



Holiday Gift Guide 2013

A Special Section of the Wallkill Valley Times • Mid Hudson Times • Southern Ulster Times • November 20, 2013

Adding traditional twists to Thanksgiving

Across America, families will be spending Thanksgiving together, and more than likely, enjoying the same menu items they've enjoyed in years past. Interestingly, more than half of Americans would embrace adding new foods or new preparations to the Thanksgiving table this year, and many think that side dishes provide the perfect opportunity to experiment, according to the findings of a new survey.

The survey conducted by Pillsbury reveals that 89 percent of Americans say preparing homemade foods shows their loved ones how much they care. However, many think the Thanksgiving meal is the most stressful of all holiday meals to make, and 72 percent are always looking for tips and tricks to prepare their dishes quicker.

The survey also shows how new food trends are shaping today's Thanksgiving table. While some households are starting to offer alternatives to turkey, more are incorporating vegetables into their meals. Green beans, corn and carrots are among the top vegetables that Americans will serve for Thanksgiving. Other side dish staples include stuffing or dressing, potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes and cranberries. With the need to reduce meal preparation time, and the interest of many to incorporate new dishes to their traditional meal, an easy and delicious dish such as Sweet Potato Casserole Crescents is one that will surprise and delight friends and family members.

Pie is a traditional Thanksgiving element and many families will end their meal with the pumpkin variety, the top Thanksgiving dessert served across America, according to the survey. Apple and pecan pies are close followers.

"We often hear from consumers that they want to make a homemade pie for their holiday celebration, but they find making the pie crust challenging," says



Madison Mayberry, Pillsbury food editor and entertaining expert. Her recommendation: make a homemade pie using a Pillsbury Pie Crust, found in the refrigerated aisle at your supermarket. The pre-made crust allows you to unroll, fill, top and bake, saving time and making it easier to bake a delicious pie. Mayberry recommends adding one of these popular pie recipes to your holiday meal: New Fashioned Pumpkin Pie, Perfect Apple Pie, or Salted Caramel Pecan Pie.

New-Fashioned Pumpkin Pie

Ingredients:

- 1 box Pillsbury refrigerated pie crusts, softened as directed on box
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin (not pumpkin pie mix)
- 1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk (1 1/2 cups)

Directions:

1. Heat oven to 425 F. Place pie crust in

9-inch glass pie pan as directed on box for One-Crust Filled Pie.

2. In large bowl, beat eggs with wire whisk. Stir in remaining ingredients until well blended.

3. Pour into crust-lined pan. Bake 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 F; bake 40 to 50 minutes longer or until knife inserted near center comes out clean.

4. Cool completely, about 2 hours. Store in refrigerator.

Tradition holds true across the country when it comes to Thanksgiving dinners. But with emerging food trends, and families trying to incorporate time-saving techniques and modernizing some of the classic recipes, today's Thanksgiving table has a bit of a new look from years past.

For more Thanksgiving holiday recipe ideas, visit Pillsbury.com.

History of the Thanksgiving parade

Thousands of people line the streets of midtown Manhattan every year to catch a glimpse of the balloons and performers marching in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Millions more will tune in to watch it on television. The Macy's parade is intertwined with Thanksgiving, making it as much a part of the holiday as turkey and pumpkin pie.

The parade has evolved throughout the years, and the history of the parade is both interesting and informational.

Historians believe the parade was instituted by European immigrants who made up the majority of employees at the retail giant Macy's. In the 1920s, employees who were now proud Americans wanted to celebrate with traditions that were similar to traditions in Europe. This included a parade down the streets. Animals were borrowed from the Central Park Zoo, bands played and marchers wore different

costumes.

In 1927, concern for children lining the parade route led parade officials to replace live animals with the signature helium balloons people now know and love. A dragon and Felix the Cat were some of the first balloons. The festivities continued to grow during the 1930s, when Santa was added to the parade's growing list of participants. 1933 was the only year that Santa led the parade rather than closed it.

During World War II, the parade was put on hiatus, as the rubber for the balloons and the helium was donated to the war effort. The parade resumed in 1945 and was televised only in New York. The 1947 film "Miracle on 34th Street" made the parade even more popular. NBC televised the parade nationwide the following year, drawing viewers from all over the country.



