

The  Current

Holiday Guide 2021

Great Ideas for Making it the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

THE 40TH ANNUAL
LIVING CHRISTMAS TREE 2021

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Holiday Happenings

Many Christmas parades and light displays are taking place across southwest Oklahoma this holiday season. We suggest checking local sources for adaptations before attending any event.

Christmas Parades

Walters – 6 p.m., Dec. 4. Decorate floats for the theme “A Superhero Christmas.” Cash prizes will be awarded for best float and non-float.

Duncan – 3 p.m., Dec. 4. Decorate floats for the theme “Christmas Around the World.”

Marlow – 10 a.m., Dec. 4.

Medicine Park – 9 a.m., Dec. 18. Parade and carnival.

Cache – 7 p.m., Dec. 11. Parade starts at school, through downtown, up to city park on H & Hwy 115.

Lawton – 6 p.m., Nov. 20. Parade starts at 2nd & C, ends at Elmer Thomas Park.

Elgin – 7 p.m., Dec. 11.

Fletcher - Dec. 11

Holiday Events

Lawton’s Elmer Thomas Park will be all aglow when Holiday in the Park flips on the lights Nov. 20. New this year are more than 20 new light displays and a skating rink. Hay rides, food trucks, petting zoo and holiday movies are planned for special weekends, and visitors can enjoy hot cocoa at the Holiday House. The Frost Your Fanny 5K & Fun Run starts at 5:30 p.m., right before the parade on Nov. 20. Learn more at www.lawtonfortsillchamber.org and look for the Holiday in the Park tab.

Enjoy 43 acres of illuminated displays at the Festival of Light in Chickasha’s Shannon Springs Park. Hours are 6-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday and 6-11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, Nov. 20-Dec. 31. Ice skating, carriage rides, food trucks and amusement rides make for a fun family outing. Find out more at www.chickashafestivalofflight.org.

The 39th annual Living Christmas Tree will take place on Dec. 10, 11 and 12 at First Baptist Church in Lawton. Several performances are scheduled. Visit www.fbclawton.org for more details.



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Five easy ways to plan ahead for the holidays

The holidays can be a stressful time, and that's likely going to be heightened this year as ongoing supply chain challenges and inflation, which is at the highest it's been over the past 13 years, make it difficult to find unbeatable deals on the most coveted items.

New research is showing that many families are preparing by shopping early. Seventy-one percent of parents start buying their holiday gifts as early as possible, according to a new study commissioned by Seattle-based online retailer Zulily. That research also shows that there may be other benefits of planning ahead than checking items off holiday wish lists.

The "Brain of the Planner" research - a first-of-its-kind pilot study conducted by third-party researcher En-

gine - used Artificial Intelligence (AI) to analyze human emotions through facial and linguistic expressions to understand what motivates moms to plan and what benefits they experience as a result. This research found that having a planful mindset can reduce stress and anxiety, allow for more leisure and social time, and help parents create healthier relationships and more stability - and importantly, that these positive behaviors can be learned over time.

"We know it's not always possible to plan ahead, but there are tips that can help even natural procrastinators start to adopt planning behaviors to experience many of these same benefits," said Luca Cazzanti, director of data science at Zulily. "We talked to moms directly, as they are largely

responsible for planning as the heads of households and primary decision-makers for their families, to understand what small habits are most helpful to form when it comes to becoming a better planner."

Here are simple tips to plan ahead this holiday season and beyond:

1. Use lists, phone calendar apps and paper calendars. Lists are a constant visual reminder to stay on track and can help you make the most of the holiday season. Both paper and digital calendars are useful tools to keep track of your schedule, prioritize and set boundaries so you can achieve your goals in the time you have, like checking off your gift lists or decorating your home. Write out what needs to be done and digitally slot it in to maximize your day, every day.

2. Get others involved to help you stay motivated. Family, friends and peers can motivate you to achieve your goals and help you get the job done - you can't, and shouldn't, do everything yourself. By delegating certain tasks, you can use your time more productively. When it comes to the holidays, assign tasks to partners, kids and even in-laws who may be in town for the occasion.

