

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO
The Farmville Herald
The Kenbridge-Victoria Dispatch
The Charlotte Gazette

Holiday Gift Guide

— NOVEMBER 2024 —



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Holiday Market offers chance to be inspired

BY NATE PENTECOST
The Farmville Herald

Small businesses are more than just a storefront. Each one tells a story of their own, it shows part of the founder's plans and dreams. You're not just walking through a corporate store. This is what someone spent years building and designing. That's why, in many ways, events like those coming up in Farmville make for the perfect opportunity to find gifts for a number of family members, the first of those being the Holiday Market.

The High Bridge Caboose Plaza is once again turning into a wonderland as the Holiday Market takes over the square at 315 North Main St. on Saturday Dec. 7.

On the first Saturday of December, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., holiday shoppers and enthusiasts will find at High Bridge Caboose Plaza holiday music, festive food, seasonal shopping, and crafts. The holiday event is surrounded by the cozy and seasonally decorated confines of Downtown Farmville.

It's a chance to celebrate the season, but also to give people a chance to wander through the downtown area, where shops have decorated for the holiday season in a number of ways. You'll find lights on in

downtown windows, sights of elves and maybe a reindeer or two. Also, the market does as the name says. It provides other creators, those without a shop, a chance to meet and show off their products. According to Farmville Downtown Partnership Executive Director Emily Gantt, there will be at least 15 vendors at this year's event.

Visitors can expect vendors to offer up holiday treats like homemade baked cookies and pies, handcrafted ornaments and keepsakes for the home, special interest entertainment booths featuring local authors and artists, backed by classic holiday tunes. Gantt said the Farmville Downtown Partnership seeks to uplift local artisans rather than

larger organizations or campaign-driven vendors.

'SMALLER SHOPS AND BUSINESSES'

"We pride ourselves in featuring smaller shops and businesses for this market," Gantt told *The Farmville Herald*. "I think (area residents) come back each year because we really celebrate the smaller, local artisans and businesses through this particular event."

Shoppers will feel the holiday spirit amid the festively lined streets of Downtown Farmville. Featured in the area again will be the luminescence and shiny adornments of the Holiday Tree in the Downtown Farmville Plaza.

The Farmville Downtown Partnership Holiday Market is also held the same day as the Farmville Community Marketplace to offer Farmville-area shoppers a chance for multiple holiday experiences on Dec. 7. Locally sourced fruits and vegetables, meats, and more handcrafted items -some with a holiday twist- will be offered by the Farmville Community Marketplace during the 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. time slot, with this event set to be located up the road at 213 North St.

"We do it the same day as the Farmers Market so that shoppers can hop between the two for a day full of great holiday shopping," explained Gantt, who is



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currently in her first year as the Farmville Downtown Partnership's Executive Director.

And beyond the outright gift ideas, there are other opportunities that day to be inspired on what to give. The Longwood Center for the Visual Arts, also in downtown, will be holding a free arts and crafts family workshop that day. Running from 10 a.m. to noon, the event includes a variety of arts and crafts, glitter, glue and plenty of ways to get into the holiday spirit.

'A FULL HEART'

As with most special holiday events, the Farmville Downtown Partnership Holiday Market involves moving parts across multiple organizations, local artists, and municipal entities. Gantt hopes the Downtown Partnership's efforts will do a small bit in bringing the Farmville community

together this holiday season while promoting an important social and commercial hub for the area.

"I hope they leave with a full heart, a strong sense of community, and a deepened shared love for the holiday season and Downtown Farmville," Gantt said.



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The most popular gift 25 years ago

It's easy for adults to experience a little nostalgia when holiday shopping for their children. The holiday season has long been considered a special time of year, and much of that magic can be traced to the joy kids feel when unwrapping gifts from mom, dad and, of course, Santa Claus. Many parents who now have youngsters at home grew up in the 1990s.

When such moms and dads are shopping for holiday gifts this season, they might wonder what was the must-have item for them back when they anxiously awaited the arrival of Christmas morning? According to Insider.com, who worked in conjunction with the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, 1996 was the year of 'Tickle Me Elmo'. This ticklish toy was the most sought-after item of the 1996 holiday season, and it was so popular that retailers experienced shortages. Those shortages led to some surprising sales on the secondary market, with figures that will undoubtedly drop some jaws even now, a quarter century after the Tickle Me Elmo craze erupted.

