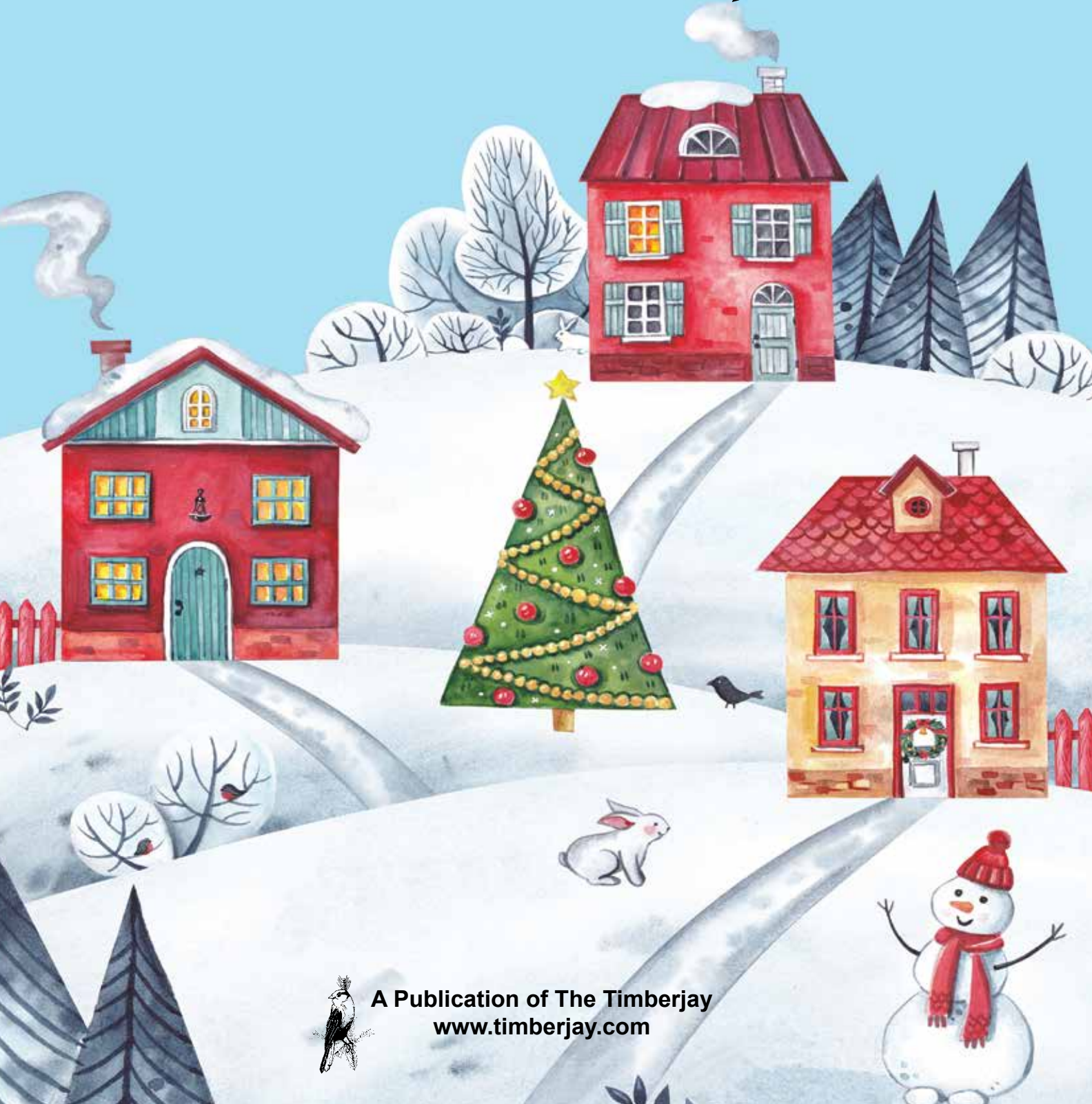


NORTH COUNTRY

# CHRISTMAS

Your Guide To The Perfect Holiday Season • 2020



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# Want to help your community?

## *Then shop locally-owned this holiday season...*

Every year, we make the case on this page for our readers to shop locally. That's always an important message, but never as important as it is this year. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic earlier this year, many of our local retailers have been hammered like never before. For weeks, many were forced to close their doors, suffering lost sales that put many deeply in the red.

They're heading into the holidays with greater uncertainty than at any time in recent memory. Will shoppers turn out to their local brick and mortar establishments or stay home and shop online? Those decisions we all make will determine the futures of many of our community-minded local businesspeople, so we urge everyone to make them in the best interests of their community.

We certainly understand the urge to shop online during a time of pandemic. But, keep in mind that the vast majority of our locally-owned and operated retailers have excellent websites which shoppers can peruse and make purchases at their leisure. Many of the items they carry are unique, unlike the mass market items you find on the giant online retail sites. Before you purchase from one of the big online retailers, ask yourself how much these big online retailers contribute to your community. Do they build new stores that provide construction jobs for your neighbors? Do they maintain facilities that pay property taxes in your community? Do they hire local resi-

dents, providing wages that circulate in your town? Do they contribute to your hometown sports teams or other local fundraising efforts?

If the answer to these questions is no, then why would you send your dollars to a company that doesn't return the favor?

For those who still enjoy shopping in-store, our local retailers are ideal locations to stay safe during the current pandemic. You're far less likely to face large crowds of people in smaller shops. That not only means the owner or employees will have time to actually assist you, but that your chances of infection are much reduced. We already know that many of our area retailers are adjusting their holiday shopping schedules to keep their customers safe. Many are canceling open houses or de-emphasizing special events, like Small Business Saturday, set this year for Nov. 28, which typically focuses attention on locally-owned retailers.

Yet many shop owners don't want to bring large numbers of customers to their store at any one time, so they're sacrificing a major sales day for

the health of their community.

Rather than thinking about Small Business Saturday, let's make a commitment to an entire holiday season focused on small businesses.

How we spend our money matters. Main Streets struggle as retail dollars that used to be spent in locally-owned shops, restaurants, and other businesses are increasingly ending up in the pockets of huge chain or online retailers. While big box retailers do at least provide a few jobs locally, they don't provide the same community impact as retailers with local ownership. What's more, numerous studies have shown that these big chain retailers often displace as many jobs as they create. They also bring with them new demands on community infrastructure and a variety of other public services, that local property owners must pay for.

Big chain retailers don't spend much in the local economy. When they build a new store, they don't employ local architects or planners, since each store is essentially a clone of all the others. They

use national suppliers for the building materials they use in construction and for the products they eventually sell. They don't use the local ad agency, or the insurance broker on Main Street. They don't use a local accountant and they rarely advertise in local newspapers.

Locally-owned businesses do all of these things, and because they do, the money you spend with a local merchant works its way throughout the area economy, creating a "multiplier effect" that benefits all of us.

