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DECEMBER 2025

"Serving The Needs of Orange County & Long Beach Seniors Since 1974"

John Fogerty

*"Sometimes I think life is just a rodeo. The
trick is to ride and make it to the bell."*

— John Fogerty



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Holiday Shopping

Six Ways to Save Money this Holiday Season



The holidays can take a bite out of your budget — but you don't have to let them and TextNow can help.

Shopping for the holidays is more expensive than ever. With Americans carrying more debt than ever before, many are expected to spend \$18.5 billion using third-party buy now, pay later (BNPL) services for holiday purchases according to data firm Adobe Analytics.

Today's shoppers want and need meaningful ways to save money without having to completely sit out the holiday season or being able to participate in the merriment of gift giving.

To help, here are six tips for saving on essentials that can let you put your hard-earned money toward thoughtful holiday gifts for friends and family:

Tip 1: Make a list and check it three times — Take the time before you start surfing the Internet or leave the house to jot down your gift ideas and keep an eye out for Black Friday and Cyber Monday sales, which can help spread out the

shopping and hit to your bank account.

Tip 2: Reduce your monthly expenses — One way is to eliminate your phone bill completely by signing up for TextNow's free phone service. TextNow makes phone service free, easy, and accessible to all and is the only mobile provider to offer unlimited calling and texting, plus free essential data on the nation's largest 5G network.

TextNow also offers Flexible Data Passes which give consumers the option to add on to a free plan without paying for a long-term contract. This ensures easy access to much-needed data-heavy apps, such as social media, but lets consumers closely monitor usage and budget all within the app. Simply open the app to make all your calls and send texts.

Tip 3: Use cash instead of

Continued on page 6

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John Fogerty: 'Fortunate Son' Indeed

By Les Goldberg

If you were born in the '40s, grew up with the musical revolution known as Rock 'n Roll, and remember the iconic Creedence Clearwater Revival, you no doubt have fond memories of its former lead singer, John Fogerty.

Now 80, the musician, singer, songwriter, record producer, and U.S. Army reservist continues to put his stamp on American and global culture.

He's in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. He's on "Rolling Stone Magazine's" list of the 100 greatest songwriters and singers. His most famous songs include "Proud Mary," "Bad



Photo courtesy NARA & DIVIDS
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"Moon Rising," "Fortunate Son" (which is the title of his memoir), "Green River," "Down on the Corner," "Who'll Stop the Rain," and "Up Around the Bend."

The question I always ask about singers and the strange-named groups in the Rock 'n Roll world is "how did you get started?"

In Fogerty's case, it began in

his Berkeley neighborhood grammar school, where he met the other future members of the Creedence band and took guitar lessons from Berkeley Folk Festival founder Barry Olivier. Today, he is considered one of the most accomplished guitarists in the world. One of his band members was his late older brother, guitarist Tom Fogerty.



Photo courtesy PICRYL.

While in junior high school in 1959, Fogerty formed a cov-



Photo courtesy NARA & DIVIDS
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er band with bassist Stu Cook and drummer Doug Clifford called the Blue Velvets. Rock inspired the band 'n Roll pioneers, especially Little Richard and Bo Diddley. In 1964, the band signed with Fantasy Records, which, without the band's knowledge or approval, changed the band's name to The Golliwogs. The group recorded seven singles that were not commercially successful.

Fogerty received his draft notice for military service during the Vietnam War in 1966 and decided to join the U.S. Army Reserves. After his discharge in 1968, he resumed playing with The Golliwogs, which changed its name to Creedence Clearwater Revival, and he became its lead singer.

The band, despite some internal strife, poor reviews, and a couple of hit singles, disbanded in 1972, setting Fogerty on a solo path.

His career became stagnant for several years as his recordings failed to meet his usual standards for perfection. It was not until 1985 that his first album under the Warner Bros. label, "Centerfield," went to the top of the charts and included a top 10 hit in "The Old Man Down the Road."

During the late '80s, Fogerty hit the road, reverting primarily to playing his Creedence play-book. A Washington, D.C. concert on behalf of Vietnam veterans was followed by shows at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony, at an AIDs concert in Oakland, and several others.



Photo courtesy
Wikimedia Commons.

His commercial recording career resumed in 1987 with his album, "Blue Moon Swamp," which won a Grammy for best rock album of the year. A year later, his "Premonition" album experienced similar success.

Continued on page 6

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The Rocky Road to 'Rocky'

By Randal C. Hill

On the day Sylvester Stallone was born in 1946, the doctor on duty clamped forceps on the baby's emerging head. The result was a severed facial nerve above the infant's jaw, which gave the left side of his face a permanent droop. Later, young Stallone was taunted by schoolyard bullies who called him "Slant Mouth" and "Mr. Potato Head."

In 1959, Sly's life changed when he saw the movie "*Hercules Unchained*" and was markedly impressed by the massive star Steve Reeves, a former Mr. Universe. Stallone then fashioned barbells from a broomstick and two cinder blocks to build himself up. After a while, the schoolyard bullies fell silent.

Sly earned a D average in high school, but after graduation, he found a college in Switzerland desperate for new students. While there, he acted in a production of "*Death of a Salesman*" and later said, "I knew then that this is what I was made to do."

The year 1969 found Stallone back in America. Determined to have a career in the movies, he earned \$200 for his first film appearance — a soft-core porn release. After a few minor movie roles, he turned to writing. To support himself and his wife, Sasha, Sly took jobs that in-

cluded theatre usher, nightclub bouncer, and fish-head cutter. He also created movie scripts, but nobody showed interest in them.

He developed the Rocky Balboa character after watching a TV match between Muhammad Ali and Chuck Wepner. Ali won, of course, but Stallone was more impressed by Wepner's dogged determination to last 15 rounds. In time, Sly would channel what he witnessed into the Balboa boxer.

The Stallones moved to Los Angeles, and there Sly fleshed out a movie script called "*Rocky*." With Sasha typing for him, the couple stayed up three days straight as the script gradually took form.

Sly offered his brainchild to United Artists, who saw it as a chance to make a film on the cheap but with a handsome big-name star — possibly Burt Reynolds or Ryan O'Neal. Stallone, though, was insistent that he play Rocky. When he finally wore the studio honchos down, they signed him for a paltry \$23,000.

In December 1975, he and Sasha took a train to Philadelphia for the shoot. There was a van that served as a production office and a changing room for Stallone. The cast and crew stayed in a cheap motel and lived primarily on pasta as they filmed miles of footage.

United Artists held out little hope for "*Rocky*" to become a box-office winner. They considered dumping it as a TV movie, especially when some film critics dismissed it at pre-release screenings. (One writer labeled it "a sentimental little slum movie.")

But ticket-buying audiences embraced "*Rocky*" with open arms when it was released in November 1976. In America alone, the blockbuster took in \$117 million, about \$700 million now. It became the highest-grossing film of the year and was nominated for 10 Academy Awards. "*Rocky*" won three, including as the year's Best Picture.

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Six Ways

Continued from page 3

credit cards — This will help you stick to a budget and curb impulse purchases.

Tip 4: Redeem rewards and leverage coupons — Savings from reward points, coupons and special offers can really add up, helping your money go even further. As you plan holiday shopping, and look for smart ways to save, a great resource is TextNow Perks which houses a wide range of exclusive in-app deals, discounts, and freebies including McDonald's, HBO Max and Hulu.

So, while you scale back on your phone bill, you also gain exclusive benefits and discounts at your target shopping destinations for the holiday season. Sounds like a win-win. TextNow Perks is free thanks to in-app ads. Just as with streaming services, ads keep the service and opportunity to leverage much-needed holiday perks free.

Tip 5: Create a realistic budget and opt for homemade or DIY gifts — Everyone loves a personal gift that's one-of-a-kind. Plus, going this route can help stretch those holiday dollars even further.

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John Fogerty

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One of the tracks from the Blue Moon Swamp album, titled "Blue Moon Nights," was used in the 2002 film, "The Rookie."

Fogerty's love of touring continued into the new millennium, including concerts in London, Australia, and Sweden, followed by appearances at National Football League halftime shows, the Glastonbury Festival, and a Grammy Awards gala.

In addition to another hit album, "Revival," and several more Grammy nominations, one of the highlights of his career was his appearances at the Hollywood Bowl and Madison Square Garden, where he shared the stage with musical superstars, including Bruce Springsteen and Don Henley, and Timothy B. Schmit of The Eagles.

Although humbled by his success, Fogerty is proud of his musical legacy. In recent interviews with "Guitar Magazine" and "CBS Sunday Morning," Fogerty was asked about his fascination with his guitar.

"It is really good," he said, referring to his strict practice regimen. "I like to practice because my connection to the guitar makes me feel better. It's kind of therapy ... it allows me to mentally and spiritually bond with the music that I love."

Funny! That's how I feel when I listen to his music.

Tinseltown Talks

By Nick Thomas

Marilu Henner Made Her Mark on Hallmark

Since its debut as the Hallmark Channel in 2001, the network has become a beloved TV destination for millions of viewers, especially during the holiday season with its Christmas-themed features. While Hallmark has cultivated a recognizable roster of its own stars, their programs have also featured an impressive lineup of veteran film and television icons over the years, including Ed Asner, Christopher Lloyd, Shirley MacLaine, Roger Moore, Danny Glover, Burt Reynolds, and Carrie Fisher.

And Marilu Henner.

Best known to TV fans of the late 70s and early 80s hit the NBC comedy series *"Taxi"* where she played a part-time cabbie, Henner has continued to work in film and television including some 30 Hallmark productions such as their murder mystery movie series, *"A Teagarden Mystery."*

The channel does have its critics, given the often-repetitive nature of their movies and predictable happy boy-always-gets-girl outcome.

"Yeah, it's the same formula but it works," said Henner of the Christmas movies. "They're just kind of feel-good stories that the whole family can watch. There's always hot chocolate, cookies baking, cut-



Photo courtesy Commons.Wikimedia.org.

ting down their own Christmas tree, and of course a final kiss."

She especially remembers one film from 2020.

"Of all the Christmas movies I've done, *'Love, Lights, Hanukkah!'* is one of my favorites," she recalled. "The story is about a girl (played by Mia Kirshner) that I gave up for adoption when I was young. She finds out that she's not just all Italian but half Jewish after

a DNA test and reconnects with me and my family. It's such a sweet holiday movie."

In 2022, she played Gramma Mia in *"A Kismet Christmas"* where she is the keeper of a famous family recipe for kismet cookies. If placed under one's pillow, the sweet treats allow the sleeper to dream of their true love kismet – a Turkish word synonymous with destiny.

"My character is very nurturing

with a certain wisdom and she's always cooking, like me," said Henner. "We filmed in Victoria (Canada) and had some scenes in traditional Dickens-like costumes which was fun."

Henner has appeared in some 20 of the Hallmark *"Teagarden"* mysteries where she plays the mother of a librarian named Aurora Teagarden who belongs to a group of enthusiasts who study true historical crimes. Unlike other network or cable crime dramas, the on-screen violence is minimal.

"You're not going to see dead bodies or pools of blood everywhere, so I can watch it with my young niece," she explained.

"Taxi" was one of Henner's first on-screen appearances. Given the co-stars who would go on to become huge stars (including Danny DeVito, Judd Hirsch, and Tony Danza), there are plenty of stories to share from the show's four seasons.

