

Compliments of Jodee Harris

essential living

Issue 310



Comfort Foods

to Cozy Up With



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Are you looking to escape to a far-off land of wonder this October? We have just the destinations for you. From ancient shipyards to awe-inspiring rock formations, these spots are sure to ignite your wanderlust and leave you captivated.

But beware, there may be something treacherous back home. While plants can be a source of joy and tranquility, some hide a dark secret. Our guide to dangerous houseplants will open your eyes to the hazards that may be lurking in your own home, especially if you have curious pets or little ones.

Don't worry, it's not all dark and gloomy around here. Indulge in our three pumpkin surprises, bursting with the spicy warmth of autumnal flavors. But, if you're on pumpkin spice overload, fear not — we have you covered with delicious comfort food inspired by classic comfort shows, perfect for a cozy night in.

So, grab your favorite blanket, sip on some cider and let our October issue be your guide to a season of adventure and delight.

— From the Publisher



What's your favorite comfort food?

Scan the QR code to cast your vote!

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PUMPKIN

..... Recipes to Make All Fall Long

It wouldn't be fall without pumpkins! From the pumpkin spice latte to roasted pumpkin seeds, this fruit masquerading as a vegetable is an autumn staple.

Nowadays, there are countless recipes incorporating pumpkin as the main ingredient. While it's most prominent in baked goods, there are also plenty of savory pumpkin recipes.

If you love pumpkin but are looking for a new and unique way to showcase it, then you're in luck! One of these recipes may even be a twist on a childhood favorite snack; there's only one way to find out what it is!

PUMPKIN PIZZA

PREP TIME: 30 minutes | **COOK TIME:** 30 minutes | **YIELDS:** 8 slices

Pizza is getting a fall makeover. Featuring a pumpkin red sauce as the base AND roasted pumpkin as a topping, this pizza is a must-make this season.

INGREDIENTS

For the Dough

- $\frac{3}{4}$ c. warm water (around 115° F)
- 1 tbsp. cane sugar
- 1 packet of active dry yeast
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. sea salt
- 1 large egg, room temperature
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. apple cider vinegar

For the Pumpkin Red Sauce

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp. tomato paste
- 15-oz. can of pumpkin puree
- 3 tbsp. water
- 2 tsp. oregano
- 1 tsp. pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt

For the Roasted Pumpkin

- 1 c. uncooked pumpkin, peeled and cubed
- 1 tbsp. maple syrup
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 2 tsp. rosemary, chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt

For the Pizza

- 1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 c. shredded Gouda cheese, plus more for topping
- $\frac{1}{4}$ c. caramelized onions
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. pancetta, cooked
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c. cremini mushrooms, slightly cooked
- 1 c. arugula





INSTRUCTIONS

For the Dough

1. Preheat the oven to 450° F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Mix water, sugar and yeast and let sit for 5-10 minutes until the yeast activates. Yeast is activated when it begins to form bubbles and looks foamy.
3. Mix flour and salt, then pour in the yeast mixture.
4. Use an electric mixer to blend the dry and wet ingredients on low for 1 minute.
5. Add in the egg, olive oil and apple cider vinegar.
6. Mix on low for 1 minute.
7. Transfer the dough to an oiled and flour-dusted baking sheet.
8. Use an oiled spatula or put olive oil on your hands to spread out the dough.
9. Use your hands to form the crust.
10. Bake for 5 minutes and then remove from oven.

For the Pumpkin Red Sauce

1. Add the olive oil to a medium-sized saucepan and heat over medium.
2. Mince 2 cloves of garlic and add to the pan.
3. Cook the garlic over medium heat for 1 minute.
4. Then, add the tomato paste and pumpkin puree.
5. Reduce the heat to medium-low and stir to combine.
6. Once combined, add the water, oregano, pepper and salt.

7. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent the sauce from burning.
8. Remove from heat and allow to cool for at least 10 minutes.

For the Roasted Pumpkin

1. Line a small baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Add the pieces of pumpkin to a medium bowl and drizzle the maple syrup and olive oil over the pumpkin.
3. Add the rosemary, pepper and salt.
4. Toss to coat all the pieces of pumpkin, then spread over the prepared baking sheet.
5. Roast the pumpkin at 450° F for 15 minutes (the pumpkin will not be fully cooked, but will soften up more when cooked on the pizza).

For the Pizza

1. Spread the pumpkin red sauce over the slightly cooked crust.
2. Mix the two cheeses together, then sprinkle over the sauce.
3. Add the roasted pumpkin, cooked pancetta, mushrooms and caramelized onions on top.
4. Place on the middle rack of the oven and cook for 15 minutes.
5. Allow the pizza to cool for 10 minutes before finishing with arugula and grated Gouda.

GLUTEN-FREE PUMPKIN CHEESE CRISPS

PREP TIME: 30 minutes

COOK TIME: 15 minutes

INACTIVE TIME: 30 minutes

YIELDS: 8 servings

These Pumpkin Cheese Crisps make a delicious snack any time of the year!