When we shop online or at big chain retailers, we also contribute to the loss of local identity. The big box stores and big chain restaurants all look and feel the same wherever you travel. It's local businesses that provide our communities with their unique flavor.

All of which makes our point. Our locally-owned small businesses contribute to the character and the economic vitality and diversity of our communities and our local economy. They absolutely deserve our support.

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# Helping the elderly and shut-ins over the holidays

## Making this pandemic Christmas one to remember for everyone in your community

For the elderly and shut-ins this holiday season, it may be an even lonelier time than usual. With visiting severely limited at assisted living and nursing homes, and many other seniors isolated at home because they are at high risk of complications if they get sick with COVID-19, the traditions of the holidays are going to be very different this year.

**Here are some ideas to make the holidays special during these unusual times.**

➤ First of all, if possible check on seniors, disabled or other at-risk neighbors in your area. Since there should be no contact right now, print out one of these #ViralKindness Postcards and leave it on their door or doorstep. Then they'll know how to reach out!

➤ Send a card: Handwritten cards and letters are always appreciated. Recipients can display the cards and re-read

correspondence to remind themselves that you care.

➤ Send some home-baked treats, or order from a favorite local store or bakery and have them delivered.

➤ Share a meal long-distance: Plan a socially-distanced meal. Have a favorite take-out meal delivered, then call during meal time and talk over a speakerphone (or smartphone/tablet if available).

➤ Create your own book club or movie club: Have grandparents read out loud over a speakerphone or video calling app like Facetime, Amazon Alexa, Facebook Messenger, or Skype. For older children, have them share a favorite book with a favorite older relative or friend, and then have them talk about the book together.

➤ Have a movie party by watching the same television show or movie.

➤ Singing old, familiar songs, classic hymns, and family



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## Holiday Tips

favorites can bring back memories and is a skill that often remains even if speech is difficult.

➤ Send a personalized gift that will remind seniors of their family: Mail-order companies specialize in custom puzzles from photographs or perhaps your child's artwork. You can have puzzles made with only a few pieces, or as many as 2,000. Personalized photo gifts are available at places like Walgreens, or online from many photo vendors.

➤ Make a photo book: Document the previous year with a scrapbook or professionally-printed photo book. This year will be one to remember, and it will be worth your time to document it. Photo books can be printed with online vendors such as Shutterfly or Walgreens, and can include text and drawings as well as color photographs. You upload your photographs, and then design the book page by page. Scrapbooking is another way to preserve and share memories.

➤ Assemble a craft box: Crossword or word search puzzle books, adult coloring books with pencils or markers, paint-by-number kits, craft kits, and jigsaw puzzles, are just some of the ideas that you can assemble into a gift box.

➤ Don't forget your care center's staff: For those with family members living in congregate care, think about small gifts for the staff that care for your loved ones or neighbors every day.

Baked goods, candy, fruit, nuts, instant drink mixes, gum, and tea are good ideas. Staff may also appreciate self-care gifts like lotions, scented soaps, or lip balm.

**HELLO!** If you are self-isolating, I can help.

My name is .....

I live locally at .....

My phone number is .....

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Baking

# A recipe for holiday fun...

## *Gingerbread houses: construct holiday memories*



**G**rowing up in a small New England town in the 1970s, St. George's Episcopal

Church in Middlebury, Conn., was the place to visit every December. The church's large social hall was transformed into an amazing gingerbread village, with replicas of the town's historic architecture arranged around a village



**JODI  
SUMMIT**

town square, just like the real homes, churches, and businesses up the hill, many of which dated back almost 200 years.

The event was a fundraiser, and the larger pieces were auctioned off, with many other smaller creations for sale. Every year, it seemed, the replicas got more and more intricate.

I never learned the art of high-end gingerbread construction, but for those willing to settle for something more basic, gingerbread construction is a terrific family activity.

And if you don't have kids in your house, consider baking and doing the

initial house assembly, purchasing the candy decorations and some extra frosting, and then creating your own do-it-yourself kit for a relative or neighbor with children in their house.

Gingerbread is a simple dough to make as long as one has a hand-held or stand mixer. Flour, butter, sugar and spices get mixed together, and then rolled out thin (quarter-inch thick) on a flat cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Baking takes about 15 minutes until the pieces are firm and solid to the touch (if they aren't cooked enough, they won't be as strong and may break while trying to put the house together). Trim the



pieces, if needed, with a sharp knife, right out of the oven (before they cool). Pieces must cool completely so they become firm, then are pieced together on a cardboard base, a few at a time, using a royal icing piped from a pastry bag as glue. Royal icing is made with confectioner's sugar and meringue powder (preferred if it will be eaten), or raw egg whites, and it sets up hard within 15-30 minutes.

Building the house can be tricky. Use cups and bowls and even some books to prop the pieces in place while the icing dries. Make sure the four walls are completely stable before adding the roof pieces, which will also need to be propped up while drying.

You can also find ready-made gingerbread kits (with pre-cooked gingerbread), or can find cookie cutter sets with all the right shapes and sizes to make a standard size house. You can find and download patterns for many different styles of gingerbread houses online that you transfer to paper or thin cardboard and then use to cut the dough into shapes.

Decorations can be as simple as piped white royal icing, but most of the fun for children is using as many kinds of small candies and colored frosting as they can imagine. Gumdrops, jelly beans, small chocolate candies, peppermints, candy canes, licorice, and fruit strips (which can be cut into shapes) can all be attached to the finished house using royal icing or regular frosting. The roof can be "shingled" with all different sorts of candies, nuts, or cereal like shredded wheat.

Gingerbread or sugar cookies in as-



**Top: Roll out the dough on parchment paper, on a flat cookie sheet, then bake without removing the background to get crisp edges. Then cut when warm out of the oven. Do simple piping before assembling the pieces.**

**Use household items to hold the pieces in place while the frosting "glue" dries.**

sorted shapes can be used to decorate the scene.

I found my recipe for gingerbread on

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the foodnetwork.com website, which came courtesy of popular Minnesota cookbook writer Beatrice Ojakangas.

For ideas, step-by-step how-to instructions, and more, start out at [pinterest.com](http://pinterest.com), [youtube.com](http://youtube.com), or [www.foodnetwork.com](http://www.foodnetwork.com).

### Some tip and tricks

➤ If cutting the pieces with a cardboard pattern, use a ruler to make sure your cuts are straight.

➤ Use a knife or cookie cutter to make the openings for windows and doors, but leave them in place until the pieces are baked, then use a sharp knife to remove them. This way the dough will not expand, and it will leave you with nice sharp edges.

➤ If the edges of your pieces are not smooth, you can use a fine grater to "sand" them.

➤ Cover a piece of sturdy cardboard with aluminum foil for the base of the house. Be sure to make it large enough to be able to create a holiday scene around the house.

