

Compliments of Jodee Harris

essential living

312

New Year
New Uncharted
Adventures



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Let's kick-start December by setting the table for a festive meal for two. Whether you're planning an intimate dinner for you and your partner or a cozy gathering with a close friend, our recipes will infuse warmth and joy into every bite.

Don't worry, though, if you've found yourself as the host for the big bash this year — you'll find all the tips and tricks you need to pull off the ultimate holiday party. From preparations to clean up, our guide will make it such a breeze, you may even volunteer for next year before the night is over! You'll even have time to bake up one of our elevated desserts to add an extra sprinkle of sweetness to the season.

Now, if you're craving a little peace and quiet, we have just the ticket. Escape the hustle and bustle of modern life and embark on off-grid adventures that will reconnect you with nature's wonders. Exploring uncharted territories will leave you refreshed and ready for the coming new year.

— From the Publisher



Pick your top celebration dessert

Scan the QR code to cast your vote!

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essential living

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LEVELING UP YOUR

Holiday Desserts



The holiday season is filled with countless desserts. From the classic gingerbread men to cinnamon rolls and the occasional fruitcake, there's no shortage of sweets in December. This year, challenge yourself to take your holiday desserts to the next level.

If you want your desserts to stand out from the dozens of cookie platters, you've come to the right place. We've curated four holiday-inspired recipes that you won't find anywhere else. These delectable treats are ideal for office parties, a white elephant gift exchange, family gatherings and more! There's also a traditional Jewish dessert that's perfect for Hanukkah.

So, skip the same old, same old and celebrate the season with these leveled-up recipes!



Sticky Toffee Pudding Cake

PREP TIME: 30 Minutes
COOK TIME: 60 Minutes
YIELD: 10 Servings

Say that five times fast! This spiced cake uses dates to create a soft texture, and a brown sugar sauce to give the cake its name. The end result is nothing short of heavenly.

INGREDIENTS

For the Cake

- 1½ c. pitted dates, chopped
- 1 c. boiling water
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1½ c. all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- 1½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ c. brown sugar
- ¼ c. cane sugar
- ½ c. unsalted butter, softened

- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 tbsp. molasses
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract

For the Sauce

- 1 c. unsalted butter
- 1½ c. brown sugar
- 1 c. heavy whipping cream
- 1½ tsp. vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Cake

1. Preheat the oven to 325° F and grease a Bundt cake pan, then dust with flour to prevent the cake from sticking.
2. Add the dates to a bowl with the boiling water and baking soda. Stir and let sit for 20 minutes.
3. After the allotted time, use a spatula to scrape the mixture into a food processor. Pulse until pureed (about 2 minutes, scraping down between pulses).
4. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the flour, pumpkin spice seasoning, baking powder and salt.
5. Add the sugars and butter to a stand mixer and cream together on medium-low speed for 2 minutes. Then, add the eggs and beat again to combine.
6. Fold in the date purée with the molasses and vanilla extract. Mix to combine.
7. Sift in the dry ingredients and beat with the mixer one last time.
8. Transfer the batter to the prepared Bundt pan and bake on the middle rack for 50 minutes. While the cake is baking, make the sauce.

For the Sauce

1. Add the butter to a heavy-bottomed pan and melt over medium heat.
2. Once melted, pour in the sugar. Then whisk in the cream. Reduce the heat to medium-low.
3. Add the vanilla extract and salt. Continue to stir for 5 minutes until it coats the back of a spatula.
4. Remove from heat and allow to cool for 5 minutes, continuing to stir.
5. After the cake has baked, use a fork to poke holes over the entirety of the cake.
6. Pour ¾ cup of the sauce over the cake. Return the cake to the oven and bake for another 5 minutes.
7. Remove the cake from the oven and allow to cool in the pan for 15 minutes. Then, carefully release the cake and cool to room temperature on a wire rack.
8. Slice the cake once cooled and serve with vanilla ice cream and the remaining sauce.

Chocolate Rugelach

This traditional Jewish dessert has a sweet chocolate filling and flakey exterior that will have everyone going back for seconds.

PREP TIME: 30 Minutes
INACTIVE TIME: 1.5 Hours
COOK TIME: 25 Minutes
YIELD: 30 Servings



INGREDIENTS

For the Dough

- 2 c. all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. salt
- 1 c. unsalted butter, cold and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " pieces
- 4 oz. cold cream cheese, cut into 1" chunks

For the Filling

- 8 oz. semisweet chocolate chips
- 2 tbsp. cane sugar
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. coconut oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cinnamon
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. espresso powder
- $\frac{3}{8}$ tsp. salt

For the Topping

- 1 egg, whisked
- 1 tsp. water
- Cane sugar for sprinkling

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Dough

1. Add the flour and salt to a food processor and pulse on low to combine.
2. Add the cold butter and cream cheese to the food processor. The mixture will be crumbly with pea-sized pieces of butter and cream cheese remaining.
3. Transfer to a clean surface and use your hands to work the crumbs until they form a light dough (be careful not to overwork – the dough should just barely hold together).
4. Divide the dough into 4 equal parts and flatten into 1"-thick disks. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 90 minutes.
5. After the allotted time, preheat the oven to 350° F and line 2 baking trays with parchment paper.
6. Transfer 1 round of dough to a clean work surface. Lightly dust with flour, then roll into a 10" circle.
7. Repeat with the other rounds.