INGREDIENTS

- ½ c. pumpkin puree
- ¼ c. milk
- 2 tbsp. butter, melted and cooled
- ½ tsp. maple syrup
- 1 egg
- 2 c. gluten-free all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 2 tbsp. nutritional yeast
- 1 tbsp. freshly chopped rosemary
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 c. grated cheddar cheese
- ¼ c. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. garlic salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add the pumpkin puree, milk, butter, maple syrup and egg to a stand mixer and mix on low for 1 minute.
2. Combine the flour, nutritional yeast, rosemary and salt in a bowl.
3. Pour into the stand mixer, then mix on medium-low speed for 1 minute.
4. Add the cheddar cheese and mix on low until incorporated.
5. Switch to the dough hook and knead on medium-low speed for 3 minutes.
6. Your dough will be ready once it's firm and not sticky; if it is sticky then add more flour.
7. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.
8. After the dough has chilled, flour a surface and dust the dough.
9. Use a rolling pin to roll out the dough until it's 1/8" thick.
10. With a sharp knife or pizza roller, begin slicing the dough into 1" squares.
11. Place the squares on a large baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
12. Use the top of a skewer or chopstick to poke a hole in the center of each square.
13. Combine the olive oil and garlic salt, then brush each square.
14. Bake at 375° F for 15 minutes, then cool for 10 minutes before serving.



BROWN BUTTER PUMPKIN BARS

These decadent bars have the perfect balance of pumpkin and nutty brown butter. All you need is one hour to make these sweet treats!

PREP TIME: 15 minutes

COOK TIME: 45 minutes

YIELDS: 16 bars

INGREDIENTS

- 2⅓ c. all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. espresso powder
- 1 c. unsalted butter
- 1½ c. brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 15-oz. can of pumpkin puree
- 1 c. dark chocolate chips

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F and grease a 9x9" baking dish, then line with parchment paper.
2. In a medium-sized bowl, mix together the flour, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon, baking soda, salt and espresso powder. Set aside.
3. Add the butter to a large pan and melt over medium heat.
4. Stir occasionally; when the butter begins to bubble, reduce the heat to medium-low.
5. Continue stirring for roughly 7 minutes until the butter browns and has a nutty aroma.
6. Remove the butter from heat and allow to cool.
7. Once the brown butter has reached room temperature, pour over a colander into a large bowl.
8. Add the brown sugar, then use an electric mixer to cream together the sugar and butter on low speed for 1 minute.
9. Add the egg, vanilla extract and pumpkin puree. Mix on low for 1 minute.
10. Slowly sift in the dry ingredients; continue mixing on medium speed.
11. Once the wet and dry ingredients are combined, fold in the dark chocolate chips.
12. Pour the batter into the prepared baking dish.
13. Place on the middle rack and bake for 45 minutes.
14. Remove from the oven and allow to cool in the baking dish for 20 minutes.
15. Using the sides of the parchment paper, remove bars from baking dish and allow to cool to room temperature before cutting.



Mystical Destinations to Explore

There are a few special destinations around the country with an ethereal appeal that truly show us all the beauty our world has to offer. These otherworldly destinations will make you feel like you've stepped back in time or onto another planet. Whether you're looking at a shipyard dating back hundreds of years, smooth, orange crags that cut through rivers or crater lakes with distinctive rock formations, these awe-inspiring destinations will leave your jaw slack. We've curated a list of seven mystical destinations around the country where you can encounter a sort of magic you've never experienced before.

We're opening the doors to exploring offbeat destinations in America that offer something completely different from your average destination. There's nothing wrong with a little bit of mystery.

Over 1.8 million acres of national forest land, red-rock buttes, pine forests and majestic red-rock scenery make Sedona in Arizona one of the most magical destinations in America. This is where you'll find a stark contrast in colors, with bright green vegetation set against majestic red rocks. There's a vibrant art and music community in Uptown Sedona, with numerous restaurants, bars serving locally made wine and pottery classes. Trailheads leading from the outskirts of town take hikers directly to Red Rock State Park, where visitors have the chance to go bird watching and hike 400+ miles of trails snaking through the steep canyon walls.

SEDONA, AZ





CRATER LAKE, OR

Around 7,000 years ago, Mount Mazama erupted and formed Crater Lake, the deepest lake in the U.S. This caldera lake reaches about 2,000 feet and is nestled by unique geological formations and the Cascade Mountains. This is an otherworldly destination that'll wow you with its beauty and history. An ancient hemlock tree stump floats, unanchored, in Crater Lake, and has baffled scientists for over a century. There is no water outlet, and a lot of water is unaccounted for. It's also the only place in the world where you'll find the Mazama newt. Surfacing about 160 feet above the lake is an island that resembles a ship. It's deemed the Phantom Ship and appears and disappears depending on the weather.

Deemed the nation's oldest city, St. Augustine is an elegant city founded in 1565, with a continuously occupied settlement of African American and European origin, making it older than Plymouth Rock and Jamestown. It's earned the nickname "The Ancient City," and it has an almost mystical appeal. With brick-lined streets, a 17th-century Spanish stone fortress, the oldest wooden schoolhouse in America and white sandy beaches, this city will enamor you. You'll find hidden courtyards encompassed by brick buildings, narrow lanes, paranormal ghost tours and intimate restaurants serving delicious cuisine from around the world.