➤ You can create "stained glass windows" by placing a hard candy inside the cut out window (on a parchment sheet of course), and placing them back in the oven for a few minutes. Then use a toothpick to smooth out the melted candy inside the cutout window.

➤ Use a thick line of icing on the inside seams of all the walls to strengthen the building.







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# Why is this Christmas different?

## *Making the most of the holidays during a pandemic*

**W**hy is this Christmas different from all other Christmases? This simple question, "Why is this night different from all other nights," is usually asked during the Passover Seder. But this year, our religious and family traditions are going to be different, so it's worthwhile to start thinking of ways to make this Christmas and holiday season special, while still keeping our families and communities safe from the spread of COVID-19.

First of all, decide which traditions are still safe. Traipsing through the woods to find the perfect Christmas tree, creating new ornaments and decorating a tree, baking holiday treats to share with friends, and writing and mailing cards, are all things that families can still continue to do. Focusing on what is safe, instead of focusing on what needs to change, will help everyone stay happy and healthy this pandemic holiday season.

Find and take advantage of events, both in person and online, that are designed to be safe this year. Sing carols with online karaoke, stream holiday music, or find your favorite holiday movies online.

### Find online Christmas carols to sing at home

- Find favorite Christmas songs and carols, along with lyrics, for easy sing-a-longs at <https://www.tistheseason.to.be>.
- Or check out youtube (which you can stream onto a smart TV) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxrC06MPx84>. Search for Top 20 Christmas Carols with Lyrics to Sing-Along.

### Borrow from other celebrations

Dig out those old plastic Easter eggs and create a scavenger hunt for the children. Number each egg, and place a clue inside that will help them find the next egg. This can be done indoors or outdoors. At the end of the hunt, hide a prize.

### Learn how to make a new holiday treat

Try your hand at candy-making, create a gingerbread house (see story on page 6), decorate cookies, make an elaborate cake. Watch a few episodes of a holiday baking show and get inspired. Make homemade taffy or caramel. How about homemade marshmallows (which you can cut into fun shapes using cookie cutters). Then float in some homemade hot cocoa.



## CDC advice on hosting gatherings

### Remind guests to stay home if they are sick

Remind invited guests to stay home if they have been exposed to COVID-19 in the last 14 days or are showing COVID-19 symptoms. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) advises anyone who has had close contact (within six feet for a total of 15 minutes or more, even if both are wearing masks) should stay home. Invited guests who live with those at higher risk should also consider the potential risk to their loved ones. Consider keeping a list of guests who attended in case someone in attendance develops COVID after the gathering, so everyone can be contacted.

### Encourage social distancing

- Host your gathering outdoors, when possible. If this is not feasible, make sure the room or space is well-ventilated (for example, open a window).
- Arrange tables and chairs to allow for social distancing. People from the same household can be in groups together and don't need to be six feet apart – just six feet away from other families.



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► If planning activities for adults and/or kids, consider those where social distancing can be maintained, like sidewalk chalk art or frisbee.

► When guests arrive, minimize gestures that promote close contact. For example, don't shake hands, do elbow bumps, or give hugs. Instead wave and verbally greet them.

#### **Wear masks**

► Wear masks when less than six feet apart from people or indoors.  
 ► Consider providing masks for guests or asking them to bring their own.

#### **Clean hands often**

► Consider providing hand sanitizer in addition to clearly marked hand-washing areas.

► Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds when entering and exiting social gatherings. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-percent alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

► Make sure there is adequate soap or hand sanitizer containing at least 60-percent alcohol available in the restrooms and encourage guests not to form a line at the door. Consider also providing cleaning supplies that allow guests to wipe down surfaces before they leave.

► Remind guests to wash their hands before serving or eating food.

► Use single-use hand towels or paper towels for drying hands so guests do not share a towel.

#### **Limit the number of people handling or serving food**

► Encourage guests to bring their own food and drinks.

► Limit people going in and out of the areas where food is being prepared or handled, such as in the kitchen or around the grill, if possible.

► If serving any food, consider identifying one person to serve all food so that multiple people are not handling the serving utensils.

► Use single-use options or identify one person to serve sharable items, like salad dressings, food containers, and condiments, so that multiple people are not handling the items.

► Limit contact with commonly touched surfaces or shared items.

#### **Lower risk activities**

► Having a small dinner with only people who live in your household.

► Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others.

► Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family.

► Shopping online rather than in person on the day after Thanksgiving or the next Monday.

► Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home.

#### **Moderate risk activities**

► Having a small outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in your com-

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munity. Lower your risk by following CDC's recommendations on hosting gatherings or cook-outs.

► Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people are able to maintain social distancing.

#### **Higher risk activities**

Avoid these higher risk activities to help prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19:

► Going shopping in crowded stores just before, on, or after Thanksgiving.

► Participating or being a spectator at a crowded race.

► Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household.



# Have a *Vera* Merry Christmas

*Thoughts and recipes from Lake Vermilion's most colorful columnist*

*Editor's Note: The following are the thoughts (sometimes appropriate, sometimes not) of Miss Vera Milion, a popular columnist in the Tower edition of the Timberjay newspaper. Vera, who lives on Lake Vermilion, writes regularly about her exploits as well as those of fellow characters Moose and Hilda. We can't always vouch for the veracity of Vera's stories, but they never cease to entertain. We suspect the following recipes are real, but with Vera, you never know for sure...*

**I**n these times of 'Political Correctness,' I wonder if there are still Christmas Pageants in public schools? I was ALWAYS the narrator! I NEVER got to be one of the Kings clad in Mrs. Hunter's old drapes, with a tinfoil crown and a bottle of Frankincense created by some mother out of a Prell shampoo bottle.

Never a shepherd dragging sheep made from a sawhorse with a stuffed sock head. As for Joseph, again NADA!

In college my luck changed! The Black Hills Passion Play toured back

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in the day and one of their stops was Bemidji– home of Bemidji State College. Theater students were invited to participate in the performance at the high school. The theater was enormous. It had been used by touring shows and was complete even with fly bars.

A fly bar, for those who did not major in theater, is a pipe that can be used to ‘fly-in’ backdrops, curtains, or set pieces.

It was my FIRST experience with this theatrical device....but not the last! The ‘gig’ (theater talk) also appealed to several of my fellow thespians and me because you got paid. Which meant you could buy food.

Being THEATRICALS, what we ingested had to be unique, rare, dramatic, CHEAP, so we dined on bologna!

**BOLOGNA WEDGES**

- 1 large package of cream cheese
- Sour cream or sweet cream---your choice
- Bologna slices



**Garlic salt**

Soften one package of cream cheese with the cream, season to taste with the garlic salt or any other salt that calls to you. Spread on bologna slices.