For the Filling and Rugelach

1. Add the chocolate to a microwave-safe bowl with the coconut oil. Microwave for 30 seconds, then stir until the chocolate has melted.
2. Add the rest of the ingredients, and stir to combine.
3. Spread the filling over the circle, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ " border on the outside. Then use a pizza cutter to cut 16 pieces.
4. Take the larger side of the wedge and roll in. Once rolled, place on the prepared baking sheet. Repeat this process with all the wedges.
5. Before baking, whisk the egg and water together. Brush over the top of each rugelach, then sprinkle with sugar.
6. Bake for 25 minutes until golden brown.

GLUTEN-FREE

Dulce de Leche Snickerdoodle Bars

What do you get when you combine snickerdoodles, dulce de leche and white chocolate? The best cookie bars in the world!

INGREDIENTS

For the Dulce de Leche

- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk

For the Snickerdoodle Bars

- 2½ c. gluten-free all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. cream of tartar
- ½ tsp. xanthan gum (if the flour doesn't already have it)
- 2¼ c. sugar
- 1 c. unsalted butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. nutmeg
- 1½ c. white chocolate chips
- ½ c. heavy whipping cream
- 1 tbsp. maple syrup

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Dulce de Leche

1. Remove the label from the can and place in a slow cooker.
2. Fill the slow cooker with water (enough to cover the cans).
3. Place the lid on and cook on LOW for 8 hours.
4. After 8 hours, turn off the slow cooker. Allow to cool in the can (still in the water) for 2 hours. Then, remove from the slow cooker and open the lid.

For the Snickerdoodle Bars

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F and grease a 9" x 13" baking dish, then line it with parchment paper.
2. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, cream of tartar and salt.
3. In a large bowl, add 1 ½ cups of cane sugar and the softened butter. Use an electric mixer to cream together on medium speed for 2-3 minutes until fluffy.
4. Then, add the eggs and vanilla extract. Mix again to combine.
5. Sift the dry ingredients into the butter mixture, half at a time. Mix on medium-low speed until combined.
6. Transfer the dough to the prepared baking dish. Use a spatula to spread evenly, pressing into the bottom and sides of the pan.
7. Take the remaining cane sugar and add it to a bowl with the cinnamon and nutmeg. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the mixture over the dough in the pan.
8. Bake for 35 minutes on the middle rack until golden brown. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely.
9. Once the bars have cooled, pour the warm dulce de leche over the top.
10. Pour the white chocolate chips into a saucepan. Melt over medium heat, whisking in the cream. Once all the cream is incorporated and the chocolate has melted, add the maple syrup.
11. Stir constantly until smooth before removing from heat and cooling for 5 minutes. Next, pour the chocolate mixture over the dulce de leche.
12. Finally, sprinkle the remaining cinnamon mixture on top. Allow to cool to room temperature.
13. Cover the baking dish with foil and refrigerate for at least 4 hours (preferably overnight).
14. Use the parchment paper to carefully remove the bars from the pan. Place on a clean workspace and use a sharp, clean knife to cut.
15. Serve and enjoy! Refrigerate any leftovers.

PREP TIME: 30 Minutes
INACTIVE TIME: 16 Hours
COOK TIME: 35 Minutes
YIELD: 15 Servings



Cinnamon Sugar Donuts



PREP TIME: 15 Minutes
COOK TIME: 15 Minutes
YIELD: 12 Servings

Skip the cinnamon rolls this year and go for the donuts! These baked cinnamon sugar donuts are the perfect recipe to enjoy in the morning with a cup of hot chocolate.

INGREDIENTS

For the Donuts

- 2 c. all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting.
- ½ c. brown sugar
- ½ tsp. nutmeg
- ½ tsp. cardamom
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ c. milk

- 2 tbsp. Greek yogurt
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

For the Cinnamon Sugar Mixture

- ½ c. unsalted butter, melted
- ¾ c. cane sugar
- 2 tsp. cinnamon

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Donuts

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F and grease two 6-holed donut pans. Lightly dust with flour to prevent sticking.
2. In a medium-sized bowl, combine the flour, sugar, nutmeg, cardamom, baking powder and salt.
3. In a large bowl, combine the milk, Greek yogurt, eggs and vanilla extract. Whisk to mix thoroughly, then sift in half the flour mixture at a time.
4. Once combined, transfer the mixture to a piping bag (you can also use a large Ziplock bag with a small corner cut off). Fill the greased donut pan a little under three-fourths of the way full of the batter.
5. Bake for 15 minutes, then allow to cool in the donut pan for another 15 minutes.
6. To release the donuts from the pan, run a clean knife along the edges. Then carefully turn the pan upside down to release the donuts.
7. Place the donuts on a wire rack until completely cooled.

For the Cinnamon Sugar Mixture

1. Combine the cinnamon and sugar in a large, shallow bowl. In another bowl, add the melted butter. Dip both sides of the donut in the melted butter. Then, place in the bowl with the cinnamon sugar mixture. Dredge both sides until thoroughly coated.
2. Place the donut on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Repeat with all the donuts.

REMOTE TOURIST DESTINATIONS THAT ARE WORTH THE HIKE



Off-the-grid adventures await!



T

ourist destinations are undeniably appealing, often boasting a multitude of attractions to explore, sights to behold and activities to engage in. Yet, there are lesser-known destinations scattered around the world that offer breathtaking views of nature, along with a reprieve from the crowds.

It's common for people to overlook these hidden gems, instead sticking to the well-trodden path. However, it's okay to break free from the typical destinations and discover a unique experience that you won't find at tourist hotspots. Whether you're venturing through Europe's secluded corners or trekking off the grid in North America, you'll discover lesser-known destinations that you may never want to leave.



SAKSUN IS HOME TO A BEAUTIFUL LAGOON AND UNBELIEVABLE VIEWS OF THE SURROUNDING CLIFFS.



