



HOLIDAY Traditions

November 2022
A Special Supplement to

Lake Okeechobee
News

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inside

HOLIDAY Traditions

WHO WE ARE:

Lake Okeechobee News' annual section **Holiday Traditions** publishes just in time for Thanksgiving to kick off the holidays. Featuring recipes, gift giving ideas, shopping tips and more, this special section will have you feeling festive in no time! In addition to this print edition, the special section is available online for one full year at southcentralfloridalife.com/holiday/!

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04 How to make Christmas Eve special for kids

06 Eight holiday centerpieces ideas

08 Simple ways to involve kids in holiday decorating
Three holiday crafts families can make together

10&11 Holiday recipes

12 Put the finishing touch on Chanukah celebrations

16 Learn the meaning behind the menorah
Lesser known Chanukah traditions

18 How to pet-proof your home when decking the halls
Fire safety protocols to keep in mind when decorating

20 Holiday recipes
Popular holiday songs to stream

21 How to build a durable gingerbread house

22 Cocktails to toast the holiday seasons

24 What to get the family beach bum

26 What is luminarias?

27 Four gifts for the busy professional on your holiday list

How to make Christmas Eve special for kids

Attend Mass at midnight

Practicing Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas. On Christmas Eve, churches often hold celebrations that may include late-evening or midnight masses that celebrate the birth of Christ when the calendar switches over to December 25. While it does make for a late night, it can be thought-provoking for kids and a unique experience unlike any other.

Bake fresh cookies

Children like to leave out a plate of cookies and a glass of milk for Santa. That makes Christmas Eve a perfect time to whip up a fresh batch of cookies. Explore different recipes to come up with a unique offering each year.

Read a Christmas story

Watching television or looking at a tablet or mobile phone before bed can be too stimulating when it's time for children to wind down for bed. Choose a holiday tale or tales that can be read as a Christmas Eve bedtime

story. Reciting the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas ("Twas the Night Before Christmas)" is a great way to set the Christmas Eve mood.

Make a batch of 'reindeer dust'

Why should Santa's reindeer be left out when it comes to receiving treats? Reindeer dust, made from a combination of oatmeal, rice cereal, dried fruits, and glitter (if desired), is purported to attract Santa's reindeer and provide them a nibble at the same time. Plus, it's generally safe for other animals in the yard to eat.

Go caroling

Caroling may not be the norm, but some families may want to revive it. Close-knit communities can organize family-centric caroling opportunities and roam the cul-de-sacs and other pedestrian-friendly areas singing popular songs.

Christmas Eve is a great time to embrace various traditions that help to make the season even more special.



Christmas Eve is viewed differently by different people, even those who live under the same Santa-ready roof. Adults may see Christmas Eve as crunch time when they must prepare food for the next day or set up presents for their children to open in the morning. Children, on the other hand, are focused on Santa's visit and little else.

Parents naturally want to make Christmastime as special as possible for their children, and that may involve ensuring that Christmas Eve is just as memorable as Christmas Day. The following are some ways to impart more magic into Christmas Eve celebrations.



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Trash pickup regularly scheduled for Friday, Nov. 25th will be picked up on Saturday, Nov. 26th.

The Okeechobee Landfill drop off location on Berman Road will be closed on Nov. 24th. The Okeechobee Landfill offices will be closed Nov. 24th & 25th.

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ENTERTAINING



8

holiday centerpiece ideas

The holiday season is a great time to make any home a bit more merry and bright. Most individuals let their personalities show through their home decor, and holiday decorating is just as personal as decorating throughout the rest of the year. The main living areas of a home get the most decorating attention, with a Christmas tree or menorah taking a prominent position in the front window. Garlands, candles and other accoutrements also may dress up spaces. However, when it comes to holiday hosting, attention also should be given to the dining table — which can benefit from a festive centerpiece.

Premade centerpieces are undeniably attractive, but adding a homespun touch can be a fun creative pursuit and become a family tradition. Explore these eight simple ideas to dress up your holiday table.



1. Frosted pine cones

Take advantage of a crisp winter's day to venture into a forest or park that is rich with evergreen trees. Gather pine cones from the forest floor and, if possible, a few evergreen boughs. Give the pine cones a touch of winter whimsy with a little faux snow in a can or even white paint. Nestle the boughs and pine cones into a wide-mouthed vase or bowl in the center of the table. Individual pine cones can later be turned into place cards for seating guests.

2. Holiday thanks

Cut many strips of paper roughly 6 inches in length from various colored pieces of paper to match the holiday theme. When guests arrive, ask them to write a favorite holiday memory or two, or what they're thankful for. Twirl the paper strips around a pencil to curl them, and then place the curlicues into a decorative bowl in the center of the table. Later in the evening, the host or hostess can read some of the sentiments.

3. Magical forest

Use green and silver conical party hats to turn a table or sideboard into a veritable evergreen forest. Arrange them on a blanket of faux snow or white confetti.

4. Freshly cut

Select attractive flowers in vibrant holiday hues from a florist or even the supermarket floral section. Cut the stems and place them into an unusual display container, such as holiday themed mugs or a punch bowl.

5. Glass baubles

Who says ornaments should be exclusive to the tree? A crystal or glass cake stand can be transformed into an icy delight when topped with silver and clear glass ornaments.

6. Birch wood

The crisp white coloring of birch bark is right at home with holiday decor. Go stark with pieces of the cut wood in varying heights intermingled with white candles that mimic the shapes and scale of the wood.

7. Fruit and vegetables

If guests are coming over and the race is on for a fast centerpiece, look no further than the kitchen. Lemons, artichokes, pears, or pomegranates look festive in a bowl interspersed with some greenery and baby's breath.

