

The  Current

2024

# Holiday Guide

Great ideas for making it the most wonderful time of the year!



  
PRESENTS  
THE 43RD ANNUAL  
LIVING CHRISTMAS TREE

# A Christmas Legacy

a prodigal comes home  
LUKE 15:31-32

**2024 PRESENTATIONS:**  
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SAT., DEC. 7 @ 6:00 PM  
SUN., DEC. 8 @ 10:30 & 6:00 PM

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# Holiday Happenings

Many Christmas parades and light displays are taking place across southwest Oklahoma this holiday season. We suggest checking local sources for adaptations before attending any event.

## Christmas Parades

Elgin – 7 p.m., Dec. 3. More information on the Elgin Chamber of Commerce Facebook page.

Marlow – 10 a.m., Dec. 7. More information at [www.marlowchamber.org/events](http://www.marlowchamber.org/events).

Duncan – 3 p.m., Dec. 7. Theme is “Christmas Characters.” More information at [www.mainstreetduncan.com](http://www.mainstreetduncan.com).

Lawton – 6:30 p.m., Nov. 16. Theme is “Candyland.” More information at [www.lawtonfortsillchamber.com/visit-lawton/holiday-in-the-park/](http://www.lawtonfortsillchamber.com/visit-lawton/holiday-in-the-park/).

Medicine Park - 10 a.m., Dec. 21. More information at [www.medicinepark.com/festivals/](http://www.medicinepark.com/festivals/).


## Holiday Events

- **Holiday in the Park, Lawton:** Celebrate the holidays with family-friendly events at Lawton’s Holiday in the Park. The festivities begin at 6:30 p.m. on November 16 with a themed parade, CANDYLAND. Throughout November and December, Elmer Thomas Park will be completely decorated with colorful light displays for the holiday season. Check out the Winter Rink, movie nights, train rides, holiday concerts, food trucks, vendors and much more. For questions or more information about the event, call 580-355-3541.

- **The Annual Living Christmas Tree, Lawton:** “A Christmas Legacy: A Prodigal Comes Home” will take place Dec. 6-8 at First Baptist Church in Lawton. Several performances are scheduled. Visit [www.fbclawton.org](http://www.fbclawton.org) for more details.



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## Decorate safely this holiday season

The holiday season wouldn't be the same without decorations, which go a long way toward establishing the festive atmosphere that dominates the month of December.

Injuries and accidents may be the furthest thing from people's minds when decorating for the holidays, but the potential for such outcomes is there. This season, holiday celebrants are urged to keep these safety strategies in mind as they deck the halls.

### Choose a fresh tree if you're going the natural route

Some people prefer natural Christmas trees because of their scent and additional characteristics. While it's alright to choose a natural tree, the Consumer Product Safety Commission notes that many artificial trees are fire-resistant, which makes them a good deal safer than natural trees. The CPSC urges individuals who opt for a natural tree to check for signs of freshness before making their decision. Such signs include a tree that is green, fresh needles that are difficult to pull from branches and do not break when bent between the fingers, and a trunk that is sticky with resin. In addition, when bounced on the ground, a fresh tree will not shed too many needles. One that does is dried out, which poses a significant safety hazard inside a home.

### Inspect lights before decorating

Holiday lights are another staple of the season, but these, too, can pose a safety hazard. The CPSC recommends inspecting both new and old lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, and/or loose connections. Discard any damaged

lights. When hanging lights outside, make sure they are fastened securely to trees, a house or other structures to protect against wind damage. In addition, the CPSC recommends using no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord. Electric lights should never be used on a metallic tree, and all lights should be turned off at night before going to bed or leaving the house.

### Be especially cautious with candles

Electric candles may not provide the same ambiance as more traditional alternatives, but they are a safer option when decorating for the holidays. If using traditional candles, make sure they are never placed on or near natural trees and keep them away from flammable materials, including wrapping paper and other decorations, at all times. Candles should always be extinguished when leaving a room.

### Exercise extreme caution around the fireplace

A freshly lit fire can establish a warm and welcoming holiday ambiance. However, it's essential that individuals emphasize extreme caution around the fireplace. Remove all decorations, such as stockings, from the area surrounding the fireplace. The CPSC also notes the importance of keeping a screen before the fireplace whenever a fire is burning.

Decorations help make the holiday season special. Some simple safety precautions can ensure such decorations don't increase the risk for accidents and injuries.

*Source: MetroCreative*



*Stockings hung by a chimney may seem ideal, but such decorations can pose a significant safety hazard. Photo courtesy of MetroCreative.*

# Gifts for holiday hosts

Millions of people open their homes to relatives and friends each holiday season. Taking on the task of holiday host can be a labor of love, as it involves not only a commitment of time, but also a financial investment.

Guests benefitting from holiday hosts' hospitality can offer tokens of their appreciation upon arrival. The following are some great gifts to offer hosts this holiday season.

