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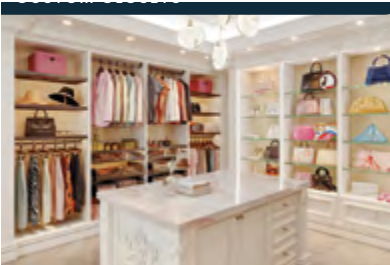
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Historic Fairville Inn in Chadds Ford

This historic property features 10 tasteful guest rooms, eight of which have gas fireplaces. The Main House features the guest reception area, living room, after-hours sitting room, dining room, kitchen and the possibility for 5+ additional rooms. Contact us for full details about what else is possible with this gorgeous property.
Price Upon Request



Privately Set in Highly Protected Area

This may be one of the most architecturally distinct and amenity-rich homes on the market today! Privately set on 12 acres in an exclusive area in Unionville-Chadds Ford Schools is this spacious 5 BR, 3.2 BA home with a fabulous indoor pool! Chefs will love the gourmet Kitchen. Enjoy the views from the elevated Deck overlooking the Koi pond, Party Barn, Play House & Stable.
\$3,175,00



Exceedingly Private Location Abutting ChesLen Preserve

Set on 23+ acres in a sought-after location, this remarkable property is privately sited, enjoys exceptional equestrian facilities & is surrounded by open space that abuts the 1,263 acre ChesLen Preserve. The home offers 5 BR, 4.2 BA and you will love the indoor pool with sauna, entertainment area, bar & kitchen. Located in Unionville-Chadds Ford Schools.
\$2,450,000



Superior Family Compound with Four Living Units

This fabulous c.1886 home features 3 BR, 2.1 BA, great Kitchen & a wonderful floor plan. Additionally, the property has three, one or two bedroom living units, making this an exciting opportunity for someone seeking a wonderful family compound! This 3+ acre property boasts superior amenities. Mechanical systems have been updated. Unionville Schools. Low taxes!
\$1,590,000



Overlooks French Creek Golf Club's 14th Hole

Set in Olde Bulltown Village is this charming 3BR, 2.2 BA home which combines the old with the new featuring cathedral ceilings, stunning main level primary suite, antique hardware, finished lower level and beautiful quarter sawn oak floors! The kitchen has high-end appliances and handsome cabinetry. This wonderful property must be seen to be full appreciated.
\$1,585,000



Great Horse Farm in Unionville Schools

This delightful property features a charming 3BR, 3.1 BA home with a lower level apartment and a well designed six stall barn. The home has beautiful post & beam construction and a nice floor plan. Equestrians will love the 10 acre setting with ample pastures and the Unionville equestrian area location. The farm is set in Unionville-Chadds Ford Schools and enjoys low taxes!
\$1,130,000



Crebilly Farm
Last Price: \$3,780,000



Pocopson Township
Last Price: \$1,599,000



French Creek Village
Last Price: \$885,000

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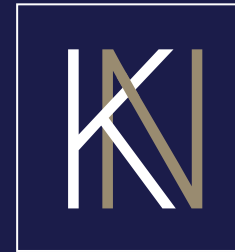
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from the
EDITOR

Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa ... the season of gift-giving and charity, Santa and lights, friends and family is in full swing. It's a *County Lines* Christmas! We have holiday happenings, house tours, gift ideas, plus suggestions for seasonal theater fun in Shannon Montgomery's "Tis the Season for the Stage."

Join Heather Reiffer as she recounts how George and Martha Washington celebrated their Christmases — including eating Christmas Pie and a Great Cake — in "Love, War and Christmas Past" in Brandywine Stories.

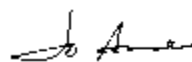
For gift-giving, we continue to suggest shopping small. Shannon Montgomery helps with "A Season of New Finds in West Chester" for one-stop shopping in the Borough. And for book lovers, Shelley Laurence has suggestions for kids, cooks and everyone else on your list in "Books for the Holidays." Or for someone who doesn't want another thing, our "Giving Back Gift Guide" has ideas for giving, not buying, when you donate to local nonprofits in someone's name.

For a quick holiday getaway with all the wonder of Christmas, but less of the hassle of travel, consider Lancaster County, Jim Thorpe, Chesapeake City and Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Find plenty of seasonal fun in Ed Malet's "Holiday Getaways ... in Under Two Hours."

Food and drink fans will enjoy recommendations in Liz Tarditi's "Firelight & Brandy" for the warmth and luxury of brandy or cognac. And for something simple and restorative, Liz offers "Sanctuary in a Bowl," a selection of hearty soup recipes in Brandywine Table for when we need a quiet moment in a busy season.

Other articles will inspire you to help the monarch butterflies — in "Measuring Monarchs" — dream about a new home — "Luxury Lakeside Living" — and be prepared to cut your own tree — "Tips to CYO Christmas Tree."

From all of us at *County Lines*, best wishes for the merriest of holidays and the happiest New Year!