3. Break large tasks into smaller parts. Big tasks can feel impossible to complete and inhibit your ability to focus. If the task is too large or overwhelming, create smaller, more manageable tasks that lead up to accomplishing the big task. If you're shopping for an entire family for the holidays, start with one person and tick each off your list, one at a time.

*Dr. Nate Edwards &
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4. Set an artificial deadline ahead of the real deadline. If you need to accomplish a task on Thursday, tell yourself the deadline is Tuesday. Self-constructed deadlines help you get ahead of your schedule and reduce the stress of leaving things to the very last minute. For the holiday season, make Halloween the new Thanksgiving deadline.

5. Shop for big seasonal moments weeks or even months in advance. Make note of the big moments throughout the year (like the holidays or back-to-school season) when it's likely other families will be shopping for similar items. Do your research to get ahead, and consider shopping at least two or three months in advance for more peace of mind when that season arrives.

Experts predict that many of the most-wanted toys of the year are expected to sell out quickly. To help moms plan ahead, Zulily has named its 25 Top

Toys for Holiday, which includes toys that develop fine motor and problem-solving skills, and includes toys that invite imagination and spark creativity.

Top 10 toys from this year's list are:

1. Barbie 3-In-1 Dreamcamper
2. PicassoTiles 101-Piece 3D Magnetic Building Tile Play Set
3. Fisher-Price Giant Rock-a-Stack Toy
4. Joybay Sky Blue Premium LED Swing Car
5. LEGO Marvel Studios The Guardians' Ship
6. Barbie House Doll Play Set
7. Barbie Holiday Doll
8. PicassoTiles 61-Piece 3D Magnetic Building Tile Play Set
9. Barbie Art Teacher & Student Doll
10. PicassoTiles Marble Run 71-Piece Magnetic Building Blocks

For the full list of toys and other holiday items, visit www.Zulily.com.



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Checking off your Christmas shopping list is easier than ever when you use your Co-op Connections card. Local merchants in southwest Oklahoma are offering special deals just for Cotton Electric members.

Got a loved one who loves antiques? In need of stocking stuffers? Want a monogrammed or personalized gift? Would your friend or loved one prefer a nice holiday bouquet? You can find deals on these and so much more on www.connections.coop, or by using the Co-op Connections app.

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Before you head out on your shopping trip, planning is key. Head over to www.connections.coop or the app

and type into the search bar where you want to shop, either by zip code or the type of business you want (i.e., boutique, gifts, books, etc.). This lets you efficiently route your day, saving time and helping you make the most of your trip.

While you're out shopping, the sitter can get help entertaining the kids at local attractions. They'll have fun while learning, and you'll keep money in your pocket with the discounted admissions.

Don't forget to reward yourself for saving money this season. Unwind after a day of shopping with a massage, or get a new look with a salon service or save up to 50% on beauty products.

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Before you plan out your new holiday lighting scheme or repeat last year's festive design, keep these 10 safety tips in mind when decorating outdoors:

- 1 Do not toss light strands up into the air. They could get too close to or come into contact with a power line.
- 2 Before using a ladder, always look up and assess all power line locations.
- 3 Carry a ladder horizontally when transporting it.
- 4 Keep at least 10 feet between yourself (and any item you are holding) and a power line.
- 5 Do not use staples or nails or tacks to secure light strands, cords, wires or extension cords.
- 6 String together no more than the number of strands recommended by the manufacturer.
- 7 Plug all lights and extension cords into GFCI-protected outlets.
- 8 Use lights and extension cords rated for outdoor use.
- 9 Do not use frayed, cracked or otherwise damaged cords, plugs or lights.
- 10 Use only lights and products certified by a reputable testing lab.

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Reduce risk of home fires this holiday season

Safety might not be the first thing people think of as the holiday season approaches. Faith, celebrations, decorations, and holiday dinners all come to mind when considering the holiday season. But that doesn't mean safety should be left out of holiday planning.

Fire safety bears special consideration during the holiday season, when the prevalence of fire hazards like Christmas trees, holiday lighting displays and other decorative items increase the risk for home fires. Such tragedies can be averted with a few simple safety measures.