8. Cornucopia

The horn of plenty can be customized to any holiday. Purchase a horn in wicker or woven grapevine and fill with flowers, fruit and greenery, or even painted gourds or miniature pumpkins.

Holiday hosts and hostesses should not neglect the dining table when they decorate. Festive centerpieces can be handmade without much effort on the part of hosts.

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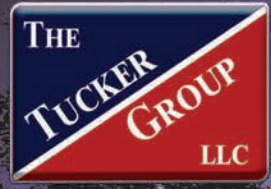


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Merry Christmas

May the Blessings of Christ be on you and your family this Holiday Season.

Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Matthew 1:23-25



CRAFTING

Simple ways to involve kids in holiday decorating



children. From simple ornaments made from pine cones picked up outside to more complex projects designed for children nearing adolescence, parents can look to the internet to find design ideas and directions for hundreds of ornaments.

Let kids lead the way when decorating the tree.

Families that celebrate Christmas can let kids lead the way when decorating their Christmas tree. Kids are likely to spend the weeks leading up to Santa's arrival gazing in awe at the tree, and knowing they decided where to place the various ornaments on it might make the season even more special for youngsters.

Take kids along when choosing lawn ornaments.

It's not safe to involve children when installing lighting displays, but kids will get a kick out of choosing inflatable lawn decorations and other items to place around the yard. Take kids along when buying new items and then seek their input when placing Frosty, Santa and his reindeer friends around the yard.

Include kids in culinary decor.

Many celebrants cannot imagine a holiday season without gingerbread houses and cookies. These traditions provide another great opportunity to involve children in holiday decorating. Set aside some time to make homemade gingerbread houses, which can be used as decorations before they're ultimately eaten. Cookies may not have the shelf life of a typical gingerbread house, but kids can pitch in and decorate cookies prior to a holiday party or family meal.

The spirit of the holiday season can be seen on the faces of children each December. Inviting kids to pitch in when decorating for the holidays can make the season even more special for its youngest celebrants.

Millions of people across the globe feel that the holiday season is a magical time of year. Though those people come from all walks of life, it's likely that no group is as taken by the unique spirit of the holiday season as much as children.

Whether they're looking forward to Santa's arrival or preparing for a school holiday pageant, kids have much to be excited about come December. Parents can channel that enthusiasm by involving kids when decorating around the house this holiday season.

Make homemade ornaments.

The options are limitless when making holiday ornaments with

3 holiday crafts families can make together

Decorating for the holidays can be made even more special when decorations are handmade creations families can cherish for years to come. Holiday crafting is an enjoyable way to pass some time and create lasting holiday traditions and memories. The following are some crafts families can make together.

Personalized elf

For families who want to make their own personalized elf dolls, all it takes is a little computer knowledge, some clever photo work and a some sewing skills. Find a template for a rag doll sewing pattern or an illustration of an elf online. Superimpose an image of your child's face on the template in a photo editing program. Print out the entire image onto iron-on fabric transfer paper. Iron it on to a light-colored piece of fabric from the craft store according to the product directions. Cut out the fabric with ironed-on decal, leaving about a one-inch margin to allow for sewing and

eventual stuffing. Duplicate the shape of the doll onto another piece of fabric to make the back of the elf doll. Place the front elf image face down on the back piece of fabric and sew the edges together, leaving a small opening at the end. Using that opening, flip the elf right-side out and stuff with pillow fill material. Sew the small opening closed and enjoy a personalized elf doll for the holidays.

Holiday candle

This craft is attractive and also smells good. Gather one bar of fragrant soap (like Irish spring); a small, white washcloth; red and green ribbon; a round of colorful mesh or tulle fabric measuring roughly 12 inches or enough to wrap your bar of soap; craft glue; a piece of yellow felt cut to look like a flame; and one or two sewing pins. Roll the washcloth into a cylinder shape to serve as the 'wick' of the candle. Glue the edges together and wrap a piece of ribbon diagonally around the wick

and adhere to secure even further. Glue the felt flame to the top of the wick. Place the soap in the center of the round piece of fabric. Attach the wick vertically to the soap using the pins. Then gather the tops of the mesh fabric around the base of the wick and use another piece of ribbon to tie into a bow and secure the fabric to the wick base. The soap and pins should now be concealed. Place the 'candle' out of direct sunlight and away from heat, preferably on a little dish so the soap will not damage any furniture.

Growth indicator ornament

Purchase a large glass or plastic Christmas tree ball. Select an acrylic paint in your color of choice and squirt some into a paper plate. Have a child dip his or her hand into the paint and then transfer the handprint to the ornament. Let dry and then attach a ribbon to hang on the tree. Through the years see how much children have grown from that little handprint.



May peace, harmony
and happiness
be with you
at Thanksgiving and all year!

Lake **Okeechobee
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Savor the holidays with a special roast



Roast Chicken with Whole Roasted Garlic

Serves 4

1 4-pound chicken
Kosher salt
2 lemons, one pierced several times with the tines of a fork and one halved
Few sprigs each of thyme and rosemary
4 large bulbs garlic, 1 per person or portion, ends cut to expose the cloves (keep the hairy root end intact)
Extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling
Freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons butter
1 cup white wine
Warm, crusty bread

Place the chicken in a shallow baking dish. Salt the chicken inside and out and place uncovered in the fridge overnight.

Preheat the oven to 450 F.

Pat the chicken dry and fill with the pierced whole lemon, thyme and rosemary. Tie the legs up. Dress the bulbs of garlic with EVOO; season with salt and pepper. Arrange the garlic in the baking dish around the chicken. Rub the skin of the chicken with butter and season with pepper. Pour the wine into the bottom of the dish.

