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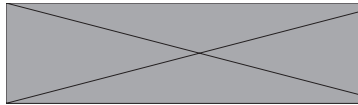


HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

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SHARING HAPPY HOLIDAYS

How sweet the holidays are—families gathering to celebrate and to observe their special traditions, excited children eagerly awaiting the arrival of Santa Claus, the aroma of cookies baking, the sound of music filling our churches and favorite season tunes filling the airwaves, the pleasure of decorating a tree. Above all, this is a season for giving and sharing.

In these pages, we invite you to discover useful information, entertaining reading and some ideas for holiday activities for you and your family to enjoy. Learn where to find several artisans' markets, where local artists and artisans will offer unique, handmade holiday gifts for sale. Discover a grand old mansion

in Milford, PA that's all decked out for the holidays. Learn the enchanting story of the "The Nutcracker" ballet, a traditional holiday favorite, including performances here in the Upper Delaware River Valley. Find out about a special Yuletide elf who traces his ancestry to Norway. Hear about one blended family's way of celebrating the holidays. And be sure not to miss our calendar of the season's events and activities.

Finally, as we approach this sometimes all-too-busy season, we at The River Reporter hope you will take time to enjoy it. We wish you peace and joy for the holidays.

Jane Bollinger

Section editor

Holiday Gift Guide

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



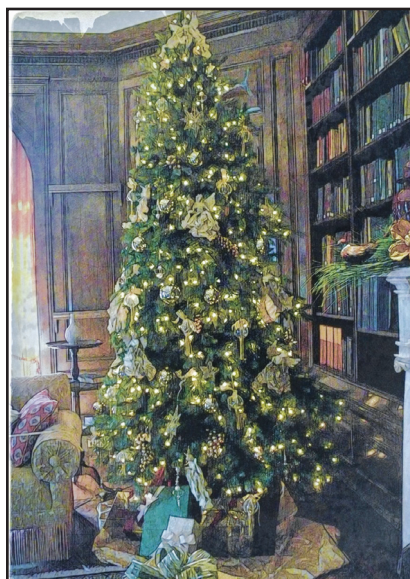
Jane Bollinger

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The Jewish holiday of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, begins at sundown on Wednesday, November 27.

Whether you observe Chanukah, Christmas, or your own personal holiday this time of year, we at **The River Reporter** wish all of our readers and friends the happiest of holidays.



Contributed by Grey Towers National Historic Site

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A fortnight of holiday festivities

Throwing open the doors of a grand old house in Milford

By JANE BOLLINGER

MILFORD, PA — One of the grandest old mansions of a bygone era in the Upper Delaware River Valley is Grey Towers, the former home of Gifford Pinchot, first chief of the U.S. Forest Service (1905-1910) and Pennsylvania governor (1923-1927, 1931-1935). One of the most beautiful times of year to visit Grey Towers is in December, when this national historic site is all decked out for Christmas, courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service and the Milford Garden Club.

Holiday house tours

For two weeks from December 9 through 21, visitors to Grey Towers are invited to join special holiday house tours to see the Pinchot home all decorated for Christmas and to experience a sense of their privileged lifestyle. "Everything we do here is linked to conservation, forestry, or to what the family would

have done in their time," explained Elizabeth Hawke, Grey Towers horticulturist, who is also a member of the Milford Garden Club.

For over 20 years, the local gardeners have been helping the forest service put up the season's decorations. For two full days early in December, club members arrive *en masse* to do their work—decorating three Christmas trees, all of the museum rooms, the home's many railings and banisters, wreaths for every window and the hallways on all three floors. Contrary to most of the year when house tours are confined to just the first floor, at Christmastime, it's different. "That's what one of the big draws is," Hawke reported. "That's what's so special about December; visitors get to see all three floors."

These days, because of concerns over bringing insects and pests into the museum, artificial trees, garlands and greenery are used.



Contributed photos

Grey Towers in Milford, PA, a national historic site, will be all decked out for the holiday and open for house tours starting on December 9.



Though Grey Towers was the Pinchot's summer home, historians know that the family spent at least one Christmas here in this grand house.

"We do get some pushback from people because we don't have a live tree," Hawke reported, "but it's all because we want to protect the many great historical pieces we have here."

For information about the Milford Garden Club, which by the way also decorates the borough's library for the holidays, contact milfordgarden@yahoo.com.

House tours at Grey Towers will be conducted at 1 and 3 p.m. from December 9 through 21. The cost

of admission is \$8 for adults, \$7 for seniors, \$5 for youth 12 to 17 and no cost for children under 12.

Visit www.greytowers.org for more information.

Dickens' classic, "A Christmas Carol," performed

Next year, be sure to catch one of the most popular traditions at Grey Towers: the annual reading of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." This year's two shows already are sold out.

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GREY TOWERS

Continued from page 4

Dramatic readings were a popular form of entertainment when the grand house was occupied by the Pinchot family from the late 1800s through mid-20th century, and Grey Towers has kept up the custom.

Joe Plummer Jr. and his sister Therese Plummer are keeping a three-decades-old family tradition alive, picking up where their father, Joe Sr., left off when he stepped down two years ago. The siblings are both actors, living in New York City. Joe Jr. is also a writer, producer and director, while Therese is an award-winning audio book narrator.

Joe Jr. reflected that the chance to do this annual reading of the classic holiday story is "the greatest Christmas gift

I've ever gotten. The story has so much depth and substance, every year I see something new or discover something different in it. That's why it's survived for so long and become such a classic.

"The text is so great and beautiful... The language is so interesting, and funny," he added, telling how the audience picks up on these things and laughs. "Here's Dickens scaring you to death and yet making fun at the same time... It's a dichotomy between scaring you and making you laugh."

It makes one want to find a copy of "A Christmas Carol" and read it again after all these years. God bless us, every one."



▲ The Pinchot family moved into Grey Towers, with its 44 rooms and 23 fireplaces, in 1886. In 2011, the mansion and grounds completed a major renovation.

▲ Part of the draw of visiting Grey Towers during December is that all three floors of the mansion are open to the public, which is not the case during most of the year.

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Town of Wallkill with Town Clerk Louisa Ingrassia
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With any questions about "The Giving Tree" or our local Boys & Girls Clubs in Orange & Sullivan Counties, please visit us at www.bgcorange.org or call us at 845-342-8833!

A holiday performance: 'The Nutcracker'

Traveling to the Land of Sweets

By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

Spanish hot chocolate, Arabian coffee, Chinese tea, candy cane, marzipan, dewdrop, flowers and sugar plum; these are not the contents of a bakery; this is the lineup of goodies in the Land of Sweets in the second act of "The Nutcracker."