Create a stack about 1-inch high and cut into wedges and refrigerate. (If you are seeking to impress, stick each wedge with one of those toothpicks with the fringe. Nothing says party like fancy toothpicks!)

The production included all sorts of animals....sheep, goats, and a mule for Jesus, so he could enter into Jeru-

salem!

There was a brief run through before the actual production. We were separated into two mobs...stage left and stage right. Each group was directed by one of the ‘professionals’ from the company. I was still just a member of the crowd, however the Angel Gabriel was in charge of my crowd and a professional. People rushed on from stage left and right awaiting the appearance of Jesus.

To this day i don’t really know why my entrance was delayed until it was me and Jesus on his mule left to enter. The mule and its passenger came on first. Gabriel held me back until Jesus was center stage.

“Now...run on as if you were late, ‘

And so I did...Biblical robes flapping the breeze which of course scared the mule who tried to stampede.

Jesus got the mule under control and continued his entrance into the city.

MY entrance WAS cut from the evening performance!

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While I still LOVE the season, many of my memories aren't! I had/have a loud voice and I can carry a tune- regardless of what the other members of the choir reported!

So, I was chosen in the fourth grade to be part of a 'select' group of singers for the school's salute to the Yule-tide. This was long before Christmas concerts became a political issue in public schools. If I had been older I might have resorted to this recipe from a cookbook created by the ladies of the Wilmette Lutheran Church, Wilmette, Illinois!

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1 can of frozen lemonade concentrate to make one quart  
 1 can of frozen limeade concentrate to make one quart  
 3 quart bottles of club soda  
 1 quart white rum  
 Mix the rum and the concentrate.  
 Don't add water to the frozen concentrates! Freeze, and an hour before serving, remove from the freezer; the

mixture should be frozen.

Before serving, blend in the three quarts of club soda. The recipes makes 34 four-ounce servings.

One of my favorite cookbooks is Tower's Kitchen Secrets, compiled by the Tower Women's Civic Improvement Club. There isn't a date of publication, but I do recognize names.

Keeping with Christmas, June Macomber's Santa Cinnamon Salad would be a success. I like it because it doesn't contain ANY vegetables!

**June Macomber's Santa Cinnamon Salad**

1/4 cup red cinnamon candies  
 2 tablespoons sugar  
 1 cup hot water  
 1 package cherry gelatin  
 1 cup cold water  
 1 cup diced apple  
 1/2 cup diced orange  
 1/4 cup chopped nuts  
 Dissolve the candies and sugar in the hot water...heat to boiling and pour

over gelatin, stir to dissolve. Add the cold water and food coloring.

Chill until partially set, then stir in the remaining ingredients and chill until firm. I FEEL this recipe just CALLS for giant dollops of whipped cream.

After these recipes, you can browse the ads in the cookbook:

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types bread and 'specially' decorated cakes.

THEN we arrive at:

**Vi Myre's IMP OF SATAN CAKE**

- 1/2 cup of shortening
- 3/4 cup of sugar
- 1-1/2 cups cake flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 cup of milk
- 1 tsp grated lemon peel
- 1-1/2 squares of grated chocolate
- 4 egg whites
- 2 tsp vanilla



Cream sugar and shortening until fluffy. Sift flour, baking powder, salt and add to the creamed mixture alternating with the

milk. Add the grated lemon peel and grated chocolate. Fold in the beaten egg whites and vanilla.

Bake in two 8-inch pans for 35 minutes at 350 degrees. Frost lavishly with chocolate frosting.

If you been asked to 'serve,' at church during the holidays I found this recipe:

**10,000 Chocolate Chip Cookies**

- 112 pounds of chocolate chips
- 65 pounds of flour
- 500 eggs
- 100 pounds of sugar
- 87 pounds of shortening
- 75 pounds of brown sugar
- 12 pounds of butter
- 3 pounds of salt
- 3 cups of vanilla extract
- 1 quart of water
- 1 1/2 pounds

Directions: DO THE BEST YOU CAN!

This recipe is from Marie Hoffman who claims it's a hit with the crew of the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Yorktown.

You can call it the winter solstice but we KNOW what you really mean!

The singers were given a huge sheet of white cotton which was our choir robes which we took home so our moms could cut the holes through which we poked out heads. There were no directions given. My mother did what was asked of her. Turned out she somehow made the hole not to Miss Bakken's wishes. So, I was led to each classroom as an illustration of HOW it was NOT to be done. The rest of the costume was a huge red bow, and who in the audience could tell the difference. If this had happened later in my life I perhaps would have taken to drinking.



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# Creating keepsakes....



Looking for the perfect Christmas gift to spoil someone in your life? Look no further. Hook and Stone by Elizabeth Engelke, a home-based jeweler in Soudan, offers a wide variety of unique wire-wrapped necklaces, bracelets, and rings. There's something for everyone and if you have something specific in mind, she can do custom orders.

Engelke has always been crafty; as a 13-year-old she taught herself to cro-



**STEPHANIE  
UKKOLA**

chet. Years later, while looking for crocheted jewelry tutorials online, she came across crocheted wire jewelry and wire woven jewelry that was so amazing she decided she wanted to learn how to make it too. This led her to new artistic challenges, all by learning from online instructional videos. "I've watched like a thousand tutorials on YouTube to learn every technique I can find, and I'll buy tutorials when I can't figure it out by looking at pictures," she said. Many of her designs are of her own creation, and she has plenty of one-of-a-kind pieces too. "I kind of work on inspiration, I see a stone and an idea comes to mind. A lot of times I'll make something that I really like and I'll sell it and never make it



again because it was a one-time inspiration.”

“I’ve always been an observer, I see things many people don’t notice.” She said she has found inspiration from things as simple as the designs on baby wipes, and front door windows, “One day I was brushing my teeth and I noticed a hair that was swirled around in a figure-8 design on the counter and it gave me an idea for earrings,” she said.

Engelke created her business originally intending to sell crochet jewelry, hence the name Hook and Stone, but has since changed her focus to wrapped-in-wire jewelry. Her signature pieces are wire-wrapped pendants with polished stones and fossils. She also sells a variety of rings, necklaces and earrings along with the occasional keychain or anklet. Engelke buys her stones from around the world and has just about every kind of stone under the sun. Many of her creations use labradorite, she has pearls from China and fossils from France. Sometimes it can take months for her orders to arrive.

“I usually spend three to five hours each day working,” she said. Depending on the style, making a ring can take 10 minutes or several hours and pendants take an hour to five hours.

“Making the jewelry is the easy part because I love creating.” Aside from jewelry making, there’s a lot more that happens behind the scenes. Engelke also has to photograph the pieces, edit the photos, post them on her Etsy store and social media accounts and write up descriptions using SEO (search engine optimization) tools so people are able to find them.

Engelke has also taught classes at Ely Folk School. She is one of several very talented local jewelry makers who teach classes in Ely.