- Tend to your tree. Live Christmas trees are awe-inspiring, but they also pose a significant fire risk. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) urges celebrants to purchase only healthy trees with fresh, green needles that do not fall off when touched. Such trees are less likely to dry out, especially when well-watered throughout the season. Dry trees can catch fire more easily than healthy

trees if embers from nearby fireplaces or candles drift in their direction.

- Recognize that location matters when decorating. The NFPA notes that Christmas trees should always be placed at least three feet away from any heat source, including fireplaces, space heaters, heat vents, candles, and even overhead lights. If decorating with candles, never place them on the tree or on tables where other flammable decorations have already been placed. Chanukah menorahs should never be placed near curtains or other decorations.

- Turn off all lights and extinguish all lit decorative items when leaving the home or going to bed. Lit candles and menorahs should never be left unattended. The NFPA recommends turning tree lights and exterior decorative lights off when leaving the home or going to bed.

- Utilize a fire screen on fireplaces. Embers can catch on trees, decorations or anything else that's

flammable if they escape the fireplace. Fire screens prevent that from happening by ensuring embers from burning logs stay in the fireplace. Like candles and menorahs, fires burning in a fireplace should never be left unattended. Make sure all embers have been extinguished before leaving the home or going to bed.

- Keep discarded trees away from your home. A 2014 analysis from the NFPA found that none of the ten days with the largest share of Christmas tree fires were before Christmas. Dried out trees still pose a fire risk even after they've been removed from a home. When discarding a tree at the end of the holiday season, place it at the curb or keep it a safe distance away from your home and garage until you can.

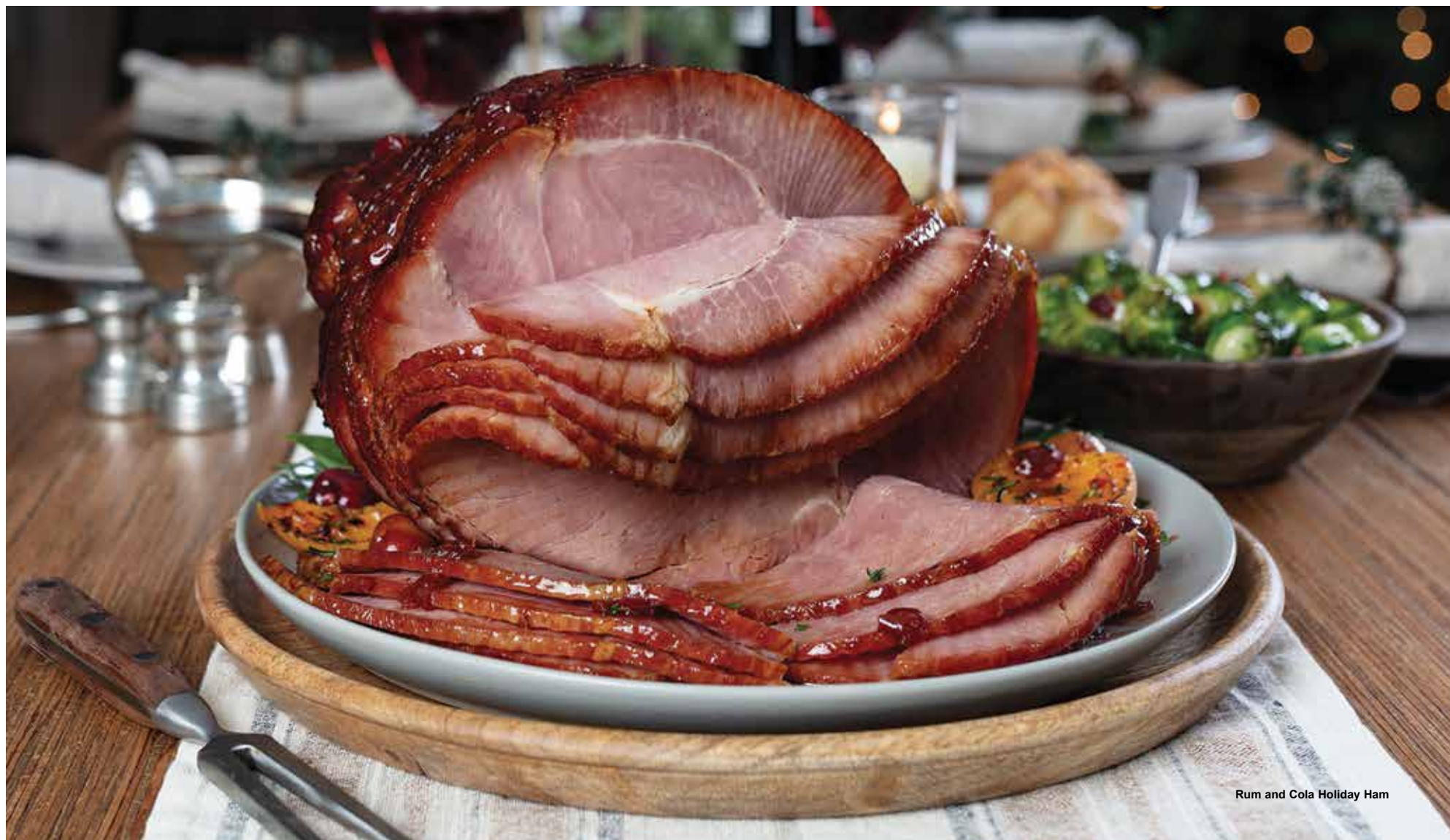
Fire safety measures are an important component of the holiday season that can prevent this joyous time of year from turning tragic.

