



Holiday GIFT GUIDE

SECOND EDITION 2023

Inside • Gift wrapping tips • Last minute gift ideas
• Hosting holiday dinner • Save on seasonal travel

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Shopping for those who have it all

Made-for-TV movies often depict holiday shopping in the best possible light.

The story's protagonist wanders into the town center and easily finds everything on his or her list at a series of perfectly decorated local boutiques that have nary a shopper in sight.

Hot chocolate or mulled cider and repartee also tends to be par for the television movie course.

People in the real world understand that holiday shopping doesn't always work so smoothly.

Shopping local is a great way to avoid the crowds and introduce shoppers to more unique gift options, but it's impossible to remove every obstacle in holiday shopping – particularly getting stumped over shopping for that particularly difficult person on your list.

The holly jolly nature of the season can be eclipsed when a person doesn't know where to begin when shopping for those people who seem to have it all.

The following ideas can help shoppers who are stuck on what to buy for that loved one who already has it all.

Consider experiences

A recent Harris Group study found

72 percent of millennials prefer to spend money on experiences rather than things.

If the person on your shopping list has just about every material possession one can imagine, giving unique experiences might be the way to go.

The National Retail Federation confirms the shift in attitude, noting consumers across all age groups now spend more on experiences than they did in years past.

Consolidate memories

Technology continues to evolve, which means that the way music, videos and photos are captured and stored is always changing.

Unless a person has older gear, it's no longer possible to watch a VHS tape featuring a family member's graduation ceremony or reprint photographs that are on film negatives. However, shoppers can work with a company that will transfer media onto a new format, such as a thumb drive or in a cloud-based account.

This can be a heartfelt gift for someone who wants to reminisce.

Food or beverage subscription

Everyone needs to eat (and drink), so there is always a need for tasty offerings.

Introduce loved ones to new foods with various subscriptions.

If a person is missing flavors from a home country, have delicacies shipped so the recipient can enjoy a taste of their childhood.

Make a family cookbook

Enlist the help of other family members and compile beloved family recipes.

Utilize a cookbook publishing service to compile all of these recipes together. Then gift recipients can revisit their favorites time and again.

Trace family lineage

If the gift recipient is a history buff or is interested in his or her family tree, then a membership to an ancestry service could be an ideal gift.

Individuals can spend hours uncovering distant relations and studying their family history in the process.

Holiday shopping can be challenging when looking for gifts for people who seemingly have it all. A few outside-the-box ideas can make it easier to overcome that challenge.

(METRO CREATIVE)

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STOCK PHOTO *Gift Guide*

It's all about the package

Simple tips to help you wrap your gifts with style

The holiday season is right around the corner, and that means the presents will be piling up before you know it.

This year, before you reach for the usual old boxes and bows, rethink your wrapping routine with these simple, inexpensive ideas to help you punch up every present.

Not only will you surprise and delight everyone on your gift list, but you'll also set the tone for a holiday season they'll never forget.

Think outside the box

Hold the sweater boxes and wrap your gifts in more interesting packages. Items like baskets, buckets and tins are not only fun to unwrap, but can also pull double-duty by being used around the house by the recipient after the gift has been opened.

If you saved gift boxes from last year, try repurposing them with bold, new twists such as:

- Decorating box lids using rubber stamps to create a personalized look that showcases the recipient's initials and favorite colors;
- Create a one-of-a-kind package by covering a box with colorful ribbon;
- Decorating the package with festive holiday tape, like EZ Start printed packaging tape from Duck brand. You can even use it to create various designs.

Keep it under wraps

Set aside traditional wrapping paper in favor of unexpected materials to make gifts feel even more special.

For glitz and glam, try wrapping presents in silver tissue paper, sparkly scrapbook paper or sheets of foil to create stunning style.

For the crafters in your life, seasonal fabric makes a great alternative to wrapping paper; and those who love to travel will appreciate gifts wrapped in repurposed maps and exotic newspapers.

For close family members, children's artwork makes for original, whimsical wrapping paper that doubles as a special keepsake. Just have your kids draw, doodle or paint on brown craft paper, then use it to wrap presents for grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Add an adornment

Increase the wow factor of each package by adding an embellishment that doubles as an extra gift.