"Want to hear a great Danny DeVito story?" asked Henner, referring to the actor who played Louie, the grumpy cab dispatcher. "Danny was down to his last unemployment check, his last clean shirt, and he had no money when he read the script for *'Taxi'* and felt it was a great part. He goes to the audition and is in a room

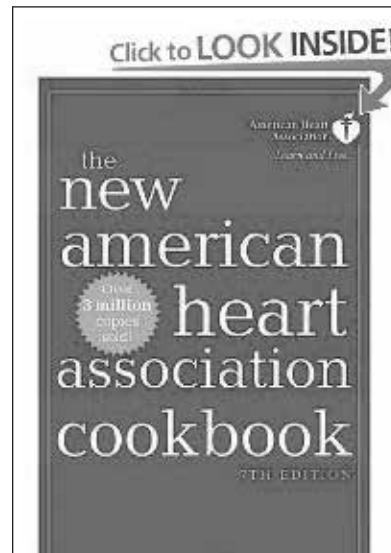
full of studio suits with the script in his hand. He throws it down and says, 'Who wrote this 'crap' (censored!)? and they said 'that's our Louie.' He was the only truly irreplaceable character in the show."

"Taxi" may have launched Marilu's career, but at 73 she has made her mark on Hallmark.

"First of all, they are really nice people to work with and I always have a great time with them," she said of her association with the network. "They pick interesting locations and there's always something in the characters that I relate to. People come up to me all the time and tell me how much they love Hallmark movies."

Nick Thomas has written features, columns, and interviews for numerous magazines and newspapers.

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The 137th Tournament of Roses Parade will roll through the streets of Pasadena on Thursday, January 1, 2026. This immensely popular event that attracts 40+ million TV viewers and more than a million visitors from around the world to Pasadena annually will be here in no time.

Parade fans wishing to secure reserved grandstand seats are urged to place their ticket orders now for the best selections. Tickets are going fast for seating at what is historically known as “TV Corner,” which offers the same views seen on Rose Parade television

broadcasts. Prices range from \$75-\$125 per seat, depending on location, plus \$50-\$65 for a parking permit.

“The Tournament of Roses is one of the greatest spectacles in the world,” said Sharp Seating President Sindee Riboli. “Nothing else compares with its magnificent floral floats, high-stepping marching bands and exceptional equestrian units. Musicians and equestrians from around the globe compete to be in the Rose Parade, so viewers really enjoy the best of the best. While the floats look beautiful on television, they are breathtaking to see live. It’s truly a not-to-be missed, experience of a lifetime.”

Sharp Seating also provides tickets for a variety of pre- and post-parade events. Fans can purchase tickets for close-up previews of the Rose Parade’s legendary floats while the finishing touches are being applied at Decorating Places December 28-30, 2025. Additionally, tickets are available to view the floats on display after the parade at Floatfest held January 1-3, 2026.

Another crowd-pleaser, Bandfest will feature bands from around the world showcasing their musical and marching talents with performances at Pas-

adena City College’s football stadium Monday, December 29, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.; and two shows Tuesday, December 30, 2025 – 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

At EquestFest — happening Monday, December 29, 2025, 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., at the Los Angeles Equestrian center — horse-lovers can stroll through the Rose Parade stable area, meet many of the equestrians they will see on the parade route January 1st, and take photos with their beautiful horses. Visitors will also enjoy riding demonstrations and equestrian drills, as well as ongoing exhibits, musical performances and great food.

For more information or to purchase tickets to the Tournament of Roses Parade and other events, visit www.sharpseating.com or call (626) 795-4171. Sharp Seating recommends advance ticket purchases for all events as they often sell out quickly.





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Napa Valley: It's Worth the Trip

By Shana McCann

With hundreds of wineries, Michelin-starred dining, and endless opportunities for culture, adventure, and wellness, planning a Napa Valley getaway can feel deliciously overwhelming, so where should you begin?

No matter where and when you go, you won't go wrong. Dive in and experience a little bit of everything Napa Valley has to offer, and anything you can't fit into your itinerary will make a perfect starting point for your next trip.

This month is an ideal time to visit if you enjoy the holiday season with its many colorful festivities throughout the five towns in the 30-square-mile region.

Things to Keep in Mind

One of the best things about a getaway to Napa Valley is the freedom you have to explore however you choose. You make the rules! That being said, there are a few things you may want to keep in mind ahead of your visit, especially if you're new to the region.

Tasting Room Reservations

While there are many tasting rooms (particularly around Downtown Napa) and some wineries throughout the Valley that offer walk-in tastings, a good rule of thumb is to assume that a reservation is most likely required. Plan your tasting visits ahead of time and be sure to check their website or give them a call to secure a reservation.



Photos courtesy Napa Valley Visitors Bureau.

Don't Wine & Drive

A traditional tasting pour isn't a full glass of wine — but multiply that across five wines and three different tasting rooms, and you'd be surprised how quickly you can start to feel the effects. Don't get us wrong, we want you to let loose and have fun but be sure to arrange alternate transportation ahead of time. Luckily, Napa Valley has a wide array of transportation options, from rideshare apps and taxis to luxe shuttles and limousines.

Tipping Etiquette

Is it short? While tipping isn't required, when you (inevitably)



have an amazing experience, it's a nice touch to tip your wine educator. Although you have already paid a fee for the experience overall, the person walking you through your tasting is doing their best to make your time there exceptional, so a tip will be greatly appreciated. For a standing bar tasting or a seated tasting, \$10-\$20 per couple is standard. At boutique wineries or for private tours, aim for \$20 or more. For large parties and special celebrations, tip at least 20% of your total bill.

Wine Country Casual

Don't stress about what to wear to a wine tasting. Jeans are perfectly acceptable! Dress to feel your best — no one will turn their nose up at you for wearing sandals. If you're visiting a more luxurious-style winery, then you might take that as an opportunity to dress up a little

more. No matter what you wear, be sure to bring layers, as some wine tastings and tours may take place in chillier wine caves or temperature-controlled areas.



All set? Great. Let's dive into how to make your first visit to Napa Valley a perfect one.

Napa Valley Welcome Center Day 1

Settle In & Start Sipping

Your inaugural visit to Napa Valley should start in the heart of things — right in the middle of Downtown Napa. Head first to the Napa Valley Welcome

Center, located on First Street. There you'll find all the information you need for a magical wine country experience, along with experts who can recommend special offers.

From there, it's a short walk to the Oxbow Public Market, where you can browse stalls offering everything from artis-

Continued on page 19

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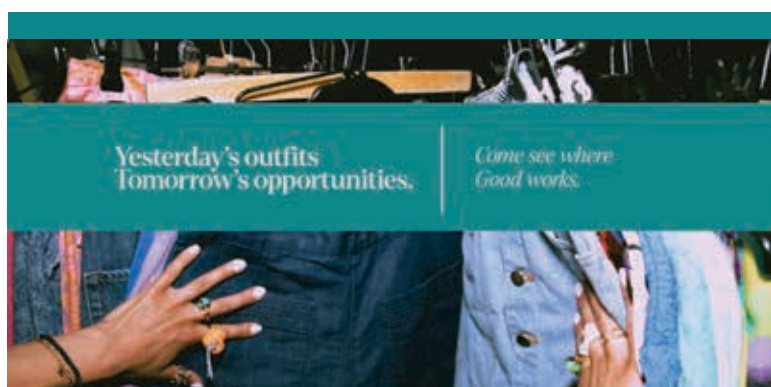


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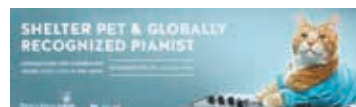
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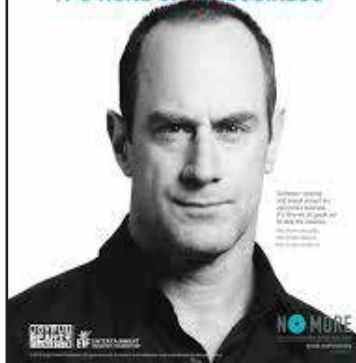
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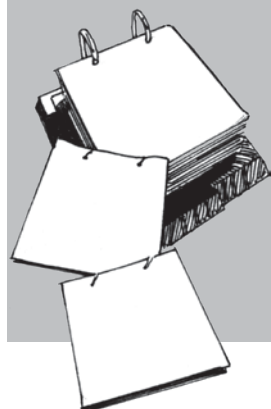
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DECEMBER Calendar of Events

December is full of holiday cheer, unique experiences, and fun for the whole family. From festive boat parades to interactive scavenger hunts, there's something for everyone to enjoy this month. Here's a curated list of events happening across the region in December.

Dec. 6, Saturday Tamale Festival La Habra

10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Celebrate the season with live entertainment on three stages, tamales, retail vendors, children's activities, a holiday tree lighting, and fireworks. A free shuttle is available from off-site parking.

Location: 301 S Euclid Street, La Habra.

Information at Lahabrac.gov

Dec. 6, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7 Boat Rides with Santa

Dana Point

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Enjoy a 20-minute harbor cruise with Santa and helpers. Tickets are \$5 per person, with all proceeds benefiting the Soroptimist of Capistrano Bay.

Location: Dana Wharf Sportfishing Docks, 34675 Golden Lantern, Dana Point.

Information: (949) 496-5794 or (949) 923-2255.

Dec. 11, Thursday Tamale Festival Placentia

4 to 10 p.m.

The annual festival features food and tamale vendors, live entertainment, nonprofit and business booths, a beer garden, kids' games, pictures with Santa, and a holiday tree lighting.

Location: 100-200 blocks of Santa Fe Street, Placentia.

Dec. 13, Saturday Surfing Santa Competition Dana Point

Men, women, and children dress in holiday-themed costumes and ride the waves at Salt Creek Beach. Proceeds benefit Surfers Healing.

Information: (949) 240-5088.

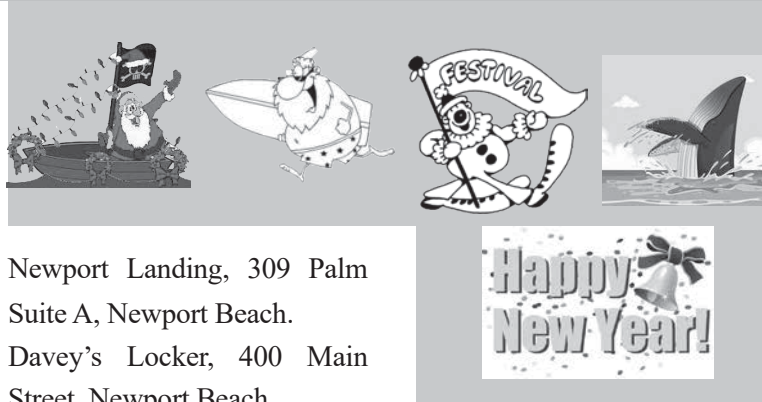
Murder Mystery Scavenger Hunt – Laguna Beach, 11 a.m.

Solve a fun, interactive mystery exploring Main Beach, Heisler Park, Browns Park, and Downtown Laguna Beach.