Though the Tickle Me Elmo doll



retailed for around \$30 in 1996, some parents intent on getting their youngsters the most in-demand gift that year reportedly spent more than \$1,000 on a single doll. To put that latter figure into perspective, data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis indicates that the average price of a new car in 1996 was \$18,525. And according to Yahoo! Finance, drivers in the market for a used car in 1996 could have purchased a 1986 four-door Oldsmobile for just over \$2,600.

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Focus on food as a gift



Gifts from the heart are among the most coveted and appreciated come the holiday season. Hobbyists from all walks of life can turn their passions into handmade gifts, but few gifts may be as welcomed as those that can be eaten.

Cooking and baking ramps up during the holiday season. People can turn extra time in the kitchen into opportunities to create festive treats that are ideal for gifting. But which items are the best of the best? Even though tastes are singular, these items will appeal to most foodies and others on your gift list.

- **Jams and preserves:** Fruit jams and preserves are versatile foods. They are as at home on toast and biscuits as they are as fillings in cookies and tarts. Jams and preserves can be made with relatively few ingredients and work well with seasonal fruits.

- **Cinnamon rolls:** Warm, sticky and full of aromatic spice, cinnamon rolls are the perfect comfort foods. These rolls

do not typically have a long shelf life, so be sure to present them promptly before they get stale.

- **Pancakes (or cookies) in a jar:** If you have a fantastic recipe that you can't resist sharing, try turning it into a gift. Measure and package the ingredients into mason jars, tie with ribbons and include directions for preparation and cooking.

- **Mini bundt cakes:** Fruit cakes may be a holiday standard, but bundt cakes make for great and traditional offerings as well. Miniature bundts filled with chocolate chips, dried fruits or even those soaked in a favorite boozy-butter glaze can be moist and delicious.

- **Chocolate barks or fudges:** Seasonal flavors can come to life in chocolate treats. White chocolate filled with peppermint pieces or dark chocolate and cherry chunks are tasty pairings. Break apart portions of the bark or cut the fudge with cookie cutters and gift inside cello bags tied with ribbons or in

cardboard candy boxes.

- **Cocktail syrups:** Create spicy or sweet syrups that are tailor-made for enhancing cocktails. Anyone on your gift list can then become a master mixologist.

- **Shortbread cookie ornaments:** Circular shortbread cookies can be decorated with royal icing to look like Christmas ornaments. They can be eaten or even placed on trees to complete holiday decor.

- **Festive cookie pops:** Cookie pops can be made by mixing homemade or pre-purchased crumbled cake with frosting or softened cream cheese and formed into balls. Insert a lollipop stick and dip the balls into melted chocolate or candy melts. Sprinkles, nonpareils or luster dust can be used to enhance the covered pops.

Food gifts are perfect for the holiday season. Handmade treats from the heart show loved ones how just much you care.

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Christmas Calendar

DECEMBER 1

HANGING OF THE GREENS — Victoria Baptist Church, located at 1423 8th Street, Victoria, will hold a Hanging of the Greens service Sunday, Dec. 1, at 11 a.m. Sunday School will happen like normal at 9:45 a.m.

FARMVILLE CHRISTMAS PARADE — The annual Farmville Christmas parade will be held Sunday, Dec. 1, starting at 5:30 p.m. with a theme of "A Country Christmas." The parade will start near the Department of Motor Vehicles on North Virginia Street and 2nd Street and make its way west on 2nd Street to the North Main Street intersection and turn left onto South Main Street before ending near the McDonalds on Putney Street.

DECEMBER 2

CURDSVILLE POTLUCK — The Curdsville Community Center will hold a potluck Christmas dinner and cookie exchange Monday, Dec. 2. The commu-

nity is invited to bring a dish to share and one or two dozen cookies. They can be homemade or storebought. Santa will provide turkey and dressing. The Center is located at 122 School Road, just off Route 15.

DECEMBER 6-8

LIGHTS AT THE LAKE — The annual Bear Creek 'Light at the Lake' will happen Friday, Dec. 6 through Sunday, Dec. 8 from 5 - 7:30 p.m. Residents can drive through the holiday lights, with the donation of a new unwrapped toy or a financial gift to Cumberland Christmas Mother. There will also be craft making activities going on and the Lakeside Snack Bar will be open to sell holiday-themed ornaments, light refreshments and some other gifts.

DECEMBER 6

LUNENBURG CHRISTMAS PARADE — The Lunenburg County Christmas Parade will be held Friday, Dec. 6. Floats

and parade members will start lining up on Tidewater Avenue at 6 p.m., with a start time of 7 p.m. for the parade.