Roast the chicken for 1 hour or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the dark meat reads 165 F. Let the chicken stand for a few minutes on a carving board until just cool enough to handle. Carve the chicken, dividing the white and dark parts and slicing the breast meat on the bias. Arrange the chicken on plates or a platter and top with drippings, juices and the juice from the remaining halved lemon. The garlic may get dark but it won't be charred. Serve in the skins or squeeze the paste from the skins with your knife and pass with a spoon to eat with the chicken or to slather on the warm chunks of bread.

Roasts are customary during the holiday season because they often feed a crowd and look impressive on serving platters. Some people opt for a roast beef while others prefer to roast a turkey. However, chicken just as easily can be turned into a Christmas dinner since it is versatile and tasty. In addition, the cooking time for a roasted chicken is much shorter than it is with other roasted dishes.

This recipe for “Roast Chicken with Whole Roasted Garlic” from “Rachael Ray 50: Memories and Meals from a Sweet and Savory Life” (Ballantine Books) by Rachael Ray provides the basis for a tasty holiday meal. Simply multiply the recipe as needed depending on the number of guests.

Wrap up this app at your cocktail party



Bacon-Wrapped Goat Cheese Stuffed Dates

Makes 16

16 pitted dates
8 thin slices bacon, halved
4 ounces creamy goat cheese
Toothpicks
Hot honey, for garnishing
Chopped fresh parsley, for garnishing

Cocktail parties feature prominently on social schedules each holiday season. Such get-togethers are convenient because the foods and beverages served are designed to be small and portable. That can save any holiday host time in the kitchen.

There may be plenty of prepared foods in the grocer's freezer that can be served for gatherings, but the taste of easy, homemade offerings can mingle with the time-savers when guests arrive. “Bacon-Wrapped Goat Cheese Stuffed Dates” are an easily prepared appetizer that pairs sweet with savory. Even better, these morsels are delicious served warm out of the oven or can be eaten at room temperature when late-arriving guests stroll in.

Wrap up cocktail party spreads with this recipe, courtesy of “Spectacular Spreads: 50 Amazing Food Spreads for Any Occasion” (Rock Point) by Meagan Brown.

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Lightly grease a rimmed baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Set aside.

If your dates are not already pitted, slice the dates lengthwise on one side, but not all the way through, to create an opening. Remove the pit.

Using a teaspoon measure, fill the cavity of each date with a heaping teaspoon of the goat cheese and then gently press the sides together to close a bit.

Wrap each date with a half slice of bacon and secure with a toothpick. Arrange the bacon-wrapped dates on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, turning the dates halfway through so the bacon is evenly cooked. Transfer the bacon-wrapped dates to a serving platter and drizzle with the hot honey. Garnish with the parsley. Serve warm or at room temperature.

RECIPES

A can't-miss holiday side dish



Side dishes are just as important to a holiday meal as the main course. It's perfectly acceptable to offer a few new and unique dishes on your holiday table, but guests likely will be expecting some tried-and-true classics as well.

Green bean casserole is a staple of many holiday dining tables. Alongside mashed potatoes and candied sweet potatoes, green bean casserole is a beloved holiday recipe — and it's easy to make as well. This recipe for traditional “Green Bean Casserole,” courtesy of Campbell’s, can hit the right tone for guests who want a taste of holidays past this year.

Green Bean Casserole

Makes 6

- 1 can (10 1/2 ounces) Campbell’s® Condensed Cream of Mushroom soup or 98% Fat Free Cream of Mushroom soup or Condensed Unsalted Cream of Mushroom Soup
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 4 cups cooked cut green beans
- 1 1/3 cups French’s® Fried Onions (divided)

Heat the oven to 350 F. Stir the soup, milk, soy sauce, beans and 2/3 cup onions in a 1 1/2-quart casserole. Season the mixture with salt and pepper.

Bake for 25 minutes or until hot. Stir the bean mixture. Sprinkle with the remaining 2/3 cup onions.

Bake for another 5 minutes or until the onions are golden brown.

Variations: This recipe can be customized as one sees fit. Double up the amount of condensed soup if you desire a wetter casserole, or change the flavor by selecting a different flavor soup variety, such as Cream of Asparagus. You can add grated Parmesan cheese or shredded cheddar if you want a cheesy option. Some people prefer to use French-style green beans instead of the thicker cut variety.

Alternate cooking method: The traditional recipe has you cooking the casserole in the oven. However, if you have a large enough toaster oven, you can cook it in there to free up oven space; otherwise, prepare the casserole as directed in a slow cooker and cook on low for around 3 to 4 hours, until tender. Then add the remaining onions and transfer the casserole to the oven to crisp up for 5 minutes. (Check that the slow cooker crock is oven-safe; otherwise, spoon the mixture into an oven-safe dish for the final baking and serving.)

Bake up a sweet holiday treat

Entertaining is a big part of the holiday season. Calendars are packed this time of year with gatherings with friends, family and professional colleagues.

Entertaining requires keeping plenty of refreshments on hand to ensure guests maintain their holiday spirit. Dessert is no stranger to the season, with office break rooms, dining tables and buffet stations brimming with sweet treats to tempt celebrants’ palates. Everyone should have a go-to dessert to bring along to a holiday party or to offer guests when hosting their own fêtes. Cookies are a standard due to their versatility and portability.

Festive “Sour Cream Cookies” provide all of the holiday feels and can be customized in color to reflect celebrations of Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, or New Year’s. Bake up a batch, courtesy of “Live Well Bake Cookies” (Rock Point) by Danielle Rye.

Sour Cream Cookies

Makes 22 cookies

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup sour cream, at room temperature

Vanilla Buttercream Frosting

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon heavy whipping cream or milk
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Gel food coloring (optional)

1. To make the cookies: Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats and set aside.

2. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt until well combined. Set aside.