THE FAROE ISLANDS

The Faroe Islands are an archipelago located in the North Atlantic Ocean between Iceland and Norway. Composed of 18 volcanic islands, the wild landscapes of mountains, valleys, seaside cliffs and grassy heartlands are a sight to behold. While the larger towns are perfect for finding lodging and food, the real charm of the Faroe Islands lies in its remote villages. These tiny settlements are scattered throughout the islands, often tucked away in isolated fjords or nestled along the rugged coastline.

One such village to visit is Saksun, located on the island of Streymoy. Saksun is home to a beautiful lagoon and unbelievable views of the surrounding cliffs. Visitors can take a walk along the lagoon and enjoy the peacefulness of the village.

Another remote village worth visiting is Gjógv, located on the northeastern tip of Eysturoy Island. Visitors can wander through the narrow streets and admire the colorful houses or hike up to nearby mountain peaks for extraordinary views of the coastline.



THE BOUNDARY WATERS MINNESOTA, USA



THE VAST LANDSCAPE PROVIDES A PERFECT BACKDROP FOR ENDLESS ADVENTURE AND RELAXATION.

another popular activity, with ample opportunities to catch trout, walleye and northern pike throughout the area's 1,100 lakes and streams. No matter which adventure you choose, there is no shortage of diverse wildlife to spot, such as moose, black bears, wolves and bald eagles.

There are over 2,000 designated campsites, from rustic backcountry spots to more developed sites with restroom amenities. Visitors can also choose to stay in one of the many lodges or resorts nearby.

Located in northern Minnesota along the Canadian border, the Boundary Waters encompasses more than a million acres of unspoiled backcountry. The vast landscape provides a perfect backdrop for endless adventure and relaxation.

With over 1,200 miles of canoe routes, water lovers can paddle their way through the designated wilderness area and experience nature in its purest form. Hikers also have a dozen trails for exploring the serene surroundings. Fishing is

MASOALA NATIONAL PARK

Masoala National Park is a haven for adventure-seekers and nature lovers alike. Found on the island of Madagascar, there are no roads leading to Masoala — instead most visitors access the park by charter flights from Antananarivo, although boating or hiking expeditions are also an option. The park is home to diverse ecosystems, from rainforests to beaches and coral reefs, providing visitors with a wide range of activities. There are numerous hiking trails that lead through the park's lush surroundings, offering the chance to spot rare wildlife such as the red-ruffed lemurs. For water enthusiasts, the park's pristine beaches and crystal-clear waters offer excellent snorkeling and diving opportunities. Visitors can also take guided boat tours to explore the nearby islands and spot whales, dolphins and sea turtles.

For those who want to fully immerse themselves in the park's natural beauty, there are camping options available within the park boundaries. Alternatively, there are eco-lodges nearby that offer comfortable accommodations and various activities, such as kayaking and birdwatching.



MADAGASCAR

LORD HOWE ISLAND

AUSTRALIA

Lord Howe Island is a unique destination that offers an idyllic escape from the modern world. Limited internet access and the lack of any mobile phone service only add to the island's charm, allowing visitors to fully immerse themselves in paradise. The island boasts stunning scenery, including towering peaks and pristine beaches. To experience all the beauty of the island, visitors can hike to the

top of Mount Gower, where they will encounter breathtaking panoramic views.

Lord Howe is home to the world's southernmost coral reef at Lagoon Beach, which is teeming with an array of marine life, such as sea turtles, dolphins and Galapagos sharks, alongside 450 fish species and 90 coral species. On land, hundreds of

bird species live on or visit the island, including the endemic Lord Howe Island Woodhen and the red-tailed tropicbird, which performs stunning aerial acrobatics during mating season.

With a limited number of visitors allowed on the island per day, Lord Howe provides a serene and secluded experience to truly disconnect from the world.



TO EXPERIENCE ALL THE BEAUTY OF THE ISLAND, VISITORS CAN HIKE TO THE TOP OF MOUNT GOWER, WHERE THEY WILL ENCOUNTER BREATHTAKING PANORAMIC VIEWS.

TEXAS, USA



AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST DARK SKY PARKS, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO SPEND THE NIGHTS STARGAZING.



BIG BEND

Nestled in southwest Texas, Big Bend National Park offers a plethora of breathtaking vistas, rugged terrains and abundant wildlife. Being over three hours from the nearest airport and at least eight hours from major cities like Houston and Dallas, Big Bend sees far fewer guests than most other national parks. Since Big Bend covers 1,252 square miles of diverse landscapes,

it provides endless possibilities for outdoor adventures like hiking through the Chisos Mountains, soaking in natural hot springs or rafting down the Rio Grande. As one of the world's largest Dark Sky Parks, it would be impossible not to spend the nights stargazing.

Big Bend offers four developed campgrounds with restrooms

and drinking water in addition to backcountry campsites and primitive roadside sites for anyone wanting to venture further into the wilderness. For a more comfortable stay, Chisos Mountain Lodge is the only lodging available within the park, and guests are always happy to retreat to the cozy cabins with stunning views of the mountains.