Jo Anne Durako
Editor

COUNTY LINES MAGAZINE

December 2025

Volume XLIX Number 4

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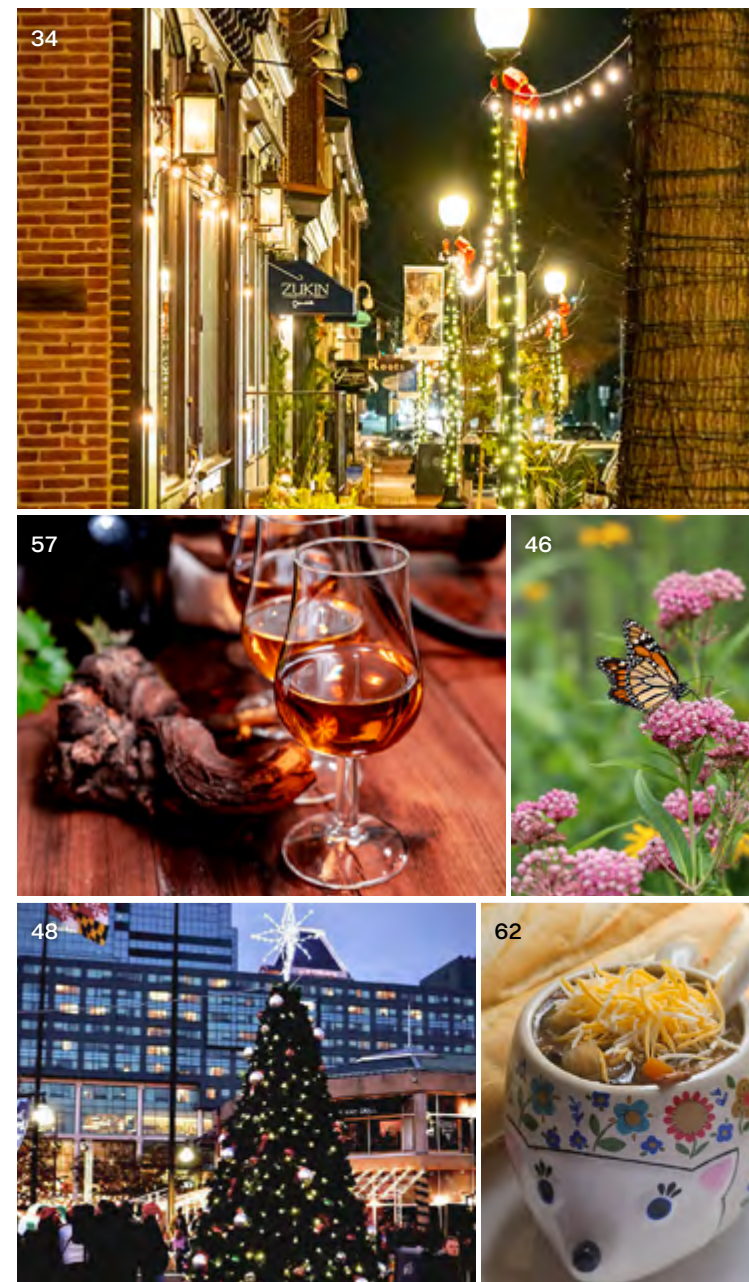
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[Good to Know] *Just a few things we'd thought you'd like to know this month*

Spanning History. Good news for covered bridge fans: county commissioners and other local notables recently cut the ribbon on the new-and-improved **Rudolph and Arthur Covered Bridge**. The new bridge spans Big Elk Creek between Elk and New London Townships, replacing the treasured 140-year-old bridge swept away by Hurricane Ida.



A faithful replica of the 1880 bridge, the new structure features the distinctive Burr Arch Truss and is named for families who once operated a papermill nearby. *Chesco.org*

Stamp of Approval. Next time you're grocery shopping, look for the green **"As Seen in the Chester County Farm Guide"** stamp. A new initiative from AgConnect, the new stamp aims to help consumers easily recognize and support local farms and agricultural businesses featured in the Chester County Farm Guide. Published annually, the guide profiles over 125 farms and markets while offering recipes, seasonal product calendars and stories from our area's vibrant agricultural landscape. *Go-AgConnect.org*



Forever Green. Two equine farms in Chester County have been **permanently preserved**. Part of \$5.7 million statewide investment by the Shapiro administration, a 20-acre farm in Upper Oxford and West Fallowfield Townships as well as a 19-acre farm in East Marlborough Township are now protected from future development, forever. Since 1988, when voters overwhelmingly voted to create the state's Farmland Preservation Program, Pennsylvania has protected 6,621 farms — that's over 650,000 acres. Hooray for open space! *PA.gov*



Hidden Hangout.

Downtown Media has a new hangout with speak-easy vibes: **Martinique Deux**, tucked beneath the Phoenix Building. The 2,400-square-foot bar and entertainment venue serves cocktails and local favorites (Stateside vodka and Surfside cans, Sterling Pig beer, John Roberts wine), plus classic bar snacks. Come for live music and comedy shows, plus Birds games on the big screen. Open Thursday to Sunday, 4 p.m. to midnight. *115 W. State St., Media. MartiniqueDeux.com*



Checking In.