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Organize your Thanksgiving holiday for smooth sailing

A large meal is customary come Thanksgiving. Planning an impressive Thanksgiving menu can be enjoyable for many people, while others get a little nervous when tasked with such an undertaking. But getting a head start and staying organized can make planning a Thanksgiving meal much easier than it looks.

Begin by jotting down ideas of which dishes you want to make this year. Traditional foods like turkey and candied yams may be expected, but it's perfectly acceptable to think outside the box as well. If you won't be hosting a large crowd, you may want to serve more manageable Cornish hens in place of a larger turkey.

Root vegetables and squash are seasonal foods that can add some autumn flavor to your Thanksgiving dinner table. Potatoes, corn, turnips and parsnips can be served baked or turned into soups and casseroles.

Thanksgiving is a great time to celebrate local foods as well. If certain items are native to your area, such as grains or game, incorporate these foods into the planning.

Once you have established the menu, you can make a list of what can be prepared in advance and what will need to be made shortly before the holiday or the day of. Separate your shopping accordingly. Any frozen or canned products can be purchased in advance of the holiday rush and stored until use. Frozen turkeys also can be bought weeks before and then thawed out when they need to be cooked. Any dairy products or fresh produce should be purchased a few days before Thanksgiving



and freshly prepared for optimal flavor.

Rather than spending all of your time cooking the night before the dinner, mashed potatoes and casseroles can be prepared and frozen, then reheated on Thanksgiving. Some foods actually taste better when flavors have had an opportunity to meld. Even some baked goods can be made in advance and refrigerated or frozen until use. Think about preparing batters for cookies or cakes and then storing them in the refrigerator before finishing them on Thanksgiving. Any work you can handle in advance will save you time in the kitchen come the big day.

Timing can be challenging on Thanksgiving. Whenever possible, free up

your oven for side dishes and desserts so that you will have ample space inside. A turkey can take up valuable real estate in the oven, so you may want to consider investing in a rotisserie or a deep-fryer so the turkey can be cooked more efficiently elsewhere. Then you will have plenty of oven space for heating side dishes and desserts.

Dense foods should be placed in the oven first to enable them to heat thoroughly. Finger foods and appetizers may only need brief heating. Do not underestimate the power of the outdoor barbecue for quickly heating up foods if you are short on space in the kitchen.

Delegate some of the work to others on Thanksgiving so you and your family can better enjoy the holiday. Encourage guests to bring their favorite items to serve buffet- or pot-luck style for Thanksgiving. This not only cuts down on the amount of work for the host and hostess, but gives guests an opportunity to showcase their culinary skills as well.

Desserts are often labor-intensive elements of entertaining. Precision in measuring and preparing helps guarantee success. If you do not have the time to bake this Thanksgiving, serve store-bought cakes and save yourself the hassle, or ask guests to bring desserts so you can focus your attention on the main meal.

While prepping for the Thanksgiving dinner, keep the dishwasher empty so you can easily load items as they are used and keep kitchen clutter to a minimum. Increasing the number of finger foods can help reduce the number of dishes used while cutting down on post-holiday clean-up.

When preparing for the meal, keep storage containers at the ready. Have guests fill up take-away containers with leftovers before the table is cleared so that no food goes to waste. Promptly refrigerate all leftovers so that they are safe to enjoy later on.

Thanksgiving is a time when big meals are customary and a good deal of work is required. Breaking down the work into manageable tasks helps the holiday go off without a hitch.

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Holiday desserts can be both healthy and decadent

Sweets of the season tend to be rich in flavor, calories and fat. Still, it is possible to create healthier sweet treats. With these quick nutrition-savvy tips, decadent desserts have never tasted so good.

Infuse fresh flavors

Start your baking with all-natural ingredients and incorporate seasonal fruits and vegetables, such as apples, pears, sweet potatoes, pomegranates and pumpkins. These, along with super foods like walnuts and soy, are excellent choices to increase the nutritional benefits, and enhance the flavor, of baked goods.