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Rum and Cola Holiday Ham

Special Centerpieces for Holiday Celebrations

FAMILY FEATURES

Few things bring family and friends together quite like the holidays, and serving up an elegant, seasonal meal centered around a mouthwatering main dish is a recipe for creating lasting memories with the ones you love.

Forging a fabulous holiday experience for the special people in your life starts with choosing a flavorful, tender cut of meat to serve as the centerpiece of the meal. Hand-cut by expert butchers, options like Spiral-Sliced Ham, Boneless Heart of Prime Rib Roast and Butcher's Cut Filet Mignons from Omaha Steaks can serve as the focal point of a memorable holiday dinner. Flash frozen to capture freshness and flavor, you can select a standout cut of meat from the comfort of your home and have it delivered directly to your door in time to put together a tender, juicy main course.

Find more holiday recipe inspiration at OmahaSteaks.com/blog/recipes.

Rum and Cola Holiday Ham

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose
Prep time: 30 minutes
Cook time: 80 minutes
Servings: 10-12

Ham:

1 Omaha Steaks Spiral-Sliced Ham (8 pounds)

Glaze:

1 cup cherry fruit spread
3/4 cup dark spiced rum
3/4 cup cola
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

To make ham: Thaw frozen ham in refrigerator 24-48 hours.

Remove from refrigerator and let ham come to room temperature, about 30-45 minutes.

Preheat oven to 325 F. Remove ham from foil and film. Return ham to foil wrapping and place in oven-safe roasting pan. Roll foil down leaving 2 inches of foil around bottom of ham.

Place roasting pan with ham in oven on lower rack and heat uncovered 60-75 minutes, until ham starts to brown. While ham cooks, make glaze.

To make glaze: In medium saucepot, whisk fruit spread, rum, cola, Worcestershire sauce, Dijon mustard and salt until well incorporated. Bring to boil then reduce heat to medium. Simmer over medium heat 10 minutes then remove from heat. Cool to room temperature.

During last 15 minutes of cooking, glaze ham every 5 minutes.



Suya-Dusted Filet Mignon with "Red Rice" Risotto

Suya-Dusted Filet Mignon with "Red Rice" Risotto

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks
Executive Chef David Rose
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 1 hour
Servings: 4

Suya Dust:

- 2 cups roasted cashews
- 1 tablespoon chicken bouillon
- 1 tablespoon, plus 1 teaspoon, smoked paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons onion powder

"Red Rice" Risotto:

- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 1/2 cup diced yellow onion
- 3 fresh garlic cloves, smashed
- 1/2 cup diced red bell pepper
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 large beefsteak tomato (about 1/2 pound), chopped
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt, plus additional, to taste, divided (optional)

- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper, plus additional, to taste, divided (optional)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups Arborio rice
- 4 cups warmed chicken stock, divided
- 1/2 cup finely chopped Italian parsley
- 1 cup freshly shredded Parmesan cheese

Filet Mignon:

- 4 Omaha Steaks Butcher's Cut Filet Mignons (6 ounces each)
- kosher salt
- ground black pepper
- 4 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 thyme sprig

To make suya dust: In food processor, blend cashews, chicken bouillon, paprika, cayenne pepper, bell pepper, black pepper, ginger, garlic powder and onion powder into fine powder.