Whether it's the rugged terrain of the Faroe Islands or the serene beauty of the Boundary Waters, there's something truly special about venturing off-the-grid. These remote destinations offer a chance to disconnect from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and immerse oneself in the beauty of nature.



personality-powered
ORGANIZATION

Tailoring your approach to a tidy life

the **MINIMALIST MAVEN**

The Minimalist Maven finds joy in a clean, clutter-free space where every item serves a purpose. Their mantra is “less is more,” and they prioritize quality over quantity to create a serene and calming environment.

home organization solutions:

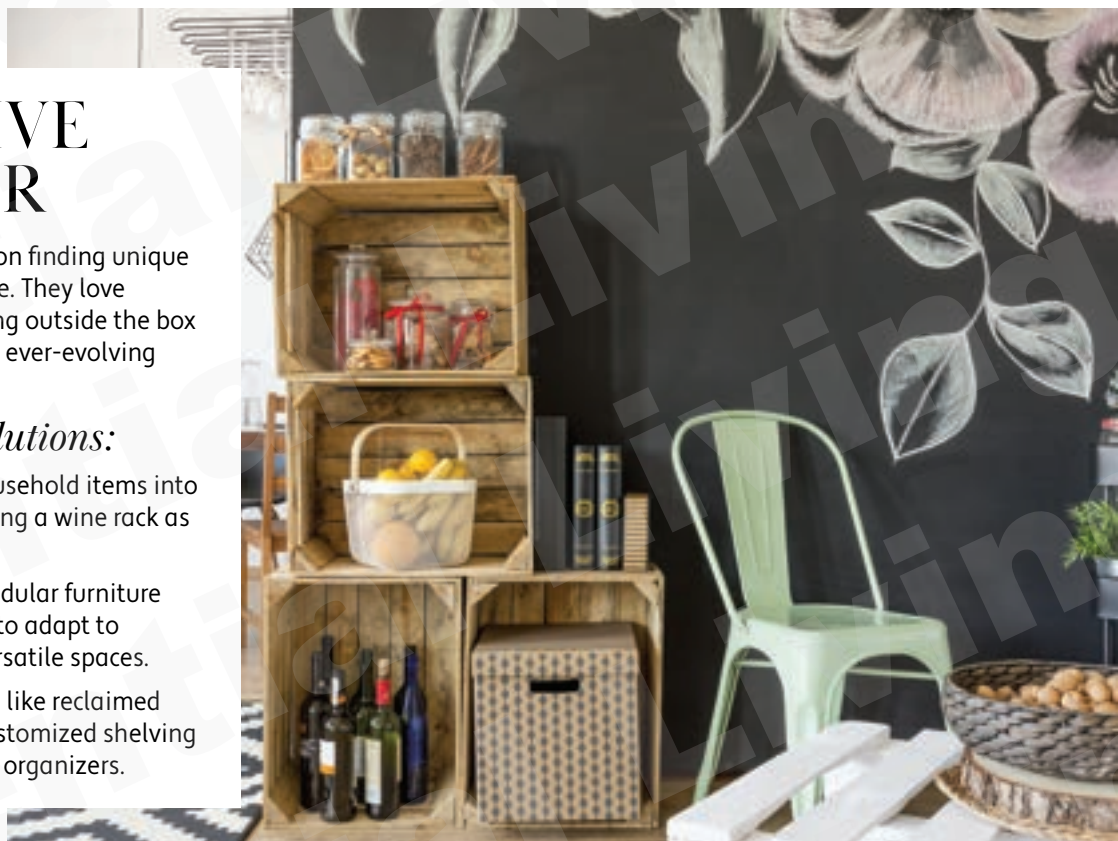
- **The Capsule Collection:** Invest in items that can perform multiple functions, eliminating the need for excessive gadgets and appliances.
- **Compartmentalized Clarity:** Utilize compartment storage systems to ensure every item has its designated place.
- **Digital Essentials:** Utilize cloud storage or digital apps to keep everything organized and easily accessible without physical clutter.

the ADAPTIVE INNOVATOR

The Adaptive Innovator thrives on finding unique solutions to organize their space. They love exploring new ideas and thinking outside the box to transform their home into an ever-evolving sanctuary.

home organization solutions:

- **Upcycle Magic:** Repurpose household items into functional storage, such as using a wine rack as a towel holder.
- **Flexible Furniture:** Opt for modular furniture that can be easily rearranged to adapt to changing needs and create versatile spaces.
- **DIY Delights:** Utilize materials like reclaimed wood or old crates to make customized shelving units or unique wall-mounted organizers.



the FUNCTIONAL GURU

The Functional Guru is a master at optimizing every inch of their space for maximum efficiency. They are always looking for ways to increase productivity to give them more time to do activities they love.

home organization solutions:

- **Smart Storage Systems:** Use open cubbies, baskets or hanging organizers to quickly access everyday items.
- **Command Central:** Create a centralized hub for important documents, calendars and to-do lists for easy reference.
- **Time-Saving Routines:** Designate specific days for cleaning, establish a meal planning schedule and delegate tasks whenever possible.



the METHODICAL PLANNER

The Methodical Planner thrives on structure and meticulous planning. They find solace in a well-executed system and create a harmonious home environment through attention to detail.

home organization solutions:

- **Task-Oriented Zones:** Allocate dedicated spaces for specific activities or tasks, like a launchpad with baskets and hooks near the door to store everyday essentials needed to leave the house.
- **Checklist Mastery:** Create detailed checklists for different areas of your home, from cleaning routines to organizing projects, to ensure nothing is overlooked.
- **Inventory Brilliance:** Revamp your storage system by creating a list of the items that are in each storage bin.

A Holiday Meal

for Two

Holiday meals are often depicted with a sprawling table filled with countless dishes, sides and desserts. If just imagining all of the cooking that goes into that feast exhausts you, you're not alone. And let's not even think about the hours of cleanup...

Contrary to popular belief, there's no guest count that you must hit to be able to enjoy a nice, seasonal meal. However, that's not

to say a small holiday dinner can't still be an experience. If anything, it's even more of an excuse to dine to the nines!

This holiday season, we're opting for dinner for two (instead of twenty). We've curated an elegant four-course meal for you and whoever is lucky enough to be your guest — signature cocktail included!

Cranberry Whiskey Cocktail

You have to take advantage of cranberries when they're in season, and there's no better way to utilize them than in this whiskey cocktail.