3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment or in a large mixing bowl using a handheld mixer, beat the butter and granulated sugar together for 1 to 2 minutes, or until well combined.

4. Mix in the egg and vanilla extract until fully combined, making sure to stop and scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.

5. Mix in the dry ingredients in two additions, alternating with the sour cream. Make sure to mix in each addition until just combined, and be careful not to overmix the batter.

6. Using a 1 1/2-tablespoon cookie scoop, scoop the cookie dough onto the prepared baking sheets, making sure to leave a little room between each one.

7. Bake for 14 to 16 minutes, or until the tops of the cookies are set and spring back when touched lightly. Remove from the oven, and allow to cool on the baking sheets for 10 minutes, then carefully transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool completely.

8. To make the vanilla buttercream frosting: In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment or in a large mixing bowl using a handheld mixer, beat the butter for 1 to 2 minutes, or until smooth. Add the powdered sugar, 1/2 cup at a time, mixing in each addition until well combined.

9. Add the heavy whipping cream, vanilla extract, and gel food coloring (if using), and continue mixing until fully combined.

10. Once the cookies have cooled completely, spread the frosting on top of the cookies.

11. Store the cookies in an airtight container at room temperature or in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.

RECIPES

Put the finishing touch on Chanukah celebrations



Challah is a special bread within Jewish households that is cooked to herald the Sabbath and celebrate various holidays. Jewish scholars indicate that the history of challah can be traced to the scripture story of manna, or bread, that God sent to the Israelites in the wilderness. Also, during the days of the Temple in Jerusalem, Jews presented dough as an offering to priests, who used it to bake their own bread.

Challah can be sweet or savory, and leftovers can make for a delicious French toast base for breakfasts and brunches.

Anyone can learn how to make challah for their holiday celebrations.

Traditional challah is made with eggs and a shiny egg wash, but this plant-based version uses potato water starch in the recipe. Bake up a loaf or two with

this recipe, courtesy of “Plant-Based Gourmet: Vegan Cuisine for the Home Chef” (Apollo Publishers) by chef Suzi Gerber.

Challah

Makes 2 loaves

- 3 Yukon Gold potatoes or other butter potatoes (about 1 ½ pounds), peeled and cubed
- ⅓ cup safflower oil or avocado oil
- ⅓ cup sugar
- 5 cups all-purpose flour or gluten-free all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon kala namak (Indian black salt)
- 1 teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 packet active instant dry yeast (approximately ¼ ounce)
- ½ cup Homemade Butter (see right), softened and cut into cubes
- ⅓ cup oat milk

1. To make “potato water,” combine the potatoes with 3 ½ cups cold water in a large pot, bring to a boil, and keep at a boil for 20 minutes, uncovered. The liquid level should reduce to about 2 cups.

2. Drain the potatoes, and reserve the liquid.

3. Combine 1 ½ cups of the potato water with the safflower oil and sugar in a mixing bowl or a large measuring cup with a pour spout (reserve the remaining potato water). Whisk until sugar is completely dissolved.

4. Combine the flour, cornstarch, kala namak, turmeric, and sea salt in a stand mixer and whisk to combine. Make sure there are no salt clusters for the yeast to come in contact with, then slowly add the yeast.

5. Change the mixer attachment to a dough hook, and slowly add the potato-water mixture to the dry ingredients while mixing. This slow pour should take about a minute.

6. Add in the softened butter, 1 cube at a time, until fully incorporated.

7. Knead the dough hook on medium-high (number 6 on

standard home machines) for 10 minutes, keeping an eye on the elasticity of the dough. Pinch and pull the dough to check its elasticity: When ready, it should stretch like a rubber band and reach about 10 inches without breaking.

8. Let the dough rise, covered, for 45 minutes at room temperature. It should double in size.

9. Portion the dough into 2 equal blocks. Divide each block into thirds to form a traditional straight braid, or into 4 sections to form a round braid. Roll the pieces into equal-sized ribbons that are at least 18 inches long. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and braid the ribbons directly on the parchment, tucking the ends under and pinching them together.

10. Cover again and let rise a second time, for 30 to 45 minutes. The dough should dramatically increase in size, eliminating any gaps in the braid.

11. Preheat the oven to 375 F.

12. While the bread rises, combine the remaining potato water (about ½ cup) with the cornstarch in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer, whisk often until a thick gel forms, and then remove from the heat.

13. Slowly add the oat milk to the gel, whisking until the gel is thin enough to paint.

14. Brush a generous and even amount of the starch-and-oat-milk wash onto the risen bread right before placing in the oven.

15. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes, rotating once halfway through. Remove once the crust is smooth and dark and the bottom is strong. When you thump the bottom with your finger, it should sound hollow. The internal temperature should be 190 to 200 F.

16. Paint the loaves again with more of the wash and let cool. Store in zip-top bags. Keep for 3 to 5 days (if they last you that long!) at room temperature, or up to 6 months if frozen.

17. If you over-proof or let the finished loaves sit out uncovered or past 5 days and they get hard, it's French toast time.

Homemade Butter

Makes approximately 2½ cups

- 1 cup hempseed milk or full-fat canned coconut milk
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1¾ cups melted refined coconut oil (the kind that is solid at room temperature)
- 3 tablespoons safflower oil, avocado oil, or sunflower oil
- 1 tablespoon sunflower lecithin powder or 1½ teaspoons liquid lecithin
- ½ teaspoon arrowroot powder

1. Combine the hempseed milk, apple cider vinegar, and salt and stir. Allow to curdle for 5 to 10 minutes.

2. In a blender or food processor, combine the milk mixture with the remaining ingredients and blend for 2 minutes on high.

