

MERRY CHRISTMAS

and Happy New Year

GIFT GUIDE IV

Candy canes and boughs of holly,
Festive scenes that make us jolly.
The Christmas season is finally here,
Bringing with it joy and cheer;
And on that note, the time is due,
to share best wishes with all of you.
May Your Season Be Blessed and Happy!

Light spectacular brings holiday merriment to Modena

By KERRY BUTRICK DOWLING

Now in its third year, Brian Cross and his family in Modena are the brilliant minds behind the "Cross' Christmas Light Spectacular", located at 143 Patura Road. In 2020, the dancing spectacle of holiday lights was imagined and has since become an annual tradition.

Each year, the Cross Family home is transformed into a striking spectacle of holiday lights, thanks to the help of family members and employees. The exact number of lights used in this year's display is unspecified, but thousands of dancing lights are brought to life for the young and young at heart. Cross explained that the display is always evolving with new features on the display every holiday season.

"This year we included a UFO, archways over the driveway, Santa fishing on the dock, jumping frogs, Santa's sleigh out front and elves distributing gifts. What distinguishes this display is its non-commercial ethos; however, we encourage donations to support our hardworking team and to better the display from year to year," he shared.

When asked what motivates him and his family to create this labor of love each year, Cross explained, "The motivation behind this endeavor is to spread joy within our local community."



PHOTO BY KERRY BUTRICK DOWLING

Brian Cross and his family in Modena, are the brilliant minds behind the "Cross' Christmas Light Spectacular" located at 143 Patura Road.

The display operates daily from 5 until 10 p.m. and Santa and friends make special appearances on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m., weather permitting. The display is free of charge to all, but donations are graciously accepted.

"There is always a steady stream of cars every



PHOTO BY BRIAN CROSS

Santa and friends make special appearances on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m., weather permitting.

night, so come join the fun as we invite everyone to experience the holiday magic at 143 Patura Road Modena, NY. Your visit not only promises a festive treat but also supports our commitment to bringing seasonal joy to all," shared Cross.



Happy Holidays

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Fun things to do on the first day of the new year

Plan a hiking excursion

There's a good chance you have not been out hiking for awhile, with your most recent venture having been a leaf-peeping trip. Enjoy the natural scenery during an entirely different season, with much lighter crowds at parks and on trails. If you've resolved to exercise more this year, hiking is a great start.



and help them shake off fatigue from a late night of partying. With a focus on conversation and food, rather than dancing and drinking, this can be an intimate way to set the tone for the new year.

into the family, this may be a good time to visit an animal shelter (if any are open) or peruse online adoption postings. The slow pace of the post-holiday months might be the ideal time to help an animal get acclimated to a new home.

Help at a nonprofit

Volunteer time at a local nonprofit group that delivers meals to homebound locals or one that visits nursing home residents. Start spreading New Year's cheer early on.

it in a jar. Every weekend pick something from the jar to do together.

Host a relaxing brunch

With all the merrymaking the evening before, most people may need a little time to recuperate before heading out. Brunch is a great way to get people fed

and help them shake off fatigue from a late night of partying. With a focus on conversation and food, rather than dancing and drinking, this can be an intimate way to set the tone for the new year.

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Resolutions that benefit the brain

Health and wellness certainly dominates our new year resolutions. This year you may want to consider ways to specifically improve brain health and function.

Get moving

Exercise does the body and the brain good. The American Academy of Neurology has found aerobic exercise may play a significant role in reversing and preventing cognitive decline. Researchers have found that even a little exercise each day can result in improved brain function in less than six months. Andrew E. Budson, M.D., a professor of neurology at Boston University, also says aerobic exercise releases growth factors in the brain, which can help grow new brain cells.



Start a new hobby

Do the same activities over and over and you eventually learn how to do them better. But doctors can't confirm this is actually helping the brain in a meaningful way. Rather, there is evidence that doing new things can be beneficial to the brain. So learning a new hobby, taking a class, or even learning to play a musical instrument can push the brain to improve from a cognitive standpoint.

Make time for fun
Repeated stress can have detrimental effects on the body and mind. Harvard Health says stress has been linked to cognitive problems and

to relax and enjoy oneself can tame stress, and in turn, alleviate issues affecting memory and cognition.

Practice mindfulness more
Mindfulness is an exercise in paying attention to one's surroundings, senses and more. Too often people are multi-tasking and never fully devoting their attention to one thing. Mindfulness gives the brain a break and brings a person into the present.

Eat a better diet

The benefit of eating healthy foods extends beyond the waistline. Many of the foods that are good for the heart are important for preventing cognitive decline and dementias. Research has found strong evidence of the protective effects of the Mediterranean diet.

a higher risk for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Taking time

NEW RESULTS



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Quick and easy salmon cakes



Serves 4

- 1 pound canned salmon, flaked
- 1/2 cup gluten-free bread crumbs
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill,
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 lemon, quartered, for garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.
2. In a bowl, mix the salmon and bread crumbs.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together egg, mustard, dill, salt, and pepper. Fold this into the salmon and bread crumbs.
4. Form the salmon mixture into 4 patties and place them on the prepared baking sheet.
5. Bake for 5 minutes, flip, bake for 5 minutes more, until patties are golden. Garnish with fresh dill and lemon. Serve as is or on buns.