Dec. 17-21, Wednesday-Sunday Annual Newport Beach Christmas Boat Parade

The 116th parade takes place nightly, starting at 6:30 p.m. Viewing from boats is available through Newport Landing and Davey's Locker for general admission.

Locations for cruises:



Newport Landing, 309 Palm Suite A, Newport Beach.

Davey's Locker, 400 Main Street, Newport Beach.

Information: (949) 675-0551.

Dec. 20, Saturday Murder Mystery Scavenger Hunt Huntington Beach

11:20 a.m.

Explore Downtown Huntington Beach, including the Pier, Pacific City, and Triangle Park, while solving clues to uncover the mystery.

Dec. 27, Saturday Murder Mystery Scavenger Hunt Dana Point

10:45 a.m.

Follow clues around Dana Point Harbor, Doheny Beach, Lantern Bay Park, and other landmarks to solve a holiday-themed mystery.

Dec. 31, Tuesday First Night in Fullerton 7 p.m. to midnight

Ring in the New Year at Fullerton's family-friendly, alcohol-free celebration with street and building activities downtown. Admission is free.

Location: Downtown Fullerton.

Ongoing Seasonal Events Winter Fest OC

Costa Mesa, through Jan. 4

OC Fair & Event Center is transformed into a holiday wonderland featuring ice skating, a tubing slide, carnival rides, holiday markets, food, and photo opportunities.

Location: 88 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa.

Whale Watching

**Dana Point and Newport Beach
December through April**

See gray whales migrating along the coast. Cruises are 2–2.5 hours from Dana Point or Newport Beach. Prices start at \$16.

Locations:

Dana Point: Captain Dave's Dolphin & Whale Safari, 24440 Dana Point Harbor Drive; Dana Wharf Sportfishing, 34675 Golden Lantern.

Newport Beach: Davey's Locker, 400 Main Street; Newport Landing, 309 Palm Suite A.



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On The Road Again ...

Napa Valley

Continued from page 11

anal olive oils to new and used books, then pop over to Hog Island Oyster Co. or Bar Lucia for some bites and a glass of wine.

I found the nearby town of Yountville, with plenty of lodging for your stay, to be an ideal location for easily exploring the rest of the Valley. It may be small, only hosting around 3,000 residents, but each square mile is full of wine country charm, and the whole town is entirely walkable.

You'll find several exceptional wineries here, such as Priest Ranch, Cornerstone Cellars, or the Hill Family Tasting Room. When you are hungry, the town offers a variety of eateries to go along with an array of wine or other beverages.

Day 2

The Heart of Wine Country

The only thing better than waking up in California's beautiful wine country? Model Bakery, a longtime favorite of Valley residents, has a Yountville location just two minutes down the road from the Bardessono, and a visit to this patisserie is sure to start your day off on the right note.

A must on your agenda is the Napa Valley Museum in Yountville. You will get a good historical overview from the first pioneer winemakers in the 19th

century. In addition to the photos and artifacts in the permanent collection, the museum hosts temporary exhibits focused on local artists.

Downtown Napa

From there, head south to the "big city" of the Valley, the city of Napa. First Street Napa is an ever-vibrant hub for shopping, dining, and, of course, wine tasting.

If you are interested in art, it is everywhere to be seen in the valley. For instance, Napa's Seguin Moreau is home to fourth-generation master cooper Douglas Rennie, an artisan who crafts wooden barrels used to age some of Napa Valley's finest wines.



Day 3

Discovery

On the third day, I encourage you to spend some time in St. Helena, where Napa Valley's winemaking history truly began — specifically, at the Beringer Vineyards, which opened in 1876 and remains the area's oldest continuously operating winery. Taste some wines and spend some time exploring the mansion, a stunning recreation of the Beringer family home on the Rhine River in Germany.

For lunch, St. Helena's picturesque Main Street has a variety of restaurants to choose from,

whether you're searching for casual fare or a more upscale, sit-down experience. Grab small plates and sandwiches at the Harvest Table, for instance, or go all-out and head to the Gatehouse Restaurant at the Culinary Institute of America's Greystone campus. The campus itself is absolutely breathtaking, and a meal there is sure to be a one-of-a-kind experience.

After a filling meal, it's time to taste some wines. Charles Krug Winery is Napa Valley's oldest winery, established in 1861 (because of periods of inactivity, it cedes the "continuously operating" distinction to Beringer).

Turn a leisurely afternoon into a truly luxe experience and book one of their private cabanas, where you'll then be able to sample several exclusive estate wines, only available on-site.

Be sure you've booked your reservations in advance — these places are by appointment only, and the reward for your preparedness will be an intimate, personalized experience you're sure to never forget.

For dinner, we recommend Thomas Keller's The French Laundry in Yountville. This restaurant is one of the most iconic in the country, having been visited regularly by the likes of Anthony Bourdain and the governor of California.

Day 4

The Last Hurrah

It's your last day in the Valley, and you'll want to end it on a

strong note. Hit the ground running and start this morning with a visit to the Chateau Montelena Winery, which made Napa Valley history in 1976.

Though the region has been a thriving winegrowing region since the 19th century, Napa's wines were not considered on par with the likes of France and Italy — that is, until 1976, when the "Judgement of Paris" took place.

The competition pitted several California white wines against well-regarded French ones, and, in a win still being celebrated today, the expert judges decided Chateau Montelena's 1973 Chardonnay was the clear best. Today, the winery's tasting room is open daily and offers a lovely backdrop for tasting some of these iconic wines. The best way to end any short or long vacation is to enjoy a relaxing spa treatment. And the best place to do that in Northern California is in nearby Calistoga. This West Coast spa town has drawn visitors to its hot springs since the 19th century, and a variety of spas, from basic to luxurious, cater to those who want to experience a "bath" in the warm, mineral-rich mud that leaves your body relaxed and your skin glowing.

Ah, a mud bath. What better way to enjoy the full experience of Napa's Wine Country! If you are like me, you'll want to make your return plans sooner rather than later.

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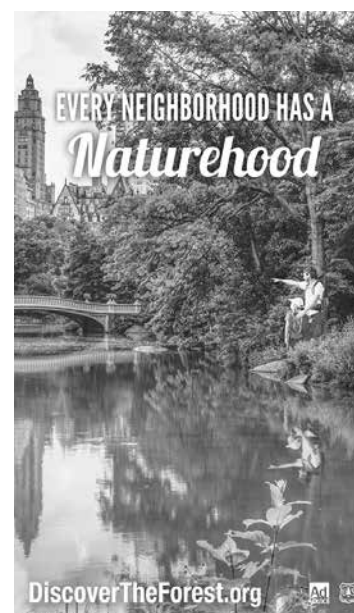
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The Gadget Geezer

By Les Goldberg

Last-Minute Holiday Gift Ideas

If you just received your copy of "Senior Reporter," you still have time to shop for your gadget-loving friends and family. Procrastinating will not work this time, however, when you factor in online shipping. We recommend visiting your neighborhood brick and mortar stores to best meet the Christmas and Hanukkah beginning Dec. 14.

However, if you decide to gear up for the holiday shopping season, there are hundreds of gadgets available to choose from. Here is just a sample of the coolest new consumer tech items on the market:

Orbitkey Nest



Photo courtesy Orbitkey.

Everyone could use a bit more

tidiness in their lives. What better place to start than with **the Orbitkey Nest**, a compact repository for your charged devices, like cables, glasses, power banks, and wireless phone chargers? Price: \$12 plus.

Wine Opener



Rather than fussing around with a dinky corkscrew that's been sitting in a drawer for years, why not give your wine-loving friends the **Secura Electric Wine Opener**? It easily and efficiently pops the top of their favorite wine with its quiet, rechargeable, and single push button features. Price: \$33.00

Photo courtesy Secura, Inc.

MiniGuard Cam

Do you need a security camera but don't want to go through the hassle of installing one? Don't dismay, help is on the way with the new **MiniGuard Cam**.



Photo courtesy beturnown.

It's a compact yet powerful device that provides clear, full high-definition recordings and live feeds with a 150-degree ultra-wide-angle lens that captures every corner, day or night. The magnetized base allows for easy installation on any surface – indoors or outdoors – without the need for cables or batteries. Now you can monitor your home from your smartphone or computer with user-friendly apps available for both iOS and Android devices. Price: \$40.00

FungaBeam

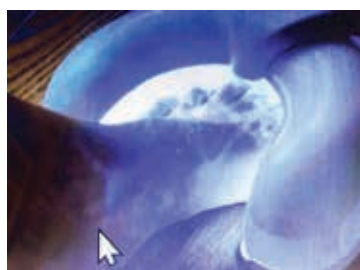


Photo courtesy FungaBeam.

Always searching for a pain-free, affordable solution to toenail fungus buildup, you may have found it in the **FungaBeam**. This device uses low-level laser technology along with heat to penetrate deep into the nail bed where fungal infections reside.

FungaBeam is designed to prevent fungal cells from reproducing, while also promoting tissue repair and regeneration, making the nails stronger, healthier, and more natural. Price: \$12.00

Oricle Hearing



Photo courtesy Oricle Hearing.

If you are hard of hearing and your budget cringes at the price of most hearing aids, a company called **Oricle Hearing** may be the answer to your problem. Designed specifically for seniors, the Oricle Hearing aid helps make conversations clearer and everyday sounds more enjoyable – without the high price tag. These discreet, in-ear devices offer the most in-demand features, such as background noise reduction, long-lasting battery life, and comfort. And they are only \$99.

Smart Cane

Each year, millions of older adults experience falls – often with serious consequences. In some cases, the mobility aids they rely on may not provide the level of stability or support they truly need. Introducing the



Photo courtesy Oulisen.

Ready Walker Smart Cane

Developed with the input from physiotherapists and mobility professionals, this device features a wide non-slip base, dual handles for extra support while rising, a built-in LED light for nighttime visibility, and an optional alert function for added peace of mind. Price: \$40 plus.

Cyber Heater



Photo courtesy Freeze2Trim.

Indeed, winters in Southern California do not come close to the chillers of the North. In fact, the Southwest region has even had an occasional heat wave during the season. However, let's face it, the nights can get a bit nippy, the mountains get snow, and jackets and sweaters are the normal garb. So, with that said, you might want

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Health Awareness

What to Know This Flu Season: Testing, Treatment and Trusted Advice

Flu symptoms are often coupled with uncertainty. What steps can you take if you start feeling sick? Is it really the flu, or something else? And what products are available to help support symptom relief? Having clear answers and knowing where to get help can make the process easier to manage. With more than 9,000 locations nationwide, CVS Pharmacy® can help by providing convenient options for prevention and care all in one place.

What to do if you suspect you have the flu

When symptoms arise, it's not always easy to know what's behind them. Because flu, COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses share common symptoms, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), testing is typically the best way to get clarity. At CVS Pharmacy, patients can purchase a 3-in-1 COVID-19 and flu test over the counter at any location. In-store testing, however, is available at select locations across 38 states. In some states, pharmacists may also prescribe treatment during the same visit, helping you begin care right away.

