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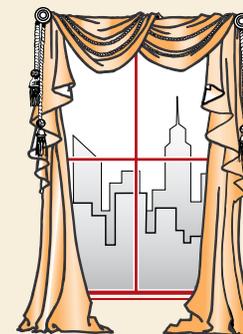
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Holiday slicing and dicing

A high-quality knife can make essential kitchen tasks easier to accomplish with greater dexterity. This utility knife from Wüsthof's Classic collection is precision-forged from one piece of stainless steel. The "full tang" design is a sign of quality that means the knife blade is forged with its shank (the long end piece) to extend fully into the handle for greater durability and precise cutting control.

At 4-1/2 inches, the utility knife falls between a chef's knife and a paring knife. This artisan model's scalloped edge efficiently slices bread or tomatoes; minces shallots, onions and herbs; or dices vegetables and small cuts of meat. Gift-packaged with a branded bamboo cutting board, it was priced at \$74.99 on Amazon.com.

Here's a knife-care tip from Wüsthof: Wash your knives immediately after use

with dish soap and warm water. Food particles left on knives can stain the blade or even cause corrosion. The dishwasher also risks damaging knives when items in the cutlery basket rub together or when excessive detergent remains on the blade.

Win the set: For a chance to win the Wüsthof knife and the branded cutting board, email Win@AtHomeNJ.com with your name, address and phone number by Dec. 21 (prize will be delivered before Christmas). To win, you must tell us where you found your copy of At Home New Jersey.

Congratulations to our September-October winners: J. Klein of Cranford wins the BiOrb terrarium; D. Grybowski of Westfield wins the two paper flowers craft books; and S. Lipkin of Springfield wins the Giaim balance ball chair.

Getting to know the locals

It's now common knowledge that the holiday season is the time of the year when most retail businesses, from food markets to product vendors, make much of the money that keeps them in business.

This is why our gift-giving and feast-making can make a difference in fueling the local economy. We are all so busy, but it can be delightful to slow down and make plans to get out and visit the area shops instead of buying so many things online. It's often a pleasure to get to know shop owners, many of whom live with their families in this area. They also support our schools and charities.

As we give thanks for all the ways we are blessed, let's make an effort to support the small businesses around us. Keeping them afloat is good for the overall health of our communities. With that, we're wishing all of our readers the best for Thanksgiving, Chanukkah, Christmas and the many other reasons this season gives us to celebrate. Think first of the value of family and friends.

We hope to help with the celebrations in this issue, offering time-saving tips and recipes as well as articles that aim to keep us focused on what matters most.

Kimberly L. Jackson, Editor@AtHomeNJ.com

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2018

AT HOME NEW JERSEY

THE BEST OF LIFE WHERE YOU LIVE

CONTENTS

PETS

Cat-astrophes — 4

ART

Helen Frank — 7

FOOD

Jersey berries — 12

ENTERTAINING

Friendsgiving — 18

CRAFT

Holiday florals — 20

MAINTENANCE

Guest readying — 21

HEALTH

Care giving — 22

FAMILY

Road rage — 23

AT HOME NEW JERSEY

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On the cover: Baked brie topped with fresh cranberry sauce and toasted American pecans.

Pet friendly

Christmas trees: Keep kitty out

For many cats, a Christmas tree is a tall, shining plaything with the promise of adventure, discovery and new heights to conquer.

There's unfamiliar water to sample, many limbs to climb, places to hide, things to chew and the bonus of sparkling orbs and other moveable shapes to swat.

The irresistible lure of Christmas trees for cats is the subject of so many real-life stories, sometimes humorously captured in internet photo galleries and videos.

But Christmas trees obviously can also mean danger for cats prone to chewing on electrical wires or not quick enough to fully escape the toppling cut evergreen or faux fir. And, of course, a fallen Christmas tree can also injure people while damaging household furnishings and treasured ornaments.

A well-placed barcade might keep out curious pups, but cats are rarely deterred. However, the following ideas can help keep families, homes and Christmas trees safe.

A PetMD.com article entitled "Can Cats and Christmas Trees Co-exist?" suggests letting the family cat get used to a Christmas tree before decorating it and placing a fresh tree in a stable stand where access to any water can be blocked.

"There are ways to increase the tree's stability," according to the article. "You can try tethering the tree to the wall or ceiling using fishing line and hooks." Also, place Christmas trees away from fragile household objects and furniture that might be damaged or climbed upon for easier access to the tree.

Catherine Angle, the staff veterinarian at PetPoisonHelpline.com, suggests that cat owners put up an artificial Christmas tree to cut down on the risk that cats will get sap on their fur, drink the tree water or eat tree needles, "which can cause nausea, vomiting, skin irritation or injury to the stomach."

"If you see or feel sap on a cat's fur, wash it away immediately," she advises. If you don't, the cat will, and for a cat that means eating



Lori Morris

There really are few effective ways to make a Christmas tree less attractive to the family cat.

sap. "Cats are very sensitive to pine oils," she notes, and ingestion could cause problems.

Tinsel and smaller Christmas tree ornaments might also be ingested by cats, putting them at risk for choking or fatal intestinal obstructions. PetMD.com recommends avoiding the cat temptation of edible ornaments such as popcorn, candy or cookies.

For those unwilling to trade fragile glass and ceramic or porcelain ornaments for unbreakable plastics and cloth, the PetMD article suggests placing breakable ornaments near the top of the tree and securing them tightly on the branch with wire ornament hooks. "Place the sturdier ornaments — the ones most likely to be swatted by little paws — on the lowest branches."

PetMD.com also advises checking light cords frequently for chewing damage. "Electric shock is a common holiday mishap for just this reason," the article notes. Get medical care for your cat if you suspect electric shock, which might cause a cat to drool or show signs of mental or physical impairment, according to the site.

In a post on the website VetStreet.com, veterinarian Marty Becker suggests confining either the tree or, as a last resort, the tree-climbing cat to avoid troublesome risks.

Putting the tree in a room to which access can be controlled might be best in a house with cats that tend to climb, she says. "Set up the tree in a room with doors you can close, choosing, say, a formal living room over a more open family room, so it's easy to deny access to the tree when you're not around."

The other option is to contain your cat as needed in a room with food, water, a litterbox, a climbing tower, scratching post and toys. "As long as you spend time with him, he'll be just fine there until it's time to take down the decorations."

Becker also notes that tree climbing is more likely to be a problem with adventure-seeking young cats than their relaxed elders.



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Twelve months on the Rahway River Parkway

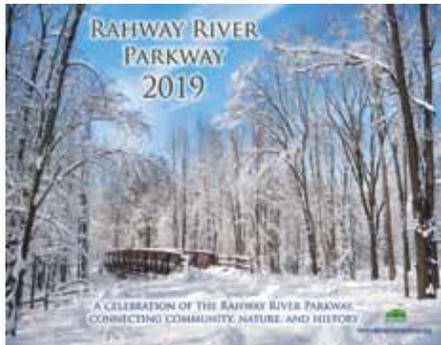
When a calendar highlights the diverse beauty of the 1,100-acre greenbelt of riverside parks from Springfield to Rahway, it becomes more than an organizational tool that marks the passing of time.

Each year since 2015, the annual Friends of Rahway River Parkway calendar has drawn local photographers and nature lovers who capture the parkway in the vivid colors of various seasons.

Additionally, the calendars, which follow the seasons with appropriate images of nature and wildlife, are a major fundraiser for the organization's efforts to win historic designation and the associated protections for the entire Rahway River Parkway. The organization works to raise awareness of the parkway while advocating for and working on its preservation, restoration and enhancement.

The 2019 calendar is a standout compilation of images, beginning with the cover's "Winter Wonderland" shot taken at Lenape Park by Cranford photographer and artist Diane Frank Metz.

Calendars are \$15, and proceeds support the organization's preservation efforts. Buy online at RahwayRiverParkway.org, which has information about the parkway, the organization's work and related events. The site lists retailers carrying the calendar, including Golden Touch Jewelers, Cranford, and Williams Nursery, Westfield.



Each year since 2015, the annual Friends of Rahway River Parkway calendar has drawn local photographers and nature lovers who capture the parkway in the vivid colors of various seasons.



David Williams

Where's this waterfall? Be first to email the answer to Win@AtHomeNJ.com and win a \$50 Williams Nursery gift card.

Give food and get a free exam

From Nov. 12 through 17, area residents can pack up bags of non-perishable goods and take them to 649 Central Ave. in Westfield, where the donations will benefit charitable programs of Osceola Presbyterian Church in Clark.

For more than 25 years, Dr. Eric Whitehouse has organized the collection, and with it an opportunity for the community to learn about the numerous health benefits of chiropractic adjustments.

Those who bring in a food donation can get a free chiropractic exam, including a consultation and X-rays, if needed.

"For loyal patients, it's a good way to say thank you," Dr. Whitehouse said. "If it's a new patient that's going to need everything, then they get a great, great deal."

For their part, participants need only bring along dry packaged, canned or boxed foods. "We don't put any limit on it," Dr. Whitehouse said of the donations.

He began the program, always held

near Thanksgiving, in 1989 with the start of his practice. His father worshipped at Osceola Church, and its members helped Dr. Whitehouse build his practice. The

congregation has a strong community outreach program, including a food pantry that provides meals to needy families through referrals. The church often needs specific items to round out its supply of staples.

"A lot of times, I would donate turkeys at Thanksgiving," Dr. Whitehouse said. Then he decided to do more through a food drive. "It's designed to help them run even

beyond Thanksgiving," he said.

Over the years, the response prompted him to extend the drive from one day to nearly a week. This gives more people a chance to get to him while sharing in his efforts to help others. "This is that time of giving, and it's my way to give back," he said.

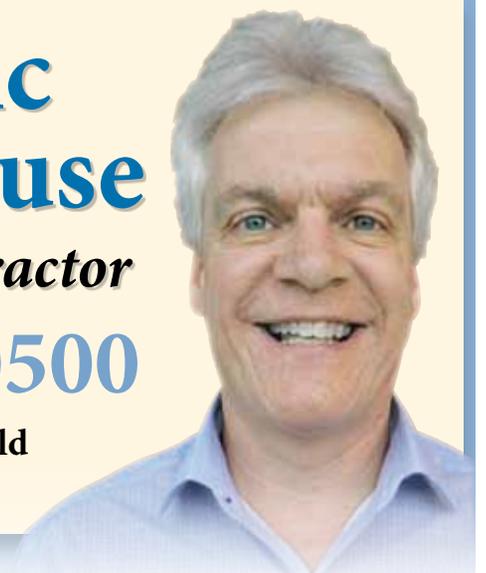


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The new showroom of Metropolitan Window Fashions at Fabricland is on Route 22 West.

Fabricland now in Green Brook

Fabricland has a new 9,000-square-foot showroom that makes Green Brook its home for the second time in the family-owned company's 85-year history.