3. Pour the mixture into a stick mold or any shape tub and freeze for at least 3 hours.

4. Keeps for up to 1 month in the fridge or up to 6 months in the freezer.

Tip: Use the boiled potatoes from making the potato water and turn into mashed potatoes or potato pancakes.

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Learn the meaning behind the menorah



The menorah is perhaps the most recognizable symbol of Chanukah. Displayed in homes, and often in windows, each year, the menorah is a nine-branched candelabrum that symbolizes Chanukah and much more.

Menorahs have been part of the Jewish faith since ancient times. Isaiah 42:6 indicates that the menorah is a symbol of the nation of Israel, and its mission is to be a 'light unto nations.' After being liberated from slavery in Egypt, the Jews were commanded by God to make the original menorah, which at the time featured seven branches. The seven arms were believed to refer to the seven days of creation.

The menorah was lit every evening and cleaned every morning. The wicks were replaced and fresh, consecrated olive oil was put into the cups to keep the flame alive.

After the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and desecrated by the Romans, there remained only enough sealed, consecrated olive oil left to light the menorah for one day. Miraculously, the oil burned for eight days, giving the Jews enough time to make new consecrated oil. This became known as the Chanukah miracle.

While the original menorahs were seven-branched, the Chanukah menorah, or Chanukiah (Hanukkiah), became a nine-branched version lit only during the holiday. According to the Jewish holiday site Breaking Matzo, celebrants light a new candle or wick on each night of Chanukah. The ninth night, called the Shamash (helper or servant), is used to light all the other candles or oil lamps. To be kosher, the Shamash must be placed on a different level than the eight other candles.

After both temples were destroyed, a new tradition developed in which Jews did not replicate anything from the destroyed temples. As a result, menorahs used in many Jewish services, apart from Chanukah, no longer had seven branches. Six-branched menorahs became popular in some synagogues. However, the Jewish Virtual Library indicates that some rabbis have gone back to seven-armed menorahs for regular services because the modern ones are electrified and, therefore, cannot possibly be duplicates of the original Temple menorah.

Lighting the Chanukah menorah gives celebrants the ability to embrace the holiness of the holiday and take a small part in Jewish history.

Lesser known Chanukah traditions

Chanukah is a relatively modern holiday in regard to the Hebrew calendar. Unlike Yom Kippur or Passover, which are steeped in rich traditions, there are few Chanukah customs.

Chanukah celebrants still participate in various customs each year, some of which are customized according to family preferences. While some traditions, such as the lighting of the Chanukah menorah, are familiar, others may not be as widely known – especially to those outside of the faith. Here's a look at a select few.

Saying the Shehecheyanu blessing:

Traditionally, there are two blessings that some people say each night while lighting the candles. The first is recited while holding the lit shamash, and the second is said while lighting the candles. Another blessing, known as the 'Shehecheyanu,' is said the first night. According to 18Doors, a resource on the Jewish faith, it's the same blessing traditionally said on the first night of all Jewish holidays and other special occasions.

Display or use of the shofar: A shofar is a type of instrument made from a ram's horn. It is a symbol of the ram that Abraham offered as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac, exemplifying heroic faith of the fathers of the Jewish people. The shofar also serves as a reminder of the destruction of the Temple



in Jerusalem, and calls people to strive for Israel's renewal and fellowship with God.

Singing 'Ma'oz Tzur': Chanukah songs may not be as numerous or as widely sung as Christmas carols during the holiday season, but there are a select few that are part of the festivities. 'Oh Chanukah Oh Chanukah' and 'The Dreidl Song' are some of the most widely known songs, but some people also follow the custom of singing 'Ma'oz Tzur (Rock of Ages)' around the menorah. The words were composed in the 13th century, and the song summarizes historical challenges faced by the Jewish people that were overcome with God's help.

Use of oil in Chanukah feasts: It's well known that latkes, or fried potato pancakes, are served around Chanukah. The reason is due to the oil used to fry them, which traditionally is olive oil. Fried foods call to mind a specific Chanukah miracle. After the Greeks destroyed the sanctuary and defiled what was thought to be all of the oil, one jug sealed with the imprint of the High Priest was found. That one jug managed to keep the Temple's menorah lit for eight days, despite it being insufficient to handle this task. This was considered a miracle and celebrated in subsequent years.

Merry Christmas

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HOLIDAY TIPS

How to pet-proof your home when decking the halls



The holiday season is a special time of year. Many factors combine to make the holiday season so unique and festive, and that includes all the effort people put into decorating their homes. Much thought is given to holiday lighting arrangements and which tree to buy, but it's equally important to consider pets when decorating. Many common household pets are naturally curious, and that curiosity can make it difficult to decorate safely come the holiday season. But various pet-proofing strategies can ensure holiday decorations and displays aren't compromised by four-legged friends this season.

Secure the Christmas tree

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

further layer of protection.

Block off the base of a live tree

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

Inspect and conceal light wires

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

chewing on them.

Avoid lighting candles

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

Speak to a vet about seasonal plants and flowers before bringing them home

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

Decorating is part of the holiday season. Pet owners must exercise an extra bit of caution to keep their pets and homes safe when decorating during this special time of year.

Fire safety protocols to keep in mind when decorating



Decorating the interior and exterior of a home is a beloved holiday season tradition in millions of households. Such decor makes it easy to dive into the festive nature of the season.

Many people could not imagine a holiday season without decorating their homes, and it's vital that celebrants do so safely. Fire safety

is especially important during a time of year when string lights and potentially dried out trees feature so prominently. These fire safety tips can ensure this holiday season is safe.

Buy the safest lights

It might be tempting to buy the most inexpensive lights, especially given all the extra costs already

associated with the holiday season. However, safety should be the utmost priority when buying new lights. Testing laboratories such as CSA, Intertek and UL certify products to ensure they're safe for use. Products that aren't certified should be avoided.