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL





ISLE ROYALE, MI

Isle Royale, a secluded island in Lake Superior, is a pristine wilderness that beckons adventurers and nature enthusiasts. With its rugged terrain, dense forests and sparkling lakes, the island offers a sense of isolation and tranquility. Visitors can explore over 160 kilometers of scenic trails, encounter diverse wildlife and immerse themselves in the raw beauty of nature. Designated as a National Park and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Isle Royale holds significant ecological and cultural value. The recognition emphasizes the importance of preserving Isle Royale's pristine wilderness, allowing future generations to continue experiencing its captivating beauty and mystical allure.

Joshua Tree is a next-level destination that has jagged rock formations and twisted Joshua trees reaching towards the sky, making the landscape feel almost extraterrestrial. The area encompasses two distinct desert ecosystems. The Colorado Desert is set 3,000 feet below sea level, and the higher-altitude Mojave Desert is where you'll find the iconic Joshua Trees. This is also where you'll find the Cotillo cactus and Yucca trees. The light at dusk and dawn offers the most spectacular landscapes and silhouettes of the iconic trees. There are numerous fascinating rock formations around the park, including Penguin Rock, Cap Rock, Skull Rock and Heart Rock. With over 120 hiking trails, you'll find no shortage of areas to explore.

JOSHUA TREE, CA





WHITE SANDS NATIONAL PARK, NM

White Sands National Park, located in New Mexico, is a captivating natural wonder renowned for its stunning beauty. This expansive desert landscape features gleaming white gypsum sand dunes that stretch for miles, creating a mesmerizing oasis. The contrast of the pure white sands against the sky is a sight to behold, especially during sunrise or sunset. Visitors can explore the ever-shifting dunes and even take a sled ride down them, gliding across the soft, powdery sand. The park's unique environment provides ample opportunities for photography, stargazing and simply getting lost in the enchantment of the vast and seemingly endless sea of white.

Founded in 1654, Mystic offers an essential experience of New England charm. For hundreds of years, this historic village served as an important Connecticut seaport, where more than 600 ships were built. Since then, it has been seen in movies like "Mystic Pizza" and now offers visitors the chance to dine at restaurants, drink wine at vineyards and munch on pastries at its bakeries. To see a working shipyard, learn about the village's history and see rotating exhibits, stop by the Mystic Seaport. Another popular attraction is the nonprofit Mystic Aquarium, where you'll find thousands of species of marine animals, including Steller sea lions and beluga whales.

MYSTIC, CT



Comfort Foods

FOR YOUR NEXT BINGE WATCH



It's hard to imagine life without our favorite comfort TV shows. Whether you grew up on reruns of "I Love Lucy" or can quote every episode of "The Office," comfort shows have a sense of home to them. It's your default program, the one you fall asleep to and the one you always come back to.

The only thing better than watching your go-to comfort show is watching it while enjoying your favorite comfort food. Much like these shows, comfort food embodies those same warm and cozy feelings. That's why we've combined our two favorite things: comfort food and comfort shows. We're not just talking about any comfort food though. No, we're talking about the classic recipes from your favorite series! From sitcoms to dramas, there's always at least one iconic food storyline. Finally, the food that you've been drooling over on screen is coming to life!

Pink Sprinkled Donut

PREP TIME:
30 MINUTES

COOK TIME:
30 MINUTES

INACTIVE TIME:
75 MINUTES

YIELDS:
8-12 DONUTS

"The Simpsons" may be one of the most iconic cartoons of all time. The only thing more iconic than the show itself is the pink sprinkled donut.

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE DONUTS

- ½ c. warm milk
- 1 packet (2¼ tsp.) of instant dry yeast
- ¾ c. all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 5 tbsp. cane sugar
- ¼ c. unsalted butter, melted and cooled
- 1 egg, room temperature
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

- ¾ tsp. salt
- ½ c. buttermilk
- 3-4 c. canola oil for frying

FOR THE GLAZE

- 1½ c. powdered sugar, sifted
- 3 tbsp. milk
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 drop of pink food coloring
- ¼ c. rainbow sprinkles



INSTRUCTIONS

FOR THE DONUTS

1. Heat the milk in the microwave for 40 seconds, then stir in a tablespoon of sugar until dissolved.
2. When the milk is roughly 105-110° F, add the instant yeast and gently stir to incorporate.
3. Allow at least 5 minutes for the yeast to activate (it should look foamy on top and have a wheat-like aroma).
4. Combine the flour, sugar and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer. Then, add the butter, egg, vanilla extract and buttermilk.
5. Once the yeast is activated, add it to the mixture.
6. Use a paddle attachment on medium-low speed to combine the ingredients for 3 minutes. Once well incorporated, switch to a dough hook and knead for 5 minutes on medium-low speed.
7. Transfer dough into a large, greased glass bowl. Cover with saran wrap and leave in a warm place to rise for an hour (you can leave it in a sunny spot or use the "proofing" setting on your oven). The dough should be about doubled in size when it's ready.
8. Oil your hands, then place dough on a lightly floured work surface. Begin kneading for 2 minutes. If it is sticking to your hands, lightly dust with flour.
9. Next, use a rolling pin to roll out the dough until it is half an inch thick. Use a donut cutter or large cookie cutter to cut 3-4" wide circles.
10. Carefully cut holes in the center of each donut, then place the donuts on a lined baking tray. Cover again with saran wrap or a tea towel, and place in a warm spot until noticeably puffy, about 1 hour.
11. Add the oil to a heavy-bottomed pot and heat to 360° F. Then reduce the heat to medium and carefully place 1 donut at a time into the pot. Depending on the pot size, you can make up to 3 donuts at a time. Just don't overcrowd the pot!
12. Fry each side for about a minute and a half or until golden brown, flipping once.
13. Once done, carefully remove and place on another baking tray lined with paper towels.
14. Repeat this process until all donuts are fried.