"The Nutcracker" is a two-act ballet, originally choreographed by Marius Petipa and Lev Ivanov with a score by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. The storyline is adapted from E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King." It premiered at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia on December 18, 1892.

According to Wikipedia, "Although the original production was not a success, the 20-minute suite that Tchaikovsky extracted from the ballet was." However, the complete "Nutcracker" has seen popularity since the late 1960s and is a holiday favorite and yearly tradition for many. It is now performed by countless ballet companies, primarily during the Christmas season, especially in the U.S., where a very popular performance is George Balanchine's production at New York City Ballet. Several performances are also to be found in the Upper Delaware River Valley; they are listed on page 10.

The ballet begins in the home of the Stahlbaums who, with their children Clara and Fritz, are holding a party on Christmas Eve. Party guests arrive with presents that are placed around the Christmas tree and they dance. Suddenly, the clock strikes and everyone freezes as Drosselmeyer, a local councilman, magician and Clara's godfather, enters. He gives Clara a wooden nutcracker shaped like a little man, and she is overjoyed and does a dance with the nutcracker.



All photos by Chris Jones taken at the 2011 production of "The Nutcracker" by the Delaware Valley Dance Company
Little ballerinas are always an audience favorite as the bon bons.



At the end of the first act of "The Nutcracker" there is a battle between mice and soldiers.

Her younger brother Fritz is jealous of the gift and snatches it from Clara, accidentally breaking it. Soon the party ends and the guests leave. Clara goes to bed but later sneaks back to check on her nutcracker. When she falls asleep, the magic begins.

Clara awakes to find large mice scurrying around her, when she is saved by wooden soldiers who have come to life. The Christmas tree grows larger and larger. Clara's nutcracker has also come to life, and is leading the soldiers in battle. Just as the mice appear to be winning, Clara throws her slipper at their leader, the Mouse King, who becomes dizzy as the nutcracker stabs him. The Mouse King is dragged off, and Clara pulls the wounded Nutcracker, who is lying on the ground, back to life. Magically, he is transformed into a prince. This begins the duet between Clara and the prince, a dance with music so romantic it can make you cry every time you see it. Then, they are transported to another world: first to a pine forest, as snowflakes dance around them, and next to the Land of Sweets.

When the curtain opens on the second act, the stage is spectacularly dazzling as all the dancers are dressed as sweets. The Land of Sweets is ruled by the Sugar Plum Fairy and her prince. The Nutcracker Prince tells them how Clara saved his life, and all the sweets dance to celebrate the couple. Each of these sweets is represented in its own special dance and also in the music. For Spanish hot chocolate, castanets can be heard in the background; Chinese tea has flutes trilling; and Arabian coffee is moody and mysterious. The score includes widely recognizable music, like the "Waltz of the Flowers." The celebration concludes with a

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THE NUTCRACKER

Continued from page 8

pas de deux by the Sugar Plum Fairy and the prince, which includes a duet, two solos, and a *grand coda*. All the sweets come back on stage to do a final *coda* and the Sugar Plum Fairy bids them all farewell.

The curtain closes and re-opens again in the Stahlbaum's living room. In some versions, Clara is asleep and then wakes up, wondering if it was all a dream. In other versions, Clara holds her wooden Nutcracker in her arms. Both endings ask the question: was the Land of Sweets real, or was it all a dream? Either way, this lovable tale is magical.



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American Ballet Theatre

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New York City Ballet

November 29 to January 4, times vary
At the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln
Center in Manhattan, NY
Tickets start at \$34
More info: www.nycballet.com



Local productions

The Dance Center's Delaware Valley Dance Company

Saturday, November 30 at 12 noon and 7 p.m.
At the Delaware Valley High School auditorium in Milford, PA
Tickets: \$12 (\$8 for child and senior) in advance, \$14 (\$10 child and senior) at the door
More info: 845/856-3373 or www.thedancecenterpj.com

Marya Kennett Dance Centre

Saturday, December 21 and Sunday, December 22 at 1 p.m.
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'Here we come a-wassailing'

WASSAIL — noun (archaic) (1) Spiced ale or mulled wine drunk during celebrations for Twelfth Night and Christmas Eve, (2) Lively and noisy festivities involving the drinking of plentiful amounts of alcohol; revelry;

verb (1) Drink plentiful amounts of alcohol and enjoy oneself with others in a noisy, lively way, (2) Go from house to house at Christmas singing carols, as in "Here we go a-wassailing." (SOURCE: Google)

Perhaps you know this traditional English Christmas carol and New Year's song called "The Wassail Song," sometimes sung as "Here We Come A-caroling."

The Wassail Song

Here we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green;
Here we come a-wand'ring
So fair to be seen.

REFRAIN:

Love and joy come to you,
And to you your wassail too;
And God bless you and send you a Happy New Year
And God send you a Happy New Year.

(Note: Endless verses follow. (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Here_We_Come_A-wassailing))

So what is wassailing really all about? For a bit of background (according to **Readers Digest**), "The Christmas spirit often made the rich a little more generous than usual, and bands of beggars and orphans used to dance their way through the snowy streets of England, offering to sing good cheer and to tell good fortune, if the householder would give them a drink from his wassail bowl or a penny or a pork pie or let them stand for a few minutes beside the warmth of his hearth. The wassail bowl itself was a hearty combination of hot ale or beer, apples, spices and mead, just alcoholic enough to warm tingling toes and fingers of the singers."

So this year, if you're considering serving a hot holiday beverage to your guests, why not consider serving wassail in a pretty punch bowl?

Here follow two recipes for wassail—one with hard cider and brandy, the other without alcohol.



Photograph of the painting taken by Pamela Gerrish Nunn

In this painting by English artist Joanna Boyce Rowena (1831-1861), a woman offers a wassail cup to Volfigern, a 5th century warlord and a leader of the Britons.

Traditional wassail

SOURCE: nourishedkitchen.com/traditional-wassail-recipe/

This traditional wassail recipe features hard cider, sugar-roasted apples, brandy and sweet spices. It is a simple, old-fashioned recipe. Serves 6

Ingredients

4 small apples	1/2 cup brandy
1 cup unrefined cane sugar	1 tbsp powdered ginger
1 medium orange	1 tsp grated nutmeg
13 whole cloves	6 allspice berries
2 quarts hard apple cider	2 cinnamon sticks
	6 large eggs (separated)

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

Scoop out the core of the apples without fully penetrating the apple; a melon baller works well. Fill each apple with about a tablespoon of unrefined cane sugar. Place the apples in the baking sheet. Stud an orange with 13 cloves and place it on the baking sheet. Bake the apples and orange together for 40 minutes.

While the apples and orange bake, pour apple cider and brandy into a heavy-bottomed stock pot and warm over moderately low heat. Whisk in powdered ginger and grated nutmeg. Do not bring the wassail to a boil.