Try fresh variations to old classics to give your homemade desserts a gourmet twist. Add a dash of vitamin A-rich chili powder for a bold take on dark chocolate brownies or tarts. Experiment with exciting combinations like lavender and lemon for a bright, unique flavor and a healthy dose of iron, plus vitamin C. Mix antioxidant-rich basil and cinnamon to produce a powerful taste sensation with added health benefits.

Make smart swaps

When deciding on a recipe for your next holiday gathering, take a look at its

nutritional value, as not all desserts are created equal. To create reduced-guilt baked goods use alternative ingredients, such as egg whites instead of whole eggs or whole wheat flour instead of white flour. Apple sauce is also a clever way to introduce moisture into cakes rather than using oil.

A reduced-fat pumpkin pie - which can be made by blending pumpkin with healthier ingredients, like egg substitute and non-fat milk, in a Vitamix Professional Series 200 - may be significantly lower in calories and fat than pies made with full-fat ingredients.

As an added bonus, the leftover pumpkin pie ingredients, plus a few extra items likely on hand in your kitchen, can easily yield a low-calorie, frosty Fall Freeze. This smooth, frozen treat is the perfect way to enjoy the fruits of your labor while baking for company.

Add a smooth finish

Don't discount chocolate. In addition to being delicious, dark chocolate with at least 70 percent cacao contains heart-friendly antioxidants. Make a festive fondue platter with warm dark chocolate and sliced fruits like bananas, pineapple and

strawberries.

Similar to a traditional fondue table, by creating a variety of dips and glazes, you and your guests can indulge in a sinfully good concoction that is still light on calories. For dips, opt for a Greek yogurt base that is high in protein and sweeten with natural ingredients, such as agave nectar and honey. A cinnamon glaze made with soy milk and tofu will please your palate - even if you follow a vegan diet.

Pick petite portions

Anyone with a sweet tooth can attest to the desire to eat with abandon during the last course. However, controlling portion sizes - whether cutting thinner slices of cake or splitting a piece with a friend - is an important part of smarter holiday indulgence.

Better yet, stick to smaller servings by getting creative with the end product. When baking a pie, lose the top crust. Or, instead of a pie, try a bite-size tartlet. Encourage sampling by making mini-muffins and cupcakes rather than their oversized counterparts.

Making a few small changes to your ingredients and your intake will lower calories, provide some unexpected nutri-

tional benefits and keep you satisfied all season long.

Here's a great recipe for a perfect guilt-free dessert.

Cinnamon Glaze

Yield: 1 1/4 cup (300 ml)

Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1/4 cup (40 g) silken tofu
2 tablespoons (30 g) vegan butter spread
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
3 tablespoons (45 ml) soy milk
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 1/2 cups (240 g) powdered sugar

Directions:

Place tofu, butter spread, vanilla extract, soy milk and cinnamon into the Vitamix container and secure lid. Select Variable 1 on the Vitamix. Turn machine on and slowly increase speed to Variable 4. Blend for 15 seconds. Stop machine and remove the lid. Add powdered sugar and secure lid. Select Variable 1. Turn machine on and slowly increase speed to Variable 4. Blend for 30 seconds or until smooth, using the tamper as necessary.



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Holiday gift-giving etiquette can be confusing, especially when it comes to gifting those men and women who aren't necessarily friends or family members, but still help us out in a variety of ways. Deciding how to thank the people who intersect our lives by delivering mail or cleaning the pool can take a little

ingenuity.

Gifting preferences often vary from region to region. What might be acceptable in a certain area of the country may be frowned upon elsewhere. For example, in urban areas cash gifts are usually appreciated, whereas rural, close-knit communities tend to give home-

made gifts. The rule to remember, above all, is that if a gift is given with good intentions, it should be happily received. That being said, here are some general guidelines for gifting those men and women who help us throughout the year.

- Determine your list. Think about the people with whom you interact regularly. The sanitation workers who pick up the trash twice a week and your mail carrier may take priority over the hairstylist you visit once every month or two.

- Establish a budget. The holiday season can be costly, so set a firm limit on what you plan to give, perhaps between \$10 and \$20 each, and stick to that budget for each recipient.

- Recognize that not everyone is allowed to accept gifts. Some service providers are not allowed to accept cash gifts or presents. Government employees, for example, may be prohibited from accepting cash gifts or gifts that exceed a predetermined amount. With



this in mind, gloves or a gift basket may be your best option.