Look forward to a new hotel coming to downtown Kennett Square. Square Roots Collective (the folks behind The Creamery and Artelo) plans to open **The Francis Hotel & Suites** in early 2026. Named for Francis Smith, who gave Kennett its name, the boutique hotel occupies a restored 18th-century home, with eight rooms — from singles to kitchenette suites — each named for a piece of local history. *205 S. Union St., Kennett Square. TheFrancisKSQ.com*



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Christmas on King in Malvern November 29



Enjoy an afternoon of family fun, food trucks, shopping and holiday cheer. King Street and Burke Park transform into a winter wonderland filled with entertainment and holiday magic, Santa's Parade, tree lighting at 5:15 p.m., pictures with Santa, food trucks and a beer garden. *Burke Park, 26 S. Warren Ave. Noon to 6 p.m. Malvern.org*

Celebrate the Holidays in Downingtown November 29, December 13

Nov. 29, Tree Lighting Ceremony with refreshments, music and Santa. *The Gazebo in Kerr Park. 6 p.m. Dec. 13*, local bands, dancers, scouts and the arrival of Santa Claus. *Starts at Beaver Creek Elementary School. 3 p.m. DTownChristmas.com*



Santa is Coming to Everybody's Hometown — Media November 30



The fun begins at the Block Party, *Veterans Square between State & Baker Sts.*, with food, music, games and giveaways. Bring a contribution to Media Food Bank or new, unwrapped toy for Toys For Tots, 2:30 p.m. Join the Fun Run/Walk at 4:15 p.m. Then find a spot for Santa's Parade on State Street with music, performers, floats, cars, dancers and more. 5 p.m. *SantaParade.Media*

Holiday Magic in Wayne December 5 & 6

Dec. 5, enjoy carriage rides, carolers, tree lighting and Santa's arrival, 5:30 to 8, tree lighting at 7:30 p.m., and Master of Ceremonies, Ducis Rodgers from 6abc Action News, will lead the community in song. *Dec. 6*, the holiday magic continues on Sat. with the Elves for Shelves Fun Run and 5K at 8 a.m., parade at 10 a.m. and a personal visit with Santa in the courtyard of *Wayne Presbyterian Church* until 11:45 a.m. *WayneBusiness.com*



December Picks by Marci Tomassone

Get in the Holiday Spirit in Phoenixville December 5 & 6, 7, 13

Dec. 5 & 6, tree lighting downtown on *Fri.*, 6:30 p.m., and family-friendly activities throughout the weekend including "Jessica Lynn's A Very Merry Classic Christmas" and "The Phoenixville Christmas Spectacular" at The Colonial Theatre. *Dec. 7*, Breakfast with Santa and food drive at *Steel City, 203 Bridge St. 9 to noon*. Benefits Phoenixville Area Community Services. *Dec. 13*, Phoenixville Firebird Festival, *Reservoir Park, 601 Franklin Ave. 5 to 10:30 p.m. TheColonialTheatre.com; PhoenixvilleChamber.org; PhoenixvilleFirst.org*



Holiday Happenings in Kennett Square Through December 31



Through Dec. 31, storefronts are decorated to the theme "Experience the Magic in Kennett Square" with a competition for the best window display. *Dec. 6 & 7, 13 & 14*, the Holiday Village Market features artisan and vintage vendors to browse while enjoying live music, festive cocktails, food trucks and family activities. *The Creamery, 401 Birch St. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 18*, Tinsel on the Town is a holiday celebration with train rides, Santa Claus and street vendors, seasonal treats, handcrafted gifts and merchant bingo, with prizes for all ages. 5 to 8 p.m. *KennettCollaborative.org*

Christmas in Coatesville December 6, 12

Dec. 6, hometown floats and music travel down Rt. 30 and, again this year, a few quiet blocks — no sirens — between 4th & 5th or 8th & 9th Aves. 10 a.m. On *Dec. 12*, the National Iron & Steel Heritage Museum's Holiday Open House & Auction brings traditional holiday music and festive displays. The online auction site offers gifts and other items. 50 S. 1st Ave. 5 to 8 p.m. *CoatesvilleChristmasParade.com; SteelMuseum.org*



A Very Wilmington Holiday Through December

From Yuletide at Winterthur and Holidays at Hagley, the area is brimming with holiday cheer. You can also stroll the streets of Historic New Castle during the Spirit of Christmas, or explore decorated homes during Christmas in Odessa. Plan your holiday excursion at *VisitWilmingtonDE.com*



FAMILY FUN

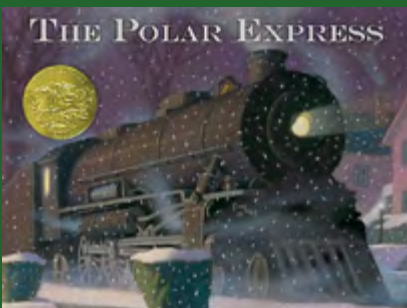
THROUGH DECEMBER 30

Morris Arboretum Holiday Garden Express & Nighttime Express. You'll see thousands of twinkling lights and rail cars in a festive wonderland of lights and sounds. Free with general admission. *Thurs–Sun, Dec. 6–21*, the Nighttime Express features laser lights in the trees and sparkling lights along the railway. *Hours and admission, MorrisArboretum.org.*