FOR THE GLAZE

1. Sift the sugar into a shallow bowl, then add the milk and whisk to combine.
2. Whisk in the food coloring and vanilla extract; set aside.
3. Once the donuts have cooled, carefully dip each donut into the frosting.
4. Then, place on a wired rack and add the sprinkles.
5. Repeat this dipping and sprinkling process with each donut.



Orange Chicken

"The Big Bang Theory" and Chinese food go hand in hand. There are countless times we watch these characters sit in Sheldon and Leonard's apartment, chowing down on boxes of Chinese food. And what more iconic take-out recipe is there than orange chicken?

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES | **COOK TIME:** 30 MINUTES
YIELDS: 2-3 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE CHICKEN

- ¾ c. all-purpose flour
- 1 egg, room temperature
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. pepper
- ½ tsp. salt
- ⅓ c. water
- 6 chicken thighs, skinless and boneless
- 2 tbsps. cornstarch
- ½ c. canola or safflower oil

FOR THE SAUCE

- 1 c. orange juice
- 2 tsp. orange zest
- ⅓ c. granulated sugar
- ¼ c. soy sauce
- 2 cloves garlic, grated
- 1 tsp. ginger, grated
- 1 tsp. rice vinegar
- 1 tbsps. cornstarch

TO SERVE

- 1 c. jasmine rice, cooked
- 1 tbsps. sesame seeds
- 1 tsp. red pepper flakes, optional





INSTRUCTIONS

FOR THE CHICKEN

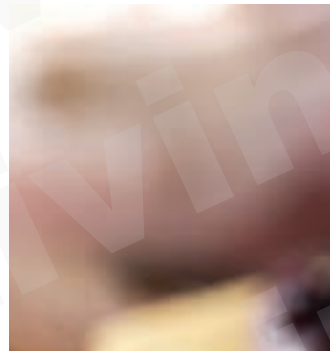
1. In a large bowl whisk together the flour, egg, garlic powder, pepper, salt and water.
2. Chop the chicken thighs into small pieces, then place in a bowl and sprinkle with flour.
3. Toss to coat, then pour the batter over the chicken to evenly cover it.
4. Add the oil to a heavy-bottomed skillet and heat over medium.
5. When the oil begins to sizzle, add a quarter of the chicken at a time.
6. Cook in batches for 5 minutes, then place on a plate lined with a paper towel.
7. Continue this process until all the chicken is cooked, then transfer to a large bowl.

FOR THE SAUCE

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F.
2. In a small pot, whisk together the orange juice, zest, sugar, soy sauce, garlic, ginger and rice vinegar.
3. Bring the sauce to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium-low and whisk in the cornstarch.
4. Once the sauce thickens, remove from heat and continue stirring.
5. Pour the sauce over the cooked chicken, using a spatula to evenly distribute.
6. Next, transfer the chicken over a lined baking tray and place in the oven
7. Cook for 5 minutes, then broil on high for 2 minutes.
8. Remove from the oven and cool for 10 minutes before serving. Serve over rice and garnish with sesame seeds and red pepper flakes.



Small Batch Cheesecake



with Blueberry Topping

If you've ever seen "**Golden Girls**," then you understand the obsession with cheesecake. This small batch cheesecake topped with blueberries is the perfect dessert to whip up when you're craving a night of binge-watching with your besties!

PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES | **COOK TIME:** 90 MINUTES
INACTIVE TIME: 60 MINUTES | **YIELDS:** 6 SERVINGS





INGREDIENTS

FOR THE GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST

- 1 c. graham crackers
- ¼ c. unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tbsp. cane sugar

FOR THE CHEESECAKE FILLING

- 16 oz. cream cheese, softened
- ½ c. cane sugar
- ¼ c. heavy cream, room temperature
- 2 eggs, room temperature

- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp. salt

FOR THE BLUEBERRY TOPPING

- 1 c. blueberries
- ¼ c. cane sugar
- 1 tbsp. milk
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. cornstarch

INSTRUCTIONS

FOR THE GRAHAM CRACKER CRUST

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F, then grease the bottom and sides of a 6" springform pan to prevent sticking.
2. In a medium bowl, mix graham cracker, melted butter and sugar.
3. Use your hands to combine the ingredients until damp.
4. Next, spread the mixture evenly over the bottom and side of the springform pan.
5. Use the bottom of a glass or spoon to press the graham cracker mixture firmly into the pan.
6. Then, bake the crust for 8 minutes or until slightly golden.
7. Allow to cool while you make the filling.