After 57 years at its former location on Route 22 West in North Plainfield, Fabricland and Metropolitan Window Fashions have moved just two miles west, to 270 Route 22 West in Green Brook.

Helping customers create a beautiful home has been the company's mission since it was founded as Chain Decorators by Philip Heyman at the height of the Great Depression. Back then, Heyman's aspirational name for his store helped manifest a goal to open a chain of home decorating stores. From 1934 to 1952, he did just that, building and maintaining Chain Decorators in Plainfield, Westfield and Somerville.

In 1952, the business moved its main store from downtown Plainfield to consolidate as Highway Mill End on Route 22 (then Route 29) in Green Brook. When the company moved to North Plainfield in 1961, Philip Heyman's son, Jay, joined the business. In 1963, a contest was held, and the new store was renamed Highway Fabric

Land, later shortened to Fabricland.

Bruce Heyman took over in 1999 as his parents, Jay and Gertrude, retired. That same year, he purchased Nassau's Window Fashions in Paramus. Since then, he has grown the rebranded Metropolitan Window Fashions to include a Manhattan showroom among his three locations.

"We are delighted to move into a 9,000-square-foot showroom that will highlight our Hunter Douglas gallery, the largest in New Jersey, along with custom and ready-made drapery displays," Heyman said. "Our business is now 75 percent window fashions and 25 percent fabric."

The company provides draperies, motorized shades, blinds, shutters and smart-home automation to residential, commercial and design clients. Fabricland has a larger footprint in Green Brook, however. "We will continue to stock dress, quilt, drapery and upholstery fabrics," Heyman said. Sewing classes also will continue. See class schedules at Fabricland.com.

For free in-home decorating consultations, visit WindowFashions.com or call (908) 755-4700 for more information.

Practice giving thanks

Being grateful is easy when life gives you a loving family, loyal friends and work that rewards your efforts with generous pay.

But what about when a loved one falls gravely ill or a job that defined you is lost? Gratitude might not be as easy then.

"Even in the most challenging times,

living gratefully makes us aware of, and available to, opportunities to learn and grow, and to extend ourselves with care and compassion," Kristi Nelson writes in "Everyday Gratitude: Inspiration for Living Life as a Gift" (Storey, \$12.95).

Nelson is executive director of A Network for Grateful Living, which produced the book to help spread the message that "small, grateful acts every day can uplift us, make a difference for others, and help change the world."

"What we call gratefulness arises when we are connected to the 'great fullness' and privileges of our lives," Nelson writes. "It can help us see opportunities and gifts even in our difficulties. It can support us to marvel at things we have long taken for granted."

In this season when we celebrate abundance with feasts and gift-giving, it's the perfect time to contemplate the notion that

"happiness is not what makes us grateful; it is gratefulness that makes us happy."

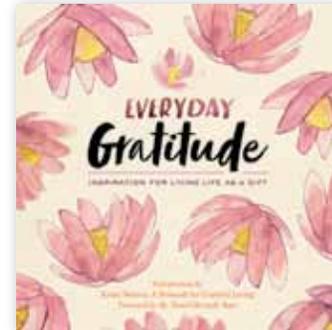
So says Brother David Steindl-Rast of Gut Aich Monastery in Austria. As founder of A Network for Grateful Living, the global organization he started in 2000, Steindl-Rast writes the book's foreword. His inspirational quotes also are featured among those of poets, writers, clerics, actors, musicians and others.

Each square page of the book contains one quote followed by a related question for reflection, and each page has a decorative background that makes it visually captivating.

Even a familiar quote such as Helen Keller's

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much" prompts self-reflection when followed by a question: "Have I expressed how helpful the people in my life are to me?"

Every quote, question and practice reflects at least one step on the path to grateful living. To understand how this can work, visit Gratefulness.org, where there is a brief Word for the Day message, and a daily question in the site's "practice" area. Participant "reflections" or answers to questions such as "I woke up this morning. How can I say thank you?" can offer greater insight into the transformative power of living gratefully.



Brain health: Balance light and darkness

We already know many of the ways daylight contributes to health, but research continues to show risks in nighttime light exposure. Light, including the blue light from televisions and electronic devices, can disrupt sleep cycles and suppress production of melatonin, a hormone the body only makes at night. It regulates sleep cycles, among other vital functions. Try the following tips to manage light's effect on the brain:

- Take a walk outside every day. If you can't get outside, try to sit by a sunny window.
- Install blackout curtains in bedrooms to block light from the moon or street lamps.
- Limit evening exposure to blue light from televisions and electronic devices.
- Try red bulbs in night lights; red light did not affect melatonin production in studies.



Across the parking lot from Trader Joe's

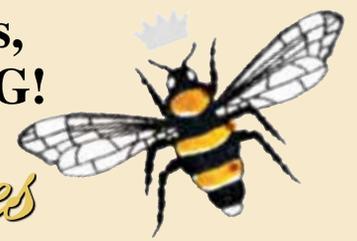
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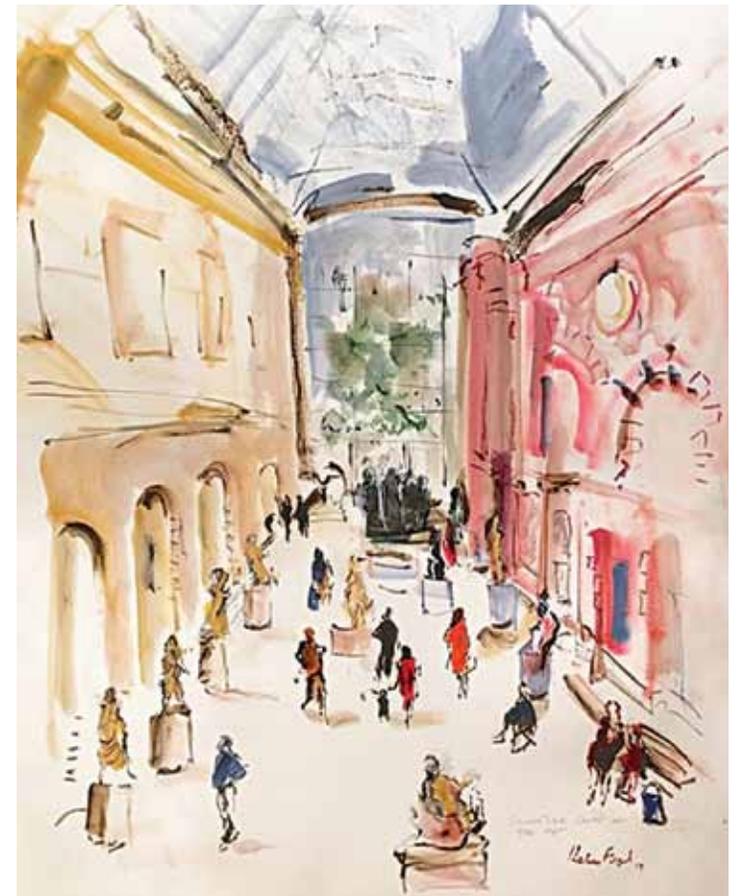
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“Remembered Merry-Go-Round,” which depicts Asbury Park’s old carousel, and “Sculpture Courtyard” at the Met, are among works by artist Helen Frank at Juxtapose Gallery, Westfield.

Experience etched: Helen Frank at Juxtapose

She is lauded as an astute chronicler of New York life. But Helen Frank is one of us.

“I’m a Jersey girl, but I identify with people all over,” said the artist, who was born in Jersey City in 1930. “I love New York and New Jersey, but I have a broader view than that.”

In descriptive etchings, Frank often captures everyday people in noteworthy settings. Her New York subjects include “Park Avenue,” “The Highline” and “Waldorf Astoria.” On the Jersey side are “Entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel,” “Pulaski Skyway” and “Jersey Shore.”

“I was brought up in Newark in my early years, and then Maplewood,” said the grandmother of four, who now lives in Springfield.

“I was always going into the city. My mother was a New Yorker. I was taken to museums, theater. I attended the Cooper Union. It was just a big part of my life. I’m still in quite a lot.”

Frank documents fleeting moments with her art. Does she scribble in sketchbooks?

“No. I do that with my eyes,” she said.

“I can’t walk around drawing all time, and

I don’t often have a sketchbook with me. The iPhone has been a boon to me. I can just pull it out of my bag and take pictures.

“But mostly, I use my eyes, my memory and my mind. I might take 10 photos of one small thing. The other night, I watched two women having dinner at Zabar’s (in Manhattan). I took 12 pictures of them, trying to get just the right gestures. That’s what I’m looking for: the right gestures.”

Frank’s style could not be called tight or fussy. The viewer senses mobility in her figures.

“That’s important to me, that it have movement,” she said. “I’m not interested in still life. I’m interested in people, animals, rooms, interiors — things that have movement in life.”

Frank’s “Remembered Merry-Go-Round” is a fantasy in which horses gallop around, and fly away from, Asbury Park’s famously ornate old carousel.

“When I was a little girl, I rode on that carousel. I was recently down there, and of course, the carousel is long gone. So I show the horses leaving the carousel,” she said.

Frank will be the featured artist for the

holidays at Juxtapose Gallery in Westfield, with window displays hung mid-November throughout December. “That’s been a tradition for years,” says Juxtapose owner Danielle D’Amico. “We have hundreds of her pieces here, including original paintings. There’s a wall dedicated to her work year round.”

Frank notes that she has had a 25-year relationship with Juxtapose Gallery, of which D’Amico is the fifth owner.

“All of my large drawings are oil on paper, and I do etchings in black and white or color,” Frank says. “I develop all the plates myself; I etch my plates and [usually] print myself. So people are buying what I have made. After it’s printed, I then hand-color it.

The beauty of it is that each one is unique.”

There also is a progressive social component to Frank’s work. Her 2012 book “The Run” (done with her late husband, Sid Frank) profiled homeless New Yorkers. Her latest book, “Widows Talk,” features essays by 16 women. “I started to do this from my own loss, to find solace someplace in other people’s experiences. And I did.”

Frank’s portrait of Ruth Bader Ginsburg was emblazoned on a T-shirt for the 2017 Women’s March on Washington. Frank received a handwritten note from Ginsburg. The Supreme Court justice promised the T-shirt “will be worn regularly when I work out.”

— Mark Voger



Artist Helen Frank and Juxtapose Gallery owner Danielle D’Amico



“Regarding Degas” by Helen Frank

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www.JuxtaposeGallery.com

CALENDAR

Holiday cheer, history lessons and sales

Friday, Nov. 9: “Rip & Sip,” paper collage workshop with wine and refreshments from 7 to 9 p.m. at Juxtapose Gallery, 58 Elm St., Westfield. Use colored and patterned papers to “paint” scenes of fall flowers. For 21 and over, all skill levels welcome. Pre-paid \$60 fee required for instruction and artist-grade materials. Register at JuxtaposeGallery.com, or call (908) 232-3278.