Finding relief when you're sick

Getting diagnosed early means you can also start treatment sooner if eligible. According to the CDC, antiviral medications



Now is the time to fight the flu. Fortunately, it can be fast and easy to get a flu shot.

may be prescribed to help shorten the duration and severity of the flu. But feeling better often starts with everyday health habits. When symptoms such as fever, cough or congestion arise, over-the-counter (OTC) products can support symptom relief. CVS Pharmacy carries a wide selection of flu care essentials, including cold and flu symptom relief support products, immune system support supplements and disinfectant cleaning products, making it simple to get what you need when you're under the weather. Pairing these with healthy routines can help you recover more comfortably.

In addition to OTC treatments, you can take everyday actions, the CDC advises, to help stop the spread of germs. Remember to:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Wash your hands often with soap and water

- Minimize touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Vaccination is still the best protection

Even with testing and treatment available, the first and most important step to prevent flu is to get a flu vaccine each year. This is the best way to help protect yourself and your family from the flu and its potentially serious complications, says the CDC. Different strains of the flu circulate each season, the CDC adds, so don't assume that if you have already had the flu, you will not get it again. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) reports that even if you have already had the flu this season, you should still make it a priority to receive the flu shot.

The CDC recommends that individuals make plans to get vaccinated before flu season begins, and preferably no later than the end of October, mak-

Continued on page 27


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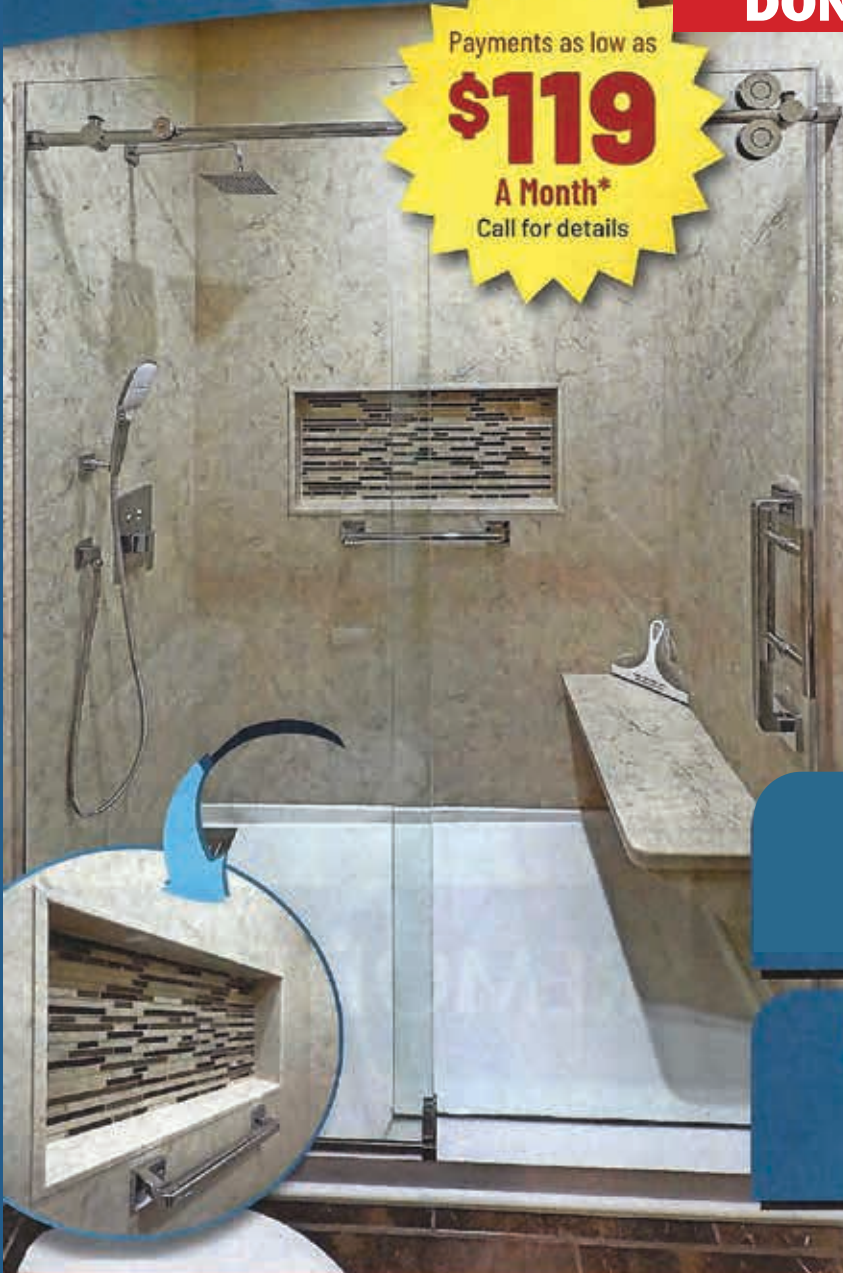
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Protecting Your Money

Three Fraud Prevention Tips



the bad actors have personal information and the bank account login details, they are able to pose as the customer and confirm that they want to send money. In the case of the

Since government pandemic assistance programs have largely come to an end, fraudsters have turned their attention back to developing increasingly clever ways to trick you into giving them your money—but you can protect yourself and your assets.

Here are two confidence schemes that have been trending in recent months:

- **Malicious Links:** Bad actors text a link that appears to be from a legitimate company. Even if you don't provide any information, clicking on the link can lead to malicious software or viruses on your phone.

- **Spoofing:** Fraudsters attempt to steal personal information by pretending to be someone with an urgent request—these bad actors often pose as government agents or fraud investigators from your bank.

In both scenarios, the goal of the bad actors is to trick the customer into providing personal information as well as bank account and login details that will let the fraudster take over the account and empty it using various peer-to-peer payment services or wires. Since

impostor phone call, the scammer will often trick the customer into sending them money to “resolve fraudulent activity” while speaking with them on the phone.

The experts at Citi suggest the Top 3 Tips to help you avoid these types of fraud:

1. Scammers Have Learned How to Spell: Don't assume that all scammers misspell or use obvious email addresses and URLs, or make requests that you send money to a far-away land to claim a lost fortune. Today's fraudsters send emails and text links that closely imitate those from real companies or other trusted individuals and that may appear to be legitimate.

2. Be Skeptical of Unsolicited Messages: Be aware of seemingly real emails, texts and phone calls that ask you to urgently provide personal or account information. These tricks are especially successful when people are distracted by their busy lives. Don't click on a link from any email or text that you receive unexpectedly and delete unsolicited incoming emails and texts. Additionally, don't provide any personal identify-

ing or account information to any inbound communication by phone, email or text. Contact your bank or the merchant directly via known and trusted communication channels if you are concerned about an account that is the subject of an unsolicited or suspicious message.

3. Don't Take the Call — Make the Call: If you get a call from an unknown number, don't answer it or return it. Instead, reach out directly to your bank by logging in to its secure website or by calling the known customer service number from the back of your card to review account activity and information. Even if you get a call from a number which appears on caller ID as your bank's name and number, do not provide personal information on that inbound call as fraudsters can easily spoof the incoming caller ID information.

Cyber-enabled fraud is very lucrative and bad actors work around the clock, using sophisticated algorithms that enable them to set up convincing confidence schemes that will trick you into giving away your credentials, your identity, even your life savings. Be vigilant to avoid taking the bait.

Learn More

For further information about fraud and how to fight it, visit: www.citi.com/fraudprevention.





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December fun facts



Photo courtesy Pixabay.

December is a month full of sparkle, celebration, and seasonal traditions. Its birthstones — turquoise, zircon, and tanzanite — are said to bring prosperity, protection, and wisdom to those born this month. Each stone has its own story: turquoise has been prized for thousands of years for its vibrant blue-green color and association with good fortune, while zircon is known for its brilliance and clarity, and tanzanite, discovered relatively recently in the 20th century, captivates with its deep, shifting hues. The flower of December, the poinsettia, has long been a symbol of the holiday season, with its bright red and green leaves representing cheer, celebration, and festive spirit across homes and public spaces.

the longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. This astronomical milestone has been celebrated for centuries with festivals, feasts, and rituals honoring the return of longer days and the promise of spring ahead. December also hosts a variety of holidays and observances worldwide, from Christmas and Hanukkah to Kwanzaa and Bodhi Day, highlighting diverse cultural traditions and the spirit of giving, reflection, and family togetherness.

Several notable figures were born in December, including Walt Disney on December 5, Jane Austen on Dec. 16, Ludwig van Beethoven on Dec. 17, and pop icon Taylor Swift on Dec. 13. The month's name comes from the Latin word *decem*, meaning "10," because in

Around Dec. 21, the winter solstice marks the shortest day and

Continued on page 27



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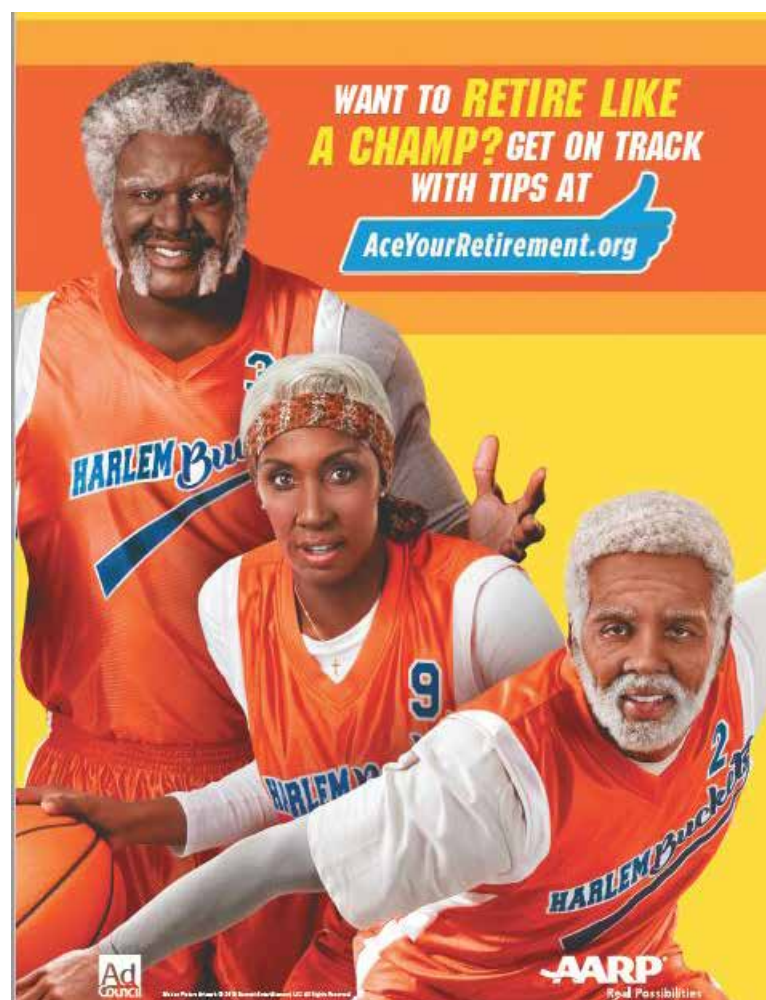
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December Crossword Puzzle