Aside from being CEO, crafter, photographer and director of marketing and sales, Engelke is also the mother of five children ages two to 15 who have been learning from home due to the pandemic. “With all the kids home doing their schooling I’ve learned to be more disciplined and schedule time to work on jewelry projects,” she said. Her oldest, Sam, will occasionally help with prep work and often lends a hand, helping sell the jewelry at farmers market and craft shows.

A large selection of Hook and Stone jewelry is available online at [www.etsy.com/shop/HookN-StoneCreations](http://www.etsy.com/shop/HookN-StoneCreations) or can be found locally at Ubetcha Antiques and Uniques in Tower. Connect with Hook and Stone on Facebook or Instagram @hookandstonecreations. Custom order requests can be sent to [liz@hookandstonecreations.com](mailto:liz@hookandstonecreations.com). Necklaces range



from \$10 to \$120 or more, bracelets from \$5 to \$45, rings from \$5 to \$70, and earrings from \$15 to \$25, depending on materials and intricacy of artwork.

The shop has jewelry for kids and adults alike. Most of the jewelry is for women, but there are a few hemp bracelets and shark-tooth necklaces for boys and men, too.

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# Must-haves to achieve a holiday wonderland

The end of the year marks a period of heightened festivity. Come the holiday season, homes and businesses are decorated and everyone seems to have an extra spring in their step.

The sight of snowflakes, candy canes, evergreen wreaths, and Christmas trees can elicit nostalgia for happy holidays of the past, as well as excitement for what is yet to come. When it comes to decorating for the holidays, there are certain items that set the scene.

► Christmas trees: Germany is credited with starting the modern Christmas tree tradition. It dates back to the 16th century when devout Christians brought trees into their homes and decorated them. German settlers brought Christ-

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mas tree traditions to America upon their arrival in Pennsylvania in the 19th century.

► **Mistletoe:** Mistletoe is known as the “kissing plant” and it is customary for couples to kiss while standing beneath the plant, typically hung in doorways and arches. Mistletoe was once hung to drive off evil spirits and ensure fertility. Kissing under the mistletoe was first associated with the Greek festival of Saturnalia and later with primitive marriage rites.

► **Lights:** Lights are commonly seen during the holiday season. The custom of having holiday lights dates back to

when Christmas trees were decorated with candles, which symbolized Christ being the light of the world. These traditions evolved from pagan rituals that would celebrate the return of sunlight as the days grow longer after the winter solstice.

► **Yule log:** Many families burn a yule log in the fireplace and watch it burn while listening to Christmas carols. The familiar custom of burning the log dates back to solstice celebrations and the tradition of bonfires. The Christmas tradition called for burning a portion of the log each evening until Twelfth Night, also known as the Epiphany, which takes place on January 6.

► **Poinsettias:** Poinsettias are a tropical plant that originated in Mexico. Joel Roberts Poinsett was the first Ambassador from the United States to Mexico. He became enamored with the plants, and brought them back to his native South Carolina. An old Mexican legend suggests a poor girl had nothing to offer baby Jesus at Christmas Eve services, so she picked a handful of weeds and put them at the bottom of the nativity scene. These weeds burst into bright red flowers and became known as “Flores de Noche Buena,” or “Flowers of the Holy Night.”

Holiday decorations borrow traditions from all over the world to help establish a festive wonderland.



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The arrival of winter forces everyone to confront the changes synonymous with the season, and local wildlife is no exception. Low temperatures, harsh winter storms and a scarcity of food can make it challenging for wildlife, including birds, to thrive throughout the winter.

Even though several species of birds are migratory and travel to warmer climates to wait out winter, many others stay put. The Audubon Society says that keeping close to home helps some species of birds maintain their territories.

Some birds will puff up to retain heat; others will seek shelter in dense foliage or cavities to avoid the elements. Many birds will huddle together to share warmth.

Another way of keeping warm is building up fat as an insulator and energy source. The Audubon Society says more than 10 percent of some birds' winter body weight may be fat. That can be challenging to maintain when common sources of food, such as insects and berries, disappear as winter wears on. This is when some human intervention can prove handy, advise ornithologists. A few simple efforts may benefit birds and other wildlife that may not hibernate winter away or escape to the tropics.

➤ Have a supply of food, bird feeders, houses, and any other bird-related gear at the ready. In our area, many people wait until bears have gone into hibernation to put out feed-

ers, and then take them down in the summer. This reduces problems because bears are very attracted to the seeds in feeders.

➤ Invest in nutritious food, such as black oil sunflower seeds or blends that are high in black oil sunflower seeds. Winter finches like pine siskins and goldfinches are attracted to thistle seed. You can purchase special thistle seed feeders, or find sock-style feeders for thistle, which is a very tiny seed. You also can make available more foods that are high in fat, such as suet, peanut butter or even whole peanuts. Mother Nature Network also suggests adding meal worms if they can be found.

➤ Choose feeders that will keep seed dry; otherwise, it will be prone to bacterial and fungal growth.

➤ Don't discard fallen leaves or any downed twigs or pruned boughs from trees. Place these nearby your feeders. This will give birds material for creating shelter or hiding away when the weather gets especially brutal. When the Christmas tree is finished for the season, place it in the yard as a windbreak for birds.

➤ Put shallow water sources around so birds can drink. Replace them frequently if water freezes.



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# Why are Christmas colors red and green?

**M**any people may not get in the holiday spirit without decorations and all the trimmings. Chances are strong that if you have containers full of items just waiting to see the light of day again this holiday season, those items are red or green or some combination thereof.

Red and green have become the traditional colors of Christmas, just as blue and white symbolize Chanukah. But how did this color palette come to evolve?

Just like many traditions of Christmas, the red and green scheme has origins that pre-date the Christian celebration. Christmas has borrowed from many of the customs of winter solstice celebrations of ancient peoples, including the Celts. Ancient Celtic people revered holly plants, believing they brought beauty and good fortune in the middle of winter — a time when the landscape is normally bleak and holly plants thrive and stand out. Celts would regularly bring in sprigs of holly and decorate their homes with the plants, which feature



shiny, serrated leaves and bright, red berries, as a way to guarantee a prosperous new year. Holly also came to be associated with the crown of thorns Jesus Christ was forced to wear during his crucifixion.