FOR THE CHEESECAKE FILLING

1. Using an electric mixer, beat the cream cheese on medium speed until soft and creamy, about 3 minutes.
2. Then, add the sugar and beat for 1 minute until fluffy.
3. Use a spatula to scrape down the sides before adding 1 egg at a time and combining on low speed.
4. Once the eggs are incorporated, add the heavy cream, vanilla extract and eggs to the bowl.
5. Beat on low for 90 seconds.

6. Use a spatula to pour the filling over the graham cracker crust and even out.
7. Wrap a layer of foil around the sides and bottom of the springform pan.
8. Then, place in the center of a large pan.
9. Pour boiling water into the large pan, filling almost halfway (this will keep the cheesecake from cracking).
10. Bake the cheesecake for 60 minutes, then cover the top with foil and bake for another 30 minutes.
11. After the allotted time, turn off the oven but leave the cheesecake inside with the oven door cracked to cool for at least 30 minutes.
12. Finally, remove the cheesecake from the oven and cool for another 30 minutes in the springform pan before releasing and serving.

FOR THE BLUEBERRY TOPPING

1. Place the berries, sugar, lemon juice and milk in a small saucepan.
2. Heat over medium-low heat, gently stirring.
3. Once bubbling, reduce the heat to low and add the cornstarch.
4. Continue stirring for another minute.
5. Then remove from the heat and allow to cool before serving over the cheesecake.

Fettuccine Alfredo

While the fettuccine alfredo scene is often overlooked for Kevin's chili in "The Office," it's still a must-make! As Michael Scott says, "I ate more fettuccine alfredo and drank less water than I did in my entire life." Strive to be like Michael.

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES | **COOK TIME:** 20 MINUTES | **YIELDS:** 4 SERVINGS



INGREDIENTS

- 12 oz. fettuccine pasta
- 3½ tsp. salt
- 6 c. water
- ½ c. heavy cream
- ¼ c. unsalted butter
- ¼ c. Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, plus more for garnish
- 1 tsp. black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring 6 cups of water and 3 teaspoons of salt to a boil in a large pot.
2. Add the fettuccine and cook until al dente.
3. Reserve half a cup of pasta water, then drain the pasta and set to the side.
4. Add the heavy cream and butter to a heavy skillet.
5. Bring to a simmer over medium heat.
6. Add half a teaspoon of salt and the pepper, stirring to combine.
7. Pour in a quarter cup of pasta water and add the cheese to the sauce.
8. Stir to combine (if too thick, add the rest of the pasta water).
9. Remove from heat, then place the cooked fettuccine in the sauce.
10. Toss to combine, then garnish with cheese and enjoy.



HOT AIR BALLOON RIDES

Hot air balloon rides offer a unique and breathtaking adventure, allowing you to soar through the skies and witness stunning landscapes from a whole new perspective. Whether floating above picturesque vineyards, majestic mountains or serene valleys, these rides promise unforgettable experiences that will leave you in awe of the beauty of our world.