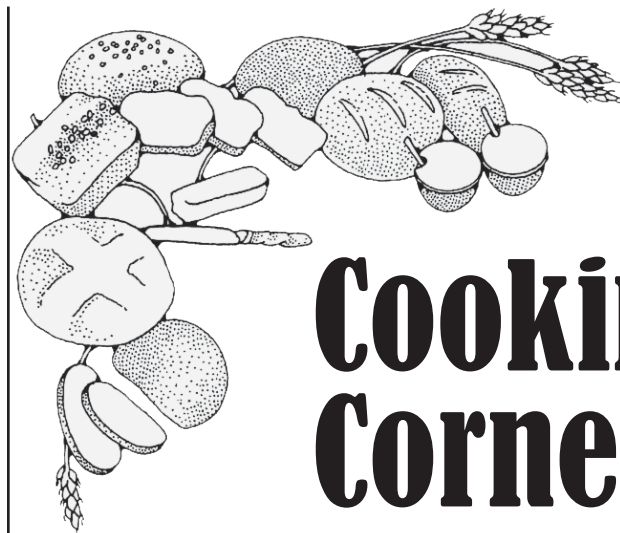
Across

1. Small fry
5. Movie-rating org.
9. Walked nervously
14. Sharpen
15. Not a dup.
16. Olds model
17. Suffix with concession
18. _____Lisa
19. Hawkins of Dogpatch
20. Tending to sleep walk
23. Tony’s cousin
24. Sprechen _____Deutsch?
25. However, briefly
28. Polite agreement
31. Night school subj.
34. Range rovers
36. Saccharin discoverer Remsen
37. Toll unit
38. Pope’s power
42. Tight
43. Metal in Montana’s motto
44. Irritable
45. Magazine fillers
46. Overdone
49. Afternoon social
50. Capture
51. Fasteners
53. One purpose of a driver’s license
60. Nephew of Donald Duck
61. Costly
62. Cornerstone word
63. Belle or Bart
64. Within (prefix)
65. Look
66. Father
67. Arabian gulf
68. Long lunch?

Down

1. _____brillig...
2. Presidential battleground state
3. Semester
4. Note taker
5. _____Dearest
6. Examines searchingly
7. Hokkaido native
8. I’ve Got ____in Kalamazoo
9. Here and there
10. Having wings
11. Basic monetary unit of Ghana
12. Rock star Clapton
13. Female goat
21. Bottomless gulf
22. Designer Mizrahi
25. 8th letter of the Greek alphabet

26. Group of six
27. Roman god of the underworld
29. Legendary ruler of Crete
30. “Exodus” role
31. Aren’t imaginary
32. Incline
33. Weill’s wife
35. URL part
37. _____snail’s pace
39. Climb
40. WWW address
41. Gladiator’s venue
46. Regalia
47. Poppy plant derivative
48. Its symbol is μ
50. Unearthly
52. Secret supply
53. Tiny bit
54. Couple
55. Think tank output
56. Ward (off)
57. Arrow poison
58. Lulu
59. Hurler Hideo



Cooking Corner

Holiday Dining

This Seafood Item is Spurring Holiday Menu Magic



Smoked salmon can make for a nutritious, delicious dish to serve friends and family this holiday season.

As we start planning holiday menus this season, many of us are looking for familiar favorites and comfort foods to serve to loved ones. The downside is that many of those foods are high in calories and don't provide much nutritional benefit. This year, consider amping up the nutritional value of your spread. One quick and easy way to do so is by adding a versatile and healthy classic: Latitude 45 Smoked Salmon. As the number one selling smoked salmon brand in the nation, Latitude 45 is not only a bona fide crowd-pleaser for holiday events, but it also offers your

guests a generous helping of health benefits.

Rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B12 and other essential nutrients, salmon can help reduce inflammation and improve heart health. Plus, it's packed with protein and integrates perfectly with nearly anything you're serving at your next gathering.

Those preferring a milder fish will love that Latitude 45 salmon is very light on the palette, making it a good option for those who typically aren't seafood eaters. Quick to serve and

ready to eat right out of the package, most smoked salmon recipes can be whipped up in under 10 minutes. This year, amp up menus by adding something new and exciting to your salmon repertoire with Latitude 45's new Smoked Salmon Candy Bites. This gastro gem is a fresh and tasty take on a classic!

Whether you're adding it to a quiche for brunch, a warm winter soup, your favorite pasta or your charcuterie board, there are many ways to enjoy Latitude 45. If you're looking for more epicurean inspiration, check out some unique recipes online at latitude45salmon.com/recipes.

Straight from Patagonia's glacial fed fjords, Latitude 45 is the only smoked salmon on the market that is fresh to smoked within 24 hours of leaving the water. Not only is it delicious but it's also Kosher certified, Best Aquaculture Practice 4-Star certified, and part of the Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative. So, you know this company's salmon is top-notch. Latitude 45 takes pride in their sustainable practices and certifications, as evidenced by the Dow Jones Sustainability Index listing it among the top 25% of food companies worldwide. Given its high quality, it's no wonder why major retailers like Meijer, Walmart, BJ's and Winn Dixie carry the line.

This holiday season, add some variety to your menu with flavorful smoked salmon dishes that you can feel good about eating.

The Gadget Geezer

Continued from page 20

to stock up on a room heater or two, like the ones offered by **Cyber Heater**. The latest technology is built into this mini-portable device, which features a digital temperature display and energy-saving usage of just 350 watts of power. It also shuts off automatically when it gets too hot or it falls over. Price: \$45.00

Flu Season

Continued from page 21

ing now an important time to get your flu shot. While it's preferable to get a flu vaccine by the end of October, people can get vaccinated as long as flu viruses pose a threat to the community.

The bottom line

From annual flu shots to testing, treatment, OTC essentials and pharmacist guidance, CVS Pharmacy offers resources to help you prepare for and manage flu in a trusted community destination.

Whether you're looking for answers or relief, the right support is close to home. Vaccine appointments can be scheduled anytime at CVS.com or through the CVS Health app—or you can simply walk into your nearest location.

In addition to vaccines, you'll find a wide range of services and products to support your health, so you can feel your best.



Continued on page 24

the early Roman calendar, December was originally the tenth month.

For those who love the night sky, December offers the Gem-inid meteor shower, often considered one of the year's most spectacular, peaking mid-month with dozens of shooting stars streaking across clear winter skies. Many regions see the first snowfalls of the season, and holiday foods like gingerbread, eggnog, peppermint treats, and spiced desserts add warmth and flavor to celebrations. From cultural traditions to celestial events, December is a month full of wonder, history, and festive cheer that brings communities together in unique and joyful ways.

(Sources: various websites)

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On Christmas Day 2024, “*A Complete Unknown*” opened in theaters and helped to boost the star power of Timothee Chalamet with his spot-on portrayal of folk-rock icon Bob Dylan. One year later, Chalamet’s movie premieres again on Dec. 25—and his screen persona couldn’t be more unlike that of the 1960s music superstar.

In “*Marty Supreme*,” Chalamet comes to us as Marty Mauser, a highly skilled athlete involved in—of all things—ping-pong. Or, as it’s formally called, table tennis.

Wait. Don’t go away. “*Marty Supreme*” isn’t your standard sports biopic. It’s a story of one gifted man shoving against odds and doing what he must to achieve a nearly impossible goal—to prove that he’s the world’s best at something.

If he has to manipulate and use people along the way, well, so be it.

This release is loosely based on elements in the autobiography of Marty Reisman, possibly the best table tennis player of all time. Born in Manhattan in 1930, Reisman suffered a nervous breakdown at age nine but soon found playing ping-pong as a way to help him crawl out of the funk he was in.

He was outstanding right from the start. By age 13, he had become the city junior champion and soon began hustling bets at a downtown table tennis club, where he would lure in challengers, lose the first few games, then, after the stakes were raised considerably, destroy all comers. He later toured as an opening act for the Harlem Globetrotters, where he hit balls with a frying pan, the soles of his sneakers, and the flat end of a chess piece.

His 1974 autobiography, “*The Money Player*,” later inspired film director Josh Safdie (“*Good Time*,” “*Uncut Gems*”) to create this month’s feature.

In Safdie’s story, Mauser proclaims to his manager, “I know it’s hard to believe, but I’m telling you, this game fills stadiums overseas. And it’s only a matter of time before I’m staring at you from the cover of a Wheaties box!”

Marty also confides to his love interest Rachel (Odessa A’zion), “I have a purpose, and if you think that’s some sort of blessing, it’s not. It means I have an obligation to see a very specific thing through, and with that obligation comes sacrifice.”

The top-notch supporting cast includes Gwyneth Paltrow, Fran Drescher, and magician Penn Jillette.

As with his work in the Dylan movie, there’s little doubt that Chalamet is destined for another Academy Award nomination.

Released by A24 films, “*Marty Supreme*” looks to become a box-office winner.



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Crossword Puzzle Answers from page 26

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14	W	H	E	T		15	O	R	I	G		16	A	L	E	R	O		
17	A	I	R	E		18	M	O	N	A		19	S	A	D	I	E		
20	S	O	M	N		21	A	M	B	U	L		22	I	S	T	I	C	
					23	O	B	I	E			24	S	I	E				
25	T	H	O		28	Y	E	S		29	M	A	A	M		31	E	S	L
34	H	E	R	D	S				36	I	R	A			37	A	X	L	E
38	E	X	C	O	M		39	M	U	N	I	C		41	A	T	I	O	N
42	T	A	U	T		43	O	R	O			44	R	A	S	P	Y		
45	A	D	S		46	F	U	L	S		47	O	M	E		49	T	E	A
					50	W	I	N			51	P	I	N	S				
	53	I	D	E	N	T		55	I	F	I	C	A	T	I	O	N		
60	L	O	U	I	E		61	D	E	A	R		62	A	N	N	O		
63	S	T	A	R	R		64	E	N	T	O		65	S	E	E	M		
66	D	A	D	D	Y		67	A	D	E	N		68	H	E	R	O		



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Managing Your Money

Fund Your Future, Not Your Bank's

Many people envision a life of financial independence—ditching the stress, breaking the paycheck-to-paycheck cycle and escaping that nagging feeling that no matter how hard you work, your money isn't working as hard for you. While 87% of young adults report that financial independence is one of their top goals, banks, credit cards and outdated advice often stand in the way of this ambition.

First Tech Federal Credit Union (First Tech) is committed to changing that. By focusing on smart habits, personalized support, resources and education, it



can help you fund your future, not your bank's.

Getting Back to Basics With Your Finances

The path to financial freedom doesn't require risky investments or chasing the next hot stock. According to Matt Hicks, Vice President of Deposit Products at First Tech, it starts with simple personal habits that build a strong foundation:

- Conduct a spending audit to assess where your money is going. Make your money work for you by canceling unused subscriptions and redirecting those dollars toward saving.
- Build a budget that reflects your values, not your social feed of less credible financial advice.
- Set a realistic savings goal—even \$20 a week can help create a cushion for tough times and economic uncertainty.
- Use your bank's tools, such as account alerts, budgeting dashboards, automatic transfers, and online calculators, to track your goals.

Taking Financial Habits to the Next Level

Wherever you are in your financial journey, assume command of your finances by scheduling time with a certified financial advisor to build a personalized roadmap tailored to your lifestyle and goals. First Tech's Envision Future Finance™ program empowers better financial conversations and supports overall financial wellness.

While it's thoughtfully designed with the unique needs of tech professionals in mind, it can benefit anyone seeking to uplevel their financial future.