The custom of using red and green continued into the 14th century. Dr. Spike Bucklow, a research scientist at the University of Cambridge, says red and green also were used to paint

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Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

## WORDS

A CAPELLA  
 AWAY IN A MANGER  
 CAROLS  
 CHORUS  
 CHRISTMAS  
 DECK THE HALLS  
 GROUP  
 HARMONY  
 I SAW THREE SHIPS  
 JINGLE BELLS  
 JOY TO THE WORLD  
 LITTLE DRUMMER BOY  
 MUSIC  
 NEIGHBORHOOD  
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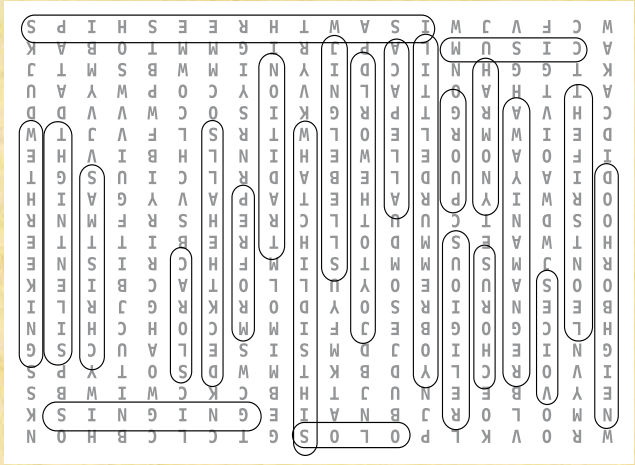
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medieval rood screens, which were partitions installed in churches to separate the congregation from the priest and altar. Dr. Bucklow notes that Victorians also extended the association of these colors as a physical boundary to another boundary: the marking of the end of the old year and the beginning of a new one at Christmastime.

While red and green had associations with Christmas in early times through holly and other sources, the connection was perhaps best solidified thanks to a man named Haddon Sundblom. Sundblom was an artist commissioned in 1931 by the Coca-Cola company to create an image of Santa Claus for the company's upcoming holiday ads. Until this point, versions of Santa were rarely consistent, with his clothing vacillating between green, blue and red. He also wasn't the plump, jolly fellow associated with Christmas as we know him today, but rather thin and elf-like. Sundblom portrayed him as a chubby man wearing red robes, likely as a nod to Coca-Cola's own red logo, even though the company denies the connection.

Santa was featured in front of a green background. The ads proved popular and Sundblom's Santa became the preferred depiction. Santa's red robes perfectly complemented the green background and other green components of the holiday, such as Christmas trees and holly, that already had been solidified as Christmas imagery.

Color plays a strong role in creating Christmas nostalgia. Red and green are put on vivid display throughout the season.





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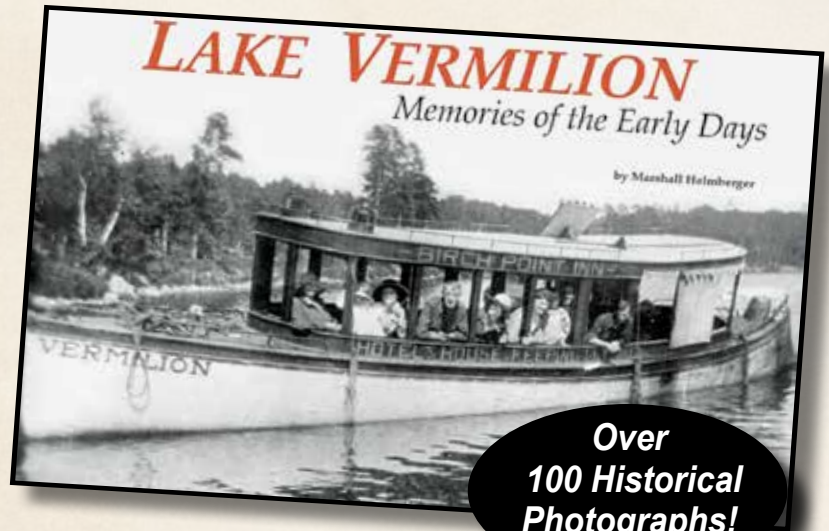
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# Tips for baking better Christmas cookies

**C**ookies and other baked treats are everywhere come the holiday season. It's not uncommon to give cookies as gifts or arrive at holiday gatherings with cakes and other decadent desserts.

Cookies are a classic holiday treat, and some families even build entire traditions around baking Christmas cookies.

Novice bakers making cookies for the first time may be a little overwhelmed when perusing recipes. Baking is a science, and sometimes it takes practice to get the results just right. However, there are some tips that can help yield better, buttery bounties.

## Handle butter with care

Butter can make or break a cookie recipe, as butter is often the glue that holds the cookie together. Therefore, it is key to follow the directions carefully regarding how to handle butter. Smithsonian.com says to leave butter at room temperature for 30 to 60 minutes to properly soften it. This takes patience, but fiddling with butter too much can damage its delectable integrity. While purists may say butter is best, margarine may be acceptable if it has a high fat content; otherwise, cookies may spread out and flatten.

When it comes time to cream the butter with sugar, be sure to do so thoroughly to incorporate air into the butter and remove the grainy texture of the sugar.

## Measure flour properly

Measuring flour the right way can ensure cookies come out right. The Cooking Channel says to spoon the flour lightly into a dry measuring cup, then level it off with a knife. Do not dip the measuring cup into the flour or tap the knife against the cup. This will pack too much flour into the measuring cup and result in dry, tough cookies.

## Slow down the eggs

Add eggs one at a time to make sure each will emulsify properly with the fat in the butter. Adding eggs en masse may cause the emulsification to fail.

## Chill out

Follow recipes that call for chilling cookie dough carefully. This process is important for making sliced and shaped cookies. By chilling, the dough becomes more malleable for rolling and even slicing.

## Use a bottom rack

Too much heat may compromise cookie integrity. The food experts at Delish say to try moving cookies onto a lower rack in the oven if they aren't retaining their shape when baked. Put an empty cookie sheet on the top rack. That will block the cookies from the most intense heat that rises to the top of the oven.

Mastering cookies takes a little patience and some trial and error. Once bakers get their feet wet, Christmas-cookie-baking becomes even more special.



## Stock the pantry with holiday baking ingredients

► **Flours:** All-purpose flour is versatile and useful in many recipes. In addition, bread flour, cake flour and pastry flour have attributes that make them better suited for their respective jobs than all-purpose flour. Individuals who follow certain diets, including gluten-free diets, can find alternative flours that can be substituted in many different recipes.

► **Baking soda:** This leavening agent is activated when it is combined with acid and heat. That is why it is often paired with citrus juice, buttermilk and sour cream.

► **Baking powder:** This leavening agent is baking soda mixed with a powdered acid and cornstarch. If baking soda is the only leavening agent, it will not require the addition of another acidic ingredient.

► **Sugar:** Granulated sugar is the most common sugar found in recipes. Confectioner's sugar (powdered sugar) is used in frosting and icings. Brown sugar is refined sugar with molasses added, and is used in certain recipes, like gingerbread.

► **Unsalted butter:** Unsalted butter will be the default for baked goods unless the recipe specifically mentions salted butter.

► **Milk:** Dairy adds moisture and texture to batters. Alternative milks, such as soy or almond milk, can sometimes be substituted, but the resulting texture may change.

