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CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS

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The ultimate playlist

to give your home
the right holiday
season vibe

Staying home for the holidays can make the season a little more convenient, saving celebrants from having to contend with the millions of individuals who take to the roads, railways and friendly skies each December. But staying home comes with its fair share of obligations, especially for individuals who are planning holiday get-togethers with family and friends.

Mood and merrymaking go hand in hand come the holiday season, and music can be used to establish a celebratory vibe this time of year. Whether you're hosting a holiday party or simply aspiring to create a festive atmosphere throughout the month of December, the following songs can help set the right tone this year.



- ♪ "Sleigh Ride," by Ella Fitzgerald
- ♪ "The Christmas Song," by Gregory Porter
- ♪ "Jingle Bell Rock," by Bobby Helms
- ♪ "Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!," by Frank Sinatra
- ♪ "Jingle Bells," by Kimberley Locke
- ♪ "Silver Bells," by Tony Bennett, featuring Count Basie and His Big Band
- ♪ "Here Comes Santa Claus," by Elvis Presley
- ♪ "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," by Diana Krall
- ♪ "White Christmas," by Bing Crosby
- ♪ "Winter Wonderland," by Louie Armstrong
- ♪ "The First Noel," by the cast of "Glee"
- ♪ "Happy Holiday," by Peggy Lee
- ♪ "Boogie Woogie Santa Claus," by the Brian Setzer Orchestra
- ♪ "O Tannenbaum," by the Vince Guaraldi Trio
- ♪ "All I Want for Christmas Is You," by Mariah Carey
- ♪ "Santa Baby," by Eartha Kitt
- ♪ "Mele Kalikimaka," by Bing Crosby and The Andrews Sisters
- ♪ "Blue Christmas," by Elvis Presley
- ♪ "Frosty the Snowman," by Gene Autry
- ♪ "Santa Claus Is Comin' to Town," by Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band
- ♪ "Deck the Halls," by Nat King Cole
- ♪ "Fairytale of New York," by The Pogues featuring Kirsty MacColl
- ♪ "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," by Burl Ives
- ♪ "Baby, It's Cold Outside," by Dean Martin and Marilyn Maxwell
- ♪ "The Twelve Days of Christmas," by The Ray Coniff Singers

Classic holiday films

the whole family can enjoy

The joy of the holiday season includes many components. Decor and gift-giving go a long way toward making December a joyous time of year; holiday films also do their part to make the season so special.

The following are some favorites that can engage viewers who are young or simply young at heart.

“A Christmas Story”

Released in 1983, this warmly nostalgic, humorous film is a perennial favorite among families. It follows the story of Ralphie, who has his heart set on a very specific Christmas present: a Red Rider BB gun. Amidst wintry exploits and family drama, the true spirit of Christmas manages to shine through in this beloved film. Some of the subject matter can be off-color, and there are some bullying scenes. So this is a movie best watched with children who are mature enough to make it through without being scared.

“Meet Me in St. Louis”

Starring the irreplaceable Judy Garland, this movie musical focuses on four sisters who are awaiting the 1904 World’s Fair in their hometown, but learn that their father has accepted a new job and the family must move to New York beforehand. A Christmas miracle occurs and all is right in the end. Garland sings a memorable version of “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” in the film, solidifying this as a holiday classic.

“Little Women”

Based on the Louisa May Alcott novel of the same name, this 1994 version of this classic follows the March sisters, who confront financial difficulties, romance and family tragedies in mid-19th century Massachusetts. While it’s not a traditional Christmas movie, the importance of spending time with family around Christmastime is a core theme in this coming-of-age tale.

“Klaus”

Perhaps not as well-known as other animated holiday flicks, “Klaus,” released in 2019, has a personality all its own. Postman Jesper, who is not making the grade at the postal academy, is sent to work in a frozen town in the North, where he discovers a reclusive toy maker named Klaus. The unlikely duo ultimately team up to make and deliver toys and bring smiles to children’s faces.

“The Santa Clause”

This Disney film came out in 1994 and remains a family favorite. When divorced dad Scott (Tim Allen) finds a man resembling Santa that fell off his roof on Christmas Eve, he magically becomes the next Santa Claus. He must learn to cope with the ways the transformation to the man in red interrupts his normal life, eventually giving over to the magic of Christmas.

“Emmet Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas”

Though this 1977 Jim Henson production is a television special and not a full-length feature film, Generation X likely remembers the heartfelt tale of a poor otter family who sacrifice prized possessions to have what’s needed to enter a talent contest. The goal is to win the prize money to buy special Christmas presents. Audiences get to enjoy narration by Kermit the Frog.

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Make holiday crafting a family affair

Create memories and decorations that will last

Families gather frequently during the holiday season as everyone enjoys the feasts and festivities that are synonymous with this time of year. Families often bake and decorate together, as these activities are inclusive of people of all ages.