- Gift a little more to personal care professionals. Your hairstylists, masseuse or anyone who performs more personal tasks for you may warrant a larger gift. Etiquette suggests giving a gift equal to the price of one session of service, even if that gift is cash. Therefore if your hair cut costs \$35, gift \$35.

- Health and child care employees warrant special treatment. A private nurse, nanny or nursing home worker should be gifted for the holidays. Avoid cash gifts with health service providers, opting for a more personal gift that is a token of your affection and appreciation. If gifts are not allowed, consider making a charitable donation in the person's name.

Your zzz's count this holiday season, so start counting

Between squeezing extra activities into your schedule, finding time to bake holiday treats for your children's classrooms and organizing a mini family reunion, the holiday season might be causing you a bit of stress. And if that stress is affecting your sleep, you could be caught up in the vicious cycle of exhaustion causing stress and stress causing more exhaustion.

Creating a personal sleep sanctuary will help you meet your needs for rest and rejuvenation and give you plenty of opportunity to count your zzz's and not lie awake wishing for sleep. By improving your quality and quantity of sleep, you are able to better handle all the stresses of the holiday season, and instead share in the fun activities at this time of year.

"A lack of sleep negatively impacts our mood and outlook, as well as our physical health," says Terry Cralle, a registered nurse and certified clinical sleep educator. "Sufficient sleep, a good diet and regular exercise are the three ingredients to staying healthy all season long."

You may be surprised at how many people experience issues sleeping. The Better Sleep Council reports that 66 percent of people 18 to 34 claim that they have trouble falling and staying asleep. That number drops to 53 percent of people ages 35 to 54, and just less than half of people 55 and older. If you fall into the portion of the population experiencing sleep troubles, consider these tips from the Better Sleep Council:

- Build a good sleep environment - A good sleep environment is imperative when it comes to counting zzz's each night. Start off with a quality mattress. "A mattress is an investment, not only financially but for your health," says Karin Mahoney, director of communications for the Better Sleep Council. "To help improve your sleep - and your quality of life - it's a good idea to compare the mattress you are sleeping on to new models every five years and to consider replacing your mattress if it is more than seven years old."

- Sleep in your ideal bedroom - Light,



noise and even temperature can disrupt sleep or make it difficult to fall asleep. Purchase light-blocking shades and install them in windows to keep the sun, streetlights and passing car headlights from shining in. Consider finding a source of white noise - such as a fan or sound machine producing soft ocean sounds - to cover up other noises in the house like the heater kicking in, or someone getting up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom. Finally, you should consider turning the temperature in the bedroom down a degree or two - or getting it as close as possible to the ideal bedroom temperature of 65 F. A cooler temperature can help the body relax and fall into sleep easily.

- Count your sleep - not sheep - Track your sleep using a sleep app. Several apps reviewed by the Better Sleep Council provide users with a variety of benefits. For example, some are designed to monitor your breathing and movements, and they encourage you to wake up when you're in the lightest stage of the sleep cycle. Others can record your snoring and breathing habits to help determine if you are experiencing any distractions mid-slumber.

Catching the right number of -zzz's can lead to better health and more energy this holiday season, helping to reduce your stress level. Make good sleeping habits and creating a sleep environment a priority, so you can wake up feeling refreshed every morning.

(BPT)



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Choosing a restaurant for your party

Getting together with family and friends for a good meal is a great opportunity to reconnect and share a few laughs. Though such gatherings have traditionally taken place at private homes, today's busy adults are increasingly turning to restaurants to host their mini reunions. Restaurants don't require hosts and guests to wash any dishes, and hosts won't have to find time to clean their homes top to bottom like they would if they were to have a party at home.

