter solstice - at its lowest point in the sky.

4. It is easy to mistake the solstices for the equinoxes, which also occur twice a year. However, the equinoxes occur in fall and spring and mark when the sun is directly above the equator and night and day are of equal length.

5. Despite the winter solstice indicating the beginning of the astrological winter, it may not be the coldest time of the season. Usually those temperatures are reserved for January and February.

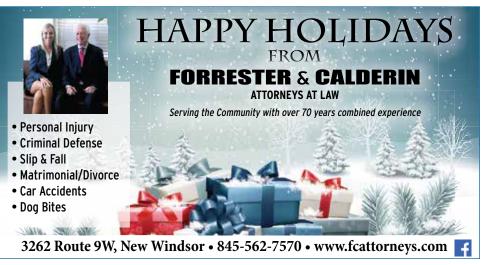
6. The Farmer's Almanac reports that many cultures marked the arrival of the solstice as a time of death and rebirth. Early man also kept track of the days by observing the sun's position in the sky. In fact, historians believe Stonehenge was created to monitor the sun's yearly "movement."

7. Many traditions associated with Christmas originated during Pagan celebrations for the winter solstice. For example, Scandinavians would burn a yule log in the hearth in honor of the god Thor. Thor's job was to bring the sun's warmth back to the people.

While the winter solstice and the lack of sunlight synonymous with it may not be something everyone looks forward to, there is a silver lining. Following the winter solstice, the hours of sunlight gradually increase by the day, eventually paving the way for the spring equinox.







### A delectably easy dessert



Add the rich flavor of caramel with this No Bake Chocolate Caramel Cheesecake for a tempting, tasty treat for a holiday gathering.

#### **No Bake Chocolate Caramel** Cheesecake

10 graham crackers, crumbled 7 tablespoons butter, melted 1/4 cup sugar 1 tablespoon cinnamon caramel sauce, divided 16 ounces cream cheese 7 tablespoons powdered sugar 1 cup whipping cream chocolate covered caramels

Place graham crackers in re-sealable plastic bag. Using rolling pin or soup can, roll graham crackers into fine crumbs.

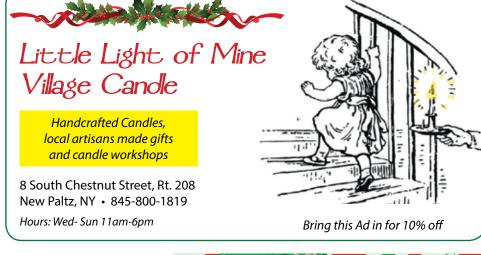
In medium bowl, add cracker crumbs, melted butter, sugar and cinnamon; stir until combined. Press into bottom of pie plate. Drizzle caramel sauce over crust; set aside.

In medium bowl, combine cream cheese. powdered sugar and whipping cream. Pour

over graham cracker crust. Refrigerate 24 hours.

Place chocolate caramel candy pieces around pie. Drizzle with caramel sauce. Refrigerate leftovers.

(Culinary.net)











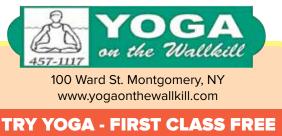




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## Last minute holiday dessert tricks

#### Use a cookie mix

Who says you have to toil and make cookies from scratch? It's the thought that counts, and any number of creative recipes can begin by utilizing a premade baking mix. These mixes already have most of the dry cookie ingredients sifted together, including flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, and sugar. All you have to do is add the wet ingredients and any extra embellishments to make the mix your own. If mixes are too much work, purchase refrigerated or frozen cookie dough. Include your own add-ins, such as nuts, white chocolate chips, bits of dried fruit, or crumbled candy canes, to give the premade dough a unique flavor.

#### Prepare ahead

Many cookie dough recipes can be made and stored for later use. In fact, refrigerating a log of cookie dough can make it easier to cut or handle later on. Spread out the bulk of your baking over two days and you might feel less taxed.

#### Try a no-bake recipe

Creative culinary experts continually reveal their clever tricks, and many of these include no-bake versions of favorite desserts.

No bake cookies come together in a matter of minutes, but still employ a host of delicious ingredients. Recipes frequently feature similar ingredients to traditional cookies, but rely on chocolate, honey or peanut butter as the setting agent to keep them together.

#### Recycle leftover cookies

If you have a fair amount of cookies remaining or several that broke apart or do not look good enough to serve, never fear. Such cookies can be used as part of another delicious dessert. Grind cookies into crumbs that can serve as a pie crust for pudding pies or

no-bake cheesecakes, or mix cookie crumbs with cake frosting or a nut butter and roll into balls. Dunk the balls into melted chocolate, add a lollipop stick and make delicious cookie pops.

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