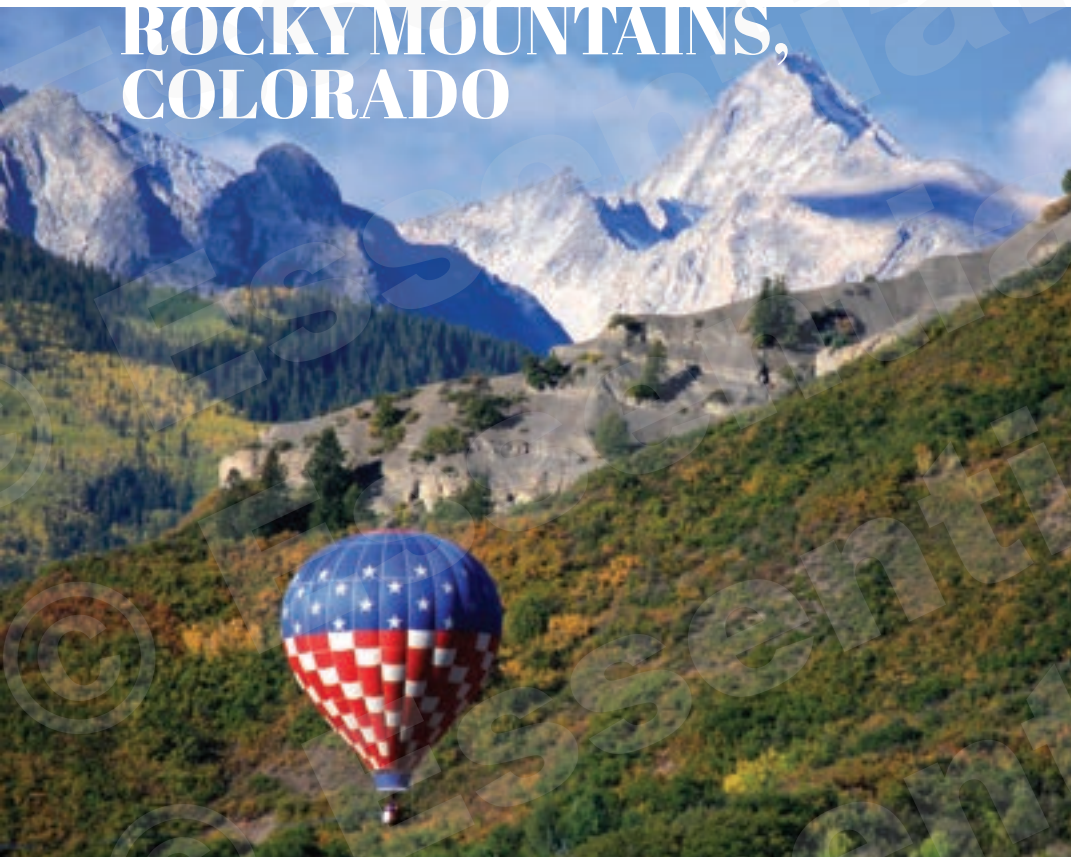
LETCHWORTH STATE PARK, NEW YORK



Best Time: Early Fall

Embarking on a hot air balloon ride over Letchworth State Park in New York is an extraordinary experience. Known as the “Grand Canyon of the East,” the park’s majestic waterfalls, lush forests and magnificent gorges unfold before your eyes as you gently ascend into the sky. From a bird’s-eye view, you’ll witness the park’s iconic waterfalls, rolling hills and the meandering Genesee River. The peaceful atmosphere and stunning views create an unforgettable and awe-inspiring adventure, allowing you to truly immerse yourself in the natural beauty of Letchworth State Park.

ROCKY MOUNTAINS, COLORADO



Best Time: Summer to Early Fall

Embarking on a hot air balloon ride over the Rocky Mountains is an exhilarating and awe-inspiring experience. As you soar above the rugged terrain, you’ll be greeted by breathtaking panoramic views of the majestic peaks, deep valleys and pristine forests. The grandeur of this iconic mountain range unfolds before your eyes, with its towering summits and cascading waterfalls. Keep your camera ready to capture glimpses of wildlife in their natural habitat, such as elk and moose. Whether you choose a sunrise or sunset flight, the ever-changing colors of the sky against the backdrop of the Rockies create a truly mesmerizing spectacle. A hot air balloon ride over the Rocky Mountains is an unforgettable journey that allows you to appreciate the raw beauty and untamed wilderness of this remarkable natural wonder.

Best Time: Early Fall

Take off on a magical hot air balloon ride over the enchanting landscapes of Napa Valley. Whether in spring or fall, treat yourself to a bird's-eye view of the patchwork of vineyards and wineries that stretch to the horizon. Revel in the panoramic vistas of rolling hills, dotted with charming Mediterranean-style villas and elegant cypress trees. Follow the meandering path of the Napa River as it winds through

the valley and catch sight of the iconic Napa Valley Wine Train traversing the picturesque vineyards. Drifting peacefully in the sky, you will be immersed in the serene beauty of the valley. A hot air balloon ride over Napa Valley is a romantic and stunning experience that allows you to experience the heart of wine country in a whole new way.

NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA



WILLAMETTE VALLEY, OREGON



Best Time: Mid-Spring to Early Fall

Ascend on a peaceful hot air balloon ride over the stunning Willamette Valley in Oregon. Let yourself be captivated by the picturesque landscapes defined by lush vineyards, rolling hills and meandering rivers. Capture the spectacular sight of Mount Hood in the distance, its snow-capped peak enhancing the enchanting views. Before or after your flight, explore the charming town of Newberg, with its local shops and inviting wineries. For a truly enchanting experience, plan your visit for mid-April and witness the kaleidoscope of colors of vibrant tulip fields in full bloom during the Tulip Festival.

Best Time: Early Fall

A hot air balloon ride over Franconia Notch State Park in New Hampshire during the fall season is an extraordinary adventure. As you ascend into the sky, you'll be surrounded by a vibrant tapestry of crimson, gold and orange foliage. The balloon gently glides over the scenic Franconia Notch, offering breathtaking views of the towering peaks of the White

Mountains, including the iconic Franconia Ridge. The tranquil Pemigewasset River winds through the valley below, adding to the picturesque landscape. From this unique vantage point, you'll witness the beauty of autumn in New Hampshire in all its glory.

FRANCONIA NOTCH STATE PARK, NEW HAMPSHIRE



Best Time: Early October

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta in New Mexico is the largest hot air balloon festival in the world, drawing over 800,000 visitors annually. Held for nine days in early October, the festival showcases over 500 colorful hot air balloons of various shapes and sizes. The highlight is the mass ascension, where hundreds of balloons take flight

simultaneously, creating a spectacular display of vibrant colors against the backdrop of the southwestern desert. Visitors can also enjoy attractions such as the Balloon Discovery Center, live entertainment and, of course, hot air balloon rides. It's advisable to book rides in advance and arrive early due to the festival's popularity.

THE ALBUQUERQUE INTERNATIONAL BALLOON FIESTA



Whether gliding over picturesque landscapes, witnessing majestic mountain ranges or marveling at vibrant fall foliage, hot air balloon rides are a truly unforgettable and awe-inspiring adventure.