Rather than developing negative associations with your financial habits, an expert can help you focus on the big picture while building in flexibility to allow a splurge on occasion. This lets you set healthy expectations and goals to maintain a positive mindset.

wards tied to checking and savings accounts.

Look for institutions that offer:

- Cash back on purchases
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- Bonus interest for automated savings

If you work in the tech sector, there's often more to the paycheck than salary alone. Restricted stock units (RSUs), employee stock purchase plans (ESPPs) and performance bonuses are now key parts of compensation. However, understanding how to use these types of benefits is essential. First Tech's Envision Future Finance™ offers you educational resources and options to engage with experts to assist in decoding these complex benefits, diversifying portfolios and reducing exposure to market risk.

Investing in Your Future Today

Even if retirement feels far away, starting now is key. Hicks recommends considering these steps to maximize long-term gains:

- Max out your 401(k), especially if your employer offers matching.
- Consider Roth 401(k) or Roth IRA options for long-term tax advantages.
- Use a high-interest savings account for your emergency fund so your safety net grows passively.
- Explore safer investments such as certificates of deposit (CDs) and monitor long-term opportunities in real estate or the stock market.

Continued on page 37

Fabulous Finds

By Debbie L. Sklar

Holiday Beauty, Skin Health, and Wellness Must-Haves

The holiday season is officially here, and this year is all about upgrading your skincare, wellness, and beauty routines. From K-beauty breakthroughs to clinically backed supplements, luxe at-home devices, and high-performance makeup, there's plenty to treat yourself — or check off your gift list. Here's a roundup of my favorite new launches that are worth shopping for now.



Photo courtesy COSRX.

Starting with skincare, the award-winning K-beauty brand **COSRX** has launched its highly anticipated **5 PDRN Vital Care line**, along with the refreshed Advanced Vitamin C 23% Serum. Available exclusively on Amazon, these products are perfect for restoring tired, dull skin. The 5 PDRN Vital Care line includes a toner, serum, and hydrogel mask, featuring five naturally derived PDRNs (from salmon, Centella, rice, sea grapes, and lactobacillus), collagen, hyaluronic acid, and vitamin B5. Designed to calm irritation, boost elasticity, and nourish the skin, this line is a winter essential for hydration and glow.

My top picks are the 5 PDRN B5 Vital Soothing Toner (\$29,

Amazon.com, which layers beautifully and preps your skin for the next steps; the 5 PDRN Collagen Intense Vitalizing Serum (\$49, Amazon.com, a daily-use serum that strengthens the skin barrier and restores elasticity; and the 5 PDRN Hyaluronic Acid Vital Hydrating Hydrogel Mask (\$5 per sheet, Amazon.com, <https://www.amazon.com>), which delivers 34 grams of multi-activating serum for a spa-level glow. The Advanced Vitamin C 23 Serum (\$34, Amazon.com) is also back, upgraded with a smoother texture, reduced scent, <https://www.amazon.com>



Photo courtesy USANA.

For wellness and bone health, **USANA's MagneCal D** supplement has earned the coveted ConsumerLab.com Seal of Approval, signaling potency, purity, and quality. Designed to support strong bones and healthy muscles, it combines calcium, magnesium, vitamin D, and boron. With millions of Americans over 50 looking for ways to maintain bone density, this is a simple daily supple-

ment to help keep you moving with confidence. MagneCal D costs \$25 for a 60-count bottle and is available at USANA.com as well as through select authorized retailers.



In makeup, **Revlon** has just introduced the **Super Lustrous Ultra Lipstick**, available exclusively at Ulta Beauty online and in stores Jan. 18, 2026. Priced at \$15.99, this luxurious formula combines high-impact color with skin-loving ingredients like squalane and murumuru butter to hydrate and soften lips over time. Available in 10 shades

from pink lilac to bold red, it's a perfect holiday-ready gift or stocking stuffer. Shop at Ulta.com or your local Ulta store.

Photo courtesy Revlon.

For those looking for at-home professional results, Rajani MD's new **PlasmaGLO HALO Mask** (\$750, Store.RajaniMD.com) brings clinical-grade LED treatments to the comfort of home. Targeting face, neck, and hair, it uses red and near-infrared light to stimulate collagen, blue light to clarify skin, and PEMF energy to optimize cellular health. Just 10 minutes a day can support firmer, more radiant skin and healthier-looking hair — perfect for anyone wanting med-spa results without leaving the house.



Photo courtesy Skin Clique.

Finally, **Skin Clique's** first-ever **Holiday Skin Health Event** offers curated gifting, discounts, and early access to products like ZO Skin Health, Hydrinity, and skinbetter science. Gift options include treatment gift cards, personalized consultations, memberships, and full skincare kits. Shop online at SkinClique.com or through its network of 700+ licensed providers nationwide.

Continued on page 37

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OC Wine Mart & Deli

"A customer favorite ... with a magic twist!"

By Samantha Hammer, Contributing Columnist

I have known the owners, Julie and Farid Moshir, for the past 10 years and wrote their opening story in 2015. And here we are now, heading for their 10th anniversary in December.

To celebrate this special milestone, the Moshirs are offering several promotions, including the following:

- * Buy One - Get One Free" bottle of magnum wine.
- * All Day Happy Hour Wine and Beer for \$6.
- * A free Magnum bottle of wine joining their popular Wine Club.

"Perfect for the holidays!"

The Moshirs are a couple and have been married for 24 years. Farid Moshir was a physician assistant for 16 years, and Julie owned retail stores in Los Angeles and Las Vegas.

The couple collaborated on a business partnership, now go-



Owners Farid & Julie
Photo courtesy Samantha Hammer.

ing into their 12th year with additional locations in Orange and Yorba Linda. Their business is built on the love of what they do and their dedication to the best customer experience.

Farid loves cooking, gardening, and designing the menu, and Julie's retail background made OC Wine Mart & Deli a perfect business decision.

Magic Made

Here's the magic of how this business came to be in Aliso Viejo: Eric Sedman, a managing member of Aliso Viejo Marketplace, reached out to the couple to compliment

them on their OC Wine Mart & Deli in Yorba Linda, which opened in 2013. Sedman was so impressed by their concept in Yorba Linda that he offered them space in his Aliso Viejo shopping center. The Moshirs accepted the offer, and here we are in Aliso Viejo.

"Our stores are a labor of love, and we want to make it a great experience for our customers. We are bringing the food and wine culture of Napa Valley to Orange County," Julie Moshir said.

She strongly expresses her deep and sincere gratitude for the extended support of the community. The Aliso Viejo store opened in 2015, and the COVID-19 pandemic was announced in January 2020, causing extensive hardship for businesses, including theirs.



Photo courtesy Julie Mosher.

Breakfast burritos were a big hit with customers of the previous liquor store occupying the space. The Moshirs included an assortment of breakfast burrito selections in their menu. Their version was nicknamed the "BTS," Better Than Sex Burritos.

The breakfast menu is available seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. They are often voted "The Best Breakfast Burritos in Aliso Viejo."

Additional menu items include extraordinary sandwiches made



Deluxe Cheese & Charcuterie Platter
Photo courtesy Julie Mosher.

to order, including Oven-Gold Roasted Turkey Breast, Maple Glazed Honey Turkey Breast, Salami, Chipotle Spicy Chicken, Black Forest Ham, Italian Hoagie, London Broil Roast Beef, Hot Pastrami, French Dip, Tuna Salad, Premium Club, Caprese, and an Avocado Sandwich. Choices galore with your selection of breads, lettuce, tomato, onion, and an aged Balsamic Vinegar and Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

My favorites are the Tuna Salad Sandwich, toasted, and the Oven-Gold Roasted Turkey Breast. Both are truly an OMG experience for the mind and taste buds. And a customer favorite is the Italian Hoagie and French Dip. Lunch is served seven days a week from opening to half an hour before closing.

The Wine Bar menu is quite a tasty experience, offering Deluxe Cheese & Charcuterie Platter (great for groups), Baked Brie, Flatbread, Margherita Pizza, Prosciutto or Bacon Pizza, Bruschetta, Meatball Appetizer, and Olive Medley. This menu is available after 2 p.m.

A Happy Hour Special for se-

lect choices of wine and beer is offered at \$6.00 each, all week. The Wine Club is extremely popular, with a current count of 1,000 memberships. Born out of necessity during the pandemic, it has taken on a "Life of Its Own." Its popularity stems from the tremendous variety of choices within each tier," she said.

Wine Club Tier selections for your choice:

1. Discovery Club is \$99. Choose from Reds only, Whites only, or mixed three bottles. (This is a great way to explore a wide variety of fruit-driven wines from key regions in California and around the world.)
2. Signature Club is \$149. Choose from Reds only or mix three bottles.

(This is a curated selection of Moshirs favorite Cabernets and Red Blends, primarily from Napa Valley, Sonoma, and Paso Robles.

3. Connoisseur Club. Reds only – two bottles. The featured wines offer an unmistakable pedigree. "THESE WINES HAVE TO KNOCK OUR SOCKS OFF."



Photo courtesy Samantha Hammer.

OCWM is the first to carry Austin Hope Cabernet Sauvignon, a benchmark for the Paso Robles Wine Family. In 2018, the Aliso Viejo store made a very wise decision to carry this

Continued on page 38

Life After Mother

By Lyn Jensen

'Exploring probate and estate issues from personal experience.'

Christmas by the Crate

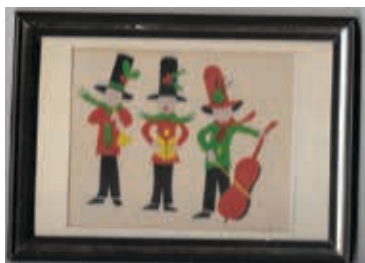
I'm spending this holiday season offering online what I think might sell, hoping that between holiday trinkets to rehome, and what items may make useful gifts, I can at last finish the chapter of my life dedicated to managing what my parents left me, and start anew. In 2019, I guessed that taking care of what my mother left behind might take two or three years. It turns out it has taken more like six, but closure is finally happening.



Photos courtesy Lyn Jensen.

My mother left behind seven crates of Christmas trappings in the garage, plus two underbed boxes, and more boxes of gift wrap, plus other Christmas-related items scattered throughout the house. One crate was obviously decorations she'd been storing for the local senior center, so that was returned, and then there were six. Some reorganization was done, some things got trashed or donated to charity or simply given away, some things got sold at estate or garage sales, and then there are five. There'd be four, but I let a guy talk me into taking some Christmas collectible House of Lloyd dolls as barter at a garage

sale, and they're now going up for sale on eBay, competing with all the other collectible House of Lloyd dolls for sale on eBay.



I got into selling things on eBay during one of my periods of unemployment about 20 years ago, when the site was much simpler. I took another turn at online selling for some of my father's things after his death 10 years ago (yes, 10 years already). Now I'm back navigating the site again, getting used to posting pix from my phone and how money moves online these days.



Besides selling on eBay, there are several other options for disposing of goods online, either through sales or giveaways. Much depends on what you're offering, whether you're selling it or giving it away, and if it's a "pick up" or "delivery" situation. I haven't tried Facebook Marketplace, but I will if eBay doesn't perform up to ex-

pectations. Other online options include Craigslist, Freecycle, Etsy, and Buy Nothing. Each one's a little different.