DECEMBER 7

SANTA PANCAKE BRUNCH — The Rotary Club of Farmville and The Woodland will host a Santa Pancake Brunch Saturday, Dec. 7 from 8 - 11 a.m. at the Woodland Community Center, 103 Varner Drive, Farmville. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 5 to 10 years old. Those under 5 eat free.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA — Passion Community Church in Farmville will hold Breakfast with Santa Saturday, Dec. 7, from 9 - 11 a.m. The free breakfast includes fluffy pancakes, sausage and a drink. Kids can meet Santa, take photos with him, enjoy holiday crafts and dive into cookie decorating. The church is located at 382 Fairgrounds Road.

HOLIDAY MARKET — The Farmville-Downtown Partnership will hold a series of Christmas events Saturday, Dec. 7 beginning at 11a.m. Festive booths will line Mill Street. A number of downtown shops will also be holding events. Once you're done with the Christmas Market explore the Farmville Holiday Bazaar at the Community Market Place and be sure to stop by the Longwood Center for the Visual Arts for a Winter Wonderland arts and crafts workshop.

WINTER WORKSHOP — The Longwood Center for the Visual Arts, located at 119 W. Third Street, Farmville, will hold a free arts and crafts family workshop Saturday, Dec. 7. Running from 10

a.m. to noon, the workshop contains a variety of arts and crafts, as well as light refreshments. Glitter, glue, and plenty of volunteers will be on hand.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPE — Payne Memorial Church will hold its annual Christmas Shoppe from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7. Everything will be a quarter, with free gift wrapping. Everyone receives a free raffle ticket at the door for some big prizes drawn throughout the day. Free food and drinks are available, along with crafts and games. The church is located at 1 Stoney Point Road in Cumberland.

HOLIDAY HERITAGE TOUR — The Lunenburg County Historical Society will hold a Holiday Heritage Tour at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Saturday, Dec. 7. The event will run from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the church, located at 409 N. Broad Street in Kenbridge. St. Luke's is the first African-American Shrine of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia. Attendees can learn the church's history, view the renovations and enjoy the holiday decorations.

CHRISTMAS MARKET — Historic Buckingham will hold its annual Christmas Market Saturday, Dec. 7 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Historic Village. Located at 84 Lee Wayside Road, just two miles west of Sprouses Corner off of Route 60. There will be buggy rides and vendors with arts and crafts, homemade goodies and treats, Christmas swags and decorations, ornaments, homemade sorghum, Amish baked goods and Foxfire Farm Christmas wreaths for sale.

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CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE — The first day of Historic Buckingham's Christmas Open House will be Saturday, Dec. 7 from 1-4 p.m. Both the Housewright House Museum and the Adams Museum will be open and decorated for Christmas. They will feature a special display of more than 30 "First Ladies of the United States" dolls, a collection made by the Madame Alexander Doll Company. The museums are located at 13012 W. James Anderson Highway in Buckingham.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA — Victoria Baptist Church, located at 1423 8th Street, Victoria, will hold its annual Community Christmas Cantata, Saturday, Dec. 7 beginning at 7 p.m.

COMMONWEALTH CHORALE — The Commonwealth Chorale of Virginia will present "To Hear the Angels Sing," a collection of Christmas music spanning multiple seasons, on Dec. 7 at Crenshaw United Methodist Church, located at 200 Church Street in Blackstone. The event begins at 4 p.m. and is free to the public.

DECEMBER 8

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE — The second day of Historic Buckingham's Christmas Open House will be held Sunday, Dec. 8 from 1-4 p.m. Both the Housewright House Museum and the Adams Museum will be open and decorated for Christmas. They will feature a special display of more than 30 "First Ladies of the United States" dolls, a collection made by the Madame Alexander Doll Company. The museums are located at 13012 W. James Anderson

Highway in Buckingham.

CUMBERLAND CHRISTMAS PARADE — The Cumberland County Christmas Parade will be held Sunday, Dec. 8 beginning at 2 p.m. The parade starts at NAPA at 1587 Anderson Highway and runs down U.S. 60 towards C & F Bank. There will be floats, plenty of music from the Cumberland High Marching Band and kids can catch a glimpse of Santa at the end.