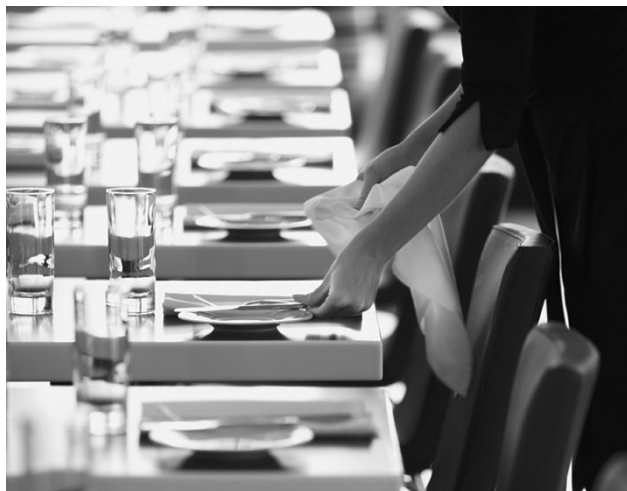
Such a reality makes a dinner party at a local restaurant a lot less stressful for the hosts. There are a number of things to emphasize when looking for the right restaurant to host the next dinner party.

Proximity

Whether entertaining family and friends or a business dinner, the restaurant where you will be gathering should be easily accessible to all people who plan to attend. A centrally located restaurant that's only a short drive for guests and hosts alike is ideal, as it cuts back on the time people will spend driving to and from the restaurant. Try to accommodate those guests who don't drive by choosing a restaurant that's accessible via public transportation.

Price

Hosts should first determine who will be paying the bill. If everyone has agreed to pay their own portion of the bill, this gives you a little more flexibility when choosing a restaurant. If you, as the host, intend to pick up the tab for everyone, then you might want to find a nice restaurant with reasonably priced entrees. A five-star restaurant



might break the bank, but you might be able to find a three- or four-star restaurant that's still elegant and more affordable.

If each guest intends to pay for his or her own meal, discuss with guests how much they would like to spend before making a reservation. Once you have an idea of what everyone is willing to spend, you can start to narrow down your options.

Menu

The menu is an important thing for hosts to consider when choosing a restaurant for their next dinner party. Many men and women adhere to certain diets or lifestyles


that restrict what they can and cannot eat, and you will want to find a restaurant that can cater to as many of your guests' needs as possible. Discuss any dietary restrictions with your guests before you begin the process of finding a restaurant. If the responses are slow to come in, you can still go ahead with your search, but look for restaurants that offer vegetarian and gluten-free fare.

When examining the menu, take into consideration any offerings for kids if any guests are planning to bring their children along. Kids tend to prefer chicken fingers and fries over filet mignon and baked potatoes, so the restaurant should have some menu items for young children if kids will be joining in the festivities.

Accessibility


When looking for a restaurant, try to find one that's easily accessible for any older guests who might not get around as easily as they used to or any guests who might have a disability that requires handicap accessible seating and restrooms. Many restaurants can fill both of these needs, but it's still up to hosts to ask in advance so all guests have a comfortable evening. The parking lot should not be too far away, but if it is, ask the restaurant manager if valet service is available for those guests who might prefer it.

A dinner party at a restaurant with family, friends or even professional colleagues often makes for an enjoyable evening for guests and hosts alike. But hosts must consider several factors before ultimately choosing where they and their guests will dine.



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DIY decorating that lasts all season long

As the holidays roll around, it's natural to want to spread good tidings and cheer with festive decorations like wreaths, candy canes and Santa Claus figurines. But this year, instead of digging out the same old holiday decorations, why not create some new looks that will last the entire winter season, even after you put away the gift wrap and ornaments?

Stimulate the senses

Nothing says winter like the fresh smell of pine and the soft, warm glow of candle light. Repurpose simple glass bottles into an outdoorsy candelcape with Krylon Natural Stone Textured Finish spray paint. Available in eight colors, like Olivine, it goes on easy and gives you the natural beauty of stone and an elegant, professional-looking appearance. Once dry, wrap artificial garland with pinecones around the bottle's neck or let the garland cascade down the bottle. Place pine tree-scented white taper candles in the bottle openings, light and enjoy for a fresh look and smell that will stimulate your senses well into 2014.

Color works wonders

Another easy way to excite the senses during a drab, gray winter is with pops of color. For a decorative display that lasts all season, avoid the red and green color combination associated with Christmas and branch out with more contemporary choices like teals, blues, purples and



pink. Metallics like silver and gold are also a great way to glitz up the season without looking like the North Pole in overdrive. Try Krylon's ColorMaster Metallic in Gold to spice up old ornaments, vases, frames, centerpieces and more in no time at all. Group spray-painted ornaments or pine cones in a hurricane vase or glass bowl and display on the mantel for added ambiance to any living room.