Use lights and cords where they're intended to be used. The packaging on lights will indicate if the product is intended to be used indoors or outdoors. It's vital that individuals decorating their homes with lights pay attention to these labels. Never decorate the exterior of a home with interior lights, and vice versa. Extension cords made for indoors also should not be used outdoors and vice versa.

Be especially careful with candles

Candles should only be burned

» See Fire Safety on page 20



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Make dinner memorable with manicotti



Few cuisine styles are as diverse and beloved as those that have been exported from the Mediterranean nation of Italy. From pasta to pizza and everything in between, the rich and savory flavors of Italian cuisine are enjoyed across the globe.

Italian restaurants can be found in many cities and towns throughout the world. However, it's just as easy to create traditional, mouthwatering dishes at home with simple ingredients. Manicotti is a popular pasta dish that can be filled with cheese or other ingredients, and topped with a traditional tomato sauce or other saucy creations. The word 'manicotti' is the plural form of 'manicotto,' which translates to "little sleeves" in

Italian. They're meant to be stuffed and baked.

While manicotti may seem complex, they're rather easy to prepare. Enjoy this recipe for "Mom's Homemade Manicotti with Crepes (Crespelle)," courtesy of the blog 3 Italian Sisters (www.3italiansisters.com). They present well for the holidays or any special occasion.

Mom's Homemade Manicotti with Crepes (Crespelle)

Yields approximately 20 crepes
Serving size: 2 to 3 crepes per person

Crepes

4 extra large eggs
1 cup flour
1 1/4 cup whole milk
2 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
Butter for pan

Ricotta filling

3 pounds part skim or whole milk ricotta cheese
1/2 cup fresh parsley, minced
1/2 cup grated pecorino romano cheese
2 extra large eggs, scrambled
1 pound mozzarella cheese cubed

Salt and pepper to taste
Premade tomato or meat sauce

Put all the crepe ingredients into a blender. Blend till smooth; scrape sides if necessary and blend again till all ingredients are blended well.

Melt a little butter in a 9" nonstick frying pan over medium heat.

Pour in small amount of batter and swirl to cover bottom of it with a thin film. Cook for approximately 20 seconds and turn to the other side and cook for another 20 seconds. Transfer crepe to plate. Continue until all batter is finished. Crepes can be stacked on top of each other. If you aren't using them right away, wrap them tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate them for 3 days or freeze for up to one month.

Ricotta filling: Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl and set aside to fill crepes.

Take 1 tablespoon of ricotta filling onto each crepe and roll gently and place on a cookie sheet, seam side down.

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Layer large casserole pan with your favorite tomato or meat sauce. Place single layer of rolled manicotti in the casserole pan on top of sauce. Ladle thin layer of sauce on top of manicotti and sprinkle with additional mozzarella cheese.

Bake in the oven for 25 minutes, or until sauce is bubbling and cheese is melted.

Fire Safety

» From page 18

when adults are in the room and should always be extinguished before leaving the room or going to bed. When burning candles, place them on heat-resistant surfaces that are beyond the reach of curious kids and pets. Never place candles within arm's length of Christmas trees or houseplants, including poinsettias.

Ask an electrician to inspect exterior outlets and circuits

Ground fault circuit interruptor (GFCI) outlets are designed to prevent electric shocks and reduce the risk of electrical fires. Most areas now require new homes be built exclusively with GFCIs, which are recognizable because they feature two buttons between the outlets. But older homes may not be equipped with GFCIs, particularly with exterior outlets. GFCI installation

is not an especially expensive job, so homeowners should ask an electrician to inspect their interior and exterior outlets and replace non-GFCIs with GFCIs.

Do not pinch light cords

Stringing lights can be a hassle, but cords should never be pinched in doors or windows or beneath interior and exterior furniture. Doing so increases the risk of damage to the cord, which in turn increases the likelihood of fire.

Avoid overloading circuits

Overloaded circuits pose a significant fire hazard. When plugging in lights, choose outlets that aren't already occupied by devices and other electronics. If need be, unplug appliances like televisions and devices while lights are on and plugged in.

When decorating this holiday season, celebrants are urged to do everything they can to reduce the risk of fire in their homes.

Popular holiday songs to stream this season

The holiday season is steeped in tradition. One of the most popular traditions is playing holiday music, which many retailers begin to broadcast over their PA systems shortly after people put their Halloween costumes in storage. The popular music streaming platform Spotify tracks the most popular holiday songs each year, and 2021 featured a mix of some newer songs and some all-time classics. According to Spotify, these five songs were the most streamed holiday tunes on the platform between November 1 and December 9, 2021.

1. "All I Want for Christmas Is You" — Mariah Carey
2. "Last Christmas" — Wham!
3. "It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas" — Michael Bublé
4. "Jingle Bell Rock" — Bobby Helms
5. "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree" — Brenda Lee

Individuals who want to stream something a little more contemporary this holiday season can consider these songs, which Spotify reports are the five most-streamed holiday songs that were released over the last half decade.

1. "Snowman" — Sia
2. "White Christmas" — Amy Grant
3. "Santa's Coming for Us" — Sia
4. "Hallelujah" — Pentatonix
5. "Merry Christmas" — Ed Sheeran and Elton John

CRAFTING & BAKING



How to create a durable gingerbread house

Gingerbread cookies and houses are one of the many symbols of the holiday season, alongside Christmas trees and twinkling lights. In fact, few confections symbolize the holidays more so than gingerbread.

Many a child (or a child at heart) has spent hours carefully trying to create decorative gingerbread houses. Although gingerbread recipes span various cultures, gingerbread houses originated in 16th century Germany. The fairy tale 'Hansel and Gretel' helped solidify the popularity of gingerbread, which became part of Christmas traditions.