Friday, Nov. 16 through Sunday, Nov. 18: Holiday Open House at Williams Nursery & The Gift House, 524 Springfield Ave., Westfield. See the new holiday merchandise at the Gift House and start shopping early with 20 percent off everything in the shop. Gifts, wreaths, ornaments and more included.

Sunday, Nov. 18: Annual 18th Century Thanksgiving Dinner Demonstration, 2 to 4 p.m., Miller-Cory House Museum, 614 Mountain Ave., Westfield. See how a holiday meal was cooked over an open hearth, learn about Colonial recipes and seasonal ingredients, and get insight on early American table manners, place settings and other traditions. This is a presentation only; no food served. Admission is \$4 for those 13 and older, \$3 for ages 3 to 12, free for 2 and younger. Admission includes a tour of the museum, an 18th century farmhouse with a cookhouse, an outhouse, a corncrib and typical early-American plantings.

Sunday, Nov. 18: Free fall concert, 2 to 3 p.m., Elmora branch of Elizabeth Public Library, 740 W. Grand St., Elizabeth. The Odessa Klezmer Band brings joyous dance music of the Klezmerim (Jewish folk musicians), celebrating the musical heritage of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, including polka and czardas. Leading the band on accordion and vocals is Ed Goldberg, who was brought up playing Eastern European and polka music in the Elmora section of Elizabeth. On Nov. 24, the band will play 7 to 9:30 p.m. at Paul Robeson Center for the Arts, 102 Witherspoon St, Princeton. Learn more at OdessaKlezmer.com.



Fran Hallada

Volunteers Ellen and Rob Hess show what preparing a Thanksgiving meal would have been like in the 18th century at the Miller-Cory House, a living history museum in Westfield.

Friday, Nov. 23 through Saturday, Dec. 29: “A Storybook Christmas” holiday tours at Liberty Hall Museum, 1003 Morris Ave., Union. The first floor of the 14-room Georgian-style home built by New Jersey’s first governor will be transformed with Christmas décor that brings to life five popular children’s stories. Tours leave every hour from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (2 p.m. on weekends) Admission is \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors and children ages 3 through 17. Children under 3 admitted free. Call (908) 527-0400.

Throughout December: Recall the joys of Christmas past with vintage ornaments and décor at Golden Bee Antiques. Get more joy with 20 percent off all your favorite things as the shop celebrates 20 years at 141A E. Broad St. (rear entrance), Westfield.

Saturday, Dec. 1: Holiday Open House, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Winterhill Antiques, 425 Park Ave., Scotch Plains. Eat, drink and be merry as you shop. The two-level store has antiques, collectibles, vintage designer clothes and handbags, fine jewelry, decorative objects and more.

Saturday, Dec. 1: “A Medley of Majestic Homes for the Holidays,” 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tour architecturally distinctive Plainfield homes decorated for the holidays by leading designers. Tickets are \$35 in advance at PlainfieldSymphony.org and also at Swain Galleries, 703 Watchung Ave., Plainfield. The tour also will feature a café and curated holiday vendor boutique at duCret School of Art (1030 Central Ave., Plainfield), where \$40 tickets may be purchased on tour day.

Sunday, Dec. 2: Gingerbread Sunday, 1:30 to 4 p.m., Miller-Cory House Museum, 614 Mountain Ave., Westfield. Gingerbread stories and crafts, including making a simple, (non-edible) gingerbread house. Admission is \$5 for children; free for accompanying adults. Reservations required. Email millercorymuseum@gmail.com or call (908) 232-1776 through Nov. 29. After Nov. 29, call only to reserve until noon on Dec. 2.

Sunday, Dec. 2: Home for the Holidays House Tour, noon to 4 p.m. Self-directed tour of four beautiful Cranford homes in holiday dress. Advance tickets are \$26.95, including a service fee, at EventBrite.com. Pick up tickets and guide book starting at 10:30 a.m. on Dec. 2 at the Hanson House, 38 Springfield Ave., Cranford, where tickets will be \$30 on tour day. Also at the Hanson House, visit the Green Thumb Garden Club Holiday Boutique. Tour proceeds benefit charitable work of Cranford Woman’s Club.

Thursday, Dec. 6: Holiday Boutique and Garden Shoppe, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., Reeves-Reed Arboretum, 165 Hobart Ave, Summit. The arboretum will have one-of-a-kind seasonal arrangements, wreaths and décor for sale, as merchants and artisans sell gifts and treats. The event is the same day as the arboretum’s annual holiday tour of area homes. Check Reeves-ReedArboretum.org or call (908) 273-8787 for updates and to learn more about upcoming arboretum events, including photos and treats with Santa.

Friday, Dec. 14: “Rip & Sip” paper collage workshop with wine and refreshments at Juxtapose Gallery, 58 Elm St., Westfield. Use colored and patterned papers for a “winter wonderland” in this 7 to 9 p.m. art-making session for those age 21 and over. Pre-paid \$60 fee for instruction and artist-grade materials. Register at JuxtaposeGallery.com. Call (908) 232-3278 about future classes.

Events dates and times are subject to change. Always confirm or register before attending.

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Try open sew at Urban Sewciety

If you sew, you know how easy it is to make new curtains, throw pillows for your bed or sofa, or a new skirt for a night out.

If you sew, but you haven’t sewn in years, you might know it can be a pain to pull out your sewing machine, set it up, find the right color thread and an empty bobbin.

The latter hassles can be eliminated if you head to an open-sew session. This is when area sewing studios let you use their machines to work on your own projects. Urban Sewciety in Westfield is the only area sewing studio that lets you do so for free.

The studio and fabric shop often

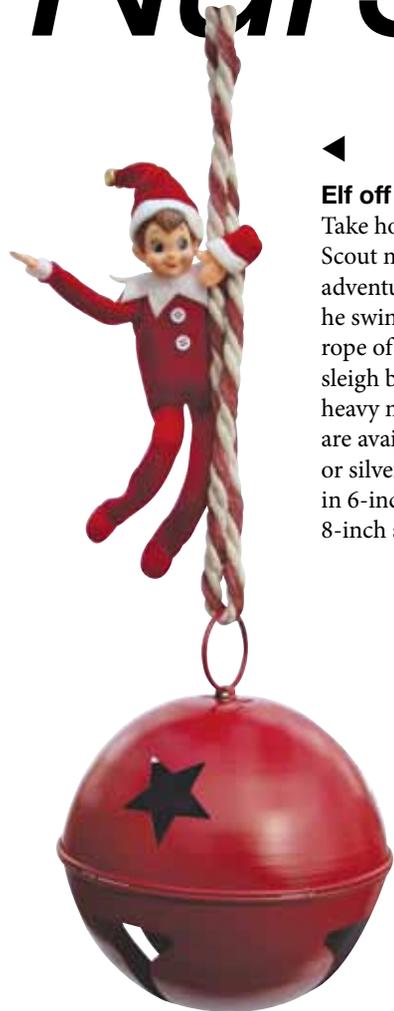
welcomes guests to visit the classroom and make something. This is a chance to shop for fabric and supplies, meet others who sew, and chat with two owners named Megan.

Need a sewing machine? Make it a productive test drive on one of the classroom’s 14 sewing machines, and get a sense of the EverSewn models they sell. Take classes and use the free time to work on your projects.

The next open sew is Friday, Nov. 16 from 7 to 9:30 p.m. All skill levels welcome, but sewing experience is required. Register from the calendar at UrbanSewciety.com, or call (908) 232-0600. Space is limited.

20% off all giftware for Open House, Nov. 16-18

At Williams Nursery



Elf off the shelf: Take home a wiry Scout made for adventure. Here, he swings from the rope of one of our sleigh bells. The heavy metal bells are available in red or silver and come in 6-inch and 8-inch sizes.



Frosty friends: Chill with irresistible tabletop snowmen in dapper hats, stacking dishwasher-safe mugs, cookie jars, and bags of plush snowballs safe to throw inside.



On topic: We have so many fun decorations for themed trees. Go Shore style, or let spring inspire you with butterflies, faux florals and pastel ribbon.



Mad for plaid: Oven mitts stuffed with dishcloths, or dishcloth and spoon combinations are just two of our plaid options for gifts and decor.



Team totems: Try these 15-inch tall indoor-outdoor tiki-style statues to bring good luck to your team. We're looking at *you*, Giants fans.



Get your merry on: At our Gift House, Santa's favorite helpers are variously occupied gnomes. You'll even find tiny ones hanging around the rim of a planter.

From Whoville: Have a "Merry Grinchmas" with live miniature evergreens in the whimsical Dr. Seuss shape with festive planters.



HOLIDAY MEMORIES

Macy's elf was Santa's opening act

By Mark Voger

I found myself in a position of great responsibility at the 2017 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. I was a balloon handler assigned to C.J., one of three Macy's elves based on a balloon from 1947. (That's the same year "Miracle on 34th Street," a movie which depicts the Macy's parade, was released. But I digress.)

C.J. is the elf in yellow. The others are Charlie, in blue, and Kit, in red. In the universe of Macy's parade geeks, these are important distinctions.

C.J. and his two fellow Macy's elves are small balloons — just 12 handlers per — but they are not without their challenges.

It boils down to this: The elves look best to parade-goers and on TV when they are flown vertically — that is, if they appear to be standing up straight.

But these balloons have a tendency to fly somewhat horizontally. That makes things tricky on a *good* day, but if there's wind, watch out. A bonus quandary: Even a mild bit of wind makes C.J., Charlie and Kit, those little imps, want to ... dance.

Santa a fixture

The first Macy's parade was held on Nov. 27, 1924. It was marketed as a Christmas parade to publicize Macy's recent expansion. Floats (Miss Muffet, Red Riding Hood), Central Park Zoo animals and Santa were all on hand during that inaugural event.

It's a grand, romantic notion to be in the Macy's parade. But there's always a measure of pain involved. I'm talking about the cold.

You have no choice but to wait in bitter cold for hours, beginning around dawn, at 81st Street by Theodore Roosevelt Park and the Museum of Natural History, where the inflated balloons are weighted down beneath netting, waiting to entertain millions.

2017 marked my fifth Macy's parade. As each year went by and I got more used to the cold, I was able pace myself. But on my first parade in 2013, the hours of bitterly low temperatures seemed endless. I remember thinking, "Why am I not home in bed?"

It's all worth it once the parade begins. You no longer feel cold. The sun is on you, and you're exercising. Plus, your heart is being warmed by all the little ones shouting, in squeaky little voices, "Happy Thanksgiving!"

I'm at the point where I struggle to remember which balloons I manned on what years, but here they are: Yes Virginia in 2013; Bob the Fireman in 2014; Elf on the Shelf in 2015; Red Star No. 2 in 2016; and C.J. last year.

I manned one of two "head lines" for the C.J. balloon. (Intuitively named, the head line is the rope attached to C.J.'s head.) My line was on the right side of C.J.; myself and the left-hand head-line guy were positioned at the front of the team.