This time of year also is one for dabbling in creative pursuits. Now is a prime opportunity to bond with children over a table full of paint, glue, beads and other crafty supplies. The crafts made during the holidays often become cherished mementos that will be regarded fondly for years to come. Here are some ideas to inspire holiday creativity.

Snowman family

Handprint crafts are popular among children. Adults and children can dip their hands into washable white paint and make a handprint stamp on a small canvas, wooden palette or even a terracotta flowerpot. Decorate the white fingerprints with black dots to look like the faces of the snowmen and paint on top hats and scarves. In the years to come, artists can marvel at how small their hand prints once were.

Wine cork reindeer

Repurpose wine corks by crafting adorable little reindeer. Two corks make up the head and the body, and four vertically will comprise the feet. Stick on googly eyes, and add a small red or black bead for the nose. Pipe cleaners can be bent to form the reindeer's antlers.

Family garlands

This craft also makes use of handprints. Ask all family members to trace their handprints on different colors of construction paper or card stock. Cut out all of the paper hands, punch holes in the tops and then string a ribbon through. Decorate the Christmas tree or a mantle with this garland.

Miniature Christmas trees

Paint the tips of gathered pine cones with green paint and allow to dry. Add white glitter or paint as snow. Glue the pine cones to wine corks that will serve as the tree trunks, and attach a small wooden star to the top of the trees for the finishing touch.

Decoupage ornaments

Purchase wooden or plastic ball ornaments.

Cover with small scraps of cut fabric or paper dipped in craft glue or Mod Podge, and attach to the ornament in an overlapping fashion. Remember to add a string from which the ornament can be hung on the tree. Allow to dry completely before use.

Paper chain Advent calendar

Cut strips of paper to make a link for every day of Advent. Advent begins on Sunday, Dec. 1, and lasts until Christmas. The top link can be any design artists prefer, but those who need a little inspiration can consider a religious symbol, the face of a reindeer, a snowman, or a Christmas tree. Hang the chain and then children can take turns ripping off a link from the bottom each day as they count down to the holiday.

Popsicle stick snowflakes

Paint four craft sticks per snowflake in desired colors. Decorate with glue, pompoms, beads, or other trinkets. Add small looped strings to hang the ornaments.

Parents, grandparents and children can have fun crafting holiday decorations this December.





Easy ways to add a

festive touch

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 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 are also colorful garlands, flowers or even ribbon that can be wrapped to make a wreath.

- **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 calendars traditionally tie into the time preceding Christmas, but 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 homemade calendars.

- **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.

- **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.

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Express your holiday self

with decorations

Homes are often described as sanctuaries for those who live there. Homes also provide a great way for homeowners to express themselves, an opportunity that is amplified during the holiday season.

Holiday decor takes center stage in December, and there are a number of ways for homeowners to utilize their homes to showcase their holiday spirit during this special time of year.

Wrap the front door

Gift-wrapped front doors have been popular for some time, and they remain a great way to utilize a home's entryway to spread a little holiday cheer. Shiny, single-color door wraps may never go out of style, but homeowners can choose patterned wraps as well. A bow door cover lets all visitors know a home and its residents are full of holiday cheer.

Go for the garland

Garland can add a touch of the holiday season to any room of the house. Wrap garland around a staircase, alternating between the banister and spindles so residents and guests can still safely navigate their way up and down. Garland streamed along foyer tables sets a decorative tone for all guests, and living room television stands and dining room banquets also can be made a touch more festive with some garland.

Hang stockings throughout the house

Stockings have long been hung by chimneys (with care), but they also can be incorporated into holiday decor throughout a home. Spread holiday cheer in each room with brightly colored holiday stockings, which can be hung along a staircase wall as well.

Decorations are a big part of the holiday season. Families can make their homes holiday central by ensuring each room is decorated for this special time of year.



Create some pinecone Christmas trees

Involve the whole family in holiday decorating by spending a weekend afternoon creating pinecone Christmas trees. Gather pinecones from your own backyard, if possible, or take a trip to some nearby woods for some supplies. There's no shortage of websites offering instructions on crafting pinecone trees. Once completed, the trees can be placed in various rooms to spread holiday cheer throughout the house.

Don't forget the kitchen

Realtors and contractors often note the popularity of the kitchen, a room where families tend to congregate each day before work and school and then again upon returning home. Some festive kitchen accessories, like a holiday-themed cutting board, jar sets and table settings can bring the spirit of the holiday season into the busiest room in the house.

Thoughtful gifts

for aging parents

Children typically want to treat their parents to something special during the holiday season. Parents do a lot for their children, and when those kids become adults, a desire to express their appreciation for Mom and Dad grows.