Cut a square of muslin or cheesecloth, and place allspice and cinnamon into the square; tie with 100% cotton cooking twine and float this sachet of spices in the wassail as it warms.

Beat egg yolks until light in color and set aside. In a separate bowl, whip egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold egg yolks into whites, then temper the eggs by slowly pouring one-half cup wassail into the eggs. Remove the spice sachet from the wassail and pour in eggs. Transfer to a punch bowl. Float baked apples and oranges in the wassail and serve by the mug.

Non-alcoholic wassail punch

SOURCE: allrecipes.com/recipe/wassail-punch/detail.aspx

Serves 12
2 quarts apple cider
2 cups orange juice
1/2 cup lemon juice
12 whole cloves
4 cinnamon sticks
1 pinch ground ginger
1 pinch ground nutmeg

In a slow-cooker or a large pot over low heat, combine apple cider, orange juice and lemon juice. Season with cloves, ginger and nutmeg. Bring to a simmer. If using a slow cooker, allow to simmer all day. Serve hot.

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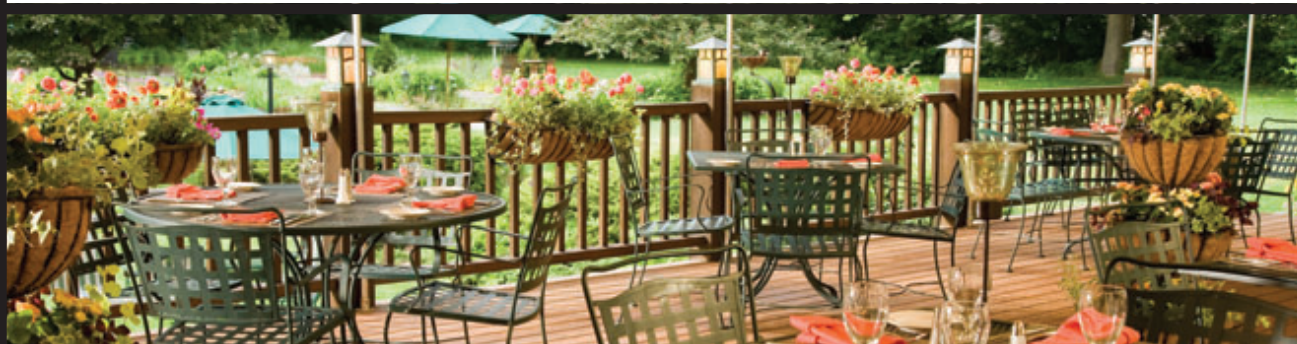
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Handmade for the holidays

By JONATHAN FOX

UPPER DELAWARE RIVER VALLEY — The Catskills and Upper Delaware River Valley have long been a Mecca for artistic expression. Painters, sculptors, photographers and writers have flocked to the region for decades, drawing inspiration from the clean air, stunning vistas and peaceful countryside that inspires. Visitors and tourists continue to explore the area and often seek unique gifts for themselves and loved ones as they scour the galleries, shops and studios of the artists who have settled here to practice their craft.

Among those who have chosen to make the mountains their home are potters Jill Weiner (www.earthgirlpottery.com) and Carolyn Duke (www.dukepottery.com) who put their heads together almost 10 years ago and created "Handmade for the Holidays," a group effort that now encompasses more than 30 local artists and businesses that create one-of-a-kind items and gather at Duke's studio in Roscoe, NY to display their wares and mingle with the community for a few weekends each holiday season, where visitors can share a cup of warm cheer, some convivial conversation and holiday shopping.

Duke explains that "In an ongoing effort to connect with the community," the seasonal show selects "a different not-for-profit organization every year (to promote), and a portion of the proceeds goes to that deserving group. This year, a percentage of every sale will benefit (NPR affiliate) WJFF." Interspersed with the watercolors, jewelry (www.mclashpants.com) and Duke's pinch-pots, local businesses from New York and Pennsylvania are also represented.

Holiday cards produced in Jeffersonville, NY (www.echoletterpress.com) are displayed alongside honey, dipping sauces and pancake mix (www.catskillprovisions.com), while organic coffee (www.javaloveroasters.com) and Jane Roth's hand-knit hats and scarves occupy some space in Duke's beautiful showroom nestled in the mountains. Jill Weiner's whimsical creations can be purchased as well, and many of the beautiful objects are available throughout the year, although select items are added each winter for those seeking a special gift.

An active member of the Sullivan County Visitors Association (www.scva.net), Duke reflects on what the yearly event means to her by saying that "a lot of folks who visit don't realize how many shops and artists are scattered about the

area, on both sides of the Delaware River" and that "if they (the tourists) have a good time in the county, then we all win. 'Buy local/shop local' is what we're all about."

While some may be under the impression that handmade gifts are out of their price range, there is a wide variety of items and price tags at this annual show. "Where else can one purchase individually crafted silver earrings for seven dollars and fifty cents?" Duke asks while touring the showroom. On closer inspection, Jane Blake's colorful, hand painted silk scarves are reasonably priced and many items are "inexpensive and easy to ship" anywhere in the world, she concludes.

The variety of gifts is expansive and diverse. Valerie Taggart's hand-crafted ornaments are each created from dried gourds and Donna Green-thal, who teaches second grade in the Roscoe school district, has watercolors on hand for purchase. "People love her work" Duke enthuses, while explaining that Kathie Fitzgerald's lampshades, Jack Yelle's paintings and Weiner's pottery are all perennial favorites as well.

Authors and musicians are represented, too, at Handmade for the Holidays in the form of books by local authors Marcia Nehemiah, Mary Greene, Barbara Winfield, Wendy Townsend, Joe Freda and Stacy Wakefield and Jazz pianist Kaz-zrie Jaxen's new CD, "A Million Shimmering Fish," debuts alongside recordings from "A Weekend of Chamber Music" and more. Furniture, soaps, handbags and greeting cards line the walls at Duke Pottery, as well as hand-spun wool, Claire Coleman's tutus for the kids and sheepskin rugs produced by Apple Pond Farm.

A dizzying array of gifts await, all destined to become family heirlooms in homes around the world as visitors shop, schmooze and (in some cases) meet with the artists, during the three weekends that Handmade for the Holidays welcomes guests, beginning on November 30 and running through December 15 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. While these dates are specific to the seasonal display of gifts, Duke points out that hundreds of items are available all year long and that visitors can stop by the showroom most days. For more information on Handmade for the Holidays, Duke Pottery, and a complete list of artists represented, visit the website (www.dukepottery.com), check out the Facebook page (www.Facebook.com/Duke-Pottery), or call 607/498-5207.

A full list of vendors as well as more photos may be found at [www.River Reporter.com](http://www.RiverReporter.com).