COMMONWEALTH CHORALE — The Commonwealth Chorale of Virginia will present "To Hear the Angels Sing," a collection of Christmas music spanning multiple seasons, on Dec. 8. This performance will be at the Farmville United Methodist Church, located at 212 High Street, starting at 4 p.m.

DECEMBER 9

SENIOR CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON — The annual senior Christmas luncheon will be held Monday, Dec. 9 with a traditional holiday meal at Payne Memorial Church from 12:30 - 1:30 p.m., with all Cumberland County senior citizens invited to attend.

DECEMBER 13-14

LIGHTS AT THE LAKE — The annual Bear Creek 'Light at the Lake' will happen Saturday, Dec. 13 through Sunday, Dec. 14 from 5 - 7:30 p.m. Residents can drive through the holiday lights, with the donation of a new unwrapped toy or a financial gift to Cumberland Christmas Mother. There will also be craft making activities going on and

the Lakeside Snack Bar will be open to sell holiday-themed ornaments, light refreshments and some other gifts.

DECEMBER 14

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR — St. John's Lutheran Church, located at 1301 Milnwood Road, Farmville, will hold a Christmas Bazaar Saturday, Dec. 14. The event will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., including crafts, baked goods, Christmas items and a Cookie Walk.

CHRISTMAS TALENT SHOW — Farmville Seventh Day Adventist Church will host a Christmas Talent Show on

Saturday, Dec. 14 from 3 - 4:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 15

HOLIDAY TRAIN DISPLAY — The second date for this year's 2024 Holiday Train Display will be Sunday, Dec. 15 at the Kimbrough home, located at 900 Fourth Avenue, Farmville. Jim Kimbrough's work this year includes 900 square feet of model layout, along with models of Santa and his reindeer, Mickey Mouse, several Disney princesses, Paw Patrol and other characters. There is no charge to visit. The event runs from 2 - 4 p.m.



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Add local bazaars to your holiday shopping

The next one happens at Payne Memorial Church in a couple days. After that, similar events will be popping up in Buckingham and at St. John's Lutheran Church. While shopping malls, online retailers and mom and pop stores can be great spots to grab holiday deals, but shoppers also can find great gifts at holiday fairs and bazaars.

Bazaars are found all over the world, but are notable to Middle Eastern and Asian countries. Bazaars are marketplaces that feature several small shops or vendor stalls. In some countries, bazaars are outdoors and covered by tents, while in others they feature several stalls set up in large rooms.

Holiday bazaars often pop up during the holiday season and mimic international marketplaces. They may be hosted by cities or towns, schools or places of worship. Sometimes they are fundraising opportunities, with nonprofit organizations charging a

stall- or table-renting fee for bazaar participants. Holiday fairs and bazaars often bring together an array of different retailers, many of whom are small businesses selling interesting wares.

Shoppers should take advantage of every opportunity to visit these holiday bazaars because they will only be around for a short time. Here's a look at some of the benefits of bazaar shopping for the holidays.

- Patronize small businesses. Holiday bazaars often bring together small businesses that may not normally have storefronts. This allows shoppers to meet the individuals behind businesses they already patronize or discover new firms they were previously unacquainted with.

- Shop unique wares. Holiday bazaars may showcase items not easily found elsewhere, from handcrafted jewelry to unique soaps to custom woodworking items.

- Develop new relationships. Shop-



ping at holiday bazaars enables you to meet and interact with new people. This can expand your social circles and may even expand your professional network.

- Enjoy the shopping experience. Shopping away from the bustle of larger, busier retail stores gives you a break from the harried shopping experience many experience during the holiday season. Rather, holiday fairs and bazaars typically are less crowded and engage at a slower pace.

Plus, they may have a more homespun decorating design that can have you feeling like you're shopping in a Christmas village.

- Take advantage of food vendors. Food vendors likely will be mixed within the offerings of the holiday bazaar. That gives you an opportunity to take the day off from cooking and enjoy some savory and sweet bites while grabbing gifts.

Holiday shopping bazaars are great places to shop for the holidays.

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How to make Black Friday/Cyber Monday pay off

The holiday shopping season is a profitable period for retailers. So it should come as no surprise to consumers that many stores now begin stocking shelves with Christmas decor and other holiday-related items as early as September, reminding shoppers that the countdown is on until the holidays arrive.