From cute and quirky to stylish and sophisticated, a few simple materials and a little imagination are all that's needed to make each Christmas gift as unique as its recipient.

STOCK PHOTO Gift Guide

Holiday ornaments, silk flowers and even pieces of costume jewelry will make each present a little more personalized – and much more fun to open.

Instead of ribbon, you can also try tying up packages with leftover pieces of yarn. Not only is it a cute and unexpected adornment, but the fuzziness of the yarn adds a cozy texture that's perfect for the holiday season.

If you're looking for a final finishing touch, try making a bow out of raffia, tulle or holiday-themed Peppermint or Cinnamon Snow EZ Start printed packaging tape.

Play tag

Repurpose last year's holiday cards to create gift tags that shine. Just cut a design or picture from the front of the card. Then, punch a hole near the edge and use a felt marker to write your recipient's name on the back.

Thread some ribbon through the hole and secure it to your gift for a quick and easy tag that's sure to stand out.

Ship and surprise

In addition to the gifts you'll give in person this season, the holidays are prime time for mailing packages, presents and goodies, too.

Packaging tape in fun holiday prints, like EZ Start printed packaging tape, helps ensure the gift is protected and looks fabulous when it arrives. You can also use

the tape to spruce up envelopes for the holiday cards you send.

From cute and quirky to stylish and sophisticated, a few simple materials and these easy tips are all that's needed to make each gift as unique as its recipient.

No matter whose gifts are being wrapped this holiday season, they're sure to find these one-of-a-kind creations unforgettable.

(BPT)





Holiday dinner the easy way

Buffet entertaining tips and timesavers, especially for large gatherings

Buffet-style meals are often the best option for large gatherings of friends and family. Space constraints can make it difficult to sit everyone down for a formal meal, and buffets enable guests to mingle with one another while selecting only the foods they want to eat.

These are not the only advantages to buffets, however. Plenty of dishes can be made in advance and stored in the freezer, providing hosts and hostesses a little breathing room – helpful particularly during the busy holiday season. Meals can be prepared a few days in advance and heated up come the day of the festivities.

Buffet service can work any time of the day and can include both cold and hot foods if they are kept at the right temperature.

Here are some additional tips for hosting a holiday meal buffet-style:

Place food in an easily accessible location – Having the food on a table or counter that will not be in the way of foot traffic will help ease the flow.

Arrange dishes and cutlery at the head of the buffet line so guests can move in an orderly fashion as they select their food.

Tie together utensils for ease – Group forks, knives and spoons with a napkin and dish so guests can easily grab what they need for dining.

Practice food safety – Hot dishes need to be kept warm and cold dishes need to be placed on ice. Chafing dishes make this possible so use chafing dishes and pans in combination with your serving plates.

Heated elements or sterno under chafing dishes will keep hot foods steaming. Place crushed ice and water in a pan under cold foods to keep them chilled.

Note that food should be removed if it has been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours.

Experiment with foods that keep – In addition to traditional holiday food, or as a side dish, casseroles and baked pasta – along with similar fare – can be made in advance and frozen.

Thaw these dishes in the refrigerator the day before the party, then heat them up and serve for the buffet.

Prepared foods purchased at a supermarket or specialty retailer also work well for buffet style meals. Simply purchase

and then set out for even less work.

Consider catering options – Catering services can make easy work of holiday hosting but not without expense. Caterers may charge by the person or by each tray of food.

Some caterers will include table settings and rolls with the price; others may not.

Calculate the costs of using a caterer and weigh them against the cost of handling the meal yourself. Or, ask guests to bring a dish for the meal to ease the work as host.

Use plastic utensils for hot foods – Metal spoons and forks can quickly heat up when sitting in hot serving dishes. Use plastic utensils so guests do not get burned.

Keep dressings on the side – Salad dressings and other condiments can cause foods to wilt or get soggy. Have them nearby so guests can help themselves.

Consider using topless squirt bottles, which are easier to handle and can help limit spills.