Between Christmas-themed items and other good-quality possessions, I'm hoping I can sell several dozen things online by the time 2026 dawns. What doesn't sell, I can decide whether to keep anyway, or just get rid of it. Then, at long last, about this house, I can say, "I'm done."

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Busy Boomers

By Les Goldberg

Are You the Karate Kid?

Who can forget the lovable Japanese American Pat Morita, who played the role of Mr. Miyagi, the wise old mentor in the legendary film, “*The Karate Kid*”?

Using his now-famous words, “wax on, wax off,” the late Morita (he was 73 when he died in 2005), a whole new generation of seniors is uttering that same phrase in their martial arts classes across the country.

That’s right – martial arts.

According to the experts, no student is ever too old to venture into the world of martial arts, which includes such programs as Tai Chi, Jiu Jitsu, Aikido, Wing Chun, and Karate.

Whatever method you choose, they all agree that the goals of seniors are to remain active, build strength, maintain flexibility, and stay healthy weight.

What are the differences between the MA programs, you ask? Let’s see.

Tai Chi

Sometimes referred to as “standing yoga,” it is one of the gentlest forms of martial arts since it involves no physical contact, and it is considered the safest for older adults. Tai Chi consists of a series of flowing movements to help improve balance and flexibility. It is also designed to reduce stress.

Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

Considered one of the best martial arts for self-defense, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is ideal for older adults who don’t want to put too much strain on their joints. It is said to be the gentlest of the “grappling arts” since it focuses on groundwork instead of standing moves.

Aikido

This is another gentle martial art that has proven to be popular among people over 50. With its focus on standing locks and minimal sparring, it builds strength and flexibility effectively while building a strong connection between body and mind. Aikido has been known to improve memory, decrease

stress, and protect against dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

Wing Chun

The experts in this form of martial arts, which they describe as a form of Kung Fu, say it is ideal for older adults because it uses open-hand techniques instead of closed fists.

Wing Chun practitioners focus on building strength and learning precision in their movements. While there is some kicking involved, they say the kicks are low and easily achieved for seniors who may not have the flexibility they had when they were younger.

Karate

The most popular of martial arts in the U.S. is Karate. The increasing number of seniors participating in this activity does it for two reasons – to stay in shape and to defend themselves.

Students in a Karate class learn how to execute kicks, punches, sparring moves, and grappling techniques. While it can take years to master Karate, the experts will tell you that many people in their 70s have successfully earned their black



Photos courtesy Iron Fist Studios.

belt, the highest ranking of Karate achievement.

“My daughter and I have been taking Tai Chi classes for years,” said Vivian Alonzo, 67, from Bellflower. “We enjoy the experience. I feel better that not only is it a good workout and gets you fit, but now my daughter is better able to defend herself if she needs to. And we’ve made many good new friends.” Bill Cummings, 72, of Midway City, said he has been taking lessons with his grandchildren in a local Karate school. “I’ve been amazed at the progress I have made and am thrilled at the new level of confidence it has given me.”

The one piece of advice that everyone I spoke with for this story is that seniors check with their doctors before jumping into martial arts. If you know your physical strengths or limitations, it will be easier to design a martial arts training program to meet your specific goals.

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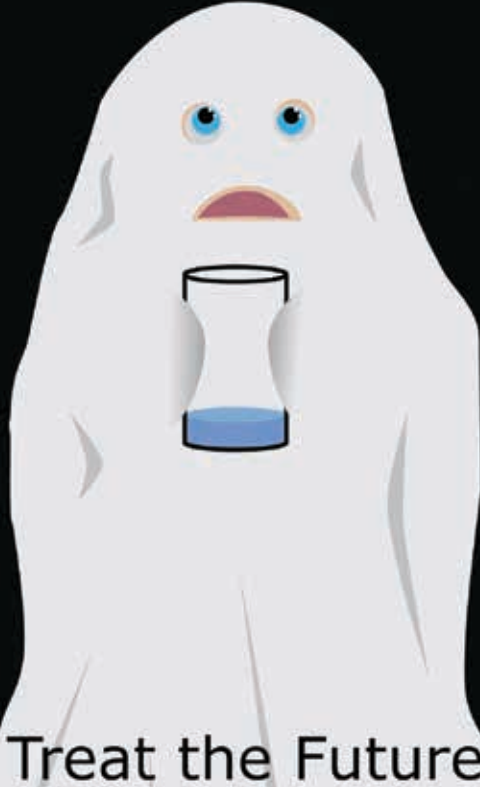


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'My Little Town' Simon and Garfunkel

By Randal C. Hill

It's humorous to see where "experts" in the music world thought the location of Simon and Garfunkel's was "My Little Town," the duo's final Top 10 Columbia Records single.

Both were born in October 1941; Paul and Art began performing during their adolescence as an Everly Brothers-based duo called Tom and Jerry. As juniors at Forest Hills High School in the sprawling New York borough of Queens, they cut a minor chart single called "Hey, Schoolgirl!" Late in 1965, and using their real names, they scored a winner on Columbia Records with "The Sounds of Silence," a No. 1 single that introduced five years of nonstop success before their breakup in 1970.

On Oct. 18, 1975, Simon hosted the second broadcast of "Saturday Night Live." In doing so, he brought on his former partner. They sang three songs together, including a new Simon composition called "My Little Town."

The lyrics conveyed Simon's often downbeat reflection on past things.

"In my little town, I grew up believing.

God keeps His eye on us all.

And He used to lean upon me

As I pledged allegiance to the wall

"In my little town, I never meant nothin'

"I was just my father's son.

"Saving my money, dreaming of glory

"Twitchin' like a finger on the trigger of a gun

"Really, nothing but the dead and dying back in my little town."

Nothing but the dead and dying back in my little town."

Pretty dreary stuff, huh? But the fun began when people began to opine exactly where they thought that "little town" was.

In his book "Paul Simon: A Life," writer Marc Eliot proclaims, "'My Little Town' is clearly Queens, and all the references to schoolbooks, saluting the flag, and so on appear to be symbols of nostalgia for the days of Tom and Jerry as much as for the years of Simon and Garfunkel."

Not so, counters music critic Dave Marsh, the author of "The Heart of Rock and Soul." " 'My Little Town' is a portrait of the middle-class Forest Hills, New York, neighborhood where Paul and Art grew up."

Hold on. Art Garfunkel had his own take on the subject. In a Wikipedia article, he insisted that the tune was about

his childhood, how he grew up where music was not seen as either desirable or exciting, and that his parents insisted that Garfunkel acquire an education unrelated to singing. (He earned a BA degree in art history in 1965 and, two years later, an MA in mathematics.)

So where was this "mysterious" burg? Nobody knew until the mid-1980s. In an interview with Bill Flanagan for his book "Written in My Soul: Conversations with Great Songwriters," Simon admitted, "I was picturing a town. I was thinking about Gloucester, Massachusetts. A friend of mine comes from Gloucester, and he used to talk about what it was like to grow up there ... That song was entirely an act of imagination ... There's no element of me in there at all."

Well, now we all know.

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Fabulous Finds

Continued from page 31



Photo courtesy Garnier.

Maybe for your grandson this year? The **Garnier Men** has teamed up with Abhishek Sharma — India's top T20 batsman — as its newest brand ambassador. The partnership coincides with the launch of **Garnier Men AcnoFight Gentle Cleanser**, designed for men with sensitive, acne-prone skin.

The cleanser is formulated to be "tough on pimples, gentle on skin," using salicylic acid for deep cleaning and Centella to calm irritation. It's soap-free, alcohol-free, and paraben-free, giving effective results without harshness.

Sharma, who spends long hours outdoors, said joining Garnier Men felt natural since skincare is part of his daily routine. The brand notes that his energy and authenticity make him a strong fit as they continue offering accessible, effective skincare for men in India.

The AcnoFight Gentle Cleanser is dermatologist-evaluated, suitable for daily use — even on shaved or irritated skin — and helps maintain the skin's natural pH balance. It is priced starting at INR 105 and is available nationwide in general trade, modern trade stores, and on all leading e-commerce platforms.

Whether you want to refresh your skincare, boost wellness, or add a pop of luxe color, these launches have something for everyone this holiday season. From self-care staples to giftable splurges, consider this your guide to staying radiant, healthy, and confident as the year winds down.

Fund Your Future

Continued from page 30

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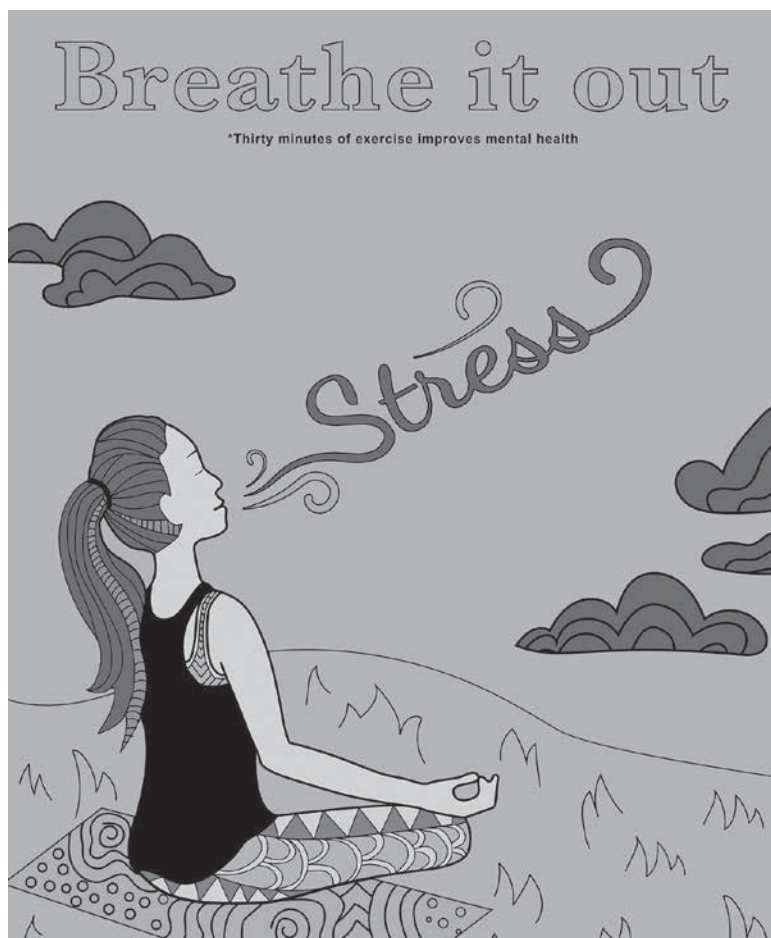
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wine selection. The wine, twice named, “A Top 10 Wine of the Year” by “*Wine Enthusiast*,” and also scored 97 points, and now being offered throughout Orange County restaurants offering fine wines.

On a special note, the Moshirs created “Chateau Moshir,” their own private label stemming from Howell Mountain of Napa Valley. This is a Cabernet Sauvignon priced at \$60.

During my visit, I was invited to choose a selection of my choice for lunch. It is definitely not an easy decision; however, I did select the Tuna Salad Sandwich with melted Swiss cheese. I also requested that the bread be toasted. Fernando, one of the food preparers, asked me, “Do you want the tuna toasted with the bread, or would you prefer the tuna added after the bread and cheese are toasted?”