Even though gingerbread houses can be fun to make, there's no denying it can be exacting work – especially for those who strive for perfection. Prepackaged kits attempt to take some of the guesswork out of the equation, but those who are crafting from scratch can employ these tips as they build their gingerbread houses.

Go for form and not flavor

Few gingerbread houses ever get eaten, so focus on finding a dough that will bake up rock hard as opposed to one that tastes good.

Get the right icing texture

Pastry artist Catherine Beddall says royal icing is the preferred 'glue' to adhere gingerbread pieces. Beddall says icing should be thick like peanut butter and not runny.

Mind the dough

Do not roll out the gingerbread dough too thin or it may become brittle after being cooked. Always cut out shapes before the gingerbread is baked. Let the baked pieces sit overnight to cool completely before using them to build.

Patience is key

Allow the icing to dry for at least a couple of hours after adhering each piece and before moving and handling the house, says Beddall. Work in stag-

es so that individual items can be decorated and allowed to dry. Then the walls can be put together, followed by the roof pieces.

Kids likely will need help

Children may not have the patience or steadiness to handle complete gingerbread construction. They can decorate the separate pieces of the house while the components are laying flat, which is easier for kids. Adults can do the main assembly later on.

Utilize a template

Free-handing may not be easy. Cut out templates using cardboard or posterboard for various gingerbread pieces.

One of the most important tips is to have fun. Don't take gingerbread house making too seriously as a novice. Rather, enjoy the experience and the centuries-old tradition.



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A classic cocktail toasts the season with a twist

People indulge just a little bit more when the holidays arrive. That may translate into enjoying an extra meal at a favorite neighborhood restaurant, buying one or two additional gifts to stash under the tree or hosting a gathering with close friends that stretches into the wee hours of the morning.

Some choose to indulge by sipping a cocktail while watching the snowflakes fall. A whiskey sour is a classic that can be given a makeover with some ingredients that are tailor-made for the holiday season. In this recipe for “Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour,” courtesy of the editors of American Lifestyle, fragrant and flavorful fruit and herbs blend well with the drink’s tartness.

Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour

Makes 4

Rosemary Simple Syrup:

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary

Cocktail:

6 ounces whiskey
3 ounces sour mix
16 ounces cranberry juice
Cranberries, for garnish
Rosemary sprigs, for garnish

1. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the sugar, water and rosemary. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, creating a

syrup. Remove from the heat, strain to remove the rosemary, and refrigerate.

2. Fill a shaker with ice, and pour in the whiskey, sour mix, simple syrup, and cranberry juice. Shake, and pour into ice-filled glasses. Garnish with cranberries and rosemary before serving.

Tip: This recipe is great without the whiskey, as a classy, adult “zero proof” drink. You can make a big batch as a lovely punch — leave some cranberries and rosemary on the side for garnish.

COCKTAILS



Champagne takes center stage again

Sparkling wines are made by sealing the beverages before the fermentation process is complete, causing the effervescent bubbles that is their hallmark. Sparkling wines are produced in various regions of the world, but 'champagne' is unique to the Champagne region of northeast France, where vines were introduced by the Romans many centuries ago.

One of the most legendary and heralded brands of champagne was created by a French monk named Pérignon. Historians say Pérignon lived from 1638 to 1715 and was admitted in his lifetime to the abbey of Saint-Vanne. He acquired the honorary title of Dom while there, and also served as cellar master, creating what later would be known as the 'vins de Pérignon.'

Dom Pérignon champagne is still a prestigious brand today, joined by other leaders of the industry like Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Nicolas Feuillatte, and Pol Roger. French champagnes are part of elegant toasts, A-list events and five-star dining experiences. They also may be poured on New Year's Eve. All champagne is sparkling wine, but not all sparkling wine is champagne.

Enjoying champagne on its own in the requisite stemmed glass is tradition, but champagne also can be mixed into any number of cocktails — from bellinis to mimosas. This 'Blood-Orange Champagne Cocktail' is a variation on the classic mimosa, and doesn't necessarily need to be enjoyed at brunch. Serve it on New Year's Eve, or for any special occasion, courtesy of Martha Stewart.

Blood-Orange Champagne Cocktail

2 1/4 cups freshly squeezed or frozen blood-orange juice
2 bottles (750-ml) champagne, chilled

Pour 3 tablespoons juice in each champagne flute. Fill flutes with champagne, and serve.



A century-old aperitivo is trendy again

Various tried and true drinks have withstood the test of time. Hosts may want to offer these traditional favorites at special occasions where alcohol will be served, especially if the beverages are once again trending in the right direction.

Although Aperol has been a popular product across Italy since its inception in 1919, it is enjoying newfound fame more than 100 years later. By 1950, the Aperol Spritz became the drink du jour of movers and shakers, and in recent years has enjoyed a resurgence of that popularity. Aperol does for orange what limoncello has done for lemons. It has a zesty orange flavor with herbal notes and a touch of vanilla. Lightly alcoholic, an Aperol Spritz is refreshing and suitable for most occasions. Perhaps the biggest feather in the cap of an Aperol Spritz is that it can be paired with a variety of small bites, making it a very host-friendly cocktail.

Enjoy this classic 'Aperol Spritz,' courtesy of Aperol, at your next gathering.

Aperol Spritz

Serves 1

3 parts Prosecco
2 parts Aperol
1 splash of soda
Orange slice for garnish

In a stemmed balloon glass full of ice, pour the Prosecco, followed by the Aperol, and then add the splash of soda. Garnish with an orange slice.

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GIFT IDEAS



What to get the family beach bum

Sandy beaches and the sounds of waves lapping against an idyllic shoreline may not be the first images people think of during the holiday season. But the beach is never far from a beach bum's mind, and that's something holiday shoppers can keep in mind as they look for perfect gift for loved ones who can't wait to dip their toes in the sand.