Be mindful of food allergies – Although you may have various foods available to meet the dietary needs of guests, do not place risky foods next to others.

Cross-contamination can occur from

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Buffets are a fine choice for big groups because they provide a wider variety of food and offer hosts the chance to mingle with guests during the gathering.

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spills or if a person happens to use the same serving spoon to dish out foods from multiple containers.

To be extra cautious, label food so it's clear what the options are.

Ask for help setting up – Ask a family member or two or close friend to come over an hour or two early to help set up the buffet and assist with any other last-minute touches.

This will take some of the pressure off of the host and ease some of the stress as they can chat and enjoy themselves before the dinner guests begin to arrive.

Frozen foods should be thoroughly wrapped – Only use freezer-safe bags and containers to store prepared foods, otherwise you may run the risk of freezer burn or freezing, which will affect the taste of the final product.

Keep in mind that many desserts, such as fruit pies, can also be frozen.

It's possible to make in advance just about everything for a holiday feast and simply thaw and reheat when the big day arrives.

Create a good side dish ratio – Buffets should include a variety of side dishes. Select one or two main dishes and then vary the rest of the selection with rice, pasta, vegetables, or other favorite side dishes.

Keep take-away containers on hand – You're bound to make more food than



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you need, so send guests home with their own goodie bags to lighten the load on your leftovers.

Encourage guests to fill up a container or two and take some food home with them.

Lock pets away – An open, unattended buffet can seem like paradise to a cat or dog. It's not sanitary or particularly appealing

for guests to catch a pet taking advantage of buffet fare.

To avoid this, keep pets in a bedroom or outside when the meal is being served.

Buffets are a fine choice for big groups because they provide variety and the chance to mingle with guests during the gathering.

(METRO CREATIVE)

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Gift ideas for the family artist

The feeling of giving a gift and watching the recipient smile broadly after peeling away the wrapping is part of what makes holiday season such a special time of year.

Matching presents to people is not always easy, but when shoppers pull it off, the smile on a loved one's face is quite the reward. Creative individuals and resident artists are continually honing their crafts.

This holiday season could be the perfect opportunity to tune into these artistic pursuits and give something that lets artists take their creativity to the next level.

The following are some gift ideas for artistic individuals on holiday shopping lists.

Supplies gift basket

Each artistic pursuit requires its own array of materials and tools to perfect the craft.

For example, painters will rely on canvases, oils and paintbrushes to create masterpieces, while those who engage in ceramics may need bisques, clays and firing tools.

A mix of art supplies can fuel upcoming

projects.

Museum or exhibition visit

Artists may be inspired by others who engage in the arts. Purchase tickets to a museum that has always been a favorite for the gift recipient.

Entry to a local art installation or exhibition also figures to be a hit.

Lessons

Classes with an artistic master can help artists hone their craft. Masterclass.com offers annual subscriptions or monthly sessions during which people can learn from the world's best instructors in their respective fields.

Local artists also may be willing to serve as mentors or instructors, and sessions with these people also can make perfect holiday gifts.

Shopping experience

Many artists also are entrepreneurs who sell their wares to others. You can help promote that passion by funding an online shopping website or paying for table or booth fees at area craft festivals and other

vendor events around town.

Display their art

If an artist you know has a particularly beloved collection or piece of art, arrange for a professional framing or purchase a high-end display case. This way the artwork will remain pristine for others to enjoy in the years ahead.

Gift cards

Though gift cards may seem impersonal, they can be the means by which an artist is able to purchase supplies or travel to art shows to sell their offerings.