To make "red rice" risotto: In medium saucepan, warm canola oil over medium-high heat. Add onions, garlic and red bell pepper, sauteing until lightly caramelized, about 1 minute.

Add tomato paste to pan and saute until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add chopped tomato, Worcestershire sauce, paprika,

1 teaspoon kosher salt and 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper; continue sauteing until tomato starts to break down and soften, 3-4 minutes. Reduce heat to simmer and cook 3-4 minutes.

Remove from heat and finely blend in food processor. Set aside.

In separate medium saucepan, warm olive oil and butter over medium-high heat. Add Arborio rice and stir until slightly nutty and translucent, about 1 minute.

Add pureed tomato-pepper mixture and 1 cup chicken stock; bring to boil then reduce heat to medium.

Add 1 cup stock each time Arborio rice absorbs almost all broth. Continuously stir risotto each time stock is added to rice. Keep adding stock until risotto is al dente and still viscous then stir in parsley and Parmesan cheese. Season, to taste, with salt and pepper, if desired.

To make filet mignon: Pat steaks dry with paper towels and liberally season with salt and ground black pepper on both sides.

In large cast-iron skillet, warm canola oil over medium-high heat.

Place filets in skillet and sear 3 minutes. Flip steaks and add butter, garlic clove and thyme. Baste steaks with butter and allow filets to finish cooking, 3-4 minutes for medium-rare doneness.

Rest filets 7-8 minutes. Serve over "red rice" risotto and sprinkle suya dust over filets.

Dijon-Herb Prime Rib Roast with Garlic Butter Mushrooms

Recipe courtesy of Omaha Steaks Executive Chef David Rose
Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 3 hours
Servings: 4-6

Dijon-Herb Rub:

- 1/4 cup minced fresh Italian parsley
- 1/4 cup minced fresh oregano
- 1/4 cup minced fresh thyme leaves
- 1/4 cup minced fresh rosemary leaves
- 3 fresh garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika

Prime Rib Roast:

- 1 Omaha Steaks Boneless Heart of Prime Rib Roast (4 pounds), thawed
- kosher salt, to taste
- ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup canola oil

Garlic Butter Mushrooms:

- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup small diced yellow onion
- 4 fresh garlic cloves, minced
- 1 pound button mushrooms, cleaned and quartered
- 1 pinch kosher salt, plus additional, to taste, divided

- 1 pinch ground black pepper, plus additional, to taste, divided
- 1/2 cup chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup finely chopped Italian parsley

To make rub: In medium bowl, whisk parsley, oregano, thyme, rosemary, garlic, Dijon mustard, oil, salt, black pepper and paprika until well incorporated.

To make prime rib roast: Pat prime rib roast dry on all sides with paper towels. Season generously with salt and pepper, to taste. Allow roast to come to room temperature about 30 minutes.

Rub Dijon herb rub all over prime rib roast and allow to stand 10 minutes.

Preheat oven to 250 F.

In large cast-iron pan, warm oil over medium-high heat.

Sear roast on all sides until golden brown, 2-3 minutes per side.

Place seared prime rib on wire rack-lined sheet pan and place in oven.

Cook until internal temperature is 10 F below desired cooking doneness.

Rest 15-20 minutes before slicing.

To make mushrooms: In large pan, warm olive oil over medium-high heat. Add diced onions and saute about 1 minute.

Add minced garlic and lightly saute until fragrant, about 20 seconds.

Add mushrooms and pinch of salt and ground pepper to pan. Saute 3-4 minutes, or until mushrooms are tender.

Add chicken stock and reduce to one-third in volume, 3-4 minutes.