► **Shortening:** Shortening is a solid vegetable fat used to make tender baked goods. Shortening also has a higher melting point, which helps cookies and other items retain their shape while cooking.

# Porch Lady's first Christmas



In this day and age, it's hard to buy a holiday decoration that will stand the test of time without being dreadfully expensive. It would appear I lucked out! In the summer of 2014 while doing my annual walk through the Ely Blueberry Festival, my eyes fixed on these whimsical lady yard decorations. There were a group of a dozen or so sitting in a crafter's tent. They were made out of 5/8" plywood pieces for face, torso, hat and bare feet. 1" dowels created skinny legs and arms with stuffed white silicone gloves for hands.



**SCARLET  
STONE**

I was delighted! The lady I favored had on a cloth black dress and a painted red hat with a few silk flowers attached. She wore costume jewelry, including a pearl necklace and rings on her fingers but no bells on her toes!

The price was about sixty dollars, and I eagerly purchased her.

I lived in Ely, so easily carried her the couple blocks home and sat her on a stool on my covered front porch, setting a lively painted tea kettle planter in her lap. She was just the most perfect outdoor decoration I had ever seen.

When fall arrived that year, I did not want to bring her inside, so I decided to put an orange hunting jacket over her dress and set a plastic toy rifle along with a coffee thermos in her lap. She sat, keeping vigil well into November and then I took her inside for winter tea parties.

This exhibition schedule continued until 2017 when I moved to Soudan, bringing Porch Lady with me, of course. She has since made many friends, enduring a few more seasons, while seated on my front wood steps that face the busy Post Office.

As spring 2019 approached, I looked at her sitting in the basement corner and thought "Honey, you need a make-over!" The faded clothes, chipped paint, drab lip-color and thin-



ning Spanish-moss hair would never do. I made a trip to Goodwill and found her a bright new polyester dress, then freshened up her paint. I even found her a pair of bright multi-colored cat-eye glasses that I glued on and she made her debut on Mother's Day for the summer season. That Halloween I turned her into a crusty, cigar-smoking, whiskered vagrant by putting a mask on her and a big black hooded poncho. It was funny, but I felt like I was doing her an injustice.

She draws plenty of attention, giving cheer to the local residents and summer visitors. Folks have stopped by to sit next to Porch Lady for a photo-op! I have thought about giving her a name... like Eugenia or Gertie, but nothing seems to stick except Porch Lady.

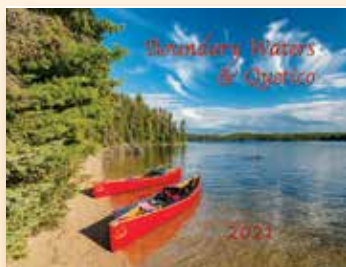
She reminds me of the decades ago Saturday Night Live character, Church Lady. One day a friend said she almost kidnapped Porch Lady and planned to hold her ransom. Such a prank was too serious a matter...so she has been screwed down to the wood steps ever since.

Many share concern for her. Recently, my bank teller told me that Porch Lady needed a COVID mask so I came home and sewed one for her and attached it. She is a natural at social distancing with her pursed lips and fixed gaze.

A few weeks ago, knowing I would not be passing out treats for Halloween because of COVID, I was going to take her inside but stripped the screws in the process, so there she still sits enduring the season. Her foot dropped off this fall and I secured it adding warm wooly socks to her feet. I put a black plastic bag over her on Halloween so she wouldn't make a scene, and have now made the decision that this is going to be Porch Lady's first Christmas! She is going from a Halloween Scrooge to a festive filly! Next spring I will use her as a pattern to create a new Porch Lady, but certainly cannot complain that I didn't get my money's worth from this decoration.



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# How to host virtual holiday celebrations

The 2020 holiday season figures to be vastly different from seasons past. The novel coronavirus COVID-19 has transformed daily life in many ways. The public has become accustomed to wearing masks while shopping, limiting the number of people in public venues, and keeping their distance from friends and loved ones. Many events have been reimagined as virtual celebrations because of social distancing protocols. For those with large families or people with inherent risk factors that make them more susceptible to illness, sharing the holidays over video conferencing apps may be the safest way to go in 2020.

## Pick a bright, festive spot

Set up your tablet, smartphone or computer in a bright area with a festive

backdrop. You'll want others who join the virtual hangout to be able to see you clearly. A Christmas tree or a decorated fireplace in the background can set the scene.

## Choose the right conferencing app

Certain programs may work better than others depending on your needs. For example, if everyone has the same operating system platform (iOS or Android), you may be able to use an app inherent to that system, which won't require a separate download or login. Apps also may be chosen depending on how many people can be invited in, as some set limits. Do your homework and be sure to conduct a test run prior to the holidays, especially for family members who aren't as computer-savvy.



## Keep props nearby

If the goal is to open gifts virtually, be sure to have everyone gathered and gifts nearby so no one is scrambling in and out of view.

## Position the camera at eye level

Try to set up the camera so you're not looking up or down. Practice looking straight into the camera instead of at yourself in the minimized window or even others on the screen. This way you'll appear engaged.

## Use mute when not speaking

Muting yourself (and encouraging others to do the same) when you are not speaking will limit the

amount of background noise. As the host, serve as the moderator and encourage everyone to speak one at a time. Choose a visual cue to signal when someone has the floor to speak, such as raising a hand or even showing a festive picture.

## Share dinner 'together'

Set up your camera source so it captures the holiday table. All parties gathering virtually can then sit down to the holiday meal as one and enjoy one of the season's more endearing traditions.

Virtual celebrations may continue through the holiday season. Adapting with some video conferencing tips can ensure everyone enjoys the festivities.

⊙ \* ☘ Ⓜ Ⓛ Ⓝ ~ Ⓢ Ⓠ Ⓝ Ⓣ Ⓡ Ⓟ Ⓝ Ⓡ Ⓛ Ⓢ Ⓟ Ⓡ Ⓟ Ⓡ Ⓟ Ⓡ Ⓟ Ⓡ Ⓟ

**CRYPTO FUN**

Determine the code to reveal the answer!

Solve the code to discover words related to Christmas. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 18 = e)

**A. 12 19 23 10 19**  
Clue: Man in red

**B. 24 18 16 23 7 18 18 24**  
Clue: Antlered animal

**C. 1 17 16 25 23 18 8**  
Clue: Santa's entryway

**D. 3 24 18 12 18 23 10 12**  
Clue: Thoughtful items

Answers: A. Santa B. reindeer C. chimney D. presents

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## Pelican Lake Private Island

ORR, MN Your own island & vintage lodge w/sunrise & sunset views! Excellent swimming and fishing. Comfortably sleeps 16. Just 6 mi to airport/9 to town. Well maintained lodge at waters edge w/modern amenities & 3 fireplaces. Vaulted great rm w/granite firepl. Main flr lakeside Master. Remodeled yr-rnd bunkhouse w/screen porch. Huge wet boathouse. Walking path around shore. Large docks.