## Beverage of choice

A bottle of wine or another spirit can be a great gift for holiday gatherings. Let hosts decide if they want to serve it with the meal or save it to enjoy at a later time.

## Curated food basket

Guests can put together a basket of different foods, like crackers, cheeses, jams, bread sticks, and other items that can be enjoyed.

## Holiday plant

A poinsettia or Christmas cactus may be fitting this time of year, and a holiday host can enjoy seeing it grow during the season.

## Kitchen tools or serving items

An olive wood serving platter or cutting board might be appreciated, par-

ticularly if guests arrive with it covered in a charcuterie spread.

## Scented candle

Hosts can add to the ambiance of an entertaining space with scented candles, which make for a great gift. Guests can inquire as to the hosts' preferred aromas or stick with safe bets like vanilla or cinnamon.

## Holiday ornament or decorative piece

Guests can offer ornaments for the tree or another decorative item for hosts who are repeat entertainers. Dating the decoration can transform it into a memento hosts can relish through the years.

## Comfort and care assortment

Hosting takes effort, so a box of items to pamper holiday hosts can be a great gift. Fill the box with a loofah, bath bombs, shower gel, moisturizing cream, and massage oil.

Holiday hosts invest time and money into making their homes welcoming spaces to spend the holidays. Guests can treat these hosts with gifts to show how much their efforts and hospitality are appreciated.

*Source: MetroCreative*



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Visit our store at 1000 S Seventh Street in Walters Oklahoma, or browse our selection at [nakedmermaidsoapery.com](http://nakedmermaidsoapery.com). Explore our holiday gift sets or call us at (580) 467-8724 to create a custom gift set that perfectly suits your friends and loved ones.

## Shop local and save with Co-op Connections

Gift wish lists are being made with haste and it's getting a little colder outside. That means the holiday shopping season is right around the corner. Speaking of 'around the corner,' there are plenty of locally owned businesses in our neck of the woods that can provide unique gifts and experiences for your loved ones. And Cotton Electric's Co-op Connections member benefit program can help you save while you keep dollars in the local economy.

This winter, let's power a Small Business Comeback and frequent the shops owned by our friends and neighbors. Visit [www.Connections.coop](http://www.Connections.coop) to find all the ways to save locally or download the free Co-op Connections smartphone app in the App Store or on Google Play. Use the

app's "Deals Near Me" option as you holiday shop at local merchants or anytime you are out running errands. And keep in mind, with many participating dining options, you can fill up on grub while you fill your trunk with toys, clothes, home goods and more!

If you have any questions about how the program works, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at 580-875-3351 or [info@cottonelectric.com](mailto:info@cottonelectric.com). And as you are busy stockpiling gifts for family and friends, keep our small business community in mind this holiday season!

Visit [www.Connections.coop](http://www.Connections.coop) for a detailed list of discounts. When shopping locally, either show your Cotton Electric Co-op Connections card or the app at the point of sale to save.



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# 7 ways to organize and store holiday decorations

Decorating a home for holidays is quite popular. A survey from the National Retail Federation found that 53 percent of respondents said they were planning to decorate their home or yard for Halloween in 2023. Lombardo Homes polled 1,000 Americans in 2021 and 94 percent said they celebrate Christmas in at least some way, and 84 percent said they decorate. According to Time2Play, which surveyed 1,000 Canadians about their holiday decorating habits, Manitoba puts up Christmas decor earlier than any other province, with these residents taking out decorations 4.3 weeks ahead of Christmas Day on average.

With so many avid holiday decorators, individuals will need to find ways to organize and store their seasonal items. Holiday decor comes in many different sizes: from the smallest tree ornaments to illuminated statues for the yard or inflatable items. Figuring out a storage plan can take a little effort. These seven tips can help.

1. Purchase clear, similarly sized storage bins and shelving racks, hanging them where you plan to keep the decorations. Most people prefer an out-of-the-way spot, such as in the garage, attic or basement. Label each bin by holiday and put the bins in chronological order to make finding items more convenient. Uniform bin sizes make it easier to stack and store.

2. Store smaller items inside larger decor items. Decorative baskets or wrapped boxes brought out for Christmas or Chanukah are ideal places to keep smaller tchotchkes like ceramics, dreidels, candlestick holders, or mantel hooks. Delicate items can be tucked into Christmas stockings or wrapped

and stored in a fluffy tree skirt. Egg cartons can be used to keep small items safe as well.

3. Label everything so you will not need to dig through boxes or bins to know what is inside. This might be a good year to ask for a label maker for the holidays.

4. Use overhead or wall storage for holiday decor. Overhead spaces in the garage or basement walls can be good spaces to keep holiday decorations. Always keep bins and boxes off the floor so they are not vulnerable to damage related to leaks or floods.