At Home New Jersey photo illustration

C.J. and his fellow elves immediately precede Santa Claus during the Thanksgiving parade.

Here's something I learned over the years: Which line you get on a balloon is pretty random. No one assigns you to a line; you just claim one while the balloons are still weighted onto the ground, almost like a game of musical chairs. At this point, you can't really tell which line is which. I imagine that the balloons' "captain" or "pilots" (the folks who guide the balloon handlers with hand signals and whistles) could switch handlers around once the balloon is up, but I have yet to see it happen. So it was just dumb luck — not my fabulous experience — that I ended up manning one of C.J.'s head lines.

The responsibility I spoke of earlier lies in the fact that the handlers behind me on the right side of C.J. had to line up with me at all

times. So I had to make certain that I was in the correct spot at all times. In other words, if I mess up, *everyone* messes up.

Since I was in front of the balloon, I couldn't see how it was flying. (We're instructed never to look backwards.) For this, we rely on our pilot. Due to frequent, albeit mild, gusts that morning, the pilot had to work me, in particular, quite a bit. In order for the balloon to remain in perfect formation while we marched, I often had to shift my position at the commands of the pilot, himself reacting to the gusts. (Yep, balloon handling is very much a work-in-progress.)

There was also the problem of the wildly varying tautness of my line. My pilot told me never to let out line. Sometimes, it took quite



National Broadcasting Company

Smokey Robinson kept warm on his float.

some strength to execute this command.

(A related aside: On the previous Labor Day, I sprained both thumbs and forearms in a bicycling accident. Very painful, very inconvenient. I wasn't certain if I'd be healed by Thanksgiving. I trained for it with light reps, and I was fine by early November.)

Another complication on parade day: All three elves shared one captain. (Usually, every balloon has its own captain.) So this poor guy spent the entire parade running from Charlie to Kit to C.J., making certain that each elf was flying straight up and in formation. So actually, a lot of the captaining was done by the pilots. Everyone pulled together.

In other words: It was *work*.

If I was one of the 90-something people on the Spider-Man balloon, I could have blended in and relaxed a little. But it's lonely at the right-hand head line of C.J. the elf.

Loud roar

Since C.J. immediately precedes Santa's sled, we found ourselves in an enviable position. Block after block, once the crowd realized that Santa was visible in the distance, a loud roar erupted that usually, you'd only hear at the bottom of the ninth in a tie game with two outs, two strikes, three balls and bases loaded. Like, *super* loud. *Rolling Stones* loud. Even the adults screamed for Santa.

As we did with Red Star No. 2 in 2016, we occasionally jogged in a circle to make C.J. appear to "spin." It was magical seeing the little ones look up in awe at the sight. Sometimes I'd catch one of the kids' eyes as I ran by, and I'd shout, "Can ya believe it? He's spinning!"

St. Nick wasn't the only celebrity in the parade. Smokey Robinson and Patti Labelle were among the stars who waved from the floats. I love Smokey Robinson and the Miracles! I never get to see the celebs — after all, we humble balloon handlers are just there to do a job — but I'm always interested. For the rest of my days, I can say that I was on the same bill with the singer of "I Second That Emotion" and "The Tracks of My Tears."

The 92nd Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will be held Nov. 22 in New York, and broadcast live on Channel 4 beginning at 9 a.m.



French pottery at Juxtapose Gallery

Add to the collection of a friend who loves farmhouse chic. These French hens were produced by an artist who adores and recreates in clay the Guinea hens that inhabit her yard in Provence. The tastefully colored ceramic birds are hand-painted and finished with high-gloss glaze. Shown are two of several available at Juxtapose Gallery, 58 Elm St., Westfield. The art gallery offers custom-framing and other gift items including jewelry and keepsakes. See examples and shop online at JuxtaposeGallery.com, or call (908) 232-3278.

Shop local this holiday

Botanical blends at Dreyer Farms

These 19-ounce candles have fragrances that smell clean, fresh and good enough to eat. Made of 100-percent soy wax, with materials and containers produced in the USA, each burns 125 to 135 hours. Find Joyeux Noel, Mistletoe, Fig & Sage and other holiday appropriate blends at Dreyer Farms, 831 Springfield Ave., Cranford. For more, visit DreyerFarms.com, or call the farm at (908) 276-1290.



Holiday ready at Uptown Vintage

Need a sideboard to help support the holiday feast, a dresser or stand for the guest room? If you want one-of-a-kind pieces, rich in character, head to Uptown Vintage, 1833 Front St., Scotch Plains. In this shop with four showrooms of decorative home accessories and collectibles, owner Marc Desranleau refinishes vintage furniture by hand using Annie Sloan chalk paints and waxes, which he also stocks. Want to do it yourself? He can teach you how, with classes and expert advice. Visit Uptown-Vintage.com or call (908) 322-5522 for details.

Gift baskets at Dreyer Farms

The farm store has edible gift options that can be custom wrapped in baskets for holiday giving. Check out Dreyer's own signature sauces and preserves to pair with olive oils, flavored balsamic vinegars, baking mixes, local honey, maple syrup and more. Gift them in one of the store's reusable farm- or equestrian-theme totes, or ask about custom gift bundles that can include fruit, baked goods and packaged foods.



The holiday season's best berry is a New Jersey native

Absolutely cranta

We're celebrating home-made cranberry sauce in honor of the New Jersey woman who made and sold it a little more than 100 years ago. Elizabeth Lee, who had a successful cranberry farm in New Egypt (Ocean County), would later become one of the founders of Ocean Spray, the cooperative of cranberry growers that still gives us cranberry sauce today. Lee is said to have been the first to sell cranberry sauce in 1917. The story has it that she decided to try cooking some of the damaged cranberries that were usually discarded. She liked the jelled sauce that resulted so much that she started selling it as "Bog Sweet Cranberry Sauce."

We could not find any record of Lee's recipe, but we experimented with many of the ways naturally tart cranberries can be tamed by a variety of sweeteners, even other fruits, as shown in the featured recipes that use fresh, frozen or dried cranberries. When dried fruit is used, the sauce is sweetened by their concentrated natural sugar. In the case of dried cranberries, there is sugar added to the fruit in production.

We start with less sweetener in these recipes. The finished sauce can always be sweetened to taste.



Cran-pecan baked brie

(10 appetizer servings)

12 ounces fresh cranberries
1/2 cup maple syrup
Zest and juice of one orange
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
12- to 14-ounce wheel brie cheese
1/2 cup roasted pecan pieces (see Page 19)

1. Boil cranberries, syrup and 1/2 cup water in medium saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture thickens, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in orange zest, juice and herbs.
2. Place brie on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake 5 to 7 minutes, until brie softens inside. Transfer to a serving dish; top with chutney and pecans. Serve warm with crackers, toasted bread and apple slices.

Nutrition information (per serving): 233 calories, 16g fat (6g saturated), 34mg cholesterol, 214mg sodium, 17g carbs, 2g fiber, 12g sugars, 8g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy American Pecan Council



Cranberry-pear compote

(12 servings)

1 cup pomegranate juice
1/2 teaspoon McCormick ground Saigon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon McCormick ground Jamaican allspice
1/4 teaspoon McCormick pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon grated orange peel
2 pears, peeled and cut into bite-sized pieces
1 cup dried figs, quartered
1 cup dried cranberries

In a medium saucepan, simmer pomegranate juice, cinnamon, allspice, vanilla and orange peel, stirring occasionally until sugar is dissolved. Stir in pears, figs and cranberries. Cook 5 to 10 minutes, until cranberries are plump and liquid is slightly thickened. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Note: This easy sauce was a test-kitchen favorite.

Nutrition information (per serving): 122 calories, 0g fat (0g saturated), 0mg cholesterol, 4mg sodium, 32g carbs, 3g fiber, 24g sugars, 1g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy McCormick

Zinfull cranberry relish

(8 servings)

1/2 cup California Zinfandel (or any red wine)
1 cup dried cranberries
1 small blood or naval orange
1 tablespoon honey
1/2 cup toasted coarsely chopped California walnuts

1. In a small pan, bring Zinfandel to a simmer. Add cranberries, remove from heat, cover pan and let stand until wine is absorbed (about 15-20 minutes).
2. Meanwhile, peel and remove white pith from orange. Holding above a bowl, slice sections of orange (supreme style) and drop them into the bowl.
3. Add honey to taste to cranberries, stir in orange sections with juice. Add walnuts and serve.

Nutrition information (per serving): 160 calories, 7g fat (0g saturated), 0mg cholesterol, 1mg sodium, 29g carbs, 2g fiber, 22g sugars, 2g protein

— Recipe, photo courtesy California Walnuts



Cranberry compote: In a medium saucepan, combine 2 cups **Ocean Spray fresh or frozen cranberries**, 3 cups canned **pineapple tidbits or diced peaches**, 1 cup **brown sugar**, 1 teaspoon **cinnamon** and 1/4 teaspoon **nutmeg**. Bring to a boil and cook just until cranberries begin to pop, stirring frequently. Let sauce cool slightly before serving. — Adapted recipe, photo courtesy Ocean Spray

astic!



Slow-cooker cranberry sauce: To a 4-quart slow cooker, add 12 ounces fresh or frozen **cranberries**, 2/3 cup **sugar**, sections of a peeled **seedless orange**, 2 McCormick **leaves** and one **cinnamon stick**. Cover and cook 3 hours on high heat, stirring every hour. Uncover. Stir well and cook, uncovered, 30 to 45 minutes longer on high or until slightly thickened. — *Recipe, photo courtesy McCormick*



Apple-cranberry sauce: In large, heavy saucepan, heat 1/2 cup **canola oil**. Add 4 large **Fuji apples** (about 2 pounds) cored and diced. Sauté over medium heat, about 10 minutes or until apples are lightly caramelized. Add 1/4 cup **lemon juice** to pan, cook and stir until deglaze. Transfer apples to a food processor; pulse until chunky consistency. Stir in 1/2 teaspoon **pure vanilla extract**, 1/4 teaspoon **ground cinnamon**, 1/4 cup coarsely chopped **dried cranberries** and 1/8 teaspoon **salt** (optional). Serve warm. — *Recipe, photo courtesy Canolainfo.org*



Tropical mango-cranberry sauce: In a small saucepan, stir together 12 ounces **fresh cranberries**, 1 cup **Ceres mango juice** and 1/2 cup **granulated sugar**. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for about 10 minutes, or until cranberries pop and soften and mixture is slightly thickened. (It will continue to thicken as it cools.) Stir in two firm, ripe, peeled, pitted and chopped **mangoes** and 1 tablespoon finely chopped **crystalized ginger**. Simmer 15 minutes more. Serve over sliced turkey, chicken or pork. — *Adapted recipe, photo courtesy National Mango Board*



Canning in small quantities makes it easier to take the first steps in preserving.