DECEMBER 3 & 10

Brandywine Museum of Art Family Holiday Events. *Dec. 3*, “The Polar Express” Read-Aloud Pajama Night—enjoy hot chocolate and cookies, 6:30 to 8 pm, \$25. *Dec. 10*, Children’s Christmas Party—visit with Santa and enjoy entertainment, characters, trains and more, 5:30 to 7:30 pm, \$35. *1 Hoffman’s Mill Rd., Chadds Ford. Brandywine.org.*



DECEMBER 12

Holiday Stroll in Yellow Springs Village. This village-wide event features an appearance from Santa, holiday crafts and finishes with the tree lighting at the West Pikeland Township building. *1685 Art School Rd., Chester Springs. Free. 5 to 8 pm. Visit YellowSprings.org.*

DECEMBER 13

Children’s Christmas Party at The Colonial Theatre. The whole family will enjoy

this afternoon of pictures with Santa, a holiday movie, popcorn and drinks, games and prizes. *227 Bridge St., Phoenixville. 1 to 3 pm. Free tickets at any Phoenixville Federal branch location. TheColonialTheatre.com.*

DECEMBER 21–JANUARY 1

Brunch with Santa at Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library. Santa will be flying in from the North Pole to share brunch and listen to your requests. *5105 Kennett Pk., Winterthur. 9 am to 12:30. Res. required, \$25–\$65. Winterthur.org.*



DECEMBER 13

KOP Town Center’s Winterfest. Enjoy an immersive holiday experience, including seasonal entertainment, food and beverage offerings and photo-worthy moments. Activities include DIY crafts, face painting, DJ entertainment and more. *155 Village Dr., King of Prussia. 2 to 7 pm. Free. KingOfPrussia-TownCenter.com.*



DECEMBER 20

Breakfast with Santa at Plain & Fancy Farm. Celebrate the holidays with this party featuring breakfast buffet, digital images with Santa and a small gift for each child. *3121 Old Philadelphia Pk. (Rt. 340), Bird-in-Hand. 9 to 11. \$25–\$30. For advance tickets, 717-768-4400 or visit PlainAndFancyFarm.com.*



HOLIDAY TRAINS

All Aboard the Holiday Trains! Check websites for hours and ticket info.

Colebrookdale Railroad. *Dec. 6–24*, ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas and Santa’s Polar Bear Express Trains. 64 S. Washington St., Boyertown. *Colebrookdale-Railroad.com*

New Hope & Ivyland Railroad. *Through Dec. 31*, Santa’s North Pole Express. 32 W. Bridge St., New Hope. *NewHopeRailroad.com*

Railroad Museum of PA. *Dec. 6 & 13*, Home for the Holidays, a nostalgic look back at railroading’s holiday past with music, costumed interpreters and Santa. Register at *RRMuseumPA.org*

Strasburg Rail Road. *Through Dec. 23*, choose from Santa Claus Limited, Night Before Christmas Train and Santa’s Paradise Express. 301 Gap Rd., Ronks. *StrasburgRailRoad.com*

West Chester Railroad. *Through Dec. 21*, Santa Express: join Santa for your journey. *Dec. 7, 14*, Christmas Tree Train: take the train to Wiggins Tree Farm to cut your tree, which will be placed on the train. 203 E. Market St., West Chester. *WCRailroad.com*

Wilmington & Western Railroad. *Dec. 4–31*, ride the Holiday Lights Express. *Through Dec. 21*, take the Santa Express. Greenbank Station, 2201 Newport Gap Pk., Wilmington. *WWRR.com*

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS.....

See also: Family Fun, December Picks and West Chester Events.

THROUGH DECEMBER 25

Holidays on the Hill in Chestnut Hill. Enjoy the holiday cheer of Chestnut Hill with a brass quartet and take advantage of late-night shopping hours on Wednesdays. Refreshments available, and guests can have their picture taken with Santa. *ChestnutHillPA.com.*

THROUGH DECEMBER 31

Christmas in Odessa, DE. Step into a beloved novel this holiday season when Historic Odessa unveils “A Jane Austen Christmas at 250” with tours and special events. Festivities throughout the month include the holiday resale shop, story-book times, festive food events, candlelight tours, a Dover English Country Dance and more. For details, visit *HistoricOdessa.org.*

THROUGH JANUARY 1

Holidays at Hagley. Returning this year with Holiday Home and Garden Tours, the 8th annual Gingerbread House Contest, and *Dec. 6* is Santa Day. *Dec. 9, 11, 16, 18*, Holiday Nights Tours, 4 to 7. Hagley’s Library & Soda House, 298 Buck Rd., Wilmington. Daily (closed Wed) 10 to 5. \$10–\$20. *Hagley.org.*



THROUGH JANUARY 3

Yuletide at Winterthur. Yuletide charm meets contemporary creativity in the historic mansion. Delight in beautifully decorated trees inside and out and marvel at a large-scale gingerbread house and 18-room dollhouse. Enjoy enchanting decorations and outdoor lighting inspired by the woodlands of Winterthur. 5105 Kennett Pk., Winterthur, DE. Tues–Sun, 10 to 5. \$9–\$30. *Winterthur.org.*