Deck the halls

Looking for a way to display the abundance of holiday cards from friends and family? Repurpose an old window shutter to create a unique display. Start by spray painting it with a festive shade, such as green or burgundy, which adds a touch of holiday spirit. Once dry, hang the shutter in the kitchen or entryway and place holiday cards in the slats of the shutter for a creative way to stay organized. Once the holidays have passed, you can still use the shutter to display birthday cards, thank you notes, party invitations and more all year long.

Outdoor decor

The inside of the home isn't the only space you can be creative. Make a lasting statement before houseguests even step inside your home by focusing decorative attention to the outside. Line walkways and driveways with lights or faux miniature pine trees, and place white flameless candlesticks on each windowsill to add a simple touch of holiday spirit without going overboard. Prop a vintage snow sled outside the front door to welcome guests.

So, this year instead of the same decorations, consider some fun and easy ways to re-beautify them into pieces that you'll be proud to display throughout the winter season. For more product or project ideas, visit www.krylon.com. (BPT)

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Finding time during the holiday season

Perhaps no time of year is as busy as the holiday season, when social engagements and holiday shopping combine to dominate so much of what is normally our free time. Additionally, holiday travel and late nights spent at work to make up for lost time also cut into our free time, leaving many people in search of ways to add more hours to the day. Though there's no way to make a day last longer, there are ways to save some time this holiday season.

Go it alone

Holiday shopping can be very time consuming, but shoppers who decide to shop alone may find themselves more productive and focused on the task at hand. Rather than going from store to store and checking items off multiple shopping lists, shoppers who shop singularly can devote all of their attention to their own lists.

Shop online

Another way to save time when shopping for the holidays is to shop online. This saves you the time it takes to drive to and from the mall and walk around multiple stores, all the while saving you from the often frustrating



inform others a few weeks in advance and let them know you want to go early to avoid crowds. This saves you time and might just help you land one of the best trees on the lot. The same principle of planning can be applied to other aspects of the holiday season as well. Planning a meal early allows you to gradually stock up on menu items, saving you the hassle of rushing to the store at the last minute or planning a menu in the days before the party when you will already have enough on your plate.

Find shortcuts when hosting holidays

Hosting a holiday dinner is a big undertaking, one that often finds hosts spending a significant amount of time in the kitchen. But hosts can save time by taking some shortcuts regarding the menu. For instance, when hosting an especially large meal, don't be afraid to buy some premade side dishes from a local grocery store or buy a bakery cake rather than whipping up your own homemade dessert. Guests will understand if you cut some corners in an effort to save some time, and the food will likely be just as delicious.

Stay home

Travel is a big commitment come the holiday season, but what about staying home this season? If the time commitment of traveling is something you truly want to avoid this year, invite some friends and family over to your home instead. You might be more busy on the day of the holiday, but you will save yourself the travel days you usually build into the holiday season. Parents of young children might prefer to stay home so they can create their own unique holiday memories, while those without children might just appreciate some peace and quiet during this hectic time of year.

Plan ahead

and time-consuming experience of finding a parking space. In addition, you can shop online at any time of day. So rather than just eating lunch at your desk on your lunch hour or spending the last hour before you go to bed for the night idling away on the couch, you can make more efficient use of that time by doing some holiday shopping.

Whether shopping for holiday gifts, taking the family to buy a Christmas tree or organizing a holiday dinner with friends, the more you can plan ahead of the holiday season the less time you will waste once the season hits full swing. For example, when choosing a weekend to go Christmas tree shopping,

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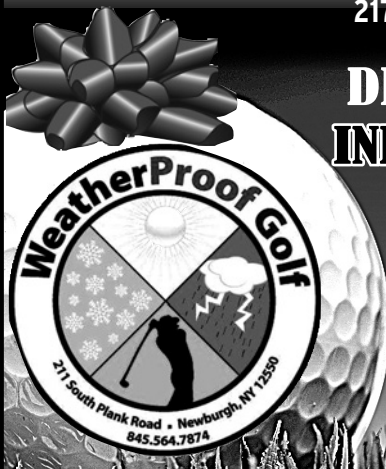
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Keeping the magic of Santa alive

He had a broad face and a little round belly that shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly. He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf. And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself. - "A Visit From St. Nicholas"

Christmas just wouldn't be the same without Santa Claus. Santa will forever be ingrained in the holiday season, serving as an endearing symbol of the season regardless of your religious affiliation.