**OFFERED AT** \$695,000  
**DETAILS** 3 BED/2 BATH 2,117 SF  
 15.75 ACRES 3,330 FT SHORELINE  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#139846



## Dog Lovers Dream Job! Pup North!

EVELETH, MN A dog lovers dream job! Pup North is for sale. A thriving boarding business and an updated country home on 20 acres. 12 miles to Virginia. Business has financeable books and a great reputation! Home includes two fireplaces, a large office, large master suite, a screen porch, and a workshop. 3 stall garage. Kennel features large reception area, fenced runs, 24 pens, and laundry facilities.

**OFFERED AT** \$550,000  
**DETAILS** 3 BED/2 BATH 2,936 SF HOME  
 20 ACRES 2,040 SF KENNEL  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#140350



## Sunrises on Bear Island Lake

BABBITT, MN Updated & well maintained year round lake home on E.-facing shoreline, Bear Island Lake. Private gradual 2 acres adjoining 100's of acres of St. land & near public beach & launch, Beautiful island studied views, 15 mi paved rd to Ely! Cedar sided home w/ attached 2 car garage. Spacious kitchen, glass door to lakefront deck. Walkout LL, open yard, storage bldg.

**OFFERED AT** \$424,500  
**DETAILS** 3 BED/3 BATH 2,016 SF  
 2.2 ACRES 350 FT SHORELINE  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#139527



## Eshquaguma CC Perfection

GILBERT, MN Immaculate yr-rnd home on beloved Lake Eshquaguma. Quiet location offers private golf course, tennis, dining, and lake living at Eshquaguma CC. Vaulted livingrm, fireplace, wall of windows lakeside, lakefront deck. Kitchen w/island open to living & dining. Lakeside main flr BR. Walkout LL w/3 season porch. New dock. Brick drive to htd att. garage + tuck under. Good internet.

**OFFERED AT** \$398,500  
**DETAILS** 3 BED/2 BATH 2,751 SF  
 0.44 ACRES 110 FT SHORELINE  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#140341

## Yr-Round Wakemup Village Living

**COOK, MN** Lake Vermilion one level 3BR yr-rnd home w/3 stall htd garage in highly desired Wakemup Villag. Paved rd on SW-facing shoreline. Clear water, excellent Swimming, 5 mi to town. Livingrm w/gas firepl & picture window capturing sunsets. Lakeside kitchen w/bar island & doors to deck. Lakeside BR w/deck. Beautiful yard w/ gentle slope to water. Lakeside sauna/storage bldg. Dock.

**OFFERED AT** \$434,500  
**DETAILS** 3 BED/1 BATH 1,230 SF  
0.6 ACRES 145 FT SHORELINE  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#140216



## Isle Of Pines Beauty

**TOWER, MN** Beautiful Lake Vermilion 3BR home on acres of white pines, located on Isle of Pines, the only island on the lake one can drive to. Unwind in front of the fireplace in the vaulted living room or kick back and relax on the wrap around deck. Spacious granite kitchen w/ island open to living, dining & deck. New heated garage. Easement to lake w/room to park at top of stairs to dock.

**OFFERED AT** \$339,500  
**DETAILS** 3 BED/1 BATH 1,309 SF  
2.8 ACRES DEEDED ACCESS  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#140507



## Gold Island Retreat

**TOWER, MN** Furnished island retreat w/shoreline & docks both sides of island, sand beach, private gradual lot, mesmerizing views! Gold Island - Lake Vermilion. Short boat ride to mainland. 1/2 log sided retreat, 2BD Main Cabin + 1 BD Guest Cabin + Sauna on beach at waters edge. Main cabin offers walls of windows showcasing views of both shorelines, stone fireplace, lakefront decks both sides.

**OFFERED AT** \$398,500  
**DETAILS** 2 BED/1 BATH 1,055 SF  
4.5 ACRES 1,200 FT SHORELINE  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#140508



## Iron Ore Bar - Tower Landmark

**TOWER, MN** No major upgrades required to reopen & lots of room to build your own condos. Solid updated building, prime location visible from the bridge in Tower w/those going to Ely & the BWCA passing by every day. Steps away from only downtown docking on Vermilion. Solid concrete bldg w/living quarters, hwy & river frontage. Updated electrical, newer rubber roof. Incredible potential!

**OFFERED AT** \$124,000  
**DETAILS** BAR - APARTMENT - EXPANSION SPACE  
1.34 ACRES 8,400 SF  
**ON THE WEB** JANISCHREALTY.COM MLS#140351



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TOWER, MN Private peninsula retreat on Vermilion features 2 classic cabins (1 log), historic lighthouse/gazebo, huge wet boathouse, sauna, large level building site, outdoor stone hearth. Nostalgic lighted paths. Float-plane harbor.

<b>OFFERED AT</b>	<b>\$1,295,000</b>		
<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>3 BD/2 BTH</b>	<b>1,044 SF</b>	
	<b>6,743 ft shoreline</b>	<b>110 acres</b>	



ELY, MINNESOTA Well maintained and cash flowing resort at the convergence of White Iron and Farm Lake. Small and large group cabins, motel suites, RV sites, campsites, bar, dining area, kitchen, marina, boat gas sales.

<b>OFFERED AT</b>	<b>\$2,625,000</b>		
<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>12 cabins &amp; 42 campsites</b>		
	<b>3,040 ft shoreline</b>	<b>60 acres</b>	



TOWER, MN Imagine living the island life on Lake Vermilion! Nights by the firepit, days on the water, work from home as needed. Boat to dining, golf, or to town for shopping. Short ride to mainland lot w/a huge garage and room for guest cabin.

<b>OFFERED AT</b>	<b>\$598,500</b>		
<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>3 BD/3 BTH</b>	<b>1,748 SF</b>	
	<b>200 ft shoreline</b>	<b>1 acre</b>	



MT. IRON, MN Master Builder's private riverside estate! Country views & abundant wildlife! Kitchen w/Aga stove & 2 islands. Main flr Master. Wine cellar. Broadband. Att. gar, w/office, + 2 huge heated garages.

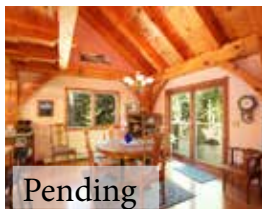
<b>OFFERED AT</b>	<b>\$889,500</b>		
<b>DETAILS</b>	<b>3 BD/3 BTH</b>	<b>5,240 SF</b>	
	<b>3,858 ft riverfront</b>	<b>31.9 acres</b>	

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Burntside - \$884,500



Pending

White Iron - \$549,500

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Sold Oct.

Vermilion - \$850,000



Sold Oct.

Superior - \$698,500