A VISUAL GUIDE TO

BATS

Bats often get a bad rap for being scary creatures of the night. Although they may not all be cute and cuddly, they are a vital part of our planet's ecosystem and are way more fascinating than they get credit for!

5 WAYS TO HELP YOUR BACKYARD BATS

1. Reduce pesticide use.
2. Leave dead or dying trees on your property as long as they don't create a hazard.
3. Put up a bat house in your yard.
4. Stay out of caves and other areas where bats are hibernating in the winter.
5. Spread awareness and knowledge!

Nearly **1,400 species of bats** exist worldwide and can be found on every continent except for Antarctica!

\$3.7 BILLION — The estimated amount that bats save U.S. agriculture per year in pest control (although some estimates say it could be as much as \$53 billion!)

Located near San Antonio, Texas, Bracken Cave is home to **20 million** Mexican free-tailed bats from spring through early fall.

It is estimated that on a good night of hunting, the entire colony eats **220 TONS of insects!**

About **45 species** of bats live in the U.S. and Canada.

The oldest bat lived to be **41 years old!** (Most, however, live around 20 years in the wild.)

Myth busted! Bats actually have great eyesight; some can even see three times better than humans!

Bats help to **pollinate over 500 species of plants.**

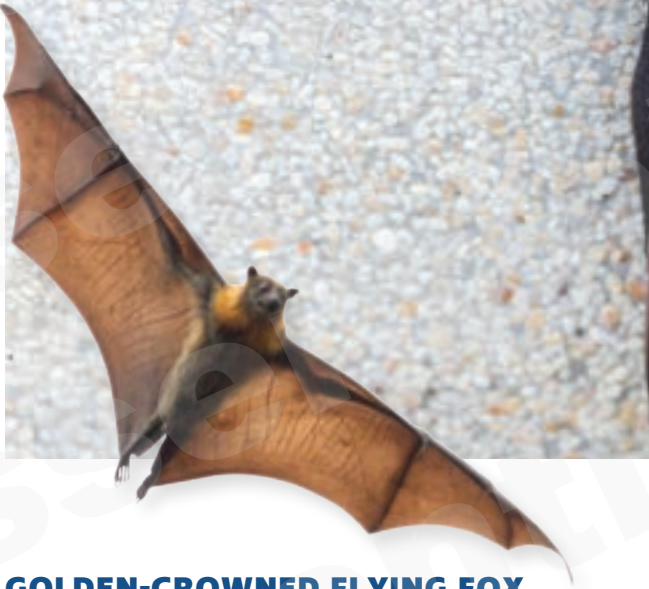
They are also the primary pollinators for agave, the main ingredient in tequila.



Bats' claws relax into a closed position, which makes **hanging upside down** a breeze.

Bats are the only mammals that **can fly.**





GOLDEN-CROWNED FLYING FOX

"THE LARGEST BAT IN THE WORLD"

SIZE: 7 to 11.4 inches

WINGSPAN: 5.6 feet

LOCATION: Philippines

With a wingspan of nearly 6 feet, it would be hard to miss these giant bats swooping through the sky.



KITTI'S HOG-NOSED BAT

"THE TINIEST BAT IN THE WORLD"

SIZE: 1.1 to 1.3 inches

WINGSPAN: 5 inches

LOCATION: Limestone caves along the Thailand-Myanmar border

Measuring just over an inch long, these tiny bats weigh less than two Skittles!

HONDURAN WHITE BAT

"THE TENT MAKER"

SIZE: 1.46 to 1.85 inches

WINGSPAN: 4 inches

LOCATION: Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama

Using their teeth, these little bats carefully cut along the ribs of leaves until the leaf folds, creating a tent-like structure for the bats to roost in.



POPULAR BUT *POISONOUS* HOUSEPLANTS

Houseplants are a widely popular way to add a pop of color and bring a sense of calm into any space. While they can help to improve air quality and even boost mental health, not every green beauty is totally safe for your home. If you live with a mischievous pet or curious child, there are some houseplants that could do more harm than good if they are ingested.

A number of factors impact the type of reaction caused by ingesting a toxic plant, including:

- The part of the plant that was eaten
- How much was consumed
- The size of the person or animal

If a toxic plant is consumed, it is important to seek medical or veterinary attention immediately.



1 PEACE LILY

This hardy and forgiving plant is one of the most common plants Poison Control receives calls about. In addition to the plant itself, the pollen can also cause irritation and swelling of the mouth, tongue and lips in humans and pets.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: African Violet

2 SNAKE PLANT

The snake plant is a houseplant classic, but it happens to also be extremely toxic to pets if they eat it. Humans also experience mild reactions that include nausea and throat irritation from consuming the plant.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Cast-Iron Plant





3 POTHOS

Even with very little care, pothos grows stunning, bright green leaves. However, those same leaves will cause stinging, burning and sometimes swelling of the mouth and throat when eaten. In some cases, the sap can cause irritation on the skin.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Swedish Ivy

4 PHILODENDRON

Many people love philodendrons because they are low maintenance and can withstand varying temperatures. However, you won't love them so much when they cause your mouth and throat to burn and swell after tasting one.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Parlor Palm