Historically, Black Friday has been the busiest day for retailers, but Cyber Monday has increasingly become a go-to holiday shopping opportunity. Now largely known as BFCM, Black Friday Cyber Monday is undoubtedly the busiest time of year for retailers. These days can be a make-or-break period for many merchants. According to Drip, an e-commerce customer data aggregator, Cyber Monday was the biggest shopping day in 2023, with shoppers spending \$12.4 billion Ñ a 9.6 percent year-over-year increase. The National Retail Federation reported a record 200.4 million shoppers participated in Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales in 2023.

As people consider their BFCM shopping plans for 2024, these tips can help them make the most of these unique opportunities.

BECOME A PRICE CONNOISSEUR

Consumers who would feel right at

home calling out correct prices on 'The Price is Right' will have an advantage come the holiday shopping season. By understanding the standard retail price on many items, it is easier to know just how customer-friendly BFCM deals are. Consumers can look at the advertisements in newspapers or online and only shop the best deals to save money.

PAY ATTENTION TO EARLY BIRD DEALS

BFCM is a great opportunity to save, and many retailers have extended this exclusive price-slashing period to offer 'sneak peeks' and 'early bird' opportunities that precede Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Shoppers can keep an eye out for early BFCM deals to save even more money.

EXPLORE LOYALTY REWARDS

Shoppers who are part of stores' rewards programs, whether that entails earning loyalty points or having a store credit card, may be eligible for additional perks. Although one's email inbox may be overflowing this time of year with promotions, individuals should double-check their accounts to see if they've been given early access to sales or special coupon codes that can bring prices down even further. Some retailers also may utilize digital coupons that need to be clipped, which is basically saving them to a loyalty account.

Plan the shopping list in advance. A complete shopping list at the ready can make it easier to shop for specific items during Black Friday or Cyber Monday hours.

Avoid impulse buying. It may be tempting to grab many different items because the prices seem so good. However, sticking to a list and only shopping for necessary items is an effective way to avoid overspending.

Don't forget small businesses. Be sure to check out the sales at local small businesses during BFCM as well as Small Business Saturday. Shoppers may find that deals at smaller retailers rival those at larger chains.

Black Friday and Cyber Monday present chances to save. Making the most of these shopping opportunities can translate to scoring holiday gifts at the lowest prices possible.




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Holiday shopping tips you can't afford to miss

The festive and fun nature of the Christmas season can make it easy to forget the benefits of being frugal. Many people go overboard on holiday spending, making this time of year costly for consumers.

Sales between the beginning of November 2023 and Christmas Eve 2023 climbed 3.1 percent from the year earlier, according to the Mastercard SpendingPulse. The National Retail Federation reported in November 2023 that holiday spending was expected to reach between \$957 and \$966 billion. Trading Economics, a financial market indicator and forecast provider, said personal spending in the United States only rose 0.2 percent in May 2024 from the previous month, which marked the lowest increase since January 2024.

Shoppers who want to spend less and stick to a budget for holiday entertaining and gifting can keep these budget-

ing tips in mind.

SET A VALUE TO GIFT RECIPIENTS

It may sound harsh, but certain people on holiday shopping lists may be assigned a higher value than others. For example, you wouldn't necessarily spend the same amount on a gift for a child's teacher as you would for a grandmother. Putting a dollar figure next to each name on the shopping list helps you identify your expected spending and where you can cut back, if necessary.

ESTABLISH YOUR OVERALL BUDGET

Once you have an idea of your potential holiday expenditures, set a firm budget. Avoid the temptation of impulse buys, which can make it easy to go over budget.

BEGIN SHOPPING EARLY

Start scouring ads and looking for

deals prior to Thanksgiving or Black Friday. Keep a running list of gift ideas and when the price is right, purchase those items.

PRICE CHECK 'PERFECT GIFTS'

If you've spotted the perfect gift for someone but it's beyond budget, see if you can find a better price elsewhere, says Better Money Habits. There are apps that allow users to scan barcodes and check items across various retailers. Many stores also have price-match policies that can save shoppers money.

LOOK FOR DEALS ALL OF THE TIME

Many people get hung up on perceived deep discounts from Black Friday and Cyber Monday offers. However, industry experts say there often isn't a huge difference in markdowns between these promotions and those during other sales. Some retailers even increase prices on goods only to mark them down for Black Friday to make it appear that there is a discount. Only by knowing the average price for items can you know if a sale is legitimate.

SIGN UP FOR STORE REWARDS

If you don't want your regular email inbox inundated with offers, set up a separate email account for in-store and online shopping. Then you can sign up for the rewards programs at checkout.