*Merry Christmas!
Happy Holidays!
and blessings at this sacred season*



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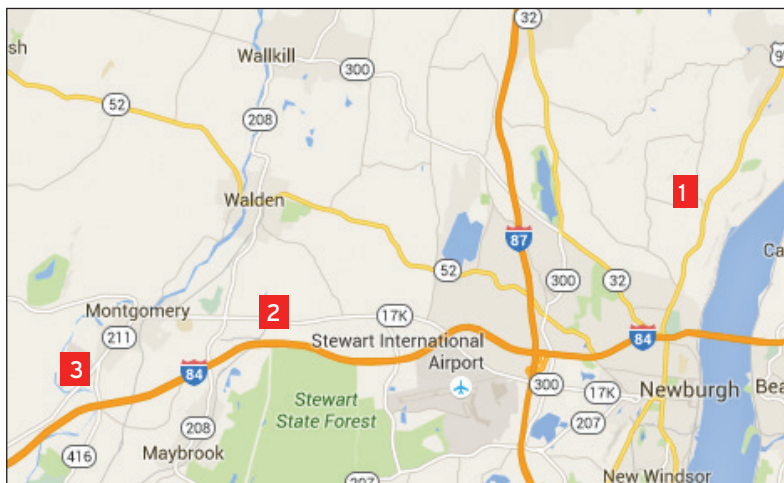


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PETS & TREES

Many common household pets are naturally curious, and that curiosity can make it difficult to decorate safely come the holiday season.

- **Secure the Christmas tree.** Much like other residents of the home, pets may be mesmerized by a glowing Christmas tree. Pets may sniff around the tree or investigate it closely, which can increase the chances that it tips over. That poses a significant safety hazard and underscores the importance of using a sturdy stand. Fastening the tree to a wall, much like one might do with a television that isn't mounted, adds a further layer of protection from tip-overs.

- **Block off the base of a live tree.** Live trees need water to stay green and keep their needles throughout the season. That water could prove enticing to thirsty pets. Drinking water from a tree stand could increase the risk of the tree tipping over and the water could upset the stomach of pets if the tree was treated with pesticides prior to being brought home. When decorating with a live tree, make sure the base of the tree where the water will be is blocked off. A small fence around the tree could keep curious pets away. The room where the tree is located should be locked or inaccessible when pets are home alone.

- **Inspect and conceal light wires.** Wires can become frayed over time, and that could pique pets' curiosity. Lighting wires should always be inspected prior to decorating and frayed or damaged wires should be thrown away, even if it means replacing lights. If wires are still sturdy, conceal them along the base of the wall using a cable concealer, which prevents pets from chewing on them.

- **Avoid lighting candles.** Candles should not be lit in homes with pets. Even candles on shelves that are seemingly beyond pets' reach can be hazardous, as pets, especially cats, have a way of accessing spaces they seemingly shouldn't be able to reach. Use electric candles in lieu of traditional ones.

- **Speak to a vet about seasonal plants and flowers before bringing them into the home.** Pet owners can speak with their veterinarians before bringing poinsettias, holly and other seasonal plants and flowers into their homes. Some pets could suffer allergic reactions if they eat certain seasonal plants, so it's best to err on the side of caution and speak to a vet before including live plants and flowers in decorative displays.



New experience gift ideas

A survey from the travel booking platform GetYourGuide found that 77 percent of people surveyed preferred to receive experiences over more traditional gifts during the holiday season.

Travel

63 percent of respondents to the GetYourGuide survey indicated they would most enjoy travel as a gift, making it the most popular category among participants. Travel-related gifts include everything from airline miles to unique activities at a fun destination, such as a parasailing adventure at an island resort.

Outdoor adventures

Outdoor adventures don't need to be exclusive to vacations in parts unknown. Holiday shoppers can find local attractions for an adventurous day close to home. Such experiences are popular, as 43 percent of respondents to the GetYourGuide survey indicated

they would most enjoy outdoor activities like skiing, boating or hiking. An adventure with a local company that offers hot air balloon rides or a guided hiking tour through scenic local mountains are just a couple of ways to gift an outdoor experience loved ones won't soon forget.

Food

Food-based experiences were the fourth most desirable experience gift among GetYourGuide survey participants. Food tours, cooking classes, a night out at a local hotspot known for its delicious menu, or even a meal at home prepared and cooked by a private chef. Beverage-related experiences are also a consideration, any food fanatic would undoubtedly love a course on wine tasting or even home brewing lessons from the brewmaster at a local brewery.

Entertainment

Exactly half of the GetYourGuide survey

respondents indicated they would enjoy tickets to a concert or show. Check out websites of favorite musicians to see when they're in town. Live theater fans may appreciate a night out to enjoy dinner and a show at their local theater.

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