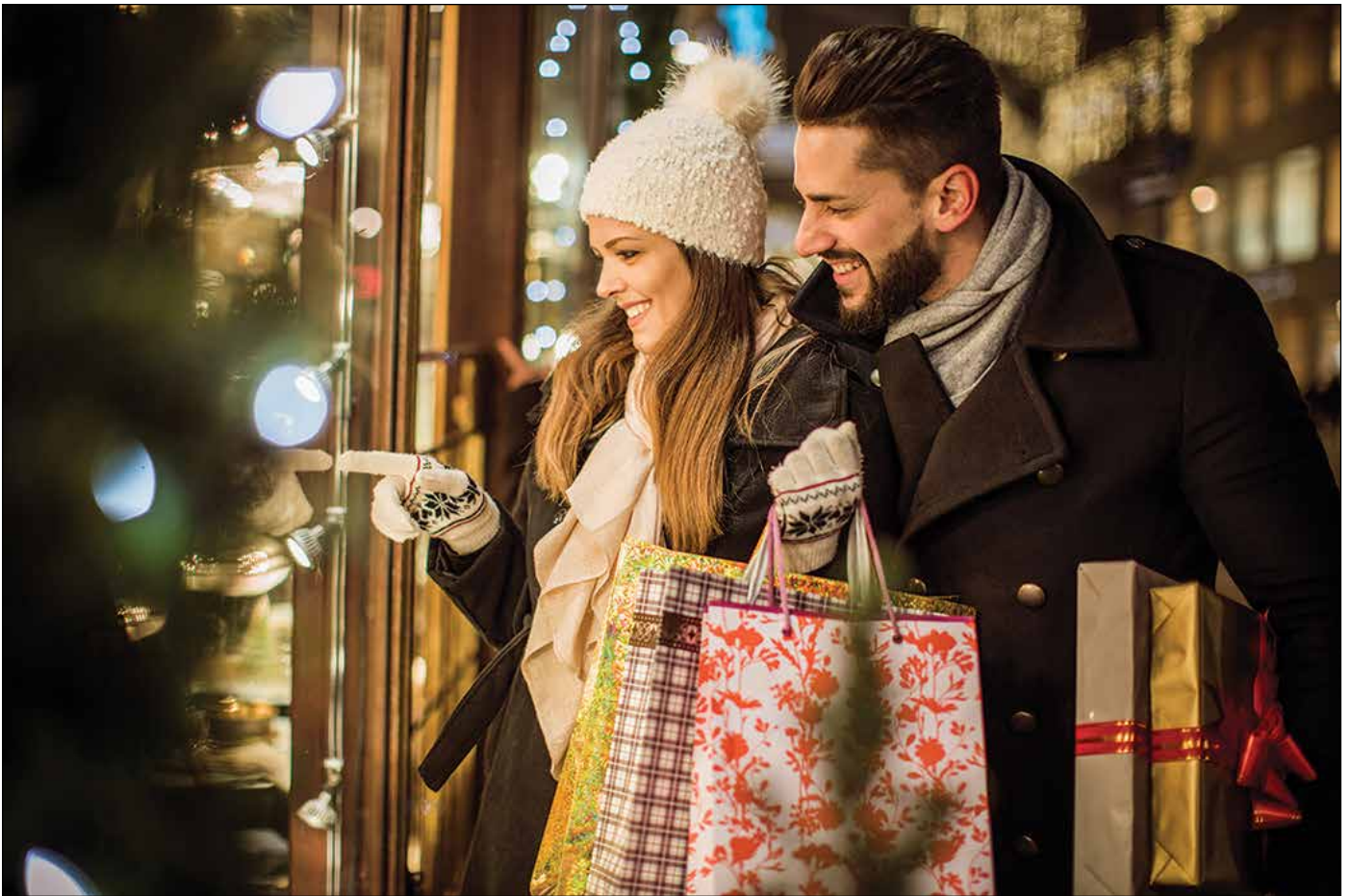
Don't discount the utility of gift cards come the holiday season.

Artists can benefit from a number of different gifts that help to propel their creative pursuits.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Creative individuals and resident artists are continually honing their crafts. This holiday season could be the perfect opportunity to give something that lets them take their creativity to the next level.

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Ideas for last-minute holiday shoppers

It's unlikely that anyone aspires to be a last-minute holiday shopper. Putting off holiday shopping until the last minute can make for a stressful home stretch to the season, and there's no guarantee store shelves won't already be picked clean or that gifts purchased online will arrive on time.

Despite how unappealing last-minute shopping can be, it's still a fact of life for millions of holiday shoppers.

As the clock winds down this holiday season, shoppers can look to these ideas for inspiration.