Utilize the coupon codes and advertisements for sales to save money without having your primary email data shared with other marketers.

TRACK SPENDING CAREFULLY

If you don't know how much you're spending, then you cannot possibly stick to a budget. After each purchase, keep a running tally of all holiday spending to see how far you are from the finish line.

The holidays can be expensive, but with smart budgeting and dedication to savvy shopping, it's possible to stay out of financial trouble.

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Gifts for holiday hosts

Millions of people open their homes to relatives and friends each holiday season. Taking on the task of holiday host can be a labor of love, as it involves not only a commitment of time, but also a financial investment. Lending Tree reported that 60 percent of Americans considering hosting holiday gatherings in 2023 expected to spend an average of \$556 on their celebrations. Six-figure earners planned to spend even more, indicating they expected to spend \$764 on holiday hosting.

Guests benefitting from holiday hosts' hospitality can offer tokens of their appreciation upon arrival. The following are some great gifts to offer hosts this holiday season.

BEVERAGE OF CHOICE

A bottle of wine or another spirit can be a great gift for holiday gatherings. Let hosts decide if they want to serve it with the meal or save it to enjoy at a later time.

CURATED FOOD BASKET

A guest can put together a basket of different foods, including crackers, cheeses, jams, bread sticks, and other items that can be enjoyed as snacks or appetizers.

HOLIDAY PLANT

A poinsettia or Christmas cactus may

be fitting this time of year, and a holiday host can enjoy seeing it grow during the season.

KITCHEN TOOLS OR SERVING ITEMS

A beautiful olive wood serving platter or cutting board might be appreciated, particularly if guests arrive with it covered in a charcuterie spread.

SCENTED CANDLE

Hosts can set the mood and add to the ambiance of an entertaining space with lit, scented candles, which make



for a great gift. Guests can inquire as to the hosts' preferred aromas or stick with safe bets like vanilla or cinnamon.

HOLIDAY ORNAMENT OR DECORATIVE PIECE

Guests can offer ornaments for the tree or another decorative item for hosts who are repeat entertainers. Dating the decoration or having it engraved can transform it into a memento hosts can relish through the years.

COMFORT AND CARE ASSORTMENT

Hosting takes effort, so a box of items to pamper holiday hosts can be a great gift. Fill the box with a loofah, bath bombs, shower gel, moisturizing cream, and massage oil.

Holiday hosts invest time and money into making their homes welcoming spaces to spend the holidays. Guests can treat these hosts with gifts to show how much their efforts and hospitality are appreciated.

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Great gifts for the family foodie

Food features prominently throughout the holiday season. Family meals around the holiday dinner table are a cherished tradition in millions of households, and food also plays a central role during seasonal gatherings with friends and colleagues. Food also can feature prominently throughout Chanukah and on Christmas Day, particularly if a loved one qualifies as a full-fledged foodie.

Many families feature at least one foodie. Foodies always know the best place in town to grab a bite or when a trendy new restaurant will open its doors. But such individuals also enjoy making meals at home, and the follow-

ing gift ideas can make this holiday season more flavorful for the family foodie.

TABLETOP FIREPIT

Shoppers who want to impress their food-loving loved one with something truly unique can give a tabletop firepit. Safe for indoor use, tabletop firepits enable s'mores-loving foodies to indulge in a traditionally summertime favorite all-year-round. Tabletop firepits are small enough to be stored on a kitchen countertop or in a cabinet. When in use, the s'mores-friendly accessory is smokeless, removing perhaps the lone disadvantage to making this beloved treat.

CLUB SUBSCRIPTION

Monthly subscriptions are a gift that can keep on giving all the way until next holiday season. Sweets lovers will undoubtedly appreciate receiving a box of fresh chocolates each month, while those with more unique tastes may anxiously await the day their monthly shipment of pickles arrives at their doorstep. The options are endless, ensuring there's a monthly subscription out there to tickle every foodie's fancy.

SAUCE SAMPLER

Amateur sauciers may find inspiration in a sauce sampler set. Sampler set options abound, so shoppers can find something for foodies who love a spicy sauce, something more sweet or even in between. Of course, sampler sets also provide a range of sauces, making them ideal for foodies who want something spicy tonight before pivoting to a sweeter dish tomorrow. Flavored olive oil sampler sets also can be a great gift for cooks who love to experiment with new flavors.