Local artisans hold holiday market

By ANDREA BRUNS

HONESDALE, PA — As live music and the aroma of freshly baked holiday cookies and assorted confections and pastries fill the air, 30 local artists, artisans and food entrepreneurs will welcome holiday shoppers to the second annual Artisans' Market at The Cooperage on Sunday, December 15 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Displays of cards, jewelry, paintings, pottery, soaps, vases, lamps, picture frames, flowers and other gift items offer shoppers with the opportunity to purchase presents for their loved ones while supporting local artisans. This event is free and offers a warm holiday welcome to friends of all ages at 1030 Main St.

Live demonstrations will offer respite from shopping and live music will cloak the festivities in a holiday atmosphere as families sit down to enjoy a hot lunch or snack sold by Benjamin Cooper of The Anthill Kitchen. Children can have their pictures taken with Santa, as organized by the Honesdale Interact Club. Throughout the day, illustrator Ky Betts will do live caricature drawings, and Beatriz Querol-Zaldivar of Bea Creations will demonstrate acrylic painting. While these activities unfold, the unique works of local potters, seamstresses, carpenters and bakers will remain the centerpieces of the artisans' market. Items range in price and purpose, ready to suit each customer's holiday needs with fine local creations.

Artist Ellen Silberlicht will be selling "creatures from the sock drawer," an array of brightly colored sock puppets for children, as well as functional pottery. Her dishwasher-safe mugs, bowls, jars, and teapots range from earthy to vibrant tones, prepared to adorn any kitchen with hand-crafted beauty.

Among the sewn products will be Vintage Bling's bags, hats, aprons and jewelry by Ramona Jan. Jan repurposes quality fabrics to provide new garments including scarves made from vintage silks and handbags and hats crafted from high-end upholstery. Patterns of fabric collide to yield one-of-a-kind products.

Richard Miller of Dique Stone Products will display practical décor crafted from various types of stone and slate. His vases, picture frames, and lamps put a professional edge on natural products, creating works that can make a statement in a home or at the office. Barbara Consentino and Bill Walsh of Oakworks Studio show their love of natural wood and stone with their wooden cutting boards, platters and jewelry.

A colorful assortment of both sophisticated and playful jewelry by Hana Gorman will be available for purchase. Her polymer clay jewelry is elegantly composed from beads swirling with color. She also creates environmentally friendly jewelry by "up-cycling" plastic bags

and other materials into wearable art.

Painter Beth Johnson will display original artwork and printed cards. Her oil and watercolor paintings are designs ready to hold season's greetings as her note cards are sealed into envelopes or to ornament walls in their original forms.

Mount Pleasant Herbarry will sell an assortment of products handmade from their homegrown, pesticide-free herbs. The herbs are incorporated into a variety of products including handcrafted soaps with herb chunks, felted soaps, therapeutic buckwheat pillows, herbal healing balms, lip balms and lotion bars. Bathroom gift sets and assortments of herbal teas will also be available.

Shoppers also will find the necessities for an aromatic cup of coffee and to keep your cookie jar full of the sweets eagerly anticipated every holiday season.

Marcia and David Dunsmore run a small home bakery, the Myrtle Avenue Bakehouse, in Hawley, PA. Using organic grains, available local products, and organic sprouted wheat flour, they bake products with health and the community in mind. Breads and cookies will overflow at their tables. Cookies include chocolate chip, oatmeal and golden raisin, molasses, farmhouse pillows and a vanilla cookie with ricotta and sour cream. For those who eat gluten free, the Dunsmares will provide coconut macaroons and chunky peanut butter cookies. Marcia and David's fruit scones and savory cheese biscuits should not be overlooked, nor their special jams and compotes.

Sugar Creek Maple Farm will sell maple syrup as well as homemade maple confections ranging from mouth-watering maple candy to crunchy coated nuts to smooth maple cream.

Joan Spencer of Sweet Eden will provide an array of holiday sweets ranging from the traditional German Christmas cookies and Lebkuchen, to decorated sugar cookies. Amid the bustle of the holiday season, Sweet Eden will help alleviate the stress of keeping the cookie jar full for visitors and family by taking orders.

Brandenburg Bakery's Sarah and Errol Flynn from Jeffersonville, NY will delight those who love authentic German pastries and holiday treats.

In the midst of the season, the second annual Holiday Artisans' Market provides a time to come together as a community in order to support local artisans and pick up gifts for the entire family. Join friends and family for an afternoon of holiday joy at The Cooperage.

A complete list of vendors can be found online at thecooperageproject.org/holiday-artisans-market. Links to more information about the artisans and their products are available alongside the list.

A full list of vendors as well as more photos may be found at [www.River Reporter.com](http://www.RiverReporter.com).



Valerie Taggart's whimsical holiday ornaments are all hand painted and made from dried gourds.



Handmade for the Holidays hostess Carolyn Duke displays one of her new pieces, created for the gift show at Duke Pottery in Roscoe, NY



The pinch-pots, vases and dinnerware created by Carolyn Duke combine to make a beautiful table setting at Handmade for the Holidays in Roscoe, NY.



Sock puppet by Ellen Silberlicht



Necklace by Hana Gorman



Original artwork and cards by Beth Johnson



Bags, hats and aprons by Ramona Jan

Holiday Happenings

Thurs., Nov. 21

Chanukah dinner meeting

LIBERTY — Catskill Mountain Chapter of Hadassah's Chanukah dinner meeting at Yiasu Restaurant, 6:30pm. Bring a menorah to show & an interesting family story. Gifts collected: hats, scarves & gloves wrapped & labeled either boy or girl. 845/292-5133 or 845/292-8023.

Christmas rummage sale

PORT JERVIS — Christmas rummage sale at First Presbyterian Church, bag day, 9am-12 noon. 845/856-1231, ext. 10.

Fri., Nov. 22

Christmas rummage sale

PORT JERVIS — Christmas rummage sale at the First Presbyterian Church of Port Jervis, what is left is free, 9am-12 noon. 845/856-1231 ext. 10.

Craft Sale

MONTICELLO — Sullivan County Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), annual craft sale, "white elephant" and home-made luncheon at Sullivan County Government Center, 9:30am-3pm.

Church holiday bazaar

MONTICELLO — Holiday bazaar at St. John's Episcopal Church, 15 St. John St., 9am-3pm. Free admission. Lunch can be purchased, 11am-1pm. Gently used items. Handmade soaps & body scrubs. Treasures to find. 845/798-8912.

Sat., Nov. 23

Artists show & holiday fair

LIVINGSTON MANOR — CAS Winter Member's Show and Holiday Fair at the Catskill Art Society, reception from 2-4pm.

