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Holidays

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CENTERPIECE IDEAS

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

HISTORY OF THE NUTCRACKER

MAKE CHRISTMAS EVE SPECIAL

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How to make Christmas Eve special for kids

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.

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.



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The history of the nutcracker

They show up as toys, collectibles, decorations, and even on Christmas sweaters.

History Of The nutcracker Doll

The traditional nutcracker doll is typically a toy soldier with tufts of hair made from white rabbit fur and a crown or helmet of some type. The originals come from a mountainous region in Germany near the Czech border, known as Erzgebirge or “ore mountains.” A mining town, when the deposits started to run out, the miners began making nutcrackers and other holiday decorations, according to The Frontier Post. In the early 1800s, the nutcrackers started out as representations of authority figures — political leaders, police officers and military personnel. The idea was that common people could order their superiors to work for them cracking nuts open. It was one of those Ore Mountain carvers who, in 1870, created what is now the iconic Nutcracker

look. Friedrich Wilhelm Fchtner became known as the “father of the Nutcracker” and his iconic soldier doll went into widespread production. Today, the eighth generation of Fchtners are still running the family business in Seiffen.

Coming To America

While nutcracker dolls have been around for centuries, it was only in the 1950s that they began to be popular in the United States. In 1944, “The Nutcracker” ballet by Tchaikovsky, based on a short story by E.T.A. Hoffmann and adapted by Alexandre Dumas, came to the U.S. for the first time, getting a professional production in San Francisco. Then George Balanchine, a famous ballet choreographer, brought it to New York City in 1954. Since then, “The Nutcracker” has been an iconic standard every November and December around the U.S. Like its hero, Clara, fans of the Nutcracker frequently like to collect the dolls in one form or another.

The ballet isn’t the only way the dolls came to the U.S. Arlene Wagner, the curator of the Leavenworth Nutcracker Museum, said that American G.I.s played a large role in introducing the nutcracker dolls to American collectors. Soldiers stationed in West Germany after World War II ended started buying the dolls and sending them home as Christmas gifts.

Today’s Nutcrackers

Nutcrackers continue to be popular in nearly any shape or form. The traditional Prussian soldier look continues to be popular around Christmas time, but so do many other designs. They range from Pez dispensers to high-end collectibles, from hand-made to mass produced. They are available in all sorts of themes, whether Star Wars figurines or animals or characters from the iconic ballet. If you’re thinking of starting a collection, consider strolling through your local gift shops and seeing what options they carry.



This lets you develop a personal relationship with the store owner or manager who can help keep an eye out for special editions that they know you might be interested in. And if you are in Washington, swing by Leavenworth

to visit the Nutcracker Museum. Not only do they have the nutcrackers associated with Christmas, but they have some ancient ones that date back thousands of years.

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8 easy 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.

Christmas Word Scramble

OENL _____

IWTRNE _____

ATSAN _____

GITF _____

CBMREEED _____

VAANTIOC _____

OCARSL _____

INETLS _____

EFPCEARIL _____

TEISLEOMT _____

OWNAMNS _____

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Shop local: ‘Support your friends and neighbors’

By Steven Hansen
♦
The Staff of the News

Holiday shopping with local merchants brings benefits to consumers, merchants, local economies and community spirit.

That’s the consensus of local chambers of commerce, economic development specialists and the director of the Clovis MainStreet program.

“You support your friends and neighbors,” said Karl Terry, director of the Roosevelt County Chamber of Commerce. “You see them at the grocery store every day, they sponsor your Little League and soccer teams. They value their relationships with the community.”

Local retailers, he said, receive as much as 30% of their annual revenues from Christmas shopping.

They contribute the lion’s share of gross-receipts tax revenues to city and county governments, Terry said, and gross receipts taxes are the largest contributors to these community treasuries.

“Each dollar you spend locally has a multiplier effect,” Terry said. “If you put more money into the community, more will be put into circulation and will likely be spent again here, and gross receipts taxes can be kept here.”

In addition, he said, “you can get things here you can’t find online or anywhere else.”

Local merchants, he said, “know their customers and will



Photo by Steve Hansen

The Curry County Courthouse’s Christmas tree adds holiday spirit to downtown Clovis’ retail shops and restaurants.

stand behind their products.”

Shopping with local merchants, he said, also allows customers to “try things on,” and show items to shopping companions for consultation.

Jodi Diaz, economic development director for the Roosevelt County Community Development Corporation, said shopping locally keeps jobs in the community, “especially for high school and college students who want to make money over holiday breaks.”

Staying in town for Christmas shopping, she said, is also more cost-effective than traveling

out of town for shopping, “especially considering the cost of gas.”

In addition, she said, agreeing with Terry, shopping locally helps generate “a strong sense of community. Supporting each other strengthens communities.”

Local shopping is also convenient, she said. For example, “local merchants are likely to gift-wrap purchases,” she said.

Local shopping, she said, allows shoppers to find unique products and personalized service, and if returns are needed, local merchants will handle them more quickly and efficiently than online

dealers.

In addition, she said, when shopping in a local store, “you know what you’re getting.”

Local vendors, she said, can make shopping “convenient and very personal,” and shopping locally keeps dollars in the community.

Tina Dziuk, executive director of the Clovis Economic Development Corp., wrote in a text message, “Keeping our money local creates the strong base needed for entrepreneurs to succeed.”

In turn, she added, “successful entrepreneurs become the inspiration for young generations to

dream and innovate.” She agreed that shopping with local businesses “strengthens community relationships.”

Local entrepreneurs, she wrote, are involved with “everything from volunteering at local non-profits to coaching youth sports. If it’s in the community, you can bet that a business owner is supporting it.”

Shopping with local business, she wrote, is a way to “give back to those businesses who give so much to us.”


Lisa Pellegrino-Spear, executive director of Clovis MainStreet, wrote in a text message that she was surprised to learn recently that \$10 million spent on shopping locally generates 57 jobs, whereas shopping online at Amazon generates only 14 jobs per \$10 million spent.

Pellegrino-Spear also wrote that support of local business is especially important in rural communities.

“In rural communities,” she wrote, “roughly 90% of the economy is small businesses.”

They create “greater resources for all of us,” she wrote. “Why wouldn’t we want to support those who are willing to do so?”

Growth and success for small businesses “builds more desire for new small business owners, encouraging other entrepreneurs to start local businesses, which leads to more jobs and revenue staying in our community.”



Did you know?

Lights on a Christmas tree may seem like a relatively recent phenomenon, but people who can't wait to deck the halls each December may be surprised to learn that this beloved tradition dates all the way back to the late nineteenth century. Edward Johnson, a friend and colleague of Thomas Edison, introduced holiday light bulbs in 1882. Prior to that, candles were lit on trees and families would briefly gaze at this awe-inspiring bit of holiday decor before the candles were quickly extinguished. Johnson is credited with being the first to suggest light bulbs, which were invented by his friend Edison, be used to light trees in place of candles. While many were impressed by Johnson's eight-bulb holiday display, it remained a novelty until the 1920s, when preassembled lights became more accessible. Since then, Christmas tree lights have taken hold as a must-have piece of holiday decor in households across the globe.

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