CHARCUTERIE BOARD AND KNIFE SET

Foodies who love to host their fellow food fanatics will no doubt fall in love

with a new charcuterie board and knife set. A 2023 report from Kroger revealed that the supermarket chain expected charcuterie boards to remain popular over the course of the year. That popularity makes sense, as anything from meat to cheese to fruit to crackers has a home on a charcuterie board, making the item especially appealing to foodies who routinely share their homes and love of food with friends and family.

ESPRESSO MAKER

Of course, foodies aren't just about food. Beverages also figure prominently in many foodies' lives. A high-end espresso maker can ground fresh beans and brew multiple cups in no time at all, making it an ideal addition to any foodie's culinary arsenal.

Food is a vital component of the holiday season and can even be incorporated into holiday shopping.



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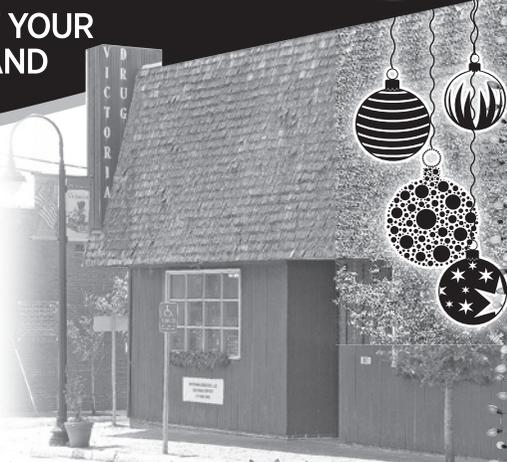


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Experiential gifts for seniors

Holiday shoppers know that, seemingly every year, there's one person on their shopping list who's hard to shop for. Seniors may fit that bill, as many have already accumulated a lifetime's worth of goods and gadgets. That's why experiential gifts can be such a good fit for seniors come the holiday season.

Experiential gifts are wildly popular. In its 2023 Winter Holiday Shopping Report, the market research firm Mintel revealed that nearly half of individuals surveyed for the report felt that experiential gifts are superior to tangible items. Seniors who already have everything they need might be even more enthusiastic about experiential gifts, which may encourage them to get out of the house or pursue passions they've long had a passing interest in. This holiday season, shoppers can consider these experiences as they look for something new and unique for the seniors on their shopping lists.

BIPLANE FLIGHT

Few experiences are as exhilarating as a flight in an open cockpit biplane. Biplane flights are unique to each company that offers them, but some planes can accommodate two passengers (in addition to the pilot), making

this an ideal gift for senior couples who aren't afraid of a bird's eye view. The length of a flight depends on shoppers' budgets, but no matter how long seniors are in the air, they're sure to return to the ground having enjoyed a truly unique experience.

HOT AIR BALLOON RIDE

If riding shotgun with a pilot in a tiny plane is more adventure than your favorite senior may be seeking, a hot air balloon ride may be more suitable. Hot air balloon rides provide a truly stunning way to experience idyllic settings and a calm way to take to the skies on a beautiful day. Rides tend to last around an hour, but companies typically offer various packages and may even let shoppers customize rides for their loved ones.

THEATRE TICKETS

The COVID-19 pandemic hasn't been easy for anyone, but seniors were among the groups most vulnerable to serious infection if they caught the virus. As a result, many seniors strictly adhered to social distancing guidelines prior to getting vaccinated. Now that seniors are eligible to be fully vaccinated and even receive two rounds of booster shots, a trip to the theatre can reignite their passion for live entertainment and make for a

memorable night out.

CYCLING TOUR

Modern seniors are among the most physically active demographics. A 2020 study published in the Journal of Medical Internet Research found that, within months of the pandemic being declared, adults age 65 and older averaged 100 more minutes of physical activity than the next closest cohort.

A cycling tour can make for a perfect gift to active seniors. Tours may be designed to visit local places of historical significance, idyllic natural settings or local eateries. Wherever the tours ultimately end up, they're sure to put a smile on active seniors' faces.

Experiences can make for the perfect holiday gifts for seniors who have it all.

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Craft an entire day around tree shopping

Though retailers may begin playing holiday tunes shortly after Halloween, for many people, no date on the calendar marks the beginning of the holiday season better than the day they pick up their Christmas tree.