Guy Ambrosino

Preserving Jersey cranberries

Chef John Thomsen already had a foot out of the door at Agricola when his cookbook named after the farm-fed Princeton eatery was published back in 2015. But at Thanksgiving, his recipes continue to hold up as they celebrate the New Jersey farmers whose produce still helps fill Agricola's tables.

At the time of the book's publication, Agricola was getting cranberries from the 200-acre Paradise Hill Farm in Vincentown, and Thomsen wrote: "We love to preserve the fruit at its peak. We pickle the cranberries, and also use them to create this interesting sweet and sour combination, which pairs well with rich dishes like chicken liver mousse."

The featured *aigre-doux* is suggested "in place of the usual cranberry relish." Made with red wine, red wine vinegar, honey, and spiced with peppercorns, star anise and vanilla beans, it aims at an elevated experience, made in small, easier-to-manage batches.

These days, cranberry offerings made at Agricola still rely on New Jersey cranberries, but executive chef Mitresh Saraiya now sources them from Donio Farms in Hammononton.

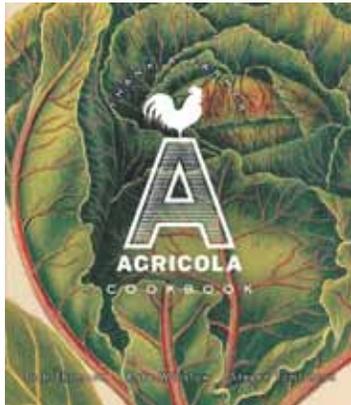
On this year's prix-fixe Thanksgiving dinner menu, the cranberry chutney will be plated with herb stuffing and Wyckoff-grown "heritage turkey" from Goffle Road Poultry. The chutney is likely to involve oranges and three types of chilies, Mitresh said when we spoke with him as he was planning the recipes.

"Arbols have heat with a nice earthy flavor, anchos have sweet and smoky, and red chili flakes have the heat," he said. "It's going to be heat, smoke, sweet and spice. Using three kinds of chilies balances the spiciness of each," he explained.

Similarly, the chutney will rely on two acid ingredients beyond the cranberries: oranges and apple cider vinegar.

"If you are making a fresh sauce, use a decent amount of sugar and apple cider vinegar to have a balance," he advised. "For a pound of cranberries, start with a half cup of vinegar and a half cup of

sugar. Add orange juice, little by little. Oranges have natural sweetness and natural acid, so the orange juice is used as a balance point. I always use two different acids, something fresh and something vinegar-based."



Agricola Cranberry Aigre-Doux

(4 pint-size servings)

2 cups red wine
3/4 cup red wine vinegar
3/4 cup honey
2 teaspoons kosher salt
2 vanilla beans
2 teaspoons black peppercorns
4 star anise pods
1-1/2 pounds fresh cranberries, well rinsed
Supplies: 4 pint-size canning jars

1. Combine wine, vinegar, honey and salt in a saucepan. Split vanilla beans lengthwise, scrape seeds into the pot. Cut bean pods in half crosswise, and add to the pot. Bring to a boil.

2. Divide peppercorns and star anise

pods evenly between four sterilized pint-sized jars. Use tongs to pull out the vanilla bean pods and put one piece into in each jar.

3. Pack each jar with cranberries. Pour the hot brine over the cranberries, stopping a half inch from the rim of each jar. Run a thin knife between the cranberries and the side of the jar to eliminate air bubbles. Add more brine if needed. Wipe the rims clean, screw on the lids until snug but not tight.

4. Process the jars in a bath of boiling water for 15 minutes. (The water should cover the jars by an inch; start timing when the water returns to a boil after the jars have

been added.) Using tongs, remove the jars from the water and let cool completely. (As the jars cool, each should make a ping sound, and the lids should become slightly concave. Any lids that don't show this sign of a proper seal should be refrigerated and eaten sooner than later.) When cool, tighten the lids fully.

Nutrition information (per serving): 374 calories, 0g fat (0g saturated), 0mg cholesterol, 595mg sodium, 76g carbs, 8g fiber, 60g sugars, 1g protein

— From "Agricola Cookbook" by Josh Thomsen, Kate Winslow, Steven Tomlinson (Burgess Press, \$30)

Barrens' bounty

About 20 New Jersey farms still supply the berries that make Ocean Spray's cranberry sauce, juices and Craisins.

Among the farms is Pine Islands Cranberry Co. Based in Hogwallow, Burlington County, and within the New Jersey Pine Barrens, the company has been in continuous operation by the Haines family since it was founded in 1890 by Martin L. Haines. As one of the world's top cranberry producers, the fruit is grown on more than 1,400 acres there.

More than half of the cranberries grown on the Haines farm are the Early Black cultivar, a native variety. Many other cultivars are grown in Hogwallow, including Stevens, Ben Lear, Crimson Queen, DeMoranville and Mullica.



Happy here: The American cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*) is native to New Jersey's Pine Barrens, and many varieties of the berry grow wild there in low areas and along stream banks. Evergreen cranberry vines thrive in the region's low-lying areas and acidic, sandy soils. That makes the area an ideal location for Rutgers research through the Philip A. Marucci Cranberry and Blueberry Research Center in Chatsworth. The center's work includes finding beneficial health properties in cranberries and blueberries, as well as propagating new varieties.



Berry cute: This cranberry-themed place holder does double duty as a napkin ring. To make, simply remove the lower leaves from the appropriate number of similarly sized rosemary sprigs. Spear the stem of each rosemary sprig through the stem end of a perfect cranberry. Tip: Using a toothpick to poke a hole through the berry will make it easier to pierce with the rosemary stem.

The assembly, along with hand-printed name tags cut from cardstock, is held in place by festive red and white twine, tied at the back of each napkin. Each place card needs 14 inches of the string. The project was created by registered dietitian Carlene Thomas of Healthfully Ever After and is among the recipes at USCranberries.com, which includes other crafty cranberry decorations.

Make holiday veggies irresistible



Oven-roasting vegetables can earn them a place among favorite dishes in any holiday spread, but the slicing and chopping to prep them can take lots of time.

To help, many food stores now do the cutting, so it's much easier to get fresh vegetables to the table. Toss them in oil and seasonings to cook on a sheet pan.

Here's a basic recipe: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Cut your chosen vegetables into chunks or slices, roughly the same size. Place on a baking sheet, toss with oil and your favorite chopped fresh herbs. Sprinkle with onion or garlic powder and roast 30 to 40 minutes until vegetables are tender. (For the American Heart Association-certified dish shown at left, five cups of chopped red, gold and purple potatoes; 4 cups of halved Brussels sprouts, a chopped large red pepper, 2 sliced medium zucchini, 2 sliced medium carrots and a quartered medium red onion are tossed in 1/3 cup canola oil and 1/4 cup chopped fresh herbs and a teaspoon of garlic powder. Find recipes at CanolaInfo.org)

It's not just the seasoning that make roasted vegetables taste great. Direct contact with heat, and the associated browning results from natural sugars in the vegetables caramelizing. We're addicted to broiler-charred broccoli, which is first parboiled and then tossed in olive oil. It needs no salt or seasonings.

Beyond eating them as prepared, roasted veggies can be a second-day addition to salads. Enjoy them as a snack or chop them more finely for sandwiches or to top bruschetta. Blend them up and the caramelized vegetable flavor can be added to soups, dips, sauces and casseroles. It's a great way to increase fiber.



Spice-roasted harvest vegetables: Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl, blend 2 tablespoons each of **olive oil** and **orange juice** with 1 teaspoon each of **salt** and **McCormick roasted cinnamon**. Add 1/4 teaspoon **McCormick ground chipotle chili pepper**. Add 1-1/2 cups each of chopped **sweet potatoes**, **red potatoes**, **carrots** and **parsnips** with a quartered medium **red onion**. Toss well to coat. For easier cleanup, line a large baking pan with parchment paper or aluminum foil. Spread vegetables in a single layer on prepared pan. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, or just until vegetables are tender and golden brown. Transfer vegetables to a platter to serve. — *Recipe, photo courtesy McCormick*



POM-glazed squash and apples: Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a pan, bake three **delicata squash** (about 1 pound each) for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, cut 4 medium **apples** (Jonagold, Granny Smith or Gala) in eighths, peel and core. When cool enough to handle, halve each squash. Remove seeds and cut in half-inch slices. Arrange with apples in a buttered 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Mix 1/2 cup **POM Wonderful pomegranate juice**, 1/3 cup **brown sugar** and 2 tablespoons melted **butter**. Pour over squash and apples. Bake 30 to 40 minutes until tender, stirring every 10 minutes to coat in juices. Garnish with **POM Wonderful pomegranate arils**. — *Adapted recipe, photo courtesy POM Wonderful*



Fruit-and-nut-stuffed acorn squash: Heat oven to 350 degrees. Bake two **acorn squash** (about 1 pound each) 25 minutes on a rimmed baking sheet. Meanwhile, combine 1 cup chopped **dried fruit**, 1/3 cup chopped **almonds**, 1 tablespoon chopped **Spice Islands crystallized ginger**, 1 tablespoon **brown sugar**, 1 teaspoon **Spice Islands pumpkin pie spice** and 1 teaspoon **Spice Islands vanilla extract** in a medium mixing bowl. Stir in 1/4 cup softened **butter**, mix well. When squash is cool enough to handle, cut into halves. Divide filling evenly between halves. Place on baking dish. Cover each half with foil, bake until heated through, 25 to 30 minutes. — *Adapted recipe, photo courtesy Spice Islands*

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Traditional ... or time-saver?



Photos courtesy Butterball

Carve hours off roasting time with a butterflied bird

Is yours a family where Thanksgiving dinner is marked by the presentation of a turkey that's dressed as well as the guests who will witness its ceremonial carving before slices are forked onto the platter that will supply each plate?

Or could your family look past a misshapen bird, splayed out on a roasting pan? Would they, if it meant the cook could be happier and more gracious because this centerpiece of the Thanksgiving meal cooked in half the time?

That is the promise of the spatchcocked turkey whose backbone has been cut out so it can be cracked open and spread flattened, exposing more of its meat to oven or grill.

These butterflied birds are certainly not for the traditionalist. And non-traditionalists will be happy to know there's no

shame in it, with this method's many variations online.

If you're Mark Bitman, you can have your time and your tradition. A photo for the New York Times food writer's 2002 recipe for 45-minute roast turkey shows a backless bird with wing tips resting neatly on properly centered drumsticks.

With his method, an 8- to 12-pound turkey would start at 450 degrees, with temperature reduced after 20 minutes to 400 degrees (350 if browning too quickly). In a demonstration video, he reports that the turkey cooked in 35 minutes.

According to commenters, removing the backbone is the hardest part of this exercise. One reported using garden shears. Bitman uses a sturdy boning knife and notes that a butcher can do the work for you. An instant-read thermom-

eter is essential, as doneness is tested at multiple points.