Church holiday bazaar

MONTICELLO — Holiday bazaar at St. John's Episcopal Church, 15 St. John St., 9am-5pm. Free admission. Lunch can be purchased 11am-1pm. Gently used items. Handmade soaps & body scrubs. Treasures to find. 845/798-8912.

Church holiday bazaar

MATAMORAS — St. Joseph's Holiday Bazaar at St. Joseph's Church, 307 Ave. F, 9am-3pm. Many craft vendors, bake sale, & flea market. Raffle. 570/491-2152.

Sun., Nov. 24

Holiday arts & craft fair

LOCH SHELDRAKE — SUNY Sullivan arts & crafts fair, 10am-4pm. Annual event showcases local and regional artisans, from handmade home decor items to food. 845/434-5750.

'The Nutcracker Festival'

MONTICELLO — Music concert at the Nesin Cultural Arts & Eugene D. Nesin Theatre for the Performing Arts, 4-6pm.

Tues., Nov. 26

Holiday dessert silent auction

ROSCOE — Roscoe Central School PTA Holiday Dessert "Silent Auction" at Roscoe/Rockland Community Hall, doors open at 6:30pm, winners announced at 7:30pm. Coffee and tea served. 607/498-9940.

Thurs., Nov. 28

Thanksgiving dinner at Settlers Inn

HAWLEY — Thanksgiving Dinner at Settlers Inn, 12 noon-6:30pm. Traditional meal with all the trimmings, plus seasonal appetizers & dessert. \$49/person; \$29/child. *Prix fixe* menu. desk@thesettlersinn.com or 570/226-2993.

Fri., Nov. 29

Holiday craft fair

CALLICOON — Delaware Community Center hosts two-day craft fair, 9am-4pm. Unique merchandise for holiday shopping, plus breakfast, lunch, & snacks for purchase. 845/887-5634.

Sat., Nov. 30

'The Nutcracker'

MILFORD — Delaware Valley Dance Company performs "The Nutcracker" at DV High School on

Route 6, 12 noon and 7 p.m. Tickets in advance, \$12; \$8 for children & seniors. Tickets at the door, \$14; \$10 for children & seniors. 845/856-3373.

Handmade for the holidays

ROSCOE — Quality local art, craft and vintage gifts at Duke Pottery, 11am-4pm. Pastry cafe and hot soup.

Holiday craft fair

CALLICOON — Delaware Community Center hosts two-day craft fair, 9am-4pm. Unique merchandise for your holiday shopping, as well as breakfast, lunch, and snacks for purchase. 845/887-5634.

St. Nicholas Faire

HONESDALE — St. Nicholas Faire at Grace Episcopal Church, 9am-4pm. Photo opportunity with St. Nicholas, crafts for kids, holiday cookies, snack bar, soups & chili to go, Christmas goods, attic treasures. Benefits outreach of Grace Church. 570/253-2760.

Sun., Dec. 1

Advent concert

SHOHOLA — Advent concert at St. Jacobi Lutheran Church, 3pm. Area churches & musical groups participate. Free- will food pantry offering. Refreshments served. 570/559-7676.

Bach Christmas concert

PORT JERVIS — Delaware Valley Choral Society performs the complete version of the Bach Magnificat at Drew United Methodist Church, 3pm. Tickets, \$15 for adults; \$10 for students. 570/267-8773 or 845/856-5696.

Holiday craft fair

CUDEBACKVILLE — Holiday Craft Fair at D&H Canal Visitor's Center, 58 Hoag Rd., 10am-3pm. Unique handcrafted items: candles, soaps, jewelry, pet accessories, holiday ornaments, primitive & folk art & more. Many items under \$5. Benefits Neversink Valley Museum. 845/754-8870.

The Lyric Quartet

PARKSVILLE — The Lyric Quartet presents A Grand Holiday Musical Feast at the Dead End Cafe, 3pm. Tickets: \$18. 845/747-4247.

Theme Tree Exhibit

HURLEYVILLE — Display of holiday trees decorated by different organizations & individuals at Sullivan County Historical Society.

Thurs., Dec. 5

Decorating with holiday greens

HONESDALE — Presented by Master Gardeners at The Cooperage, 6-8pm. Free admission; \$5 for each item made. www.thecooperageproject.org.

Fri., Dec. 6

Christmas with The Crackers

HONESDALE — Toys for Tots fundraiser with music by The Crackers at The Cooperage, 6-10pm. Suggested donation, \$10, or a new toy. Coffee & treats for purchase. www.thecooperageproject.org.

Holiday bake sale

HONESDALE — Holiday bake sale and "New to You" Boutique at The Other Shop, 1036 Main St., 10am-3pm. Homemade baked goods & decorative holiday items. Sponsored by Wayne Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

Liberty holiday parade/ tree lighting ceremony

LIBERTY — Following the annual Town of Liberty holiday parade, the tree lighting ceremony takes place 6pm at the Town Hall and Liberty Main Street Stage. Light refreshments served. 845/292-7690.

Sat., Dec. 7

Christmas in Callicoon

CALLICOON — Children's Christmas party, 1-3pm at Delaware Community Center. Arts & crafts projects for holiday giving, cupcake decorating, photos with Santa for a nominal fee. 845/887-5155.

'Highlights for Children' holiday open house

HONESDALE — "Highlights for Children" holds 22nd annual holiday open house at 803 Church St., 10am-4pm. Event features treats, entertainment & craft room. 570/253-1080.

Holiday bake sale

HONESDALE — Holiday bake sale and "New to You" Boutique at The Other Shop, 1036 Main St., 10am-3pm. Homemade baked goods & decorative holiday items. Sponsored by Wayne Memorial Hospital Auxiliary.

Holiday craft fair & lunch

GRAHAMSVILLE — Gramsenville United Methodist Church hosts a holiday craft fair & luncheon in its Fellowship Hall, 10am-3pm. Local artists & craftsmen will sell jewelry, watercolors, pottery, handmade soaps & more. Lunch of soup, sandwiches & desserts available. 845/985-7427 or 845/985-2283.

Holiday variety show

NARROWSBURG — "Once Upon a Time: The Best Holiday Show Ever—Even If You've Seen Them All!" A variety show with singing, dancing & comedic acting. By DJM Productions in association with DVAA, 2pm and 7pm, Tusten Theatre, 210 Bridge St. Cost, \$15; \$10 for children under 16. (Not appropriate for under 5 years old). Tickets & reservations, 845/252-7272.

Indie Holiday Mart

NARROWSBURG — Indie Holiday Mart in the alley off of Main Street between The Heron and MayerWasner, 11am-6pm. Custom jewelry, clothes, accessories, artisan foods, oddities & gifts. www.facebook.com/IndieNarrowsburg.

Sun., Dec. 8

Holiday concert

BETHEL — "Lincoln Center Family" holiday concert at the Event Gallery, Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, 3pm. Tickets: 845/583-2060.