There are many different ways to acquire a Christmas tree. Some people prefer artificial Christmas trees that can be stored and taken out each year. Others make a yearly expedition to a tree lot or a Christmas tree farm to find the perfect fir or spruce. Historians believe a man named W.V. McGallard planted 25,000 Norway spruce seedlings



at his Mercer County, New Jersey farm

in 1901, essentially establishing the first commercial Christmas tree farm. By 1908, customers could visit the farm and choose trees for \$1 each. McGallard helped create an entirely new industry that

now accounts for 350 million trees being grown and sold in the United States every year.

Selecting a Christmas tree may not take more than an hour or two, but there are ways for families and other tree shoppers to maximize their time spent looking for a tree.

BRING REFRESHMENTS

Couple Christmas tree shopping with picnicking if the weather is amenable. Pack some foldable chairs into the vehicle (sitting on the ground on a blanket may be too cold) and bring along thermoses of coffee or hot cocoa. Snacks like granola bars, Christmas cookies or other filling treats can keep everyone satisfied and energized while they shop for a tree.

PAIR TREE SHOPPING WITH A TRIP TO SEE LIGHTING DISPLAYS

Find the tree lot or tree farm and then scope out potentially scenic spots to view holiday lighting displays nearby. Neighborhood Facebook or other social media groups often tout homes that put up eye-catching displays. Ask around for addresses and plan your own tours.

PLAN A NIGHT OUT

Everyone may be tired and hungry after a long day of Christmas tree hunting. Plus, it's typically a good idea to wait some time for boughs to open before decorating. Use this opportunity to dine out and return home ready to decorate. Make it a regular occurrence that Christmas tree shopping is followed by a family meal at a favorite restaurant.

WATCH A CLASSIC FILM

Many different holiday movies are broadcast this time of year and each enhances the Christmas spirit. While putting up the tree, play a favorite film in the background. What better way to enjoy decorating your own tree than by watching Charlie Brown adorn his meager evergreen at the same time?

Make a day of selecting and putting up the Christmas tree each year. Doing so can enhance the holidays and make for an entertaining way to spend time together as a couple or family.

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These decorative items add a lot to holiday festivities

It's easy to recognize the holiday season has arrived. Holiday-centric sights and sounds abound this time of year. In fact, the arrival of decorations in stores seemingly comes earlier and earlier each year, perhaps to accommodate people's undying enthusiasm for the holiday season.

Decorating a home or business for the holidays involves some familiar items, but this is a time of year when people can truly make the holidays their own. With that in mind, here are some considerations for decorations and other trinkets that can add a lot of cheer to this already festive time of year.

WREATHS

Wreaths are one of the simplest ways to dress up windows, doors or other areas of a home. These decorative items can be made from various materials. Evergreen boughs are one of the more traditional, but there's also colorful gar-



lands, flowers or even ribbon that can be wrapped to make a wreath.

LIGHTS

Lights are integral parts of both Christian and Jewish holiday celebrations. Lights adorn homes to represent Christ being the Light of the World. In Judaism, the lighting of eight candles for Chanukah represents how a small amount of Temple oil miraculously

burned for eight days and nights. Filling a home with artificial lights or candles adds a festive touch to dark winter evenings.

ADVENT CALENDAR

While it is called an advent calendar and traditionally ties into the time preceding Christmas, anyone can utilize an advent "countdown" calendar as they anticipate the arrival of Christmas Day. There are different iterations of advent calendars, from chocolate calendars to decorative ones featuring doors behind which there are whimsical figurines. Kids may even want to get involved in making home-made calendars.

POINSETTIAS

Poinsettias come in a variety of colors, but red is the hue of choice for

holiday decorating. Perhaps surprisingly. Poinsettias are tropical plants. The "flowers" you see on the plants aren't flowers at all. They're modified leaves called bracts. If you take good care of poinsettias, they even can be planted outdoors for the summer.

BOUGHS AND BRANCHES

One of the easiest ways to add a festive touch to a home for the holidays is with items that likely can be scavenged from outdoors. Take a hike and gather some evergreen boughs, tree branches, pine cones, and holly sprigs, which can be turned into garlands, wreaths or centerpieces. With a little white speckle paint, you can give them a snow-covered look.

Decorating for the holidays is a popular tradition and one that can make spaces even more festive to enjoy. Various items can enhance the ambiance and set the scene for the joyous weeks to come.

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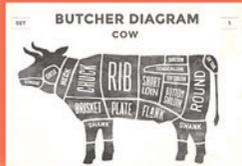




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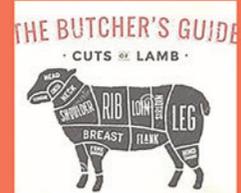
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