A turkey is an investment, so it's smart to watch videos, including Bitman's, before trying this method that seems to rely on a smaller turkey. Pan juices for gravy might also be lost.

Butterball has a recipe where a 10- to 12-pound turkey is said to cook in 80 minutes. The flattened turkey is rubbed in olive oil and seasoned with salt, pepper, garlic cloves and herbs (fresh rosemary or thyme). Butterball's experts advise roasting at 400 degrees until the breast registers 170 degrees and the thighs 180 degrees. If you hit a snag, Butterball's reliable Turkey Talk-Line team will be on hand at 800-288-8372 (that's 800-BUTTERBALL) to field questions Nov. 1 through Dec. 24. There's also a live-chat feature on Butterball.com.

On Thanksgiving, the grill is your friend

Here's a reason to fire up the grill in November: Thanksgiving recipes to cook everything from turkey to the trimmings. Those grates also offer cooking space beyond the kitchen.

For the last few years, grill makers have been populating the recipe section of their websites with feast-appropriate recipes. (We've seen one for sous vide and smoked turkey.)

Grill-roasting a bird is an increasingly common strategy for those who want to test the range of smokers or powerful, super-sized models with a hefty rotisserie rod.

The grill also can expand heat sources to meet the demands of holiday cooking while offering a talking point for those who want to enjoy Thanksgiving with a twist.

The Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association notes that anything that can be cooked in the oven can go on the grill. The organization estimates more than 14 percent of grill owners will grill all or part of their Thanksgiving feast.

NapoleonGrills.com has tips for roasting a turkey, and

brining a turkey for grilling. Recipes include butter-injected rotisserie turkey, apple-smoked turkey and roasted garlic-stuffed turkey breasts with gravy. For an appetizer, there's baked brie with apples, cinnamon, pecans and cranberries.

Weber.com is also in on the action with several side dish recipes on its site, and video guidance to smoke a turkey over charcoal in its Smokey Mountain Cooker. Between the two sites, there are recipes for roasted root veggies or squash, sourdough stuffing with smoked bacon, sausage-stuffed baked apples, green bean casserole, roasted heirloom carrots, and roasted mashed potatoes with paprika and aged cheddar — all baked in regular pans on the grill.

Sip a mulled autumn sangria, and finish the meal with a grilled dessert of spiced carrot cake, maple-walnut apple crisp, apple cake with cinnamon sugar or easy apple blooms, the still-trendy dessert option where apple slices are rolled into a rosette within a puffed pastry crust.



Courtesy Big Green Egg

A win-win: Stuffed mushrooms get smoky flavor on the grill.



Give delicious

◀ **Superior sauces:** When you can't stop thinking about garlic and sauerkraut mustard, it's one indication that the company behind it has lived up to its promise of "creating food adventures." Terrapin Ridge Farms is a purveyor of blended flavors in the form of dressings, dips, sauces, jams and jellies. They can assemble themed gift sets based on mustard, spicy heat and more. TerrapinRidge.com

▶ **Wonder bread:** Breadsmith in Cranford is turning out addictive evil in round loaves with a gooey, buttery cinnamon filling that eclipses anything you'd get at a mall food court or that hulking Swedish furniture chain. Protect yourself and only take this to holiday brunch where it can be safely shared with others. Otherwise, freezing hunks of it is the only way to resist. This we know. *32 North Ave. West, Cranford*



▶ **Beyond good:** Nueske's packs its smoked bacon and Wisconsin cheddar into the casing for an applewood-smoked sausage that's exactly the indulgence you'd imagine. Slices on toothpicks will disappear at any gathering. Gift bundles can include their smoked meats and more. Nueskes.com



◀ **Candy classic:** Chocolates from See's were often a sneaky part of Christmas breakfast for two California girls who figured out how to hide gift boxes of Nuts & Chews from their parents. Years later, the one in California still sends a box to the one in New Jersey, and she still thinks it's the best chocolate a person can eat. Sees.com



Mixed messages

Unscramble this American food icon's quote about cooking. Solution on AtHomeNJ.com.



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Bring these to the ‘Friendsgiving’ party



Ultimate party meatballs: Easy eats are perfect for “Friendsgiving” parties, where friends gather to celebrate Thanksgiving. Among fun options, try turkey-and-stuffing meatballs in Ocean Spray’s classic recipe. Look online for a recipe, or blend your own using stuffing mix in place of bread crumbs. The sauce: combine 14 ounces **Ocean Spray jellied cranberry sauce** and 12 ounces **Heinz chili sauce** in a large pot. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring until smooth. Add 2 pounds frozen, pre-cooked **cocktail-size meatballs**. Cover and cook 15 minutes or until meatballs are heated through, stirring occasionally. — *Photo courtesy Ocean Spray*



Grilled cheese roll-ups: Using a rolling pin, flatten eight slices of **white or wheat bread** to 1/4-inch thick. Top bread with slices of **Wisconsin cheddar cheese** and roll up tightly, lengthwise. Cut each roll in half. Melt 2 tablespoons **butter** in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, add roll-ups to the skillet, cooking until all sides are golden brown and the cheese has melted, about 3 to 4 minutes. Add butter as needed. Serve immediately. For added party excitement, double or triple the recipe and alternate with Wisconsin Monterey jack, Swiss and mozzarella slices. — *Recipe, photo courtesy Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin*



Idaho potato curried turkey loaf: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray a loaf pan with **nonstick cooking spray**. In a medium skillet, heat 2 teaspoons **olive oil** over medium heat. Add a finely chopped medium **onion** and a minced **garlic** clove. Cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft. In a medium bowl, combine onions and garlic with mixture, a pound of **lean ground turkey**, 1/2 cup **instant Idaho® mashed potatoes**, 1/4 cup **whole milk**, 1 tablespoon **curry powder**, one slightly beaten **large egg**, 1/4 cup **golden raisins**, 1/4 cup **slivered almonds** and 1/2 teaspoon each of **salt** and **freshly ground black pepper**. Place mixture in loaf pan; smooth the top. In a small bowl, whisk 1/2 cup whole milk, 2 large eggs and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Pour over meatloaf. Bake 1 hour or until custard sets and the loaf’s internal temperature is 160 degrees. Let stand 10 minutes before slicing. — *Recipe, photo courtesy Idaho Potato Commission*



Ham and almond ring: In a large bowl, blend 4 ounces (1/2 cup) **chive and onion cream cheese**, 1 cup diced **cooked ham**, 1 diced large **apple**, 1/2 cup finely chopped **red onion** and 1/4 cup diced **green bell pepper**; stir gently to combine. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line a large baking sheet with heavy foil, lightly coat with **nonstick cooking spray**. Unroll two 8-ounce cans **refrigerated crescent rolls** and separate. On prepared baking sheet, overlap dough triangles with shortest side toward the center, leaving a 5-inch open circle at center. (All rolls may not be needed.) Pointed ends of the dough may hang over baking sheet edge. Press overlapping dough to flatten. Spoon ham mixture evenly over widest part of dough. Pull points of dough over the filling and carefully tuck under dough at center to form a ring. (The filling will be partially visible.) Brush evenly with beaten **egg**, sprinkle with 1/4 cup **finely chopped almonds** and gently press them onto the dough. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until done and golden brown. (If needed, loosely cover with foil in the last 10 minutes of baking to avoid over-browning.) Cool 5 minutes on baking sheet. Use foil to lift and move pastry to serving platter. Cut foil at center and remove in pieces. — *Adapted recipe, photo courtesy of National Pork Board/PorkBeInspired.com*



Spanish roasted vegetable dip: Heat oven to 450 degrees. Cut 1/4-inch off top of a half **head of garlic** to expose cloves. Place garlic on foil or cooking parchment. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon **olive oil**. Wrap tightly and place on a large, shallow baking pan. With cut sides up, add 4 halved **plum tomatoes**; 2 halved and seeded **red bell peppers**, 1 unpeeled, halved **red onion**; and 1 small **eggplant** (about 3/4 pound), stemmed and halved lengthwise. Drizzle vegetables with 3 tablespoons olive oil. Sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon of **McCormick Sicilian sea salt**, 1/4 teaspoon **McCormick gourmet course-ground organic black pepper**. Roast 40 minutes, or until vegetables soften. When cool enough to handle, squeeze roasted garlic from its skin, peel skin from tomatoes and onion, and scoop flesh from eggplant. In a food processor, coarsely chop vegetables with 1/4 cup olive oil, 3 tablespoons **tomato paste**, and 1 teaspoon each of **McCormick gourmet organic oregano**, **McCormick gourmet organic thyme** and **McCormick gourmet organic roasted ground cumin**. Add 1/2 teaspoon **McCormick gourmet organic smoked paprika** and 1/4 teaspoon each **salt** and **pepper**. Serve with grilled cheese roll-ups (above), pita wedges, crackers or crusty bread. — *Recipe, photo courtesy McCormick*



Spiced pumpkin-cider cakes: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour 10 mini Bundt pan cups (about 1 cup each). In a large bowl, combine **spice cake mix** (about 15 ounces), 15 ounces **canned pumpkin** (not pie blend), 3 large **eggs**, 2/3 cup water and 1/3-cup **vegetable oil**. Beat until well blended. Spoon about 1/2 cup batter into each Bundt pan. Bake 30 minutes or until toothpick inserted near the centers comes out clean. Cool 15 minutes in pans. Invert onto wire racks to cool completely. In a pot, combine 4 cups **apple cider**, 8 **whole cloves** and 1/2 teaspoon **ground cinnamon**. Boil until liquid is reduced to 1 cup, about 7 minutes. In a small bowl, whisk 1-1/2 teaspoons **cornstarch** into 2 tablespoons apple cider until smooth. Add to cider mixture; cook and stir until slightly thickened. Remove from heat; cool completely. Remove and discard cloves. Spoon glaze over cakes. — *Recipe, photo courtesy Butterball*

Holiday pancakes take shape of gingerbread cookies



Fun idea: Metal cookie cutters coated inside with nonstick cooking spray can make cute pancake shapes. Plastic grips make it easier to remove a heated cutter, but use low heat to avoid melting. With regular metal cutters, use tongs to carefully lift cutters once batter sets.



Photos courtesy McCormick

Gingerbread batter: To 1 cup of your favorite pancake mix, add 1 lightly beaten **large egg**, 1/3 cup **milk**, 1/4 cup **brown sugar**, 2 tablespoons **canola oil**, 1 tablespoon **molasses**, 1 tablespoon **McCormick gingerbread spice** and 2 teaspoons of **McCormick pure vanilla extract**.

Toasting brings out the best in nuts



Yes, it's an extra step in an already overloaded cooking and baking schedule, but if you put pecans and other nuts on a baking sheet and toast them before adding to cakes, cookies or other dishes, their flavor will be enhanced in a way that justifies the added effort.

Toasting heats the natural oil in nuts to make them crisp with a lighter, more pleasing crunch. Toasted nuts also can hold their own against the moisture in batters and doughs.