Prep Time: 5 Minutes | **Cook Time:** 10 Minutes | **Yield:** 2 Cocktails

INGREDIENTS

For the Simple Syrup

- 1 c. frozen or fresh cranberries
- ½ c. water
- ¼ c. cane sugar
- 2 rosemary sprigs

For the Cocktail

- 1 c. ice, plus more for the glasses
- 4 oz. whiskey
- 3 oz. cranberry juice
- 3 oz. simple syrup
- Cranberries, cinnamon sticks and rosemary sprigs for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Simple Syrup

1. Add the frozen cranberries, water, sugar and rosemary sprigs to a small saucepan.
2. Over medium heat, bring the mixture to a simmer. Let the syrup simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. Allow the syrup to cool to room temperature.

For the Cocktail

1. Add ice to a cocktail shaker with the whiskey, cranberry juice and simple syrup.
2. Shake vigorously for 1 minute.
3. Strain into 2 small cocktail glasses filled with ice.
4. Garnish with cranberries, cinnamon stick and a rosemary sprig.



Arugula & Fennel Salad

This winter salad is full of seasonal ingredients to create a zesty appetizer perfect to enjoy before dinner.



Prep Time: 20 Minutes

Yield: 2-4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

For the Dressing

- 3 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. honey
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the Salad

- 3 c. arugula, washed
- 1 Bartlett pear, washed and sliced thinly with a mandolin
- ¼ c. fennel bulb, shaved
- ¼ c. fresh or dried cranberries
- ¼ c. slivered almonds, toasted
- ¼ c. goat cheese, crumbled
- Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Dressing

1. Pour the apple cider vinegar into a small bowl, then whisk in the olive oil.
2. Once combined, add the Dijon mustard and honey.
3. Whisk to combine before adding salt and pepper.
4. Pour a little more than half the dressing into a large salad bowl (coating the sides).
5. Reserve the rest of the dressing to pour over the salad.

For the Salad

1. Add the washed arugula to the large salad bowl.
2. Use a mandolin on the second thinnest setting to carefully slice 1 pear, then add it to the bowl with the arugula.
3. Wash the fennel and cut off the top so that you're only working with the bulb. Wash and dry the bulb. Then, use the mandolin on a thicker setting to shave long pieces of fennel bulb, adding them to the salad.
4. Add the cranberries, toasted almonds and crumbled goat cheese to the bowl.
5. Use salad tongs to toss the salad, coating it in the dressing already in the bowl. If desired, drizzle the remaining dressing over the top of the salad or serve on the side.
6. Add salt and pepper to your liking before serving.

Sauteed Lemon Broccolini

If you're looking for an easy side dish that goes well with any meal, then baby broccoli is for you! This green vegetable is easy to cook and tastes delicious with lemon.

Prep Time: 10 Minutes

Cook Time: 15 Minutes

Yield: 2-4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

- 2 small bunches of broccolini, washed
- 3 tbsp. water
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Wash the broccolini, then remove any leaves and cut an inch off the stems.
2. Add the water and olive oil to a large skillet and heat over medium-high heat. Once the water begins to simmer, add the broccolini.
3. Toss to coat the broccolini, then cover and steam for 5 minutes over medium heat until the broccolini is a bright green and most of the liquid has evaporated.
4. After 5 minutes, remove the lid and add the butter, garlic and lemon juice.
5. Cover again for 2-3 minutes or until the broccolini has wilted slightly.
6. Remove the lid, then add the lemon zest, red pepper flakes and salt.
7. Cook for another 3-5 minutes. Remove them from heat once the broccolini is tender and the top has a little char.





Braised Short Ribs With Goat Cheese Polenta and Garlic Mushrooms

The entree of all entrees. This decadent dish has three flavor profiles that, when combined, yield the perfect bite.

Prep Time: 30 Minutes

Cook Time: 3 Hours and 30 Minutes

Inactive Time: 20 Minutes

Yield: 2-4 Servings

INGREDIENTS

For the Short Ribs

- 2 lb. short ribs (8 pieces, bone in or bone out)
- 2 tsp. pepper
- 1½ tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 shallot, diced
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1½ c. beef broth
- ¾ c. dry red wine
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 sprig rosemary

For the Goat Cheese Polenta

- 4 c. vegetable stock
- 2 c. whole milk
- 1 c. yellow corn polenta
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- ½ c. goat cheese

For the Mushrooms

- 1 c. brown mushrooms, sliced
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, sliced
- ¼ c. dry white wine
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp. pepper
- ¾ tsp. salt
- 1 sprig fresh thyme



INSTRUCTIONS

For the Short Ribs

1. Pat the short ribs dry with a paper towel and allow them to reach room temperature. Then, season with salt and pepper.
2. Preheat the oven to 325° F.
3. In a large Dutch oven, add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and heat over medium heat. Add 4 short ribs at a time, searing each side for 30 seconds. Remove the 4 short ribs and place on a plate, then repeat with the remaining.
4. Add the other tablespoon of olive oil to the Dutch oven with the shallot, carrots and celery. Sauté over medium heat for 5 minutes before adding the minced garlic.
5. Cook down for 2 minutes until the garlic is fragrant. Stir in the tomato paste and Worcestershire sauce.
6. Then, add the red wine and beef broth. Bring to a simmer, then add all 8 of the seared short ribs.
7. Add the bay leaves, thyme and rosemary. Then, cover with a lid and place in the oven for 2 and a half hours.
8. After the allotted time, the beef should be very tender. Allow to cool for 20 minutes before serving.