Indie Holiday Mart

NARROWSBURG — Indie Holiday Mart in the alley off of Main Street between The Heron and MayerWasner, 11am-6pm. Custom jewelry, clothes, accessories, artisan foods, oddities & gifts. www.facebook.com/IndieNarrowsburg.

Mon., Dec. 9

Holiday Love Lites

HONESDALE — Wayne Memorial Hospital Auxiliary annual Holiday Love Lites ceremony & carols at the hospital, 6:30pm. Trees in front of the hospital will be lit, each light shining in memory or honor of a loved one. The public is invited. 570/253-3610 or 570/729-7881.

Sat., Dec., 14

Christmas concert

BETHEL — "Christmas, Christmas, Christmas," with Karen Mason at the Events Gallery, Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, 8pm. Admission: \$49.50. Tickets: 800/745-3000.

Indie Holiday Mart

NARROWSBURG — Indie Holiday Mart in the alley off of Main Street between The Heron and MayerWasner, 11am-6pm. Custom jewelry, clothes, accessories, artisan foods, oddities & gifts. www.facebook.com/IndieNarrowsburg.

Sun., Dec. 15

Holiday artisans market

HONESDALE — Second annual holiday artisan market at The Cooperage, 11am-5pm. Thirty local and regional artisans. www.thecooperageproject.org.

Holiday concert

WOODBOURNE — Lesser known carols & cantatas, presented by Sullivan County Community Chorus at Immaculate Conception Church, 2pm. Admission, \$15; \$12 for students & seniors; kids free with parents attending. 845/794-7869.

Indie Holiday Mart

NARROWSBURG — Indie Holiday Mart in the alley off of Main Street between The Heron and MayerWasner, 11am-4pm. Custom jewelry, clothes, accessories, artisan foods, oddities & gifts. www.facebook.com/IndieNarrowsburg.

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Advent

The season of expectation

By Fr. EDWARD K. ERB

Outside the Christian Church, the word "advent" is associated with something that is on the brink of coming, such as, "the advent of the fiscal collapse" heard in the news recently. In the Church, though, Advent is a season of waiting, of expectation, hope and preparation.

Advent is the season in the Church which precedes the annual remembrance of the birth of Jesus Christ. It begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas, often as in this year, the Sunday after Thanksgiving. The most obvious observance in the Church is marking time by each week lighting one more candle in the Advent Wreath—a circle of greens with

four candles lit in succession. On Christmas Day, those candles are replaced with a single white candle in the center—the Christ candle.

Another obvious sign is the color of the season. Often purple has been used for the color of the candles as well as the vestments worn by ministers and the coverings for Altar, pulpit and lectern. Purple is usually used for penitential seasons of the Church, notably Lent, which precedes Easter. Advent was called the "Little Lent" as a time of penitence preparing for Christ's arrival. The English tradition though is to use a deep blue as the color of the season. Equally a color of royalty, blue is the color associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and separates Advent's expectation from Lent's penitence.

The Sundays of Advent recall the prophecies of the Hebrew Testament of the coming of Messiah as well as the Annunciation (announcement) of the Archangel Gabriel to Elizabeth and Mary of the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus, his cousin, and the assurance to Zechariah and Joseph (their husbands). To prepare for the coming of Messiah, the story of John is told who proclaimed that Jesus was the Messiah and prepared the way for Christ's earthly ministry.

With the marking of time, of expectation, the lighting of successive candles (perhaps modeled on the Hanukkah lights), another tradition is counting down the days with an Advent Calendar. Usually a child's entertainment, an Advent Calendar is a two-layered board with a picture of the season on top. It contains 25 numbered windows (from December 1st) which are opened one day at a time. Behind each window can be a verse from the Bible, or more popular with the children, a coin or piece of chocolate. Even in the secular world, we recognize the excitement



Starting on December 1 and counting down to Christmas Day, small treats can be retrieved daily from this homemade Advent Calendar, made by **The River Reporter's** Amanda Reed. From the back, the cardboard rolls are just the right size to fit tiny gifts inside. The numbered circles are cut from scrapbooking paper and flip up for retrieving the treats.

ment of children as the days are counted down. Usually it is because of Santa Claus, but the Advent wreath and calendar help them focus on the "reason for the season."

(Fr. Erb is pastor at Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA.)



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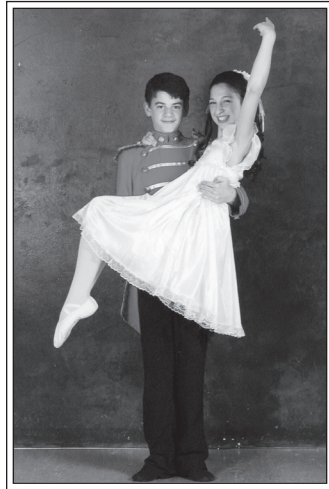
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Celebrating the holiday with your blended family

By TOM CASKA

The days between October 31 and January 1 are my favorite days of the year. I stop short of naming holidays, because there is so much going on at this time that these days mesh into one great big season of smiles. This is the most exciting time of the year, and yet it can also be the most stressful. But cool heads can prevail, especially in our current society where blended families are more the norm.

I remember being a kid growing up in a big “blended” household with all the comings and goings of family and friends. Mom referred to our Brooklyn home as “Grand Central Station.” We lived in a three-story Queen Anne in Flatbush, NY with Mom, Dad, Grandma, Grandpa, Aunt Jo, Aunt Ellie, Uncle Charlie, siblings Kathy, Ken, (me), Mike and Jean, plus a boxer named Hansel. We were crowded in the beginning, but as time moved on and people moved out, we gained some elbow room.

During holiday dinner celebrations, we all squeezed in around the table—somehow. Yes, we had a kids’ table, which at times was in my grandmother’s bedroom. I say, “blended” because my older sister and brother are my half-siblings, but there is nothing half about them in our eyes. Because they are 10 and 12 years older, there was a big “idol” factor in our minds when it came to Kathy and Ken.

I remember being a snot-nosed 10-year-old, getting the crap beat out of me by “Lumpy” in the schoolyard. Then some kid said, “Hey, that’s Orbsie’s little brother!” Suddenly “Lumpy” picked me up by my collar and asked, “Are you his little brother? And if so, why you got different last names?”

“Cause his dad died, and my dad married his mom,” I blurted out, spitting the dust from my lips. He brushed me off and told me to tell my brother Ken, “This was a big mistake.” (Yes, Ken had a reputation in the schoolyard that saved my butt that day.)