Gift cards

Gift cards may never earn a distinction as the most sentimental item to give a loved one during the holiday season, but they are surprisingly sought-after.

In fact, a survey from the National Retail Federation found that 54 percent of participants identified gift cards as the most-wanted gift of the 2022 holiday season.

Chain retailers, small businesses

and restaurants are among the many establishments that sell gift cards, so shoppers are bound to find a card to please anyone on their shopping list.

Food/beverage

The holiday season is a popular time to indulge in some great food and wash it down with a favorite wine or another adult beverage. That makes food and beverages a great holiday gift.

Shoppers can take a loved one out to a favorite restaurant, prepare a homemade treat or purchase a favorite dish from a local specialty grocery store or eatery.

Pair the food with an appropriate beverage and this accessible last-minute gift idea is sure to be a hit.

Tickets

Tickets to a movie, sporting event, live theater performance, or concert are another gift idea that likely won't be gobbled up by early bird shoppers.

People of all ages enjoy experiences,

and a 2022 survey from the travel booking platform GetYourGuide found that 50 percent of survey respondents indicated they would enjoy tickets to a concert or show.

Books

Books make an ideal holiday gift for everyone from young kids to grandparents. Traditional print books are small enough that they can likely arrive on time even if they're purchased just a few days before Christmas.

E-book sellers enable gift givers to pick the perfect time to notify loved ones they have received an electronic book.

Audiobooks, which can be downloaded to a smartphone or given as a CD, make an ideal gift for loved ones who spend a lot of time behind the wheel.

Last-minute holiday shopping can be stressful. However, various sought-after items can be secured at the last minute, ensuring gift givers' loved ones have a happy holiday season.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Despite how unappealing last-minute shopping can be, it's still a fact of life for millions of holiday shoppers and there are several gifts that are suitable for many people.

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Hitting the road this holiday season

Ways to save money when traveling is necessary

Nothing beats spending time with loved ones during the holidays, but the process of getting there can leave a lot to be desired.

Traffic on the roads, crowds at the airport and expensive plane tickets and hotel rooms may challenge your resolve in maintaining your holiday cheer.

But if you plan ahead and are smart about your travel, you won't need to worry about turning into a grinch before you get to your destination.

Just like savvy shoppers know when and where they can find the best deals on holiday gifts, a few simple strategies can get you the best deals on travel and keep your stress level to a minimum.

Here are a few ideas that can help you keep money in your pocket and thoughts of peace and happiness in your mind:

Book early

Whether it's purchasing your flight, hotel

or rental car, the holidays are one time that it really pays to beat the rush.

As space on flights and hotels becomes scarce, you're not likely to find a very good deal closer to your travel date.

Compare your options

Use travel sites like Orbitz, Travelocity, Hotels.com and Expedia to find the best prices on flights, hotel rooms and rental cars.

Expand your searches to include nearby airports as well, as you may find savings at smaller airports in surrounding areas.

Travel sites may also be able to offer discounts when you book your hotel and rental car at the same time as your flight.

Look for coupons

Sites like Expedia, Groupon, JetSetter, Yuupon and TripAlertz offer deals from the top travel sites and airlines with some featuring increased cash back rewards

during special fall and holiday promotions. TripAlertz believes travel should not just be a transaction and donates 1% of direct revenue to sustainability efforts.

Don't just settle for the best price you find on your first search – see if you can apply other coupons and rewards to bring costs down even further.

Travel during the week

If you have the flexibility, booking your travel as far away from the holiday itself and away from the surrounding weekends can potentially save you a lot of cash.

Try a date range search on your favorite travel site to see which days offer the best prices for travel.

Sign up for alerts

Many travel sites also offer the

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Traffic on the roads, crowds at the airport and expensive plane tickets and hotel rooms may challenge your resolve in maintaining your holiday cheer. But if you plan ahead and are smart about your travel, you won't need to worry about turning into a grinch before you get to your destination.

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opportunity to sign up for low price alerts for the destination of your preference.

You can also sign up for daily emails from coupon sites. But don't wait too long for the best deal, especially around the holidays – be ready to purchase as soon as you see the right price as it might not be there for long.

