HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE IV



Use tools on hand for entertaining with ease this holiday season

'Tis the season for gatherings galore. Whether you're an all-star entertainer or a first-time host, having the right tools will set you up for success—meaning you can spend less time in the kitchen and more time with loved ones.

Pops in a pinch and creative cocktails

Popsicles aren't just for summertime. In fact, they're a great option for a holiday crowd since you can prep them well in advance, and they make for a light dessert after a night of feasting. Simply puree some fruit – strawberries, kiwis, etc. – pour the mixture into ice pop molds, cakepop or cupcake molds, stack them in the freezer, and voilà, you've got a delightful treat that basically made itself. Better yet, add the fruity pops to a glass of champagne or cocktail of choice to add flavor and keep drinks cool.

Table-worthy tools

When hosting a dinner party, dishes will inevitably pile up in the sink. One way to cut down on dirty



dishes is to use kitchen utensils for serving so you can go from the stovetop to the dining table without needing to dirty any additional tools. Another tip is to make the meal family style, which allows your guests to choose what they want and reduces the need to portion out individual servings, ultimately giving you more time to enjoy the party.

Functional and fashionable bowls

Despite the name, mixing bowls can be one of the most versatile kitchen tools, used for mixing, prep, storage, and if you choose a stylish design like stainless steel, even serving! Why dirty multiple dishes when you can opt for one-bowl recipes? When it comes to entertaining, it's best to work smarter, not harder

Having the right tools makes all the difference when you're preparing to be the host with the most. Be sure to equip yourself right for a season of easy and festive holiday prep, and don't forget that when it comes to hosting, versatility is the name of the game.









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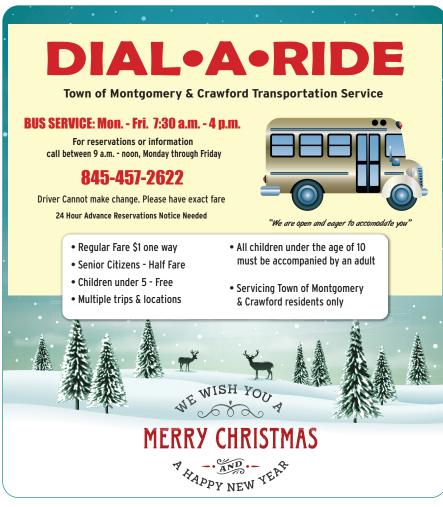


















When did Christmas lights become popular?

Decorating a Christmas tree with electric lights can be traced back to the nineteenth century. In 1882, Edward Johnson, a friend and colleague of Thomas Edison, replaced candles, which had traditionally been used to briefly light Christmas trees, with light bulbs. But at the time the high cost of light bulbs ensured the idea did not catch on. And though United States President Grover Cleveland used electric lights to illuminate a Christmas tree in the White House in 1895, it would be another eight years

before General Electric would begin selling Christmas light kits. Those kits cost \$12 in 1903, which equates to several hundred dollars today. The first outdoor Christmas light shows become popular in the 1920s, around the same time commercial sales of Christmas lights picked up. In the 1960s, GE began manufacturing Christmas lights overseas reducing the price of outdoor lights and thus paving the way for the tradition of decorating home exteriors with string lights during the holiday season.





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Let's make a toast

Sparkling wines are made by sealing the beverages before the fermentation process is complete, causing the effervescent bubbles that is their hallmark. Sparkling wines are produced in various regions of the world, but "champagne" is unique to the Champagne region of northeast France, where vines were introduced by the Romans many centuries ago.

One of the most legendary and heralded brands of champagne was created by a French monk named Pérignon. Historians say Pérignon lived from 1638 to 1715 and was

admitted in his lifetime to the abbey of Saint-Vanne. He acquired the honorary title of Dom while there, and also served as cellar master, creating what later would be known as the "vins de Pérignon."

Dom Pérignon champagne is still a prestigious brand today, joined by other leaders of the industry like Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Nicolas Feuilatte, and Pol Roger. French champagnes are part of elegant toasts, A-list events and five-star dining experiences. They also may be poured on New



Year's Eve. All champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is champagne.

Enjoying champagne on its own in the requisite stemmed glass is tradition, but champagne also can be mixed into any number of cocktails from bellinis to mimosas. This "Blood-Orange Champagne Cocktail" is a variation on the classic mimosa, and doesn't necessarily need to be enjoyed at brunch. Serve it on New Year's Eve, or for any special occasion, courtesy of Martha Stewart.

Blood-Orange Champagne Cocktail

2 1/4 cups freshly squeezed or frozen bloodorange juice

2 750-ml bottles champagne, chilled

Pour 3 tablespoons juice in each champagne flute. Fill flutes with champagne, and serve.





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