I hate the term “step” brother, sister, son or daughter—mother and father for that matter, too. There is a connotation to that term “step” that makes me feel as if we are illegitimate. Fast forward 40 years, I have a “blended” family of my own, and I still struggle with the term. Our kids have used the term, “brother by another mother,” which about sums it up and puts a smile on our faces. I once had a “discussion” with the youngest, who reminded me, “you’re not my dad,” to which I agreed and reminded him he had a perfectly good dad, and would he like me to call him?

Raising a family is never easy. With

now with traditions like “Cookie Palooza,” a weekend of making cookies to share with friends and the other parent as well.

It is really important to validate the other parent. Once the “War of the Roses” is over, there needs to be peace in the home. Validating the other parent is key in my book; these gestures are the “ties that bind.” They reinforce to the kids that if parents can get along, they are still loved. Today’s kids know the reality of divorce more than we realize, and the more normal we adults can make it the better. Heck, there will be plenty of graduations, soccer games, plays, funerals, more

On a few occasions, Evelyn and I decided to reach out and invite everyone from each family to our celebrations. It seems the barbecues worked the best, when there was plenty of room to walk about. We also did have a “blended” Thanksgiving dinner one year, and I must say it went well. If the discussions revolve around the kids (or pets) it seems that things roll smoothly. This single event helped to smooth the feathers for future gatherings of the kids’ celebrations.

There are issues to be considered, and there are plenty of suggestions online for how to pull this off. Here are a few tips from me: Don’t take the bait when comments are made; don’t forget to breathe; and before you make a comment, look into the eyes of your child—they will be looking into yours.

I will leave you with a quote from Mrs. Doubtfire:

“Oh, my Dear. You know, some parents get along much better when they don’t live together. They don’t fight all the time, and they can become better people. Much better mommies and daddies for you. And sometimes they get back together. And sometimes they don’t, Dear. And if they don’t... don’t blame yourself. Just because they don’t love each other doesn’t mean that they don’t love you.

“There are all sorts of different families. Some families have one mommy, some families have one daddy, or two families. Some children live with their uncle or aunt. Some live with their grandparents, and some children live with foster parents. Some live in separate homes and neighborhoods, in different areas of the country.

“They may not see each other for days, weeks, months or even years at a time. But if there’s love, Dear, those are the ties that bind. And you’ll have a family in your heart forever. All my love to you, Poppet. You’re going to be all right.

“Bye-bye.”



The author’s blended family, Evelyn Diuguid-Caska, left, Tom Caska, Randy Diuguid (holding stuffed Santa), Catherine Caska, Taylor Diuguid, Thom Caska and Bradley Diuguid, will celebrate the holidays together.

the bumps in the road comes the joy of seeing everyone grow into his or her own.

Christmas in particular is my favorite holiday, and it’s because of the kid in me and the joy of having kids around me. After my first marriage ended and Evelyn and I married, it became clear early on that to keep the peace there would be compromises. The “every-other-holiday rule” eventually morphed into a realization that Christmas Day would be celebrated on the day the kids found their way back to our home. We supplement the holiday season

graduations, throw in a wedding or two, and you get my point. From the kids’ perspective, they want Mom and Dad—period. They will tolerate the significant others as long as it’s Mom and Dad first, which is not all that bad if you think about it.

Sometimes it’s appropriate for the significant other to step back and let the “nuclear” family be, without fear or jealousy, remembering it’s about the kids. Don’t get me wrong, I am speaking from my experience here, and I am no expert by far, just another guy trying to figure this all out.

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Julenisse

A Christmas phenomenon from Norway

By LINDA DROLLINGER

Author's Note:

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting the local chapter of Sons of Norway, Bernt Balchen Lodge #3-566, in Lackawaxen, PA, to learn about Norwegian Christmas traditions. From the good people there, and from an article by Sarah Asp Olson, "Norway's Nisse" published in the December 2012 issue of SON's official magazine, **Viking**, I learned how at Christmas ancient wisdom makes its way to us still.

LACKAWAXEN, PA — He's only as tall as a toddler, but his long white beard proves that puberty was a milestone passed decades ago. Believed to live in farm out-buildings, he's known to be mischievous and can be moody and unpredictable as well. Hardly fashion forward, he dresses in gray knickers and is never without a red stocking cap, which, when turned inside out, renders him invisible. Usually benevolent, he's credited with tending to the farm animals and protecting the farm from evil spirits. In return, he expects some kind of edible reward, usually in the form of cream porridge and strong alcoholic drink. If the reward is not provided or falls short of his expectations, his nature will turn malevolent, and he can wreak harm on the farm, its animals, and the farmer's family. It's reputed that the bite of an angry *nisse* (elf) can be fatal within minutes.

A color-blind leprechaun? No, but his distant ancestors were probably of the same fairy-sprite family. He's the *nisse* of Norway's eastern and southern farm country, and he is, as the kids of today would say, legendary.

The *nisse's* origins are shrouded in the mists of time, but he's generally thought to be descended from the *huldre*-folk of ancient Norway. Like the wee folk of Ireland, *huldre*-folk tend to their business forever unseen, although their existence is accepted without question. There emerged from the *huldre*-folk one guardian archetype, *gardvord*, whose duty it was to protect the farm and all who dwelled thereon. In return for his protection, he was revered and provided with edible tribute.

Some mythologists claim that a plumb line can be dropped from *gardvord* to Norway's Santa

Claus, Julenisse. (In the Norwegian language, Jul means Yule, and *nisse* means elf; thus *Julenisse* is the Yule elf. Interestingly, *Nisse* is also a Norwegian nickname for Nicholas.) But no one argues the fact that the *nisse* figure emerged from Norse folklore and has become inextricably identified with Norway's culture, transforming and evolving along with Norway's own character.

From pagan times, Norway celebrated a festival of light near the winter solstice on December 21. In the 10th century, King Haakon I moved that traditional feast to December 25, in honor of the



Contributed photo

According to Norwegian tradition, Julenisse is a Christmas elf that bestows gifts on those who have led a virtuous lifestyle.

birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas is a national feast day in Norway, then and now. At 4 p.m. on Christmas Eve, all work comes to a halt. People dress in their finest clothes and sit down to a feast that starts with a first course of pudding. But before they eat, they hang out a sheaf of grain for the birds and leave a bowl of pudding (or cream porridge) for the barn *nisse*. A feast of roast pig follows and continues into the night. Long after the feast has ended, the food and drink is left on the table, so that the Julenisse can help himself.

No one wants to risk offending him and bringing *nisse* wrath down upon the farm.

The Julenisse emerged around the middle of the 19th century, just as Christmas in Scandinavia and much of Western Europe was morphing into the child-centered family holiday celebrated in America today. Contemporary Norwegian folklorists view Julenisse as a refined and updated version of the *nisse* of Norway past. Like his predecessor, Julenisse has a nature that is both generous and judgmental. He bestows gifts on those whose virtuous lifestyle has made them worthy of the honor. And, like the *nisse* of old, he expects an edible reward for his efforts. He favors the headwear of his ancestor, and it's no coincidence that he, too, manages to do his work unseen.