For the Goat Cheese Polenta

1. Combine the broth, milk and seasonings in a large pot and bring to a boil.
2. Whisk in the cornmeal and reduce the heat to medium.
3. Cook over medium heat for 30-40 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Once the polenta is smooth and begins to stick to the sides, remove from heat.
5. Stir in the goat cheese and serve under the short ribs and mushrooms.

For the Mushrooms

1. Wash and the cut mushrooms into ½"-thick slices, then pat dry.
2. Add the butter to a large pan and melt over medium heat.
3. Once melted, add the mushrooms and stir, cooking for 4 minutes.
4. Add the white wine, stirring to deglaze the pan.
5. Then add the minced garlic and fresh thyme.
6. Cook for another 4 minutes, stirring to prevent the mushrooms from burning.
7. Remove from heat and season with salt and pepper.
8. Garnish with more fresh thyme and serve over the goat cheese polenta.

Flourless Chocolate Cake

Is there anything more decadent than a flourless chocolate cake? This naturally gluten-free dessert is rich and the perfect sweet to end a fabulous dinner.

Prep Time: 10 Minutes

Cook Time: 25 Minutes

Yield: 8 Servings



INGREDIENTS

- ½ c. semisweet chocolate chips
- ½ c. unsalted butter
- ½ c. cane sugar
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- ½ c. unsweetened cocoa powder, plus more for dusting/sprinkling
- 1 tsp. espresso powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- Cranberries rolled in sugar (or fresh raspberries/strawberries) for topping
- Whipped cream or vanilla ice cream for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F and grease a 7" springform pan. Brush with melted butter, then line the bottom and sides with parchment paper. Cut the paper to fit accordingly, then brush again with melted butter. Finally, dust the bottom and sides with cocoa powder (shake off any excess).
2. Set a mixing bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Place the butter into the bowl to melt. Once halfway melted, add the chocolate chips and stir until melted. Then, remove from the heat and allow the bowl to cool slightly.
3. Combine the sugars and use an electric mixer to cream together for 2-3 minutes on medium-low speed. Then, add 1 egg at a time, mixing for 30 seconds in between.
4. Add the cocoa powder, espresso powder and salt to a small bowl. Sift half into the wet ingredients, using the electric mixer to combine before sifting in the rest of the dry ingredients.
5. Pour batter into the prepared pan and bake for 25 minutes on the middle rack.
6. Cool for at least 30 minutes in the springform pan. Then carefully remove by releasing the sides of the springform pan.
7. Dust with cocoa powder if desired, then serve with desired toppings and enjoy!

A dark, ornate living room with a chandelier, a fireplace, and a tufted chair. The room features dark wood paneling, a large chandelier with crystal droplets, a fireplace with a dark mantel, and a tufted chair with a dark frame. The overall aesthetic is gothic and dramatic.

—••O••—

EMBRACE THE DRAMA OF WHIMSIGOTHIC

THE DARK & DREAMY STYLE CREATING CAPTIVATING HOMES

—••O••—



Interior design styles have often filled our homes with elements like shiplap accent walls and vintage pieces. However, across all the various styles and elements, there has always seemed to be one thing missing — a touch of magic. Until now.

Whimsigothic mixes a touch of cluttercore, two pinches of boho, a sprinkle of eclectic and an ample dose of dark academia to create a warm and lush style that will leave you totally enchanted.

Although this dark and dreamy style is currently having a major moment, it first came into the limelight during the '90s, when you wouldn't dare miss the newest episode of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" or "Charmed."

Drawing inspiration from goth's dark and opulent side and cottagecore's whimsy and lightheartedness, whimsigothic strikes a perfect balance between the two.

The style thrives off deep colors and rich textures, while effortlessly incorporating lighter hues, floral touches and playful décor for a space that is draped in fanciful drama.



HOW TO GET THE LOOK

Part of what makes whimsigothic magical is its ability to match the personality of the individual. One might choose to go with a more romantic take on the style, adding vintage floral patterns and lace, while another may lean into dark academia with floor-to-ceiling bookshelves and a leather chair. Although the final details depend on personal taste, there are some must-haves when it comes to creating a whimsigothic home.



THE COLORS

Blank white walls won't get you very far when incorporating this style into your space. Walls covered in deep jewel tones or patterned wallpaper featuring a Victorian damask will help set the tone for the rest of the room. If you're feeling extra bold, go for all black walls to fully embrace the style. An emerald velvet couch or a dark vintage Moroccan rug with pops of gold will help tie the look together.

MIXED TEXTURES

Layer a variety of textures throughout the space to create maximum drama. Think dark wood finishes with a plush rug, a silky tablecloth surrounded by upholstered leather seating and velvet accent pillows against a chiffon blanket.