Parents typically go to great lengths to ensure their children enjoy the holiday season. By keeping the magic of Santa alive, parents can add a special touch to the holiday season for their youngsters. Children may become more skeptical of Santa around the time they turn 10, but there are plenty of ways to encourage this spirit to live on year after year.

- Read an uplifting story. The holidays are ripe with stories that tug at the heartstrings. Parents can take their children to the library and rent a Christmas tale or take home a book of holiday stories, reading a different one before bed each night. Encourage children to write their own positive stories of what the holidays mean to them and read them aloud to family and friends. The book "101 Ways to Keep the Spirit of Santa Alive: For 'Kids' From 1 to 92" by John Hagerman is a great way to get everyone in

the house enthusiastic about Santa.

- Keep the magic flowing. Children who believe in Santa for an extra year or two often come from families that keep the magic of Santa alive. In addition to the standard traditions of leaving cookies and milk out for the jolly old man, come up with new ways to evoke the essence of Santa. Spray peppermint air freshener around the tree and other places Santa is sure to visit. Use a large boot to make a footprint in a plush rug. Find a way to trigger noise on the roof to give kids the impression that Mr. Claus himself has arrived. Extra measures to keep Santa alive can help everyone enjoy the holiday that much more.

- Take advantage of opportunities to spend time with Santa. Parents and children alike have many opportunities to spend time with Santa during the holiday season, including photo opportunities at the mall and personalized videos sent directly to youngsters' email accounts. Elf dolls and breakfast with Santa at a nearby restaurant are other opportunities to spread the magic. Make the most of these opportunities over the course of the holiday season.

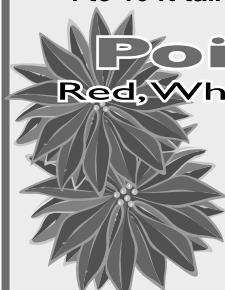
- Spread some Christmas cheer. Santa's job is to bring presents to the world's children. Channel the notion that giving is better than receiving and spend time giving back to others as a family. Schedule a day when you can distribute gifts at a senior center or arrange to bring gifts to a foster child. Bake cookies and deliver cellophane-wrapped dishes to all of your neighbors. These activities put the emphasis on giving.



Keeping the tradition of Santa Claus alive can help adults and children alike enjoy a more festive holiday season.

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'Tis the season to see if your tread's been bad or good

The holidays are here again, and so is running - er, driving - around for things. Rushing to parties, picking up family at the airport, preparing dinners, and, of course, shopping. Whether it's fighting for parking spaces at the mall or traveling over the river and through the woods, don't overlook the four round pieces of rubber that are responsible for safely getting you from point A to point B - your tires.

"People have a lot of to-do's on their

checklist during the holidays, but one thing they tend to forget is to check on the condition of their tires," says Dan Guiney, director of technical services for Yokohama Tire Corp., maker of a variety of truck and car tires. "It's something every driver should do."

"Tires must be replaced for traction considerations depending on anticipated roadway and weather driving conditions and by Federal regulation when the tread

is worn to 2/32 of an inch groove depth remaining. You want to prevent loss of traction which may result in skidding and hydroplaning," says Guiney."

It's hard to visualize what that acceptable tread depth looks like, so place a penny upside down into a tread groove. If the top part of Lincoln's head is just starting to be covered, you're driving with the very minimum amount of tread depth, 2/32nds. If driving conditions will be wet or snowy you may want to purchase new tires before the minimum levels to maximize traction performance. If heavy snow or ice is anticipated, winter tires are an excellent choice because they can provide considerably more winter traction than all-season tires. And because your all-season tires are taking a "winter vacation," they'll last longer.