I was so impressed with his thoughtfulness and honesty, and I have never heard anyone ask me that in the past. My decision made the biggest difference. The sandwich came on an artisanal roll with drizzled aged balsamic vinegar and extra virgin olive oil. The lettuce was sliced very delicately, including sliced tomatoes. The melted Swiss cheese added such a lovely flavor, and needless to say, it was a heavenly experience.



Fernando Barrera & John Fabian-Photo courtesy Samantha Hammer.

While I was waiting for my sandwich, I chatted with two of the customers. I first chatted with Swan. I was sitting at a table, and when he walked by and said, “Don’t you just love this place! It’s one of the hidden gems of South Orange County for delicious food, beer, and wine.”

I also chatted with Dave. He has been in the area since 1998. “I come here because of the people; they are nice all the time.”

John Fabian is the store manager, and Fernando Barrera is the assistant manager. They are both extremely friendly, offering their expertise in food preparation and making the customer experience one to remember.

Additional store offerings include wine dinners, special wine tasting events, Wine Club Membership, catering, and complete menu items are available for viewing through the website: ocwinemart.com.

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Thank you to each of you for reading this wonderful story about the labor of love and commitment of ownership, staff, and community. This story is a true recognition of a family who has endured change, challenge, and a reward for renewal. I applaud their strength.



Samantha Hammer

Contributing Columnist

diningoutwithsam@gmail.com

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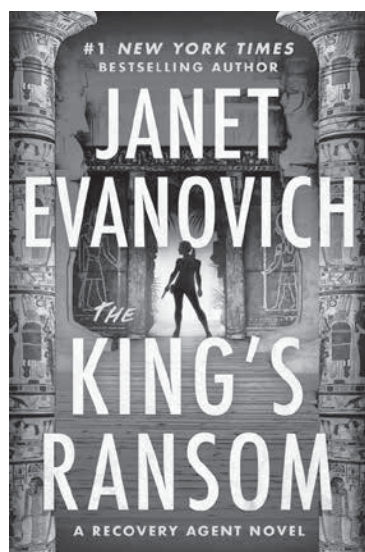


December Book Club

As we settle into December and the days take on that early-evening glow, it's the perfect time to curl up with a good book and discover a few new stories worth talking about. This month's selections bring adventure, history, romance, and a dose of terror — something for every reader as the season turns.

The King's Ransom A Novel — Book No. 2 of *The Recovery Agent* Series

By Janet Evanovich



Gabriela Rose, recovery agent extraordinaire, can find just about anything — except maybe a way to shake her gorgeous but infuriating ex-husband, Rafer Jones. When Rafer's cousin, Harley, finds himself in deep trouble, Gabriela is pulled into a global chase to recover a

series of priceless, insured artifacts that have mysteriously gone missing. If they aren't returned soon, Harley may take the fall for a crime he didn't commit.

As Gabriela and Rafer circle the globe, they face corruption, threats, murder, and the shadowy forces behind a conspiracy aimed at destabilizing the world's wealth. A sinister villain lurks at the center of it all, determined to push the world to the brink of ruin, according to Atria Books.

Queen Esther A Novel

By John Irving



John Irving returns to the world of *"The Cider House Rules"* with the story of Esther Nacht, a Viennese-born Jewish girl whose life is shaped by loss, displacement, and the long reach of anti-Semitism. Born in 1905, Esther loses both parents before she is fourteen and finds herself in the care of Dr. Wilbur

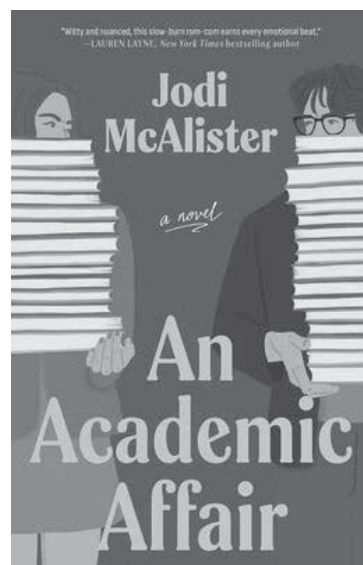
Larch at St. Cloud's orphanage in Maine.

Unable to find a Jewish family to adopt her, Dr. Larch turns to the Winslows, a philanthropic New England family who despise anti-Semitism and welcome Esther into their home. Her gratitude for the Winslows becomes the throughline of her life, even as she retraces her roots from Maine back to Vienna and eventually to Jerusalem.

Irving's 16th novel explores identity, belonging, and how history shapes personal destiny, reminding readers why he remains one of the most compelling storytellers of our time, according to Simon & Schuster.

An Academic Affair A Novel

By Jodi McAlister



Sadie Shaw and Jonah Fisher have been academic rivals for more than a decade, battling for top marks, fellowships, and now, a coveted full-time teaching position. The problem? The

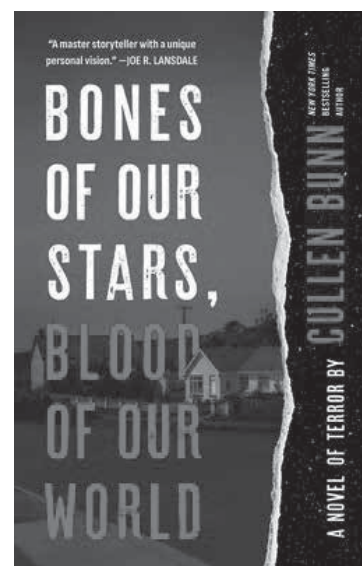
job comes with a "partner hire" option.

When Sadie realizes they could both get what they want by legally marrying, she proposes a plan that's equal parts brilliant and reckless. What begins as a convenient arrangement between two long-standing competitors soon turns complicated as chemistry, emotions, and old frustrations surface.

Perfect for fans of Ali Hazelwood and Abby Jimenez, this charming, sharp, slow-burn romance dives into ambition, academia, and the unexpected ways love can rewrite even the best-laid plans, according to Atria Books.

Bones of Our Stars, Blood of Our World A Novel of Terror

By Cullen Bunn



"New York Times" bestselling writer Cullen Bunn delivers a chilling adult novel debut set on Wilson Island, where bodies are piling up and the murders

grow increasingly ritualistic. The town's sheriff has suspicions but no evidence — until an arrest triggers a terrifying, otherworldly eruption.

As an ancient evil unfurls across the island, a disparate group of residents must join forces in a desperate bid for survival. With cosmic dread, escalating violence, and a masked killer at the center of it all, this story blends horror, suspense, and supernatural threat into a relentless, atmospheric tale, according to Gallery Books.

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In The Spotlight

By Debbie L. Sklar

Making It Through the Holidays When Life Feels Heavy — A Story for Those Over 55

Janice had always loved the holidays. The scent of pine needles, the twinkle of lights along Main Street, and the hum of her favorite carols drifting from the local radio station all used to fill her with warmth and anticipation. But this year, at 62, the season felt different. Her husband had passed two years ago, and her children had scattered across the country. The house that once held laughter now felt quiet, and the thought of holiday gatherings left her feeling anxious and alone.

As November turned to December, Janice noticed the familiar heaviness creeping back: the sleepless nights, the appetite she couldn't seem to control, the ache in her chest when she thought about sitting alone at her own table. She knew she wasn't the only one — many friends her age confessed to similar feelings — but acknowledging it didn't make it any easier.

One chilly morning, Janice decided to take a walk through her neighborhood, wrapped in her favorite scarf. The crisp air seemed to clear her head a little, and as she passed her neighbor's house, she noticed the lights twinkling and the aroma of baking drifting out the window. She realized she didn't



Photo courtesy Pixabay.

have to do it all alone. Small steps could make a difference.

First, she called her daughter in Seattle and asked if they could video chat on Christmas Eve. Just seeing her granddaughter's smile, even though a screen lifted her spirits. Next, she reached out to her local community center and discovered a holiday volunteer program delivering meals to seniors who were homebound. "It won't fix everything," she told herself, "but it might help someone else feel less alone — and me too."

Janice also began setting boundaries for herself. Invitations from extended family poured in, and rather than forcing herself to attend every event, she picked just a few she genuinely wanted to attend. She allowed herself a quiet

morning to sip coffee, listen to carols, and journal her thoughts before joining the chaos of the day. It wasn't selfish — it was necessary.

On another evening, she joined a small walking group organized at her local park. The brisk walk and friendly conversation reminded her that connection could be simple and low-pressure. She found herself laughing over memories from past holidays, realizing that even though life had changed, joy could still be found in small, unexpected moments.

Janice also practiced gentle self-compassion. When she found herself comparing her life to others, she paused and reminded herself that grief and loneliness didn't make her weak — they made her human.

Breathing exercises, short meditations, and lighting a candle for her late husband became quiet rituals that brought comfort.

By mid-December, the holidays still weren't easy, but Janice noticed a difference. She felt more prepared, more intentional, and more in control of how she spent her days. She attended family dinners with a clear sense of when to leave, volunteered with a heart open to giving, and carved out sacred time for herself. The heaviness remained at times, but it was balanced by moments of connection, laughter, and peace.

Janice realized something important: the holidays wouldn't look like they used to, and that was OK. She could honor traditions while creating new ones, like a yearly volunteer day or a solo ritual of writing letters of gratitude. She learned that joy and sorrow could coexist, and that moving through the season with intention and self-kindness was its own quiet triumph.

For those over 55 facing depression or grief during the holidays, Janice's story is a gentle reminder: small steps matter. A phone call, a volunteer activity, a walk in the fresh air, or simply a moment of reflection can

make the difference between enduring the season and surviving it. The holidays don't have to be perfect — they just have to be manageable, meaningful, and kind to yourself.

If you are struggling with depression or feelings of hopelessness, resources are available through the National Institute on Aging, Mental Health America, or your local senior support networks. You are not alone.

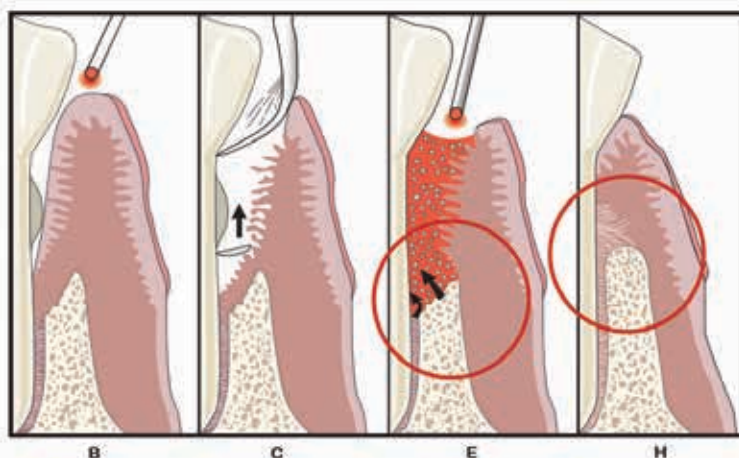


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1. Gregg RH II, Gregg DM. Laser-assisted periodontal regeneration with the LANAP protocol. *Dent Today* 2019 May;38(5):78, 80-83
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