THROUGH JANUARY 11

A Longwood Christmas. This Christmas, the Gardens are transformed into a living jewel box as twinkling lights dance, hues of emerald green to ruby red to bold sapphire shimmer, and every path leads to a new treasure. 1001 Longwood Rd., Kennett Square. \$20–\$42. Timed tickets required. *LongwoodGardens.org.*

DECEMBER 5 & 6

A Dickens of a Christmas Weekend in

Kent County, MD. Come dressed like a Dickens character and step into 1840s London to experience the holiday season as Charles Dickens imagined it. This two-day event includes carriage rides, entertainment, home tour, food, book talks, merchandise and more. Fri, 5 to 9 pm; Sat, 8 am to 6 pm. Chestertown, MD. *MainStreetChestertown.org/Dickens-Festival.*

DECEMBER 5 & 6

Tree Lighting & Holiday Home Tour in Strasburg. *Dec. 5*, the tree lighting takes place in front of the Strasburg Borough Library,

145 Precision Ave., at 5:30 with free activities and food. At 6:30, Santa will arrive by fire truck to light the tree. *Dec. 6*, seven fes-



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tively decorated homes in historic Strasburg are open for viewing. First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg, 101 S. Decatur St. 10 to 4. \$25. StrasburgHeritageSociety.org.

DECEMBER 5 & 6
Holiday Open House at The Willows. *Dec. 5*, Preview Party with a first look at vendors and offering live music and light fare, beer and wine. 6 to 8 pm, \$25. *Dec. 6*, vendors, holiday music, craft tables for the kids, hot chocolate bar and a poinsettia sale. 490 Darby-Paoli Rd., Villanova. 10 to 3. Free. WillowsVillanova.com.

DECEMBER 6
Uwchlan Garden Club Christmas Fair. You'll find all your decorating needs with fresh-cut local greens, handmade wreaths, swags, centerpieces and planters. Enjoy homemade treats, a Kids Korner, raffle and more. 1756 Uwchlan Meeting House, 5 N. Village Ave., Lionville. 8 am to 2 pm. Free. UwchlanGardenClub.org.



DECEMBER 12 & 13
Winter Luminary Nights at Jenkins Arboretum. As the days grow shorter, take a ride to Jenkins for an evening celebration of winter light. The gardens will be aglow with luminary-lined paths and the warmth of community. A family-friendly event, not to be missed. Refreshments available. 631 Berwyn Baptist Rd., Devon. 5 to 6:30 pm or 6:30 to 8 pm. \$25–\$35. JenkinsArboretum.org.



DECEMBER 13
Christmas in Marshallton. Come out to

Marshallton United Methodist Church to enjoy these holiday favorites. The cookie sale starts at 9, and handmade crafts will be available from 9 to 1. A free community lunch of soup and sandwiches starts at 11:30 am. 1282 W. Strasburg Rd., Marshallton. MarshalltonChurch.org.

DECEMBER 14
Candlelight and Caroling: A Holiday Open House at Historic Waynesborough. Tour Anthony Wayne's House and learn about holiday customs, create a festive craft and enjoy treats and caroling by the Haverford School Notables a Cappella ensemble. 2049 Waynesborough Rd., Paoli. 2 to 4 pm. \$5–\$10. PhilaLandmarks.org.



ART, CRAFTS & ANTQUES
THROUGH JANUARY 1
Made in Philadelphia Holiday Market. Local artisans, designers, crafters and jewelers offer their holiday-inspired handmade goods and gifts. Dilworth Park, west side of City Hall, 1 S. 15th St., Philadelphia. Sun–Thurs, noon to 8; Fri–Sat, noon to 9. MadeInPhila.com.



THROUGH FEBRUARY 1
Bryn Mawr Rehab's 30th Annual Exhibition and Sale. *Nov. 8*, opening evening features a cocktail reception and dinner under a tent. The show continues as a showcase and marketplace for talented artists, educating the community about the remarkable abilities of people with disabilities. Open daily during visiting hours. Bryn Mawr Rehab Hospital, 414 Paoli Pk., Malvern. Main-LineHealth.org.

DECEMBER 6
Historic Sugartown Holiday Craft Market. Get into the holiday spirit at the Holiday Market

Local Farm Markets



Artisan Exchange, 208 Carter Dr. West Chester. Sat, 10 to 1. ArtisanExchange.net.

Berwyn Farmers Market, 511 Old Lancaster Rd. Sun, 9 to noon. BerwynFarmersMarket.com.

Bryn Mawr Farmers Market, Lancaster Ave. Bryn Mawr train station lot. Sat, 9 to 1. LMFarmersMarkets.org/BrynMawr.

Downingtown Farmers Market, Kerr Park, Log House Field, 28 E. Pennsylvania Ave. Sat, 9 to 1. GrowingRootsPartners.com.

Eagleview Farmers Mkt., Eagleview Town Ctr., 570 Wellington Sq., Exton. Thurs, 3 to 6. GrowingRootsPartners.com.