Here's one toasting method: Heat the oven to 300 degrees. Spread 2 cups of pecans on a baking sheet lined with cooking parchment. Toast 15 minutes, tossing occasionally for even heating. Let nuts cool fully before using in baking recipes, or storing in the freezer. For snacking, toss nuts hot from the oven in 2 teaspoons olive oil and a teaspoon of salt.

Egg whites are a low-calorie coating that holds spices on toasting nuts to give them even more flavor.

For a sweet blend, whisk together 1 egg white, a tablespoon of granulated sugar, a tablespoon of brown sugar and 2 teaspoons of a chosen spice blend (such as pumpkin pie spice or gingerbread) and a pinch of salt. Fold in 2 cups of pecans until well coated. Spread onto a parchment-lined baking sheets and bake 30 to 40 minutes, stirring several times, in an oven preheated to 275 degrees. Allow pecans to cool before serving. For a savory mix, use an egg white, 2 teaspoons each of chili powder and smoked paprika and 3/4 teaspoon salt.

In addition to snacks and baked goods, try toasted pecans in a smoky hummus recipe from AmericanPecan.com: In a food processor, blend until smooth 1 cup slightly cooled toasted pecans with 3 cups of rinsed and drained canned chickpeas, 2 cloves of garlic, 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, a heaping teaspoon of smoked paprika and 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper. Scrape down sides and thin as desired with 1/4 to 1/2 cup of filtered water.

Photos courtesy American Pecan Council

Pecans and other nuts are easy to toast on a sheet pan. Tossed in egg whites beforehand, they can hold various seasonings.

You can do this: Easy holiday florals



The foundation: Making your own holiday centerpiece or mantel arrangement can be easier than you'd think if you begin with the stem-controlling material known as floral foam. There are types made for fresh or artificial flowers. Flower stems and greenery pushed into these penetrable blocks stay exactly where you want them in arrangements. Trim the blocks to fit a variety of containers. Secured by tape or hot glue, they can make almost any container a vessel for flowers.



Beyond wreaths: Fill a slender hanging basket with a mix of evergreens and faux florals. Wire on ornaments, add a bow. Done.



A little shine: Floral picks from JoAnn.com light up this petite option. Brush glue on faux fruit, dust with fine glitter, let dry, and spear with a small skewer to tuck into place.

A few basic tips to get you started

Making floral arrangements can be a productive and relaxing seasonal craft. Whether it's a holiday centerpiece or a mantel display, enjoy a sense of accomplishment and pride when you make it yourself. A photograph or your own instincts can guide you in balancing flowers with greens. Here are a few basic tips.

Pick your container: Don't limit yourself to vases. With floral foam, almost anything can become a container. Visit area antiques shops for attractively shaped mugs, bowls or soup tureens. Some vessels will need to be protected by a waterproof liner, and you can go smaller or larger according to preference and intended use.

At right, boxwood: Trim or combine blocks of floral foam to fit your container. Put the foam in water in a container large enough to submerge it. Let it gradually absorb water until it sinks. Secure foam within the container using sturdy florist tape (at craft stores).

Select flowers and greenery: 'Tis the season to repurpose Christmas tree cuttings and yard clippings to fill in arrangements. If you don't have suitable trees or shrubs to cut, you can buy assorted bundles of evergreen stems at Williams Nursery in Westfield, Dreyer Farms in Cranford and sometimes even at ShopRite and food stores. Visit a florist for the best flower selection, or pick a bundle from the market to save time.

Soak the foam: Trim or combine blocks of floral foam to fit your container. Put the foam in water in a container large enough to submerge it. Let it gradually absorb water until it sinks. Secure foam within the container using sturdy florist tape (at craft stores).

Add accents: Glittered faux florals can be pushed into wet floral foam with fresh flowers if their wire stems are coated in plastic.





A flexible putty knife will apply spackling compound more effectively than a stiff type.

Get ready for company

Preparing for visitors, of course, means house cleaning and clutter clearing.

However, there are areas beyond the obvious ones that require attention. Here are a few reminders on home maintenance tasks that might be missed in the holiday rush.

Clean untidy areas. With life's day-to-day busy-ness, it can be easy to miss corner cobwebs and dust on the baseboards. Survey the common areas of your home with a critical eye to see what guests are likely to notice. Sit in your bathtub to survey the floor and grout lines.

Look outside. Our attention may be on feasts and gathering around the table, but don't forget to check your landscape. Be sure fallen leaves have been removed. Avoid heavy pruning until trees are dormant, but trim trees and shrubs for a neater appearance before decorating. Correct any problems and add a seasonal welcome mat to maximize holiday curb appeal.

See the light. Dust lamp shades and check the covers on ceiling light fixtures to remove any dust or dead insects. Dust all the vents for exhaust and heating.

Fluff the guest room. Check stored seasonal bedding for stale odors or stains. In addition to fresh bed linens, stock the guest bedroom with an extra blanket so guests won't need to ask for more cover. Be sure to sweep or vacuum under the bed.

Fortify chairs. Turn over dining chairs and look under the table for screws that need tightening. For improved stability, the furniture joints that have been glued can be reinforced with chair braces or L-brackets, available at home improvement stores. The metal brackets resemble an "L" in shape and have holes on both ends where screws can be driven in to anchor them to furniture.

Hide scratches: Dab them with a touch-up marker and wipe away excess with a rag. Start with a marker that's slightly lighter than your furniture or cabinets and switch to a darker shade if needed. For deeper damage, use a wood filler pencil.

Stay safe. Check the indoor and outdoor stair railings and secure any loose screws. Wear goggles and use a flashlight to inspect a fireplace and chimney. Check smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

Prepare to paint: DAP has a variety of formulas to smooth out wall imperfections, and offers the following tips. First, overfill any repair slightly when applying spackling compound. Sand it down to a smooth, flat finish once dry. For the smoothest finish, dip a flexible putty knife in water and lightly smooth the spackling before letting the filled repair dry fully. To sand the repair, use dual-grit sanding. Start with medium grit sandpaper and finish with fine grit. You'll have a smooth surface to paint.

ABOUT THE HOUSE

Woes of water and dust

Keeping water out of basement

Q. Our basement, dry for our first 40 years of home ownership, began taking in water about 18 months ago. After much frustration, and increasingly more water coming in, we have installed an electric system to pump out the water. Do you have any thoughts on where all this water can be coming from after all these years? Our city department of public works is as stumped as we are. Can you help?

A. Most foundation leakage problems are caused by grading problems, be they from ground settling around the foundation or the settling over time of appendages, such as stoops, patios, walks, driveways, etc. Very few are caused by underground springs or a rising water table.

If leakage occurs during or soon after a heavy rain or rapid snowmelt, it is usually a surface water problem. If the leakage occurs hours after these events, it may be due to a rising water table or swollen spring.

With a critical eye, check the grade conditions around your entire house. Are there places where the ground is overly flat or actually leaning toward the foundation? This can happen when heavy rain or large amount of melting snow saturate soil close to the foundation over time. Settling of the soil can take place after a long period of drought followed by heavy rains. It can also happen if the foundation buckles from frost pressure.

Flower beds can settle over time and as they are worked over at spring planting time. They can also hold great amounts of water, especially if heavily mulched.

Next, look at all appendages: Has the soil settled around a stoop, window wells, attached patio or walk? Has your dog dug a comfortable hollow in which to lie and cool off in warm weather? Have any downspouts caused sunken areas near the foundation? Have you recently installed a brick or other form of border to the outside of flower beds? Is a walk parallel to the house blocking proper drainage? Has there been a recent increase in heavy traffic on your street, perhaps caused by some construction, that can cause the soil to compact from vibrations?

These are some of the possibilities I have encountered that may have caused leakage in the last 18 months.

The rule of thumb is for the grade around

a foundation to slope away at a rate of about 2 inches per horizontal foot.

If you have gutters, make sure the downspouts discharge onto plastic or concrete splash blocks or extensions to divert water from the foundation. If you don't have gutters, lay patio blocks flat with the grade at the roof drip line to prevent erosion.

If any appendages lead water toward the foundation, that should be repaired, which may be expensive to do.

It is best to plant a healthy crop of grass and avoid shrubbery and flower beds within four or five feet of a foundation. Instead, plant them farther out and enjoy them from your windows.

Dealing with excessive dust

Q. We are experiencing a tremendous amount of dust in our townhouse that is four and a half years old. Basically, I need to dust every day.

I was considering having my ducts cleaned, but my furnace person told me that was a waste of money. He said that it wouldn't do any good in such a new home. Most other people in my area are experiencing the same thing. The construction work is completed in my immediate area so I don't feel that it's construction work.

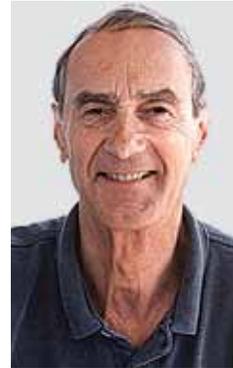
I have this problem even in winter with all the windows and doors closed. The floors in my main areas are tile or linoleum, so it's not a carpet dust problem. I've tried higher efficiency filters on my furnace, and it hasn't helped at all. Do you feel that the duct cleaning would help?

A. The construction process of your townhouse and adjacent buildings has generated a lot of dust and dirt, as all construction does. I'm not so sure that your furnace man is accurate in telling you that a townhouse that's only 4-1/2 years old should not need duct cleaning, but that doesn't mean that it does.

The fact that most other people in your area are experiencing the same problem can mean that they also suffer from the remnants of construction dust or that you live in an area prone to dust. Even in winter, average windows, though closed, can let a lot of outside dust in and I doubt that the builders of your townhouse development used the type of high quality windows that are much more airtight.

Consider having an electronic filter installed on the cold-air return of your furnace; it is expensive but it might solve your problem, as these filters stop over 90 percent of the dust and other particles that go through them.

For more than 40 years, Henri de Marne has shared his expertise on residential construction, repairs and remodeling with readers of his nationally syndicated column. Contact the author and learn more at HenriDeMarne.com.



HENRI DE MARNE

Surprising solutions for relieving stress

From finances and health concerns to lengthy to-do lists, there are numerous sources of strain in our lives.

According to a survey conducted by Wakefield Research, 68 percent of people feel stress on a weekly basis and 32 percent are stressed every day. Twenty-five percent of women reported experiencing stress multiple times a day.

However, today there is a surprisingly simple way to relieve stress: flowers.

New research from the University of North Florida's Department of Public Health shows that living with flowers can significantly alleviate daily stress. These findings follow decades of behavioral research studies conducted by researchers at universities including Harvard, Rutgers and Texas A&M that demonstrate flowers' ability to make people happy, strengthen feelings of compassion, foster creativity and even provide boosts of energy.



Courtesy Society of American Florists

Living with flowers can reduce stress.

The study, titled "The Impact of Flowers on Perceived Stress Among Women," concludes that adding flowers to indoor environments results in a statistically significant reduction in stress.