If the weather outside is frightful, these beach-themed gifts can be just what beach lovers want to see under the tree this holiday season.

Beach shade/tent: Beach shades and tents can



make a day at the shore that much more enjoyable by protecting beachgoers from the sun. Many beach shades and tents offer significant sun protection, making them the perfect places to look to for a riverside or oceanfront nap. Shades and tents also provide a welcome respite from the sun while eating or reading summer's must-read novel.

Beach hammock: Individuals or couples who want to take beach napping to the next level would undoubtedly appreciate a beach hammock. A beach hammock strung between two palm trees is the stuff tourism brochures are made of. When shopping for beach hammocks, look for one with durable tree

straps and an attached bag that makes setup and takedown a snap.

Sand-free towel: Perhaps the only nuisance of spending a day at the beach is bringing sand home with you. Enter the sand-free beach towel. Sand-free towels are typically made with microfiber that prevents sand from accumulating on them. That helps beachgoers ensure sand on their towels doesn't make it to their cars and homes.

Foldable blanket: A foldable blanket folds up and zips into a tiny rectangle and makes for the perfect place to enjoy a picnic at the beach. Foldable blankets that can be zip-closed can fold up into the size of a small pillow, making them highly popular among beach lovers who are accustomed to serving as sun-soaked sherpas each time they visit the beach. Sand-free fabrics make these ideal for people who want to leave the sand behind when it's time to go home.

Beach wagon: Beach wagons make getting from the car to the sand with your gear in tow that much easier. Collapsible wagons can fold up and fit easily into vehicle trunks when not in use. Depending on the size of the wagon, it may be able to carry more than 100 lbs. of cargo, including beach chairs, coolers, towels, and more.

The weeks between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day might not be peak beach season, but it's a great time to find items that can make beach lovers' trips to the beach that much better.

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What is luminarias?

Aside from safety guidelines established by local authorities, there are not many rules when it comes to decorating for the holidays. Some individuals prefer a more understated look marked by a Christmas tree in their front windows, while others go all-out and cover their homes in colorful lights. Luminarias is one of the lesser known ways to decorate for the holiday season, but it can be awe-inspiring and even help to bring communities together during this special time of year.

What is luminarias?

A luminaria is a Christmas lantern that consists of a votive candle placed inside a small paper bag. The bag is weighted with sand. Communities or neighborhoods that decorate with luminarias typically place the luminarias at the end of their driveways or along sidewalks on a predetermined night, such as Christmas Eve. When all the candles have been lit, the result is an awe-inspiring and uniform display.

How long has the tradition of luminarias been around?

According to LumaBase[®], a manufacturer of decorative luminarias, the tradition of luminarias

dates back to 16th century Spain. At that time, small bonfires known as "luminarias" were lit along roads to help people travel safely to Midnight Mass on the final night of Las Posadas, a traditional celebration in many countries with significant Hispanic populations that runs from December 16 through December 24. The celebration is meant to serve as a remembrance of the story of Mary and Joseph seeking lodging in Bethlehem prior to the birth of Jesus Christ.

Where is luminarias practiced today?

In North America, luminarias remains a tradition in Mexico and the southwestern United States, though FLIC Luminarias[®] indicates it is practiced in communities throughout the U.S. and Canada. Modern lights have evolved so individuals interested in introducing the tradition of luminarias in their communities need not light traditional candles if they're concerned about safety. Battery-powered, electric and solar options are available as alternatives to candles lit by a flame.

The tradition of luminarias can bring communities together in celebration of the holiday season.

Happy Holidays from

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HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Four gifts for the busy professional on your holiday list

The life of a successful professional can be hectic. Demands at work force many professionals to work long hours, and those days could be even longer for remote workers. In fact, a 2020 study of 2,800 workers by the staffing firm Robert Half found that 70 percent of workers who transitioned to remote work due to the pandemic now work on the weekends. The survey also found that 45 percent of workers indicate they now routinely work more hours during the week than they did prior to the pandemic.

With so much on their plates, busy professionals may not have time to shop for products that can make their lives a little easier. That makes the holiday season a perfect time for people to consider what to get the hardworking professional on their shopping list. These four gifts can each make it easier for busy professionals to handle long days at the office.



1. Portable phone charger

Modern professionals rely on their smartphones to check and send work emails, keep track of their busy schedules and answer calls from colleagues, among other things. But those phones are only useful when their batteries are charged. Portable phone chargers are lightweight and easy to use, making them ideal for on-the-go professionals who need to keep their phones charged all day long. Professionals who spend lots of time in their vehicles may love a solar-powered portable charger, which ensures their phone batteries stay charged even when they forget USB cables at home.

2. Wireless headphones

Though some models can cost of hundreds of dollars, a reliable set of wireless headphones can be found for as little as \$50. These headphones can be especially useful for professionals who work from home, as many are designed to cancel out ambient noise, making it easier to participate in Zoom calls or other meetings even if the kids are being rowdy right outside a home office door.

3. Cleaning service

Few chores are less appealing after a long day at the office than cleaning a house. Many cleaning services offer weekly or monthly packages, and professionals would undoubtedly appreciate someone taking this time-consuming task off their to-do list. Ask a relative or two to pitch in and help pay for the service if it's beyond your budget.

4. Slow cooker

Slow cookers allow users to put everything in a pot in the morning and then arrive at night to a ready-to-eat, homecooked meal. These can be especially valuable to professionals who work long hours and don't have the time to prepare a meal from scratch at the end of a workday. Whether it's portable tech, some help keeping their homes clean or a device designed to simplify homecooking, various gift ideas can help make busy professionals' lives a little less hectic.





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