"Tire technology has come a very long way, resulting in tires that last longer and are more fuel efficient," says Guiney. "For example, at Yokohama our engineers use a technology on the AVID Ascend that blends the oil from citrus products with rubber to create a special compound that enhance traction and fuel economy with

long tread wear life. However, drivers still have the responsibility to check their tires regularly to get the optimum performance out of them."

For the holiday season or the daily commute, driving smartly and maintaining your tires can save money at the gas station. Here are some of Guiney's tips:

- Keep your tires properly inflated. Once a month, when the tires are cold (at least three to four hours after the vehicle has been driven), check tire pressure with a reliable tire gauge. Be sure the valve stems have a plastic or metal cap to keep dirt out and seal against water and foreign objects.
- Slow down. All vehicles lose fuel economy at speeds above 55 mph. Driving 55 mph instead of 75 mph can reduce fuel costs up to 25 percent. Driving 65 mph instead of 75 mph can save up to 13 percent.
- Tire alignment should be checked once a year. Misaligned tires lower mileage and creates unnecessary tire wear.

For additional tire care and safety tips, visit www.yokohamatire.com or www.rma.org.

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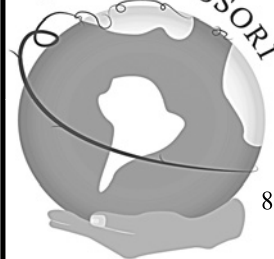


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Moms champion traditional toys even in a digital age

As smartphones and tablets are more frequently finding their way into kids' hands, many parents may wonder about the implications of increased screen time, and question what role traditional toys should play in their children's lives.

While there is no denying the benefits of digital devices and it is becoming commonplace for parents to pass their tablets to Junior, research shows many want to limit the time their kids spend on screens, large and small. Parents also actively encourage their kids to play with toys that may help them reach critical developmental milestones. So how have traditional toys stood the test of time?

The various ways in which children play have remained largely unchanged throughout time. In many cases, technology can help amplify play by helping to introduce characters or tell a compelling story. When Mattel, the world's largest toymaker, asked moms their opinions about toys and technology, it found that even in a digital age, moms continue to place a high value on traditional toys.

"Kids today are digital natives and are immersed in digital experiences," says Dr. Michael Shore, vice president of Global Consumer Insights for Mattel. "However, when you walk into a child's room and see what is visibly present and displayed on the shelves, you won't see an app on the wall as an expression of who the child is, what he or she loves, or as markers of the childhood experience. For that, toys will continue to endure as ideal gifts for children. After all, you can't wrap an app."

However, as experts and media debate whether digital devices will one day replace dolls, cars, trains and action

figures, most moms do not think smart digital devices and traditional toys directly compete with one another as a source of kids' entertainment. Rather, each category remains fundamentally different. While 75 percent of kids today play with devices like smartphones and tablets, Mattel's research found the time they spend with these devices actually competes with the time they spend with



other screens, such as televisions and computers. In fact, 59 percent of moms felt that smart portable devices will one day replace other electronic devices, not traditional toys.

According to Mattel's findings, moms frequently associate toys with social activities since toys are often used to play with others, whereas digital devices are generally

associated with solo play (for example, keeping a child entertained when waiting at the doctor's office or on a long car ride). Moms also credit toys with providing opportunities for active play that allow kids to exercise and burn off energy. Further, moms see toys as a great way to help kids spark their imaginations and flex their creative muscles.

Knowing that the leaders of tomorrow will be those who think differently and solve problems in new ways, imagination is more important than ever before. Dr. Shore offers some tips for using play as a catalyst for fostering imagination and creativity:

- In an increasingly overscheduled world with a variety of things competing for kids' time, it is easy to overlook the importance of dedicating time just for play. Give your child the time and space to play.
- Consider starting a play group in your neighborhood or hosting play dates at your home or local playground. Bring out the toy chest and see what games the kids can create when they play together.
- Encourage your kids to play with their imaginations. Two of the most important tools for play are toys and an imagination. Help your children dream beyond what they see on screen and encourage them to bring those cartoon characters to life using their toys and imaginations.
- Everyone loves a good old-fashioned tea party or toy car race down the hall. Playing together is one of the most fun and meaningful ways for parents and children to bond and foster creative thinking for both of you.

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