A deep faith in the unknown runs through the Norwegian way of life. Long before microscopes and telescopes, the *nisse* personified a Norwegian conviction that the eyes and mind of man cannot discern all that exists. Julenisse is the modern manifestation of the Norwegian belief that the eternal mystery of life must be acknowledged, respected, and given its due.

(For more information about Sons of Norway, visit www.sonsofnorway.com. New members are always welcome, and Norwegian ancestry is not a requirement; the primary requirement is having a strong interest in, and passion for, Norwegian culture. Visit www.3dsofn.org. Special thanks to Millie Diefenbach, Mikki Ryan and Sverre Aasgaarden.)

Nisse wisdom is a prescription for virtuous life, long attributed to the *nisse*. An eclectic mix of common sense, nonsense and humor, here are some nuggets of *nisse* advice.

- Change underwear at least once a year.
- Stay dry behind the ears.
- Tell the others a good joke every day.
- It's obligatory to take a ladle of cod liver oil daily.
- Don't tease your neighbor more than once a month.
- Even if you're wrong, don't give in.
- A good laugh extends life.
- Don't overwork when you don't have to.
- Save the pennies and let the dollars go.
- Don't let the neighbors get more hay in their barn than you have in yours.
- View change with skepticism.
- Stay in shape and lift a horse with one outstretched arm daily.

(Excerpted from "The Norwegian Nisse: Its Amazing Life and History" by Frid Ingulstad)

Recipes for Julenisse's favorite food and drink are here provided, to safeguard readers from the retribution of a disgruntled Julenisse. Please note that strong beer can be substituted for grog.

Hot Apple Grog with Blackcurrant and Cinnamon

Serves five

- 3 cups apple cider
 - 1/2 cup sugar
 - 1 cinnamon stick
 - 2 dried blackcurrant leaves (can be excluded)
 - 1/3 cup apple liquor
- Bring apple cider to a boil with sugar, cinnamon stick and blackcurrant leaves.2
- Let simmer for approximately 10 minutes.
- Remove from heat and cool.
- Add apple liquor just before serving.
- Season to taste with more sugar.

[Adapted from New Scandinavian Cooking www.newscan-cook.com]

Cream Porridge

- 1 quart thick soured cream
 - 1 3/4 cups flour
 - 1 quart milk
 - 1 tsp salt
- Boil the soured cream (covered) for two minutes and stir in half the flour. Stir vigorously until the butter separates. Skim off butter and keep warm. Stir in the rest of the flour and mix in milk. Simmer the porridge for five minutes. Season with salt.



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Shop local at the Narrowsburg Indie Holiday Mart

By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

Now in its second year, Narrowsburg's Indie Holiday Mart will be held on the weekends of December 7 and 8 and 14 and 15 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sundays. The mart is run by Pamela Mayer and Allison Ward. Ward's husband, Paul, had the idea to create an independent artisan mart last holiday season that sells goods from different talents around the area. The trio organized it last year, and Mayer said, "We thought we would do it again, because it was such a fun success."

Last year the holiday mart was held in a space behind the buildings on Main Street, but it didn't have heat or reliable electricity. This year it will be held in the alley between Little Harem and By Delaine on Main Street. You have to go through the alley and down the steps. "It still has an underground, independent, secret vibe, but it's much nicer," said Ward.

Products for sale are made by artisans from the local area, the Hudson Valley and New York City. "We wanted things to be manufactured around a three-hour radius," said Mayer. Mayer and Ward said they chose people who are very good with their craft. Mayer's son Gabriel will again do his popular bake sale, with part of the proceeds going to charity.

Shopping locally is important to Mayer and Ward. "As a local business owner and a person who makes things here, I do my very best to buy things locally and keep the money in our (community's) economy and marketplace. Also, there are so many talented people here who make things, or grow things, or produce things," said Mayer. Ward talked about the over-commercialization of the holidays and added that, "When you buy local, you buy directly from the person who makes it, so you're going to make a difference to them and that money will stay in the (local) economy and be spent in different places."

They said that there will be something for everyone at all prices at the indie mart. A list of all the merchants at the right. Mayer said, "Come have some hot cider on us, shop and buy some baked goods."



Narrowsburg Indie Holiday Mart merchants

Madame Fortuna – One-of-a-kind jewelry
MayerWasner - Clothing and accessories (+ sale items)

Bocote – Silk-screened and embroidered T-shirts and totes + hand-carved jewelry

Catskill Mountain Herbals - Local wild crafted teas, oils and tinctures (Saturday only)

Green Door - Hickster gear

Leila McCullough - Knitted accessories

Ellyane Hutchinson - Tatted lace jewelry

Echo Letterpress - Holiday cards (Saturday only)

Daria Dorosh - Textile jewelry

Mildred's Lane - Waxed ornaments and more

Lagusta's Luscious - Handcrafted artisanal chocolates

Hudson Valley Seed Library - Heirloom art seed packs

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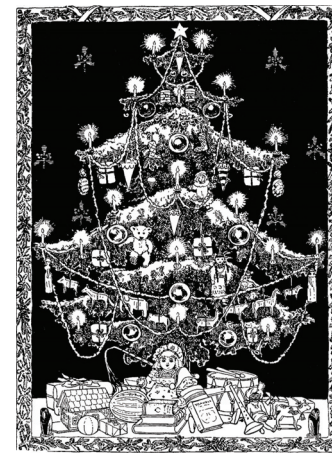
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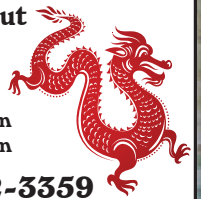
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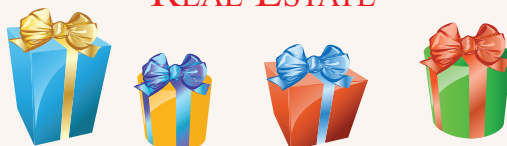
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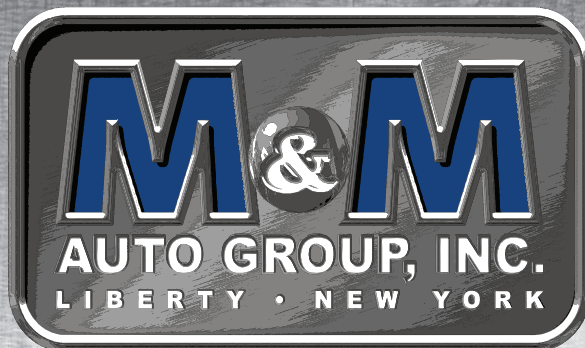
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