According to The Wrap Up: Snappy's 2022 Holiday Gift Report, the majority of Americans report they need help when it comes to holiday gifting. They may want to carefully consider a recipient's interests, as the report also discovered more than half of all Americans want a gift that reflects their personal interests and hobbies. When shopping for elderly parents, it may not be as simple as identifying interests, particularly if Mom and Dad are experiencing age-related health issues. Consider these gift ideas that may be ideal for the aging adults in your life.

Cozy blanket

Older adults may have trouble regulating their body temperatures, which can translate to feeling cold a lot of the time. A new blanket or throw for a bed or to cuddle up with in a favorite recliner might be the perfect gift.

Family history book

Budding writers can interview their aging parents and jot down family stories. Those stories and anecdotes can be compiled into a book and combined with photos to make a family history log, which can be gifted back to the interviewee.

Gripping slippers

Slips and falls can injure aging adults and put them out of commission for quite some time. Sturdy and secure slippers with anti-slip soles are good for getting around the house and making quick trips to take out the trash or get the mail.

Robotic vacuum

Keeping up with the household chores is easier with a robotic vacuum that automatically scours carpets and hard-surface floors. This eliminates having to wrestle with a cumbersome vacuum.

Key finder

A key finder can help adults find their keys if they are misplaced. Some employ radio frequency, while others utilize Bluetooth technology and can be paired to a smartphone.

Magnifying light

Older parents who like to do puzzles or close-up work like knitting or stitching can benefit from an LED lamp that also has a magnifying glass built right in.

E-reader

Avid readers may enjoy an e-reader because they don't have to find spots to store even more books in their homes. E-readers can be customized so the print is the right size for the reader's needs. Also, the devices are lightweight and easy to stow in a bag.

Automatic card shuffler

Parents who are known card sharks around the community can use an automatic card shuffler to make card play even easier.

Resistance bands

Resistance bands are like large rubber bands that exert force to strengthen muscles and improve flexibility. They can help aging adults stay in shape in a low-impact way.



Dining gift cards

When parents do not want to spend additional time in the kitchen, they may opt to visit a favorite restaurant. A combination of a gift card to a favorite establishment as well as pre-paid taxi or ride share service ensures a good meal and a safe ride home.

Gifts for holiday hosts

Millions of people open their homes to relatives and friends each holiday season. If you are lucky enough to be hosted and are looking for ways to show your appreciation, check out these suggestions.

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.

Family, friends and FOOD

Ahhh, the holidays. So much to look forward to – family, friends, decorating, gift exchanges, and perhaps most importantly, food.

Whether you return to your tried-and-true favorite dishes year after year or shake it up a bit with new food choices, it all starts with planning. The following provides a few tips to plan an eclectic holiday menu that can be used to enhance your table or change up it up completely. Additionally, we provide a few recipes to try just for fun this year.

Tips to plan an eclectic holiday menu

The holiday season is steeped in tradition. Though family traditions are part of what makes December such a special time of year, holiday hosts still have some wiggle room when welcoming loved ones into their homes.

If tradition governs how holiday hosts celebrate the season with their families, they may find some flexibility in the kitchen. This December, hosts can consider these ways to make their holiday menus a little more eclectic and unpredictable.

Embrace local ingredients

Locally-sourced foods have a tendency to taste fresher than imported alternatives, which is reason enough to incorporate them into holiday menus. Additionally, relying on locally-sourced foods when preparing holiday meals can be a great way to introduce new dishes to a holiday dinner table. Guests may be impressed by a new flavor profile, and they'll surely be happy to learn they're supporting local businesses during a time of year when shopping local has gained greater popularity.

Offer a new twist on old favorites

Celebrants, including hosts, have come to expect certain foods during the holiday season. For instance, some may shudder at the thought of a Thanksgiving dinner table without turkey. Though holiday season staples may need to make an appearance at dinnertime this December, hosts can offer a new twist on some old favorites. In lieu of roasting a turkey this year, offer a deep-fried

alternative. When it comes time to serve dessert, offer apple crumb pie in place of traditional apple pie. Fall is peak apple-picking season, so hosts and guests may be happy to enjoy a unique twist on this beloved dessert.

Incorporate seasonal ingredients

Another way to ensure freshness has a place at

your holiday dinner table is to emphasize seasonal ingredients. Such items are those that are at their most fresh in late fall and early winter, and which foods you choose may depend on where you live, particularly if you're focused on providing locally sourced seasonal ingredients. Some simple tweaks to existing recipes will impress guests and leave them asking for another helping.

Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing

Makes 8 servings

- 1 loaf crusty white or wheat bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus extra for baking dish
- 1 medium yellow onion, peeled and diced
- 2 large celery stalks, rinsed, trimmed and diced
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 cup packed dried tart cherries
- 1 cup roughly chopped toasted pecans
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage leaves
- 1 tablespoon crushed fennel seed
- Coarse salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup fresh chopped parsley



- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Position oven racks in the middle and lower third of the oven. Arrange bread in a single layer on two rimmed baking sheets. Toast until dry and golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool.

2. Lightly butter a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion, celery and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until onion and celery are softened, about 7 minutes. Add cherries, pecans, sage, and fennel seed; cook, stirring for 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl and season with salt and pepper.

3. Add parsley, eggs and bread to the cherry mixture; stir to combine. Add broth in two additions, stirring until absorbed. Season generously with salt and pepper; transfer stuffing to butter baking dish. Bake on middle rack until the top is deep golden brown, about 25 to 30 minutes. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.



Prepare an ethnic dish

Traditional holiday entrées like turkey and rib roast are not necessarily associated with any particular ethnic group or region of the world. Hosts who want to incorporate their heritage into holiday cooking, or simply include food from a favorite country they've visited or hope to visit, can prepare an ethnic dish as an appetizer, entrée or dessert. This unexpected addition to the menu can prompt engaging discussions and can serve as a great way for hosts to introduce their loved ones to a dish or style of cuisine they love.

Tradition is a big part of the holiday season. This season, hosts can start a new tradition by taking steps to prepare a more eclectic menu for guests.

Give this beloved side a tasty twist this holiday season

Are you looking to change things up with the old holiday table standbys, but don't want to disappoint your guests?

Stuffing is a dish many celebrants can't wait to see on the holiday dinner table. For hosts trusted with preparing holiday meals, the beauty of stuffing lies in its versatility. A host of unique ingredients can be added to holiday stuffing without adversely affecting the popularity of this beloved side dish. In fact, adding some unique ingredients can make people love stuffing even more. Such could be the case with this recipe for "Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing" from Lines+Angles.

Set the tone for a holiday party with this beloved seasonal beverage

Holiday season celebrations have a reputation for being especially jovial. The spirit of the season undoubtedly has something to do with that, but holiday hosts also play a role in promoting the festive spirit of the season.

Hosts often go to great lengths to ensure holiday guests enjoy their visits, which extends to the food and drinks they serve. Many celebrants would insist no holiday season get-together is complete without eggnog, a classic beverage that's most popular in December. This holiday season, hosts can treat their guests to this recipe for "Eggnog" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Add a new offering to your Christmas cookie lineup

What would the holiday season be without cookies? There are so many cookie varieties that make the rounds; if you are tasked with bringing cookies to a function, you might be interested in something a little different.

"Santa's Whiskers" likely get their name from the coconut on these cookies, which resemble Santa's beard. Maraschino cherries add some jolly red to the cookies as well, making them perfect for Christmas. Try this recipe from "Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy" (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.

Eggnog

Makes 2 servings

- 2 ounces brandy or cognac
- 2 ounces dark rum, plus more for sugar rim
- 1 cup eggnog, prepared
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon light brown sugar
- 2 sticks cinnamon, for garnish (optional)
- 2 pods star anise, for garnish (optional)
- Shortbread or gingerbread cookies, for garnish (optional)



1. In a cocktail shaker with ice, add the brandy, rum and eggnog together, cover and shake.
2. Add the nutmeg, cinnamon and sugar to a small plate and stir around to combine. Wet the rims of 2 glasses with rum. Roll the rims of the glasses in the spices to coat.
3. Strain the eggnog mixture into the two glasses. Garnish with cinnamon sticks, star anise pods and festive shortbread cookies, if desired.

Santa's Whiskers

20 to 24 cookies

- 1 1/2 cups confectioner's sugar
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 12-ounce jar pitted maraschino cherries, strained and stemmed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sweetened shredded coconut



In a stand mixer, with a hand mixer, or by hand, cream the sugar and butter until light and fluffy.

Add the cherries, vanilla, almond extract, and salt. Mix thoroughly. Fold into the flour and mix until it forms a crumbly but moist dough.

Lay a 16-inch sheet of parchment paper onto the counter. Sprinkle 1 cup of the coconut on the center in a loose rectangle, making sure it does not reach the edge of the parchment. Place the cookie dough on top, flattening a bit with your fingers, and sprinkle the remaining coconut over the top of the dough.

Form the dough into a 12- to 14-inch log, about 3 inches thick. Evenly press the coconut around the log and roll to make the log an even cylinder.

Roll the parchment up with the dough inside and twist the ends. Chill for at least 2 hours or overnight.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice cookies in 1/4- to 1/2-inch rounds, place on the prepared baking sheet, about 2 inches apart, and bake 12 to 15 minutes. Allow to cool before serving. Store in an airtight container.

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