5 DUMB CANE

Known for its lush leaves, the dumb cane brings a little piece of the tropics into homes. Unfortunately, when ingested it causes pain in the mouth, swelling and numbing of the throat, which doesn't sound like paradise.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Moth Orchid



6 WEEPING FIG

This slow-growing, small tree is almost perfect for every home; however, when eaten it can cause swelling and a burning sensation in the mouth and throat. The sap also causes itchy eyes, coughing and skin irritation.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Boston Fern



7 RUBBER TREE

Although it may be associated with wealth and abundance, the sap from the rubber tree will only leave you with an uncomfortable rash.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Baby Rubber Plant



8 FLAMINGO FLOWER (ANTHURIUM)

The bright red leaves make this an enticing plant to have in homes, but if ingested it can lead to painful burning in the mouth, swelling and blisters.

SAFE ALTERNATIVE: Cattleya Orchid

If you have any of these plants already in your home, make sure they aren't easily accessible to anyone who may want to investigate them a little too much.

Bacon-Wrapped Dates

PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

YIELD: 8 SERVINGS



INGREDIENTS:

8 slices of bacon, uncooked

16 dates, pitted

4 oz. goat cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Slice halfway through each date lengthwise
2. Place the desired amount of goat cheese into each date and press date closed.
3. Wrap each date with half a slice of bacon.
4. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes, then flip and bake until all bacon is golden brown, about 5-10 more minutes.
5. Place dates on paper towel lined plate to cool.



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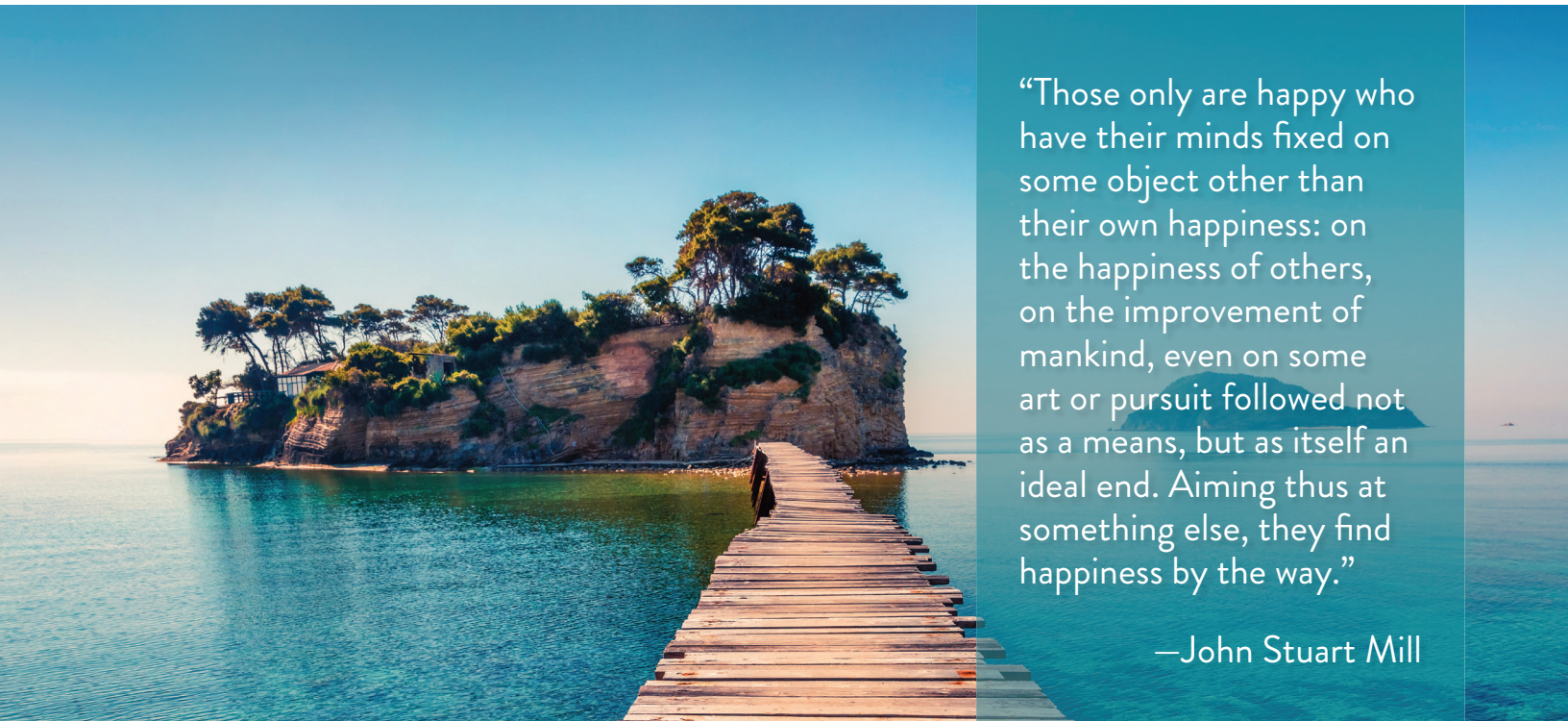
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“Those only are happy who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness: on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way.”

—John Stuart Mill



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