5. Garment bags can protect larger decorations, such as wreaths, artificial trees or signs. If you have a large number of mechanical, illuminated or inflatable lawn ornaments, consider investing in a small shed where these items can be safely kept. Wrap the extension cords and any bracing stakes or strings used with the decorations so it's easy to find.

6. Utilize pieces of cardboard as well as toilet paper or paper towel tubes to keep lights and wires tidy. Tuck cords into the toilet paper tubes, and wrap lights around the cardboard to avoid tangles.

7. Each year, take inventory of your decoration collection and toss out anything that is damaged or has seen better days.

Storing holiday decorations will take some time, but once you establish a system, things will be simple year after year.

*Source: MetroCreative*







# *Hardzog's*

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## *Christmas Open House*

*November 22, 23, 24*

*Friday 10 am - 6 pm*

*Saturday 10 am - 4 pm*

*Sunday 12 pm - 4 pm*

# Christmas cookies embody the joy of holiday cooking

The holiday season simply wouldn't be the same without food. The joyful spirit of the season lends itself to sharing a bite if not a full meal with family and friends. Perhaps that explains why so many people embrace the joy of baking each holiday season. Some bake to honor and continue family traditions, while others spend hours crafting cookies to put a smile on the face of loved ones each holiday season.

Whatever it is that inspires individuals to break out the measuring cups, flour and whisk, cookie fans undoubtedly appreciate that spark of confectionary creativity. This holiday season, those with an urge to bake some cookies can try this recipe for "Christmas Linz Shortbread Cookies with Red Jam" from Lines+Angles.

*Source: MetroCreative*

## Christmas Linz Shortbread Cookies With Red Jam

Makes 24 cookies | Preparation time: 30 minutes | Resting time: 1 hour, 30 minutes | Baking time: 15 minutes | Difficulty: Easy

2 cups all-purpose flour  
 3/4 cup almond flour  
 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
 1 cup unsalted butter, softened  
 3/4 cup sugar  
 2 egg yolks  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 1 tablespoon lemon zest  
 1/2 cup raspberry jam  
 1/2 cup powdered sugar

1. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, almond flour, salt, and cinnamon together. In a separate bowl, beat the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add in the egg yolks, vanilla extract and lemon zest and continue to beat until well incorporated.

2. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and continue to beat until just combined to form a dough. Divide the dough in half; pat each

half into a disc, wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour.

3. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, and let it soften for about 5 minutes, until soft enough to roll. On a lightly floured surface, roll one disc of dough out to about 1/4" thickness. Using a 3" cookie cutter, cut out cookies. Cut out a top for each cookie using a smaller cookie cutter to cut out the center. Transfer the cookies to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Gather the scrap dough, roll, and repeat.

4. Place the first batch of cut cookies in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to chill. Preheat the oven to 350 F and repeat the process with the second batch of dough.

5. Bake the chilled cookies for about 12 minutes or until just starting to turn golden around the edges. Let the cookies cool for a few minutes until transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely.

6. Once cooled, spread the bottom half of each cookie with some raspberry preserves, leaving a thin border around each cookie. Dust the tops of each cookie with powdered sugar and place on its corresponding bottom half. Use a spoon or piping bag to fill the cut-out center with a little more of the preserves.



## Take hot chocolate to the next level

People tend to think of sipping ice cream floats in the middle of summer when temperatures are soaring. Ice cream floating in a bubbling base of cola or root beer can be a welcome treat on a hot day. However, floats can be just as delicious when the weather chills, particularly when ice cream enhances rich and decadent hot chocolate.

For this “Hot Chocolate Float” from “Chocolate: Over 100 Temptingly-Tasty Dishes” (Love Food) by the Love Food editors, coconut- and chocolate-flavored scoops of ice cream bob and melt in creamy hot chocolate. Feel free to use your favorite flavors of ice cream to make this recipe your own.

*Source: MetroCreative*



## Hot Chocolate Float

Serves 4

### Ingredients

2 cups milk  
8 ounces semisweet chocolate  
2 tablespoons superfine sugar  
8 scoops coconut ice cream  
8 scoops semisweet chocolate ice cream  
Whipped cream, to decorate

### Directions

Pour the milk into a saucepan.  
Break the chocolate into pieces and add to the saucepan with the sugar.  
Stir over low heat until the chocolate has melted, the sugar has dis-

solved and the mixture is smooth.

Remove the saucepan from the heat.

Put 1 scoop of coconut ice cream into each of 4 heatproof glasses, top with a scoop of chocolate ice cream, then repeat the layers.

Pour the chocolate flavored milk into the glasses, top with whipped cream, and serve immediately.

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**Nov. 16 - Holiday Stroll 4 pm - 8 pm**

**Nov. 23 - Shop Small Business Saturday**

**Dec. 7 - Christmas Parade 3 pm**

**“Christmas Characters”**





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