Pay attention to fees

Decide ahead of time how much luggage you will bring and factor luggage fees as you price out plane tickets. If your family plans on checking multiple bags, you may want to pay just a bit extra for tickets from an airline that allows you to check some bags for free.

Shopping online for gifts and having them sent directly to your destination can help lighten your load whether you are flying or driving.

Consider hotel options

It might be possible to find a deal at a hotel that usually serves business travelers rather than a more family-oriented hotel. If you're just looking for a place to put your head down for the night, this could be a great option.

By looking in the right places and planning ahead, you can save a considerable amount of money on holiday travel. That will allow you to spend more on activities or gifts for your loved ones – or simply put your savings in the bank to use on next year's trip.



(BPT)

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On the garden path

Enhance your holiday landscape

Add color to outdoor space while helping out feathered friends

Add a little holiday sparkle to your landscape for you and your guests to enjoy. No matter the weather outside, a few decorative touches can greatly increase the beauty and enjoyment of the space outside your home.

Try one, two or all of these tips to improve your landscape's winter appeal.



By **MELINDA MYERS**
Contributor

Add solar accents

Light a pathway, your favorite tree or front porch without installing additional outlets. Look for unique colors and shapes like the solar star lantern or the changing colors of northern lights spheres for added appeal.

The wide variety now available can help create a memorable winter display. Be sure to select solar accents that provide hours of enjoyment when fully charged.

Feed feathered friends

Create an outdoor holiday tree for you and your feathered visitors to enjoy. Decorate a few of your evergreen trees and shrubs with purchased or homemade birdseed ornaments.

Holiday shapes made of energy rich birdseed and suet give the trees a holiday flare, while providing important food for birds to enjoy. These also make great gifts for your favorite gardener or bird watcher.

Light it up

Fill a weatherproof planter with potting mix or play sand. Purchase greens from your favorite garden center or trim a few from your landscape.

Stick the cut end of the greens in the potting mix or sand to create an attractive display. Add some colorful berries, decorative twigs and ribbon. Then add some height and light to your winter container with fiber optic solar lights.

Place the container by your front steps for holiday visitors to enjoy day or night.

Attract more birds

Increase color and motion with the help of heated birdbaths. Attract greater numbers and variety of birds by providing water



Add a little holiday sparkle to your landscape for you and your guests – including birds – to enjoy. No matter the weather outside, a few decorative touches can greatly increase the beauty and enjoyment of the space outside your home.

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year-round.

Northern gardeners should consider heated birdbaths to ensure water is available even during the coldest months.

Further help the birds by adding a few stones or branches to the birdbath. This allows them to drink without getting wet, helping them to preserve their body heat.

Make your own lights

Create your own homemade outdoor lights by lining pathways, accent plantings or dress up fence posts with ice globe luminaries. Produce your own or purchase

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

ready to make kits.

Use colorful outdoor LED lights or tea candles to light up blocks or spheres of ice.

You and your family – especially younger members – will have fun creating these memorable nighttime accents.

Add color, art

Hang a few colorful and unique birdhouses in your backyard. They provide color and whimsy to the winter landscape and will be ready for your feathered friends to move in when spring arrives.

Include a “gingerbread” house for the birds by hanging decorative birdseed houses from a shepherd’s crook or tree branch.

Be sure to place it in an area where you and the birds can enjoy the decorative treat. Look for a sheltered, but open area where the birds can watch for predators while enjoying their winter feast.

Move the tree outdoors

Place your cut holiday tree in a snowbank, vacant spot in the garden or make it part of your bird feeding station.

The tree provides some extra greenery in the often-drab winter landscape as well as shelter for the visiting birds. Then add a few of those birdseed ornaments for added food and winter decoration.



Hang a few colorful and unique birdhouses in your backyard. They provide color and whimsy to the winter landscape and will be ready for your feathered friends to move in when spring arrives.

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Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the recently released *Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition* and *Small Space Gardening*.

She hosts *The Great Courses* “How to Grow Anything” instant video and

DVD series and the nationally syndicated *Melinda's Garden Moment* TV & radio program.