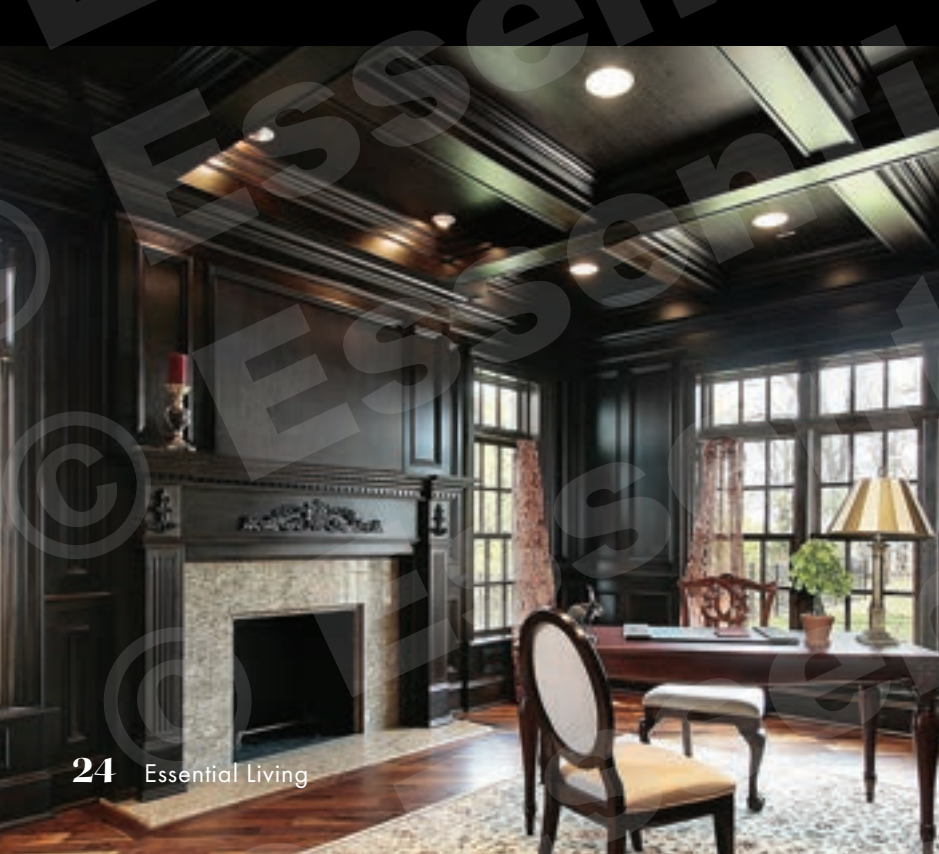


THE DÉCOR

This is where the magic happens. While the possibilities of decorating your space are just about endless, any whimsigothic interior should have a golden ornate mirror, a gorgeous candelabra (or two) and plenty of sprawling plants to fill the space.

A mismatched collection of thrifted trinkets on the table, stained glass art in the windows, shelves lined with apothecary jars and framed floral drawings on the wall will come together to create a touch of magic. Floor-length curtains, dried flowers in a tall vase and a sun catcher or two will flawlessly complement the rest of the décor.

When shopping for the perfect pieces, try to stick with authentic antique and vintage elements. You can't go wrong with distressed tables, claw foot chairs and furniture with intricate carvings to complete your space.



—●●○●●—

Whether you just want to try a new style in your home or are relishing in the nostalgia for the '90s, designing a whimsigothical escape is a great way to add some major character to your home and show off your dynamic personality.

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CHEERS TO A *Stress-Free* HOLIDAY PARTY



A
Guide
to Effortless
Entertaining

The holiday season is a time for celebration, and what better way to do that than to host a party? Whether you're planning a casual get-together with friends or a formal dinner party, with a little bit of planning and organization, you can throw a memorable and stress-free party.

SEND INVITES ASAP

With only so many days to celebrate the holidays, calendars fill up fast. Don't wait too long to set your date and send invitations. Try using an online invitation service to easily manage your guest list and save on postage.



Bring the Cheer

You don't need to buy all new holiday décor to deck the halls. Use what you already have, but keep in mind that sometimes less is more. Try hanging a garland on an empty wall or filling glass vases with vintage ornaments for a festive touch.



Make the Party Flow

If you put all your food and drinks in one place, you'll find all your guests in the same place too. Set appetizers out in different areas to keep guests moving around. Put drinks in easy-to-access spots and separate alcoholic from non-alcoholic beverages. Move furniture against the walls or into another room if it takes up more space than it provides.



Cook, Cater and Delegate

Pick a few no-fail dishes that you can make ahead of time, and enlist a few guests to bring a menu item or two. Consider catering some food as well, especially more time-consuming dishes — just don't forget to place your order well in advance.



Don't Attempt It All By Yourself

Whether it's helping to make food, coming over early to set up or staying to wash the dishes, accept the help of friends and family. To really reduce the stress of hosting, consider hiring a cleaning service to help you prepare your house for the big party.



Don't Overlook the Details

From multiple trash cans in easy-to-find spots, foods for various diets, the Wi-Fi password visibly on display and a fun soundtrack keeping spirits bright, it's normally the small details that make the biggest difference.

Hosting a holiday party doesn't have to be a stressful experience. By planning ahead, delegating tasks and paying attention to the details, you can throw a successful party that will leave everyone full of holiday cheer.





WALK YOUR WAY TO WELL- NESS

Step into a
healthier tomorrow

Ready to
put a spring
in your
step?

Walking is one of the easiest and most effective ways to boost your physical and mental health while also indulging your sense of adventure. But let's be real, sometimes hitting the pavement can seem about as appealing as watching paint dry. With these tips, you'll find yourself looking forward to every step of your wellness journey.

FIRST UP, LET'S SET SOME FUN AND CREATIVE GOALS TO MAKE YOUR WALKING ROUTINE MORE ENJOYABLE.

1

Walking is a breeze when you have a clear objective in mind. Make it fun by creating a challenge for yourself like beating the number of steps you took the day before, or try seeking out the quirkiest street art in your neighborhood. Whatever your goal, make sure it's something that will not only keep you motivated but also keep your walks fun. You can also **invite a friend to join you**. Not only is it a chance to catch up, but having a walking buddy can also provide **accountability** and **motivation** to keep up with your routine.



2

NOW, ON TO FASHION.

Who says you can't be wearing a good 'fit while getting fit? If you're feeling uninspired with your current workout wardrobe, why not switch things up a bit? **When you feel good about what you're wearing, you're more likely to enjoy your workout.** Additionally, investing in a pair of supportive sneakers will make your workout more **comfortable** and **help prevent any potential injuries.**





3

OF COURSE, NO WALKING ADVENTURE WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A KILLER SOUNDTRACK.

