

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Curious how people from other countries decorate their Christmas trees? Each year, people all over the world festively decorate evergreen trees with ornaments.

Many believe that this tradition began with Martin Luther in Germany in the 1600s, but decorating trees in the wintertime was actually a pagan tradition before being associated with Christmas. Today, the tradition has grown, and ornaments are just as much a part of the Christmas season as the trees themselves. Here are some of the common ways people in other countries decorate their Christmas trees.

Germany

In Germany, Christmas decorating traditions are regional. In Bavaria, people tie straws into festive shapes using beautiful threads to decorate the trees. Most trees have Christmas lights, and some people even use live candles. It is said that Martin Luther decorated the first Christmas tree with candles to represent the stars in the heavens.

Australia

Although most of us in the United States associate Christmas with the winter, in the southern hemisphere, December is a summer month! As a result, many people in Australia prefer to decorate their tree with a summer theme and use natural elements, such as seashells, to make up the majority of their decorations.

Ukraine

In addition to all the typical Christmas decorations, people in Ukraine always include spiders and spider webs in their tree-decorating scheme. Although spiders aren't always a welcome presence in the home, they are a token of good luck in Ukraine. By decorating the tree with spiders, the people in the household hope it will bring them luck and good fortune in the coming year.

Greece

Although the tree has been a symbol of Christmas since the 1600s, it still isn't fully adopted in Greece. Those who do put up a tree use fairly standard decorations, such as strings of Christmas lights and homemade ornaments. Many Greeks stick with their original tradition of elaborately decorating ships and boats for Christmas.

Africa

Christians in Africa don't decorate evergreen trees for Christmas. Since this holiday falls in the summer months, Christians in African countries such as Uganda decorate palm trees and mango trees in and outside their home with items from nature.

Italy

Those who do decorate the Christmas tree in Italy use fairly typical decorations such as strings of Christmas lights and beautiful, handcrafted ornaments. This is especially true in the parts of Italy that directly border Germany. However, in much of the country, greater importance is placed on decorating the house with the traditional nativity scene.

December is... Cancer Awareness Month



1st	World AIDS Day
7th	Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
10th	Human Rights Day
15th	Bill of Rights Day
21st	Winter Solstice
25th	Christmas Day
26th	Boxing Day Kwanzaa (Start)

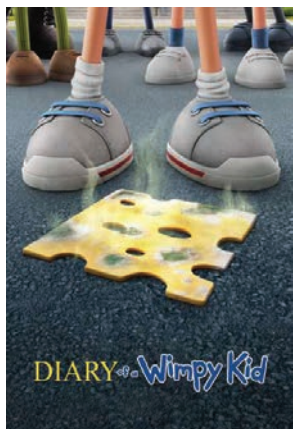


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Movie Madness

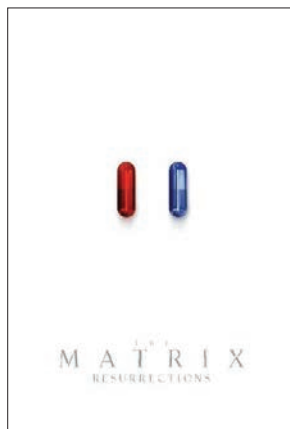


December Movie Releases



Diary of a Wimpy Kid

Greg Heffley is a scrawny but ambitious kid with an active imagination and big plans to be rich and famous—he just has to survive middle school first.



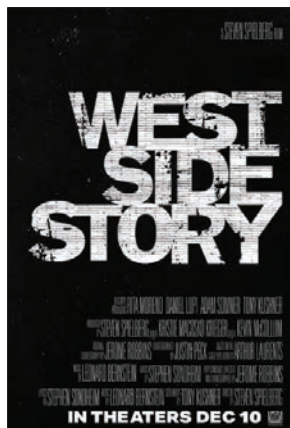
The Matrix Resurrections

A continuation of the story established in the first Matrix film, reuniting icons Neo and Trinity as they venture back into the Matrix and even deeper down the rabbit hole. A mind-bending new adventure with epic scale, it's set in a familiar yet even more provocative world where reality is more subjective than ever and all that's required to see the truth is to free your mind.



American Underdog

The true story of Kurt Warner, who went from a stock boy at a grocery store to a two-time NFL MVP, Super Bowl champion, and Hall of Fame quarterback.



West Side Story

Two youngsters from rival New York City gangs fall in love, but tensions between their respective friends build toward tragedy.



Spider-Man: No Way Home

Peter Parker is unmasked and no longer able to separate his normal life from the high-stakes of being a Super Hero. When he asks for help from Doctor Strange the stakes become even more dangerous, forcing him to discover what it truly means to be Spider-Man.