Myers is also a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine. Her website is MelindaMyers.com.

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USPS announces holiday shipping, mailing deadlines

To assist customers with their preparations for the upcoming busy holiday shopping and shipping season, the U.S. Postal Service recently provided 2023 holiday shipping and mailing deadlines.

The information below covers domestic, international and military shipping destinations to allow for the timely delivery of cards, letters and packages by Dec. 25.

No holiday surcharges

The Postal Service has announced it will not have a peak, or demand, surcharge this holiday season, offering increased predictability in pricing for customers.

As always, the Postal Service offers simple, upfront pricing year-round with no additional fees for residential area delivery, for Saturday delivery, no fuel surcharges and no volume minimums.

The Postal Service continues to be the most affordable way to mail and ship this holiday season.

USPS is ready

A new shipping option this year is USPS Ground Advantage, a service that provides

a simple, reliable and affordable way to ship packages with day certain delivery of two to five business days based on distance.

In addition to convenient retail locations, customers can purchase their shipping labels, order Priority Mail packaging and schedule free carrier pick up via the Postal Service's shipping platform, Click-N-Ship.

Customers using the platform will have access to Commercial Shipping Rates that will apply to all domestic package labels – making it easier for customers to ship their packages.

The Postal Service is built for the holidays, serving 165 million addresses across the country and covering every state, city and town. Everyone living in the United States and its territories has access to postal products and services.

Review the details on how to ship packages to military and diplomatic addresses at domestic prices, even if you are sending mail overseas. Notably, the Postal Service is the only delivery service that ships to APO, FPO and DPO addresses.

2023 deadlines

Within the Lower 48

(excludes Alaska and Hawaii):

- USPS Ground Advantage – Dec. 16
- First-Class Mail (including greeting cards) – Dec. 16
- Priority Mail – Dec. 18
- Priority Mail Express – Dec. 20

Alaska:

- USPS Ground Advantage – Dec. 16
- First-Class Mail – Dec. 16
- Priority Mail – Dec. 18
- Priority Mail Express – Dec. 20

Hawaii:

- USPS Ground Advantage – Dec. 16
- First-Class Mail – Dec. 16
- Priority Mail – Dec. 16
- Priority Mail Express – Dec. 20

Air/Army Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO), Diplomatic Post Office (DPO)

- USPS Ground Advantage – Nov. 6
- First-Class Mail – Dec. 9
- Priority Mail – Dec. 9
- Priority Mail Express Military Service – Dec. 15*
- *PMEMS not available for APO/FPO/DPO AE ZIPs 093

International Mail

Shipping deadlines for international mail vary depending on the destination. Check out International Mail and Shipping Services for details.

The Postal Service is a secure shipping option that meets international mail shipping needs to over 180 countries.

More tools and tips to help customers prepare for the busy holiday season can be found by visiting usps.com.



Hosting the holidays when times are hectic

Who wouldn't love the holiday season to unfold similarly to the plot of a made-for-TV movie?

In such films, families get along, townsfolk are overcome with the holiday spirit and even minor obstacles all get worked out by the time the credits roll.

Hosting the holidays in the real world doesn't always go so smoothly.

The period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day can be hectic, as social schedules fill up and work demands mount before people take an end-of-year break.

Food may not turn out perfectly and gifts may be purchased in the eleventh hour. In fact, most people's holiday celebrations may be more "Clark Griswold" than "Norman Rockwell."

However, a few tips can help any host handle a hectic holiday season.

Set the date early

Give guests plenty of time to plan for your event. If it is a holiday social gathering that does not take place on the holiday itself, provide at least three weeks' notice so guests can plan accordingly.

This also allows you plenty of time to work backward from that date to ensure all

details are accounted for.

Keep it simple

Instead of a four-course dinner with gourmet fare, consider something small and easy.

A gathering that's not geared around trying to impress can ensure hosts have time to kick back and relax with their guests – something everyone can use during this busy time of year.

Choose a theme, like hot cocoa and cookies or cocktails and charcuterie, so you won't have as many tasks to tackle. Asking everyone to bring a dish also reduces hosts' workload.