Add butter and parsley to pan and saute until butter is melted and incorporated. Immediately remove from heat and season, to taste, with salt and pepper.

Serve mushrooms with prime rib roast.



Dijon-Herb Prime Rib Roast with Garlic Butter Mushrooms

Holiday sweets made to share

(Family Features) Among the decorations, gifts and gatherings of loved ones, there's perhaps nothing quite like family favorite foods that call to mind the joy of the holidays. Whether your loved ones relish building gingerbread houses or dining on an all-in feast, looking forward to annual traditions is part of what makes the season so special.

This year, you can add to the fun with a new annual activity by creating a delightful dessert with the help of little ones and adults alike. With an easy recipe like Peanut Butter Saltine Candy that calls for just a handful of ingredients, you can get the whole

family involved in the kitchen.

Ask your little helpers to measure out ingredients while a grownup prepares the pan and uses the stove. Once the base is finished baking, call the kids back to sprinkle chocolate chips and peanut butter chips over the top.

After your candy creation is cooled, just break it into pieces meant to be shared with the entire family. An added benefit: all can enjoy the nutrient-rich flavor of peanuts, which rise to superfood status by delivering 19 vitamins and minerals and 7 grams of protein per serving.

Find more holiday recipes at gapeanuts.com.



Peanut Butter Saltine Candy

Peanut Butter Saltine Candy

Yield: 45 pieces

- Nonstick cooking spray (butter flavor)
- 1 sleeve (4 ounces) regular saltine crackers
- 1/2 cup butter
- 3/4 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups milk chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup peanut butter chips
- 1/2 cup rough chopped, dry roasted peanuts

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line 10-by-15-by-1-inch pan with aluminum foil. Spray foil with nonstick cooking spray then lay saltines flat in single layer on prepared pan. Set aside.

In heavy duty, 1-quart saucepan over medium heat, combine butter, peanut butter and sugar. Stir constantly until butter and sugar are melted, bringing mixture to boil. Boil 3 minutes, stirring frequently. Pour cooked mixture over saltines and bake 5 minutes.

Remove from oven and sprinkle

chocolate chips over saltines. Let cool 3 minutes then spread melted chocolate completely over saltines.

Sprinkle peanut butter chips evenly over chocolate. Return pan to oven 1 minute to soften chips. Pull pointed tines of fork through softened peanut butter chips to partially cover chocolate. Sprinkle chopped peanuts on top, gently pressing into candy.

Let cool on rack about 15 minutes then place in freezer 3 minutes. Remove from freezer and break into pieces. Store in airtight container.

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Warm and wow guests with homemade mulled apple cider

When hosting friends and family at home, it's understandable that hosts direct so much of their focus to the foods they plan to serve. The main course is often the focal point and most memorable aspect of a dinner party, and that's true whether the get-together is a backyard barbecue, a holiday meal with the family or a formal affair with colleagues.

Food might be a focal point, but guests also will need something to drink. Traditional spirits like wine and cocktails are the standard, but hosts who want to get a little creative should not hesitate to do so. When choosing a special beverage, timing is everything. Guests will want to cool down on warm summer evenings, so something cold and refreshing can make for the perfect signature cocktail. When hosting on nights when the mercury has dropped, a warm beverage can heat up guests in a matter of minutes. On such nights, hosts can serve this version of Hot Mulled Apple Cider courtesy of Laurey Masterton's *The Fresh Honey Cookbook*

(Storey). One added benefit to Masterton's recipe is it can produce a welcoming winter aroma, helping hosts establish a warm ambiance for the festivities.

Hot Mulled Apple Cider

Serves 16

- 1 gallon apple cider
- 1 orange, unpeeled, cut into slices
- 1/4 cup whole cloves
- 4 sticks cinnamon
- 1/4 cup honey, preferably cranberry honey

Combine the cider, orange slices, cloves, cinnamon, and honey in a large pot over medium heat. If you are picky about things floating in your cider, make a little bundle out of cheesecloth and place the cinnamon and cloves inside before adding to the cider. Bring to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer over low heat for an hour or so to spread these lovely winter aromas around your home.



Hot Mulled Apple Cider



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