Farmer Jawn Farm Store, 1225 E. Street Rd., West Chester. Tues & Wed, 10 to 6; Thurs–Fri, 10 to 7; Sat–Sun, 9 to 5. FarmerJawn.co.

Kennett Square Farmers Mkt., 600 S. Broad St. Fri, 3 to 5:30. KSQFarmersMarket.com.

Lancaster County Farmers Mkt., 389 W. Lancaster Ave., Wayne. Wed, Fri & Sat, 6 to 4. LancasterCountyFarmersMarket.com.

Malvern Farmers Market, Burke Park, 26 S. Warren Ave. Sat, 9 to 1. GrowingRootsPartners.com.

Media Farmers Market, Edgemont St. between Front & State Sts. Dec–Apr, 1st and 3rd Sun of the month, 10 to noon. MediaFarmersMarket.com.

Oxford Village Market, 193 Limestone Rd. Thurs, 8 to 6; Fri, 8 to 7; Sat, 8 to 5. OxfordFarmMarketPA.com.

Phoenixville Farmers Market, 200 Mill St. Sat, 10 to noon. PhoenixvilleFarmersMarket.org.

Thornbury Farmers Mkt. & CSA, 1256 Thornbury Rd., West Chester. Thurs–Fri, noon to 6; Sat, 9 to 6; Sun, 11 to 5. ThornburyFarmCSA.com.

West Chester Growers Mkt., Chestnut & Church Sts. Sat, 9 to 1. WestChesterGrowersMarket.com.

Westtown Amish Market, 1165 Wilmington Pk., West Chester. Thurs, 9 to 6; Fri, 9 to 7; Sat, 8 to 4. WestChesterAmishMarket.com.

For more visit the Chester County Farm Guide online, ChesCoPlanning.org/Agriculture/FarmGuide.cfm

featuring many local crafters and artisans, and Santa will be on-hand to greet shoppers. 260 Spring Rd., Malvern. Noon to 4. \$10. HistoricSugartown.org.



DECEMBER 12-14
CraftForms 2025 Holiday Shopping Weekend. Get inspired for the holidays and shop locally with over 30 fine craft and culinary artisans featuring their handmade and one-of-kind works of art. Make a day of it and find the perfect handcrafted gift at Wayne Art Center, 413 Maplewood Ave., Wayne. Fri, 4 to 7; Sat, 10 to 5; Sun, 10 to 4. WayneArt.org.

BOOKS.....
DECEMBER 2 & 9
Main Point Books. *Dec. 2*, Main Point Books welcomes Jan Brett and her newest picture book “The Christmas Sweater” at Wayne Presbyterian Church, 125 E. Lancaster Ave., Wayne. 5 pm, \$23. **Fiction Book Group:** *Dec. 9*, “The



NEW! Select Friday and Saturday evening hours for candlelit tours, cozy firepits, and more!

President's Hat” by Antoine Laurain, 1 pm. 116 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne. MainPointBooks.com.

DECEMBER 7–JANUARY 1
Wellington Square Bookshop. **Classics Book Club:** *Dec. 7*, “Dracula” by Bram Stoker, 2 pm. **Fiction Book Group:** *Dec. 10 & 11*, Holiday Book Swap, 2 pm. **NonFiction Book Group:** *Jan. 1*, “Papyrus: The Invention of Books in the Ancient World” by Irene Vallejo, 7 pm. 549 Wellington Sq., Exton. WellingtonSquareBooks.com.

DECEMBER 16
Reads & Company. Book clubs and special events are held throughout the month. Check website for a complete list. **The Then and Now Book Group:** *Dec. 16*, “If on a Winter's Night a Traveler” by Italo Calvino. 234 Bridge St., Phoenixville. 7 pm. ReadsAndCompany.com.

FUNDRAISERS
THROUGH DECEMBER 21
The UCF MTB Christmas Tree Fund-raiser. A variety of Christmas trees in different sizes and types are offered, benefiting the Unionville-Chadds Ford School District (UCF) Mountain Biking Team. Northbrook Marketplace, 1805 Unionville Rd., West Chester. 9 am. NorthbrookMarketplace.com.

DECEMBER 5
49th Annual Gala at The Grand. Enjoy a performance by Bruce Hornsby with the Brandywine Valley Symphony. Then make your way to The Hotel du Pont for the Ultimate After Party featuring live music, delicious food, signature cocktails and more. 818 N. King St., Wilmington. 8 pm. Tickets \$250 and up. TheGrandWilmington.org.



MUSEUMS
THROUGH JANUARY 25
Delaware Art Museum. “Warm Room: Photographs from Historic Greenhouses by

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Peter A. Moriarty,” historic greenhouses world-wide, capturing their light-filled architecture in gelatin-silver prints. 2301 Kentmere Pkwy., Wilmington. Wed–Sun, 10 to 4. \$14–\$25. DelArt.org.

THROUGH MAY 31
Brandywine Museum of Art. *Through Mar. 1*, “Jerrell Gibbs: No Solace in the Shade.” *Through May 31*, worldwide museum debut of a rediscovered masterpiece by Jasper Francis Cropsey not seen in the U.S. since it was painted over 150 years ago. 1 Hoffman’s Mill Rd., Chadds Ford. Wed–Mon, 9:30 to 4:30. \$8–\$20. Brandywine.org.