Space out cleaning

Rather than a mad dash to the finish line the day of the event, space out getting the home in order the entire week prior to the party.

Focus on the rooms that will get the most attention, such as living areas, bathrooms and kitchens.

Prepare overnight spaces

If guests will be spending one or more nights, decide where they will sleep.

Choose a private spot away from the hustle of the household, such as a den, home office space or even a finished basement.

Create a welcome basket that includes some creature comforts and necessities, such as extra toiletries, a book, note with Wi-Fi password, and some individually wrapped chocolates.

Set aside a quiet retreat

Sometimes you may need to sneak away for a moment to take a breather from the action.

Delegate a private space where you can retreat for a few minutes to catch your breath and do some relaxation exercises. Then you may return refreshed and ready to interact with guests once again.

Some simple strategies can help hosts navigate the often hectic holiday season.

(METRO CREATIVE)

Even though the food may not turn out perfectly and gifts may be purchased in the eleventh hour, a few tips can help any host handle a hectic holiday season.

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Tasty tidbits about eggnog

Eggnog is a rich and delicious beverage that has become synonymous with the most festive time of year. This milk- and egg-based concoction is tasty on its own, or it can be dressed up with other flavors and spiked with a favorite spirit when celebrating the holiday season with other adult partygoers.

December is National Eggnog Month, and Dec. 24 is National Eggnog Day. There is no more perfect time of year to learn everything you can about eggnog – all the while sipping a cup of this creamy concoction.

Indulge in these festive facts about the beverage, courtesy of Mental Floss, The Fact Site and Tastemade.

- Eggnog likely originated in the medieval period and was known as “posset,” a hot, milk-based drink made of spices and wine. Even though posset could be a cocktail, it also was used as a remedy for colds and flu for its soothing properties.

- Milk, eggs and sherry used in the early recipes were difficult to come by, so when eggnog first appeared it was a drink only the wealthy could enjoy. That changed when eggnog was popularized in the American colonies, where dairy products and liquor were more readily available.

- Entomologists believe “eggnog” stems from the word “noggin,” which refers to small wooden mugs often used to serve strong ale, known by the slang word “nog.”

- In the Medieval period, it was risky to drink milk straight because it wasn’t pasteurized. Eggnog contained alcohol so that it would kill off any harmful bacteria in the milk.

- A typical homemade version of eggnog has roughly one egg per serving. However, commercial eggnog is regulated by the FDA and can only contain 1 percent of the product’s final weight in egg yolk solids. That stems from fear of raw egg and salmonella.

- President George Washington apparently enjoyed serving eggnog at Christmas, and even had his own special recipe (see below), according to the Old Farmer’s Almanac.

- There is no right or wrong alcohol to use when preparing eggnog. Distilled spirits like rum, sherry, cognac, and whiskey all have produced suitable eggnogs.

- Puerto Rican coquito is a traditional drink that is very similar to eggnog.

- Individuals concerned about eggs or milk in eggnog can enjoy a vegan recipe made from nut milk instead. Commercially produced vegan eggnog offerings are now more widely available.

- One of the more notable flavors in



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eggnog comes from the use of nutmeg. Nutmeg is a fragrant spice made from grinding the seed of the nutmeg tree.

Now that you’ve learned about eggnog, whip up a batch of George Washington’s original recipe this holiday season.

Eggnog

(George Washington’s original interpretation)

1 quart cream
1 quart milk
1 dozen tablespoons sugar
1 pint brandy
1/2 pint rye whiskey
1/2 pint Jamaican rum

1/4 pint sherry

Eggs (Washington forgot to include the number of eggs, so home chefs can improvise or use six, which seems to be the standard in traditional recipes)

Mix liquor first, then separate yolks and whites of eggs, add sugar to beaten yolks, mix well. Add milk and cream, slowly beating. Beat whites of eggs until stiff and fold slowly into mixture.

Let sit in a cool place for several days. Taste frequently.

Tip: Today’s recipe makers may want to set the eggnog in the refrigerator as the “cool place” of choice.

(METRO CREATIVE)

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