Whether you prefer to jam out to pop hits or enjoy something a bit more mellow, make sure you have a playlist that will **keep you moving and grooving**. And if you're feeling extra motivated, **you could even create a playlist that matches your pace**, so you are literally walking to the beat. Trust us, it will make time fly by.



4

AND FINALLY, LET'S TALK ABOUT WHY YOU SHOULD WALK IN THE FIRST PLACE.

Walking is a low-impact exercise that can have a big impact on your health and well-being. Plus, it's a fantastic way to **explore your neighborhood, connect with nature** and get some **vitamin D**. So, the next time you're feeling a bit sluggish, lace up your shoes and take that **first step towards a healthier, happier you!**

3 WAYS TO WALK MORE

1. TAKE THE STAIRS INSTEAD OF THE ELEVATOR OR ESCALATOR.
2. PARK YOUR CAR FARTHER AWAY FROM YOUR DESTINATION.
3. SCHEDULE A WALKING MEETING INSTEAD OF SITTING IN THE OFFICE.

Essential Living does not provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Any information in this publication is not intended as a substitute for medical advice, and you should not take any action before consulting with a healthcare professional.

Horses

GET READY TO **GALLOP** INTO THE WORLD OF HORSES

The Mane Facts

Horses' hooves are made of keratin, the same protein that forms human hair and fingernails.

They have near 360-degree vision but do have blind spots directly in front and behind them.

Horses can only breathe through their nose.

A horse's teeth never stop growing throughout their life, with their teeth growing around 2-3 millimeters each year.



The average horse's heart weighs around 10 pounds and can pump up to 75 gallons of blood per minute.

Horses can sleep both lying down and standing up, thanks to a special "stay apparatus" in their legs that allows them to lock their joints in place.

Horses are measured by hands, from the ground to the highest point of their withers (or shoulders). One hand is equal to four inches.

Known for their speed and versatility, the **American Quarter Horse is the most popular breed** in the United States.

It's estimated that around **95,114 wild horses** and burros live on public lands in the Western United States.

Found in Mongolia, **Przewalski's horses are the last truly wild horse**. However, they are critically endangered.





GALLOPING INTO THE *Record Books*

The tallest and heaviest horse on record was a Shire named Mammoth, who measured 7 feet 2 inches tall at the shoulder and weighed 3,360 pounds.

The smallest horse breed is the Falabella, which stands around **30 inches tall**.

The average **lifespan of a horse is around 25 to 30** years. However, the oldest recorded horse, named Old Billy, reportedly lived to be **62 years old**.

The most expensive horse ever sold was Kentucky Derby winner **Fusaichi Pegasus, for a record-breaking \$70 million** in 2000.

The fastest recorded speed of a horse was achieved by a thoroughbred named Winning Brew, who in 2008 ran a quarter mile in just 20.57 seconds.





FROM STABLE TO *Silver Screen*

Trigger, the horse ridden by Roy Rogers in numerous Western films, was trained to perform over 100 different tricks and was known for his intelligence and obedience. He also had his own fan club and received more fan mail than any human actor at the time.

Bamboo Harvester, who played Mr. Ed on the TV show of the same name, **was trained to move his lips** using peanut butter as a reward.

The Budweiser Clydesdales made their first appearance in a **Super Bowl commercial in 1986.** The commercial featured the horses pulling a wagon through a snowy landscape and was an instant hit with viewers.



Brie + Prosciutto + Fig Jam Crostini

This classic cheeseboard pairing is rolled into one tasty bite!

PREP TIME: 10 minutes | COOK TIME: 20 minutes | YIELDS: 8 servings

INGREDIENTS

For the Fig Jam

- ½ c. black figs
- 2 tsp. almond milk
- 2 tsp. coconut oil

- ¼ c. water
- 2 tbsp. cane sugar
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract

For the Crostinis

- 1 French baguette
- 1 wheel Brie cheese
- 6-8 slices prosciutto

- Honey, for garnish
- Micro arugula, for garnish

INSTRUCTIONS

For the Fig Jam

1. Add the figs and almond milk to a food processor.
2. Pulse on high for one minute, then scrape the edges and pulse again on low for one minute.
3. Add the coconut oil to a small saucepan, then add the fig mixture.
4. Next, add the water, sugar, lemon juice and vanilla extract.
5. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally for five minutes.
6. Remove the fig jam from heat, then pour it into a bowl to cool for at least 10 minutes.

For the Crostinis

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F and line one large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Slice the baguette into eight pieces, then spread a spoonful of fig jam on each piece.
3. Next, slice the cheese into eight long pieces.
4. Place the Brie on top of the crostinis and bake for 5-7 minutes until the cheese has melted and the bread is slightly crunchy.
5. Wrap the crostinis in thin prosciutto pieces.
6. Drizzle honey over the crostinis and finish with micro arugula.



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7 ENERGY-SAVING TIPS



1. **DEFROST THE FREEZER** — Ice can interfere with the temperature sensors and cause the freezer to work harder.
2. **REPLACE FILTERS** — Check the guidelines for your HVAC system, water heater, refrigerator and dryer.
3. **SWAP OUT LIGHT BULBS** for energy-efficient LEDs.
4. **UNPLUG DEVICES** when not in use.
5. **FIND AND SEAL AIR LEAKS** — Check doors, windows and places where utilities enter your home.
6. **UPGRADE TO A SMART THERMOSTAT** to closely control the temperature.
7. **INSTALL ENERGY-SAVING SHOWERHEADS**, faucets or flow restrictors to reduce the amount of hot water being used.



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