MUSIC & ENTERTAINMENT
THROUGH DECEMBER 30
American Music Theatre Presents The 2025 Christmas Show: Deck the Halls. Celebrate the season with awe-inspiring performances designed to capture the hearts of the entire family. 2425 Lincoln Hwy. E., Lancaster. Times and tickets, AMTShows.com.



DECEMBER 2-20
The Keswick Theatre. *Dec. 2*, A Swingin’ Little Christmas: Jane Lynch Live in Concert with Kate Flannery, Tim Davis and The Tony Guerrero Quintet; *Dec. 4*, Chris Botti; *Dec. 5*, Beatles vs. Stones; *Dec. 6*, LeAnn Rimes; *Dec.*



7, Becky Robinson; *Dec. 9*, Chris Isaak; *Dec. 11*, Starship featuring Mickey Thomas; *Dec. 12*, Pete Correale; *Dec. 13 & 14*, The Temptations & The Four Tops; *Dec. 17*, Darlene Love; *Dec. 19*, Samantha Fish, Cedric Burnside, Jon Spencer; *Dec. 20*, An American Celtic Christmas. 291 N. Keswick Ave., Glenside. Times and tickets, KeswickTheatre.com.

DECEMBER 6-16
At The Grand in Wilmington. *Dec. 6*, Lúnasa: An Irish Solstice Celebration; *Dec. 12*, Joan Osborne sings Songs of Bob Dylan; *Dec. 16*, Matteo Bocelli. 818 N. Market St., Wilmington. Times and tickets, TheGrandWilmington.org.



DECEMBER 10-31
At The Colonial Theatre in Phoenixville. *Dec. 10*, Tab Benoit I Hear Thunder Tour; *Dec. 11*, The Milk Carton Kids Holiday Tour; *Dec. 14*, City Rhythm Orchestra Holiday Style; *Dec. 19*, Colin Mochrie & Asad Mecci star in Hyprov: Improv under Hypnosis; *Dec. 20*, A Charlie Brown Christmas with the Eric Mintel Quartet; *Dec. 27*, Start Making Sense Talking Heads Tribute; *Dec. 31*, New Year’s Eve at the Moulin Rouge fundraiser. 227 Bridge St., Phoenixville. Times and tickets, TheColonialTheatre.com.



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES.....
THROUGH FEBRUARY 16
Flight on Ice. This pop-up outdoor ice skating rink brings a season of family fun, including

Where to see The Nutcracker
A holiday tradition with ballet companies across the area taking us on the magical journey, all to the backdrop of Tchaikovsky's mesmerizing score. Visit websites for times and tickets.



DECEMBER 5-31
Philadelphia Ballet
Kimmel Center, Academy of Music, 240 S. Broad St., Philadelphia. Philadelphia.Ballet.org

DECEMBER 12-14
Wilmington Ballet
The Playhouse on Rodney Square, 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. WilmingtonBallet.org

DECEMBER 13 & 14
Schuylkill Valley Regional Dance Company
Phoenixville Middle School Theatre, 1000 Purple Pride Pkwy., Phoenixville. SVRDC.org

DECEMBER 13-21
First State Ballet
Copeland Hall, 818 N. Market St., Wilmington. TheGrandWilmington.org

DECEMBER 19-21
Brandywine Ballet
Emilie K. Asplundh Concert Hall, 700 S. High St., West Chester. BrandywineBallet.org



ice skating sessions, fire pit lounge areas, local entertainers and DJs, and food and beverages. Proceeds benefit the Delaware County Veterans Memorial Association. Energy Transfer Veterans Memorial Rink, 4901 West Chester Pk., Newtown Square. FlightOnIce.com.



THEATER.....
THROUGH DECEMBER 21
See also: Theater article.
“Christmas by Candlelight” at The Candlelight Theatre. Featuring seasonal favorites,



sacred tunes and some surprises, brought to life by the Candlelighters. 2208 Millers Rd., Wilmington. Times and tickets, 302-475-2313; CandlelightTheatreDelaware.org.

THROUGH JANUARY 4
“A Christmas Carol” at People’s Light. Experience the magic of Dickens’ enduring classic in this music-filled adaptation. “A Christmas Carol” is a must-see for the whole family, full of humor, heart and holiday magic. 39 Conestoga Rd., Malvern. Times and tickets, PeoplesLight.org.



THROUGH JANUARY 4
“Elf—the Musical” at Fulton Theatre. This modern-day holiday classic is sure to make

Handel’s Messiah

A holiday tradition at nearby locations. Visit websites for times and tickets.

DECEMBER 5, 7, 19, 21
Vox AmaDeus
A holiday tradition on original Baroque instruments. Performed at 4 locations. VoxAmaDeus.org

DECEMBER 4-6
Lancaster Symphony Orchestra
First Presbyterian Church, 140 E. Orange St., Lancaster. LancasterSymphony.org

DECEMBER 12-14
Philadelphia Orchestra
Kimmel Center, Marian Anderson Hall, 300 S. Broad St., Philadelphia. PhilOrch.org

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everyone embrace their inner elf. 12 N. Prince St., Lancaster. Times and tickets, 717-397-7425; TheFulton.org.