"There is a growing body of research that illustrates how environmental design positively impacts health," said lead researcher Erin Largo-Wight, Ph.D., of the University of North Florida. "Now it is both intuitive and scientifically known that adding elements of nature, like flowers, to interiors promotes well-being."

The average reduction in stress among women who received and lived with flowers was minus-5.5 points on the perceived stress questionnaire, a significant statistical decrease in stress.

"Our findings are important from a public health perspective because adding flowers to reduce stress does not require tremendous effort to generate a meaningful effect," Largo-Wight said.

"When life seems to be in a constant state of frenzy, flowers can provide a much-needed moment of calm."

Visit aboutflowers.com/stressless for more.

Preventing caregiver burnout

Caring for a chronically ill or disabled family member — and potentially his or her financial and legal interests — can come at the expense of the caregiver's quality of life. This is especially true if your loved one lives with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia-related illnesses.

In addition to maintaining a healthy, active lifestyle outside of caregiving responsibilities, it is important for those caring for a loved one to learn ways to avoid health hazards and stay well-informed of any changes in their loved one's condition. Add work and children to care for to the equation and it's a formula that can lead to stress, exhaustion and even potential health issues.

The additional duties often required to provide care for a loved one can lead to physical or emotional fatigue, often referred to as "caregiver burnout." If you're caring for an older adult, the Alzheimer's Foundation of America recommends these tips to help manage stress before caregiving leads to burnout.

Know the signs of burnout. By the time many caregivers suspect signs of burnout, they're likely already suffering symptoms related to their responsibilities. Being aware of some of the warning signs can help caregivers properly manage stress and protect themselves.

Warning signs include overwhelming fatigue or lack of energy; experiencing sleep issues; significant changes in eating habits or weight; losing interest in activities you once enjoyed; neglecting personal physical and emotional needs; becoming unusually impatient, irritable or argumentative; having anxiety about the future or a feeling of hopelessness; suffering from headaches, stomachaches or other physical ailments; experiencing depression or mood swings; having difficulty coping with everyday tasks; and lower resistance to illnesses.

Prepare to make important decisions. Take care of financial, legal and long-term care planning issues early on to help reduce stress later. Try to involve the individual in decision-making if he or she is capable, and consider personal wishes regarding future care and end-of-life issues.

Build your care skills. Key skills for any caregiver include communication, understanding safety considerations and behaviors, and managing activities of daily living such as bathing, toileting and dressing. Some organizations and local hospitals may even offer classes specific to your loved one's disease that can aid you in the process.

Develop empathy. Try to understand what it is like to be a person living with Alzheimer's or dementia. Put yourself in the affected person's shoes while also recognizing your own losses. Manage your expectations of your loved one and remain patient.



Dreamstime

Caring for a loved one can be overwhelming, but there are ways to take "time-outs."

Educate yourself. It's likely the loved one you care for has several health problems, takes multiple medications and sees multiple health care providers to manage his or her conditions. As a first step in learning more about Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related illnesses, visit alzfdn.org or try nia.nih.gov/alzheimers for information. Support groups, educational workshops, community resources and professionals can also help increase your understanding of the disease and what to expect so you can be a better-informed and prepared caregiver.

Ask for help. Reach out to medical and mental health professionals as well as family and friends. They can assist you when things get tough. In addition, there are typically programs, agencies and organizations in your community that can help manage the challenges of caring for older parents, grandparents, spouses and other older adults.

Advocate for your loved one. Take an active role in the individual's medical care. Get to know the care team, ask questions, express concerns and discuss treatment options. Also remember to connect on a personal level through kindness, humor and creativity, which are essential parts of caregiving and can help reduce stress.

Think positive. Focus on the capabilities and strengths that are still intact and enjoy your relationship with your loved one while you are still together. Look for ways to include him or her in your daily routines and gatherings to make as many memories as possible.

Find more caregiver resources and tips at alzfdn.org.

Tips for coping

- Maintain a positive attitude
- Accept the circumstances
- Be honest about your feelings
- Take it one day at a time
- Get a good night's sleep
- Incorporate stress management techniques such as meditation, deep breathing and exercise into your routine
- Drink plenty of water and eat a healthful diet with fruits and vegetables
- Set realistic goals
- If you need a break from time to time, look into respite programs such as home care, which is often initiated by a doctor's order. Medicare covers some home health services.
- Take advantage of adult day programs, which offer stimulation, socialization and therapeutic activities in a community-based group setting and often include meals.
- Provide a short stay for your loved one in a nursing home or another facility. Facilities typically charge for each day; Medicare or Medicaid may cover some costs of an inpatient facility.
- Identify responsible family members and friends who can lend a hand in providing supervision for your loved one and create a rotating care schedule.
- Enlist the help of family members living in different states by assigning them tasks such as legal or financial paperwork.

— Alzheimer's Foundation of America

ASK DR. BARB

Changing perspective can stop road rage

Dear Dr. Barb,

My husband suggested that I write to you about what he considers an extreme problem with road rage. I admit I am constantly blowing my horn at idiot drivers, and there are a lot of them these days. I see people using both hands to send texts while they should have them on the wheel with their eyes on the road. I often complain and curse when in heavy traffic, and get very angry when people cut me off. I confess I've followed people to yell out the window at them for stupid driving that almost causes an accident. I know this anger raises my blood pressure and probably affects my health. My husband is concerned I will one day pull up on the wrong person and get hurt. Am I supposed to just let these things happen and stay calm? I would find that hard to do; however, I would appreciate any advice.

Dear Reader,

It is good to hear that you are able to listen to your husband's concerns about road rage, which is an aggressive form of driving behavior. Examples, as you mentioned, include constant horn blasting, tailgating and cursing at those you consider to be "idiot drivers." Road rage often is caused by low tolerance for frustration, feelings of intense irritability and poor impulse control. It can result in extreme emotional distress.

Some mental health professionals would categorize road rage as a form of an intermittent explosive disorder, whereby a person on repeated occasions suddenly explodes into an angry and hostile rage without reasonable provocation. Recent studies suggest that an explosive disorder in which a person reacts impulsively, aggressively and at times even

violently is far more common than people realize. Such actions may be caused by underlying depression and mood swings. The person feels out of control during and after the episode, and guilty about the behavior thereafter.

Individuals who exhibit this behavior put themselves and everyone else in physical danger. In heavy traffic, emotions can run high, causing some drivers, already stressed out, to make poor and dangerous decisions in response to your belligerent provocations. In essence, road rage can have a domino effect by turning an annoying or frustrating situation into a serious or even fatal accident.

During times of extreme emotional distress, the nerves in the body that control our heartbeat can set off a maladaptive "fight-flight" response. In primitive times, the fight-flight response was a means of survival in defense against wild beasts or other physical dangers. In a fight-flight mode, blood vessels constrict, the heart beats too rapidly and blood pressure rises, all of which can result in ongoing physical damage to our organs.

Although there are times when this heightened response is appropriate to a real danger, an inappropriate "fight-flight" reaction usually is brought on by over-reactive mental beliefs about frustrating situations. These beliefs are caused by negative ways of thinking such as overgeneralization, exaggeration, perfectionism and demandingness — ways of thinking that usually result in catastrophizing or blowing things out of proportion.

Pertaining to road rage, examples of this would be "It couldn't be any worse," "This is terrible and I can't stand it" or "I shouldn't have to put up with this." Faulty beliefs like

these typically result in behaviors that range from tailgating other drivers to rolling down the window and cursing them out. This out of control behavior may be more of a threat to everyone's survival than the other motorist's driving blunders. In such cases, the "wild beast" causing the fight-flight response is in one's head and not on the road.

My advice would be to learn how to remain calm in stressful driving situations, as well as in all other frustrations of day-to-day living. Managing your stress entails thinking in a more rational manner and knowing how to relax yourself when a situation calls for it. Learning to breathe in a relaxing way can reduce bodily tension. By slowly breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth even a few times, your whole body becomes more relaxed. Paying attention to your breaths as you breathe naturally in and out can be relaxing as well.

Feeling calmer, one can take a step back and form a different perspective about the situation. Doing so can help you become more mindful — to stop and think, and not to act out impulsively.

In so doing, you might even be able to turn a negative situation into one that can become more positive. When driving in heavy traffic, instead of feeling trapped in a situation over which you believe you have no control, turn on some relaxing music or begin a pleasant conversation with your spouse to pass the time. These choices will help you feel more in control and stop you from feeling guilty afterwards about acting inappropriately.

If you are unable to change self-defeating behavior, it would help to work with a psychologist who specializes in anger manage-



BARBARA ROSENBERG

ment. This kind of professional can help you explore underlying issues and provide cognitive behavioral modification to help you relax and develop healthier beliefs about yourself and the situations around you.

Barbara L. Rosenberg, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist whose Summit practice serves individuals of all ages, as well as couples and families. She previously chaired educational and social programs for the Essex-Union County Association of Psychologists. Contact her through BarbaraRosenberg.com.



Diane Lang is a Flanders-based therapist, educator, speaker and author. More at dlcounseling.com.

Dump worries at the end of the day

By Diane Lang

Do you find yourself constantly obsessing over negative situations? Constantly worried about the future or stuck in the past? Does it feel like there is no "Stop" button and this negative situation takes over your thoughts and your day?

This is known as rumination. Ruminating thoughts can prevent us from focusing, sleeping and enjoying life.

Here are seven ways to reduce rumination:

1. Identify the fear. What are you afraid of? If you're not sure of your biggest fears, start journal writing, it helps you to become more self-aware.

2. Determine the worst-case scenario. If your fear comes true? Can you handle it? For example, if your worst-case fear is getting

fired. Think about getting fired. What would happen? The odds are you could survive it. It might be tough and upsetting, even scary, but could you handle it? Yes!

3. Know what you can control. Can you change the situation? If you can't, then let it go. If you keep focusing on what you can't change, then you are setting yourself up for failure. If you can change it, then set up goals and action plan to make the change. Taking action reduces our fear and anxiety.

4. What can you learn? Look at the experience as a learnable or teachable moment. Instead of obsessing about failure or a mistake, ask yourself: What is the lesson? How can I change to avoid this situation again? How can I grow and improve myself as a result of it?

5. Release. Schedule a time to dump your worries. I have my clients either do a morn-

ing or evening dump where they write out all their stressors and fears to help get them off their brain.

6. Live in the present moment. Our fears often are based on past baggage or anxiety about the future. When we are in the present moment, everything is fine. Being more mindful means remaining in the moment of whatever you're doing. If you find yourself thinking about something else, bring yourself back into the present moment. Meditation helps reduce anxiety and excessive worrying, so add a guided meditation routine.

7. Exercise. Walking is one of the best ways to cultivate mindfulness and remain in the present moment. Taking a 20- to 30-minute walk four to five times a week will help reduce anxiety, cultivate mindfulness and contribute to happiness.

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