The Ark and the Aardvark

An aardvark named Gilbert lands the job of shepherding all the animals onto Noah's Ark.

Culinary Creations

A lighter take on holiday dinner!

Citrus-Roasted Salmon

Ingredients:

- 3 clementines, divided
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 8 sprigs thyme, plus 1 tablespoon thyme leaves
- 1 (3-pound) skin-on salmon fillet
- 1 1/2 tbsp. pure honey
- 1 tbsp. fennel seeds, crushed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 425°F. Slice 1 clementine. Arrange sliced clementine, lemon, and thyme sprigs in center of a baking sheet. Top with salmon, skin side down. Grate zest from 1 clementine into a measuring cup, then squeeze in juice from both remaining clementines (you should get about 1/4 cup). Add honey and whisk until dissolved. Brush salmon with half of clementine mixture, then sprinkle with fennel and thyme leaves. Season with salt and pepper. Roast 10 minutes. Brush salmon with remaining juice mixture. Roast until barely opaque throughout, 12 to 15 minutes.



Cider-Glazed Carrots with Walnuts

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 pounds medium carrots, peeled and cut into 2-inch diagonal pieces (about 9 cups)
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 cup toasted walnut pieces
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Directions:

Place carrots in a large saucepan with water to cover, and bring to a boil over high. Reduce heat to low, and simmer until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain and set aside. Combine brown sugar, apple cider vinegar, butter, salt, dry mustard, and paprika in a large nonstick skillet over low; cook, stirring often, until butter melts. Increase heat to medium-high, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; add carrots. Cook, stirring constantly, until carrots are glazed and sauce is syrupy, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in walnuts; sprinkle with chopped parsley, and toss to combine. Serve immediately.



Cranberry Gin Fizz

For the Cocktail:

- 2 oz. gin
- 3/4 oz. cranberry syrup (see directions at right)
- 3/4 oz. fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 oz. elderflower liquor
- Ice
- Club soda
- Fresh cranberries, to garnish
- 2 sprig fresh thyme, to garnish

For the Cranberry Syrup:

- 1/2 c. cranberries
- 3/4 c. granulated sugar
- 3/4 c. water
- 4 sprigs fresh thyme

Directions:

Make the cranberry syrup: Simmer cranberries, granulated sugar, and water in a small saucepan over medium heat until sugar dissolves and cranberries break down, 10 to 12 minutes. Stir in 4 sprigs fresh thyme. Cool to room temperature. Strain; discard solids. *Make the cocktail:* Combine gin, cranberry syrup, fresh lemon juice, elderflower liquor, and ice in a cocktail shaker. Shake until chilled; strain into 2 glasses. Top with ice and club soda. Garnish each drink with fresh cranberries and 1 sprig fresh thyme.



ENJOY A SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

Holiday safety is an issue that burns brightest from late November to mid-January, when families gather, parties are scheduled and travel spikes. Here are some basic guidelines.

Decorate Safely

Decorating is one of the best ways to get in a holiday mood, but emergency rooms see thousands of injuries involving holiday decorating every season. When decorating, follow these tips from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission:

- Keep potentially poisonous plants—mistletoe, holly berries and amaryllis—away from children.
- If using an artificial tree, check that it is labeled “fire resistant.”
- If using a live tree, cut off about 2 inches of the trunk to expose fresh wood for better water absorption, remember to water it and remove it from your home when it is dry.
- Place your tree at least 3 feet away from fireplaces and other heat sources, making certain not to block doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower tree branches where small children can reach them.
- Only use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors, and choose the right ladder for the task when hanging lights.
- Replace light sets that have broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.
- Follow the package directions on the number of light sets that can be plugged into one socket.
- Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles.
- Turn off all lights and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.



Watch Out for Fire-Starters

Candles and Fireplaces

Use of candles and fireplaces, combined with an increase in the amount of combustible, seasonal decorations in many homes during the holidays, means more risk for fire. The National Fire Protection Association reports that one-third of home decoration fires are started by candles and that two of every five decoration fires happen because the decorations are placed too close to a heat source.

- Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over and out of reach of children.
- Keep matches and lighters up high and out of reach for children in a locked cabinet.
- Use flameless, rather than lighted, candles near flammable objects.
- Don't burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper in the fireplace.
- Use a screen on the fireplace at all times when a fire is burning.
- Never leave candles or fireplaces burning unattended or when you are asleep.
- Check and clean the chimney and fireplace area at least once a year. ~ National Safety Council

Coloring Fun!



A Special Place Just for Kids!