THROUGH JANUARY 4
“Annie” at Media Theatre. Bring the whole family to see the classic story of the little orphan who could. 104 E. State St., Media. Times and tickets, MediaTheatre.org.



DECEMBER 3-21
“Shrek the Musical” at Delaware Theatre. The perfect play for the whole family. 200 Water St., Wilmington. Times and tickets, DelawareTheatre.org.



DECEMBER 20 & 21
“Miracle on 34th Street: The Musical” at The Playhouse. A holiday classic from the writer of “The Music Man” and based on the movie of the same name featuring a

book and score by Meredith Willson. 1007 N. Market St., Wilmington. Times and tickets, TheGrandWilmington.org.



TOWNS, TALKS & TOURS
See December Picks and West Chester Events for Holiday Happenings in area towns. ♦

Stay in the know with everything going on in *County Lines* country. Sign up for our Events Newsletter (sent twice monthly) at Newsletter@ValleyDel.com.

Send a description of your activity to Info@ValleyDel.com by the first of the month preceding publication.

For more events visit:

CountyLinesMagazine.com

Give the Gift of Discovery

This holiday season, give the gift of membership to the Delaware Museum of Nature and Science for a whole year of exploration and discovery.

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302-658-9111 | delmns.org

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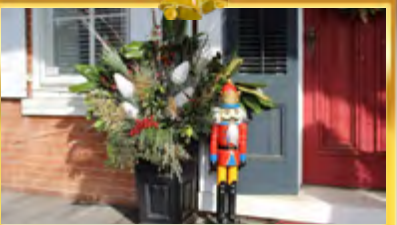
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Tickets

THE COLONIAL THEATRE
227 Bridge Street Phoenixville, PA 19460 610-917-1228 | thecolonialtheatre.com



December 5
Surrey Holiday House Tour & Shop. Visit Main Line homes decorated for the holidays, 9:30 am to 4 pm, \$95, then stop by the Holiday Shop for lunch and the perfect holiday gift. St. David's Episcopal Church Hall, 763 S. Valley Forge Rd., Wayne. Benefits Surrey Services. Surrey-Services.org/Holiday-House-Tour-2025



December 6
Annual Christmas in Odessa Holiday House Tour. Tours leave from the Visitor's Center located in the Old Bank, 2nd & Main Sts., Odessa, DE. 10 am to 5 pm. \$25-\$30. Benefits Historic Odessa. Reservationsrequired,302-378-4119.ChristmasInOdessa.com



December 6
West Chester Public Library Holiday Home Tour. The tour showcases beautiful and diverse West Chester homes decorated for the holidays. Benefits the library. 10 am to 3 pm. \$40. [Tickets, WCPublicLibrary.org](http://Tickets,WCPublicLibrary.org)



December 6
Phoenixville's Candlelight Holiday Tour. The Marketplace is held at the Phoenixville Senior Center (food, drinks, holiday vendors) from 3 to 7 pm. Tour, 4 to 8 pm, with transportation from the center. Benefits the Senior Center. \$30-\$35. 153 Church St., Phoenixville. [On Facebook](http://OnFacebook)

HOLIDAY House Tours



December 6
Holiday Home Tour in Strasburg. Tour tickets, lunch, greens, craft vendors and a silent auction, all at the First Presbyterian Church, 101 S. Decatur St., Strasburg. Benefits Strasburg Heritage Society. 10 am to 4 pm. \$25. StrasburgHeritageSociety.org



December 6
Newtown Historic Assn. Holiday House Tour. Tour private homes and public buildings. Benefits Newtown Historic Assoc. Tickets at the Half-Moon Inn, 105 Court St., and Stocking Works, 301 S. State St., Newtown. 10 am to 4 pm. \$40. NewtownHistoric.org



December 13
Chestnut Hill Holiday House Tour. Ride in your car or take the event trolley on this self-guided tour through this charming Philadelphia neighborhood. Benefits Chestnut Hill Community Assoc. 10 am to 4 pm. \$50. ChestnutHill.org



December 13
Spirit of Christmas in New Castle, DE. Stroll through private homes and museums, join caroling and the tree lighting ceremony. Benefits Historic New Castle. 25 E. 2nd St., New Castle, DE. 10 am to 5 pm. \$15. SpiritOfChristmasDE.com

George & Martha Washington: Love, War and Christmas Past

THE WASHINGTONS' HOLIDAY JOURNEY FROM BRANDYWINE TO MOUNT VERNON

Heather P. Reiffer



1

PHOTO CREDIT: NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; GIFT OF AN ANONYMOUS



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PHOTO CREDIT: NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; TRANSFER FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART; GIFT OF THE A.W. MELLON EDUCATIONAL AND CHARITABLE TRUST, 1942

IT WAS A COLD CHRISTMAS EVE in 1783 when General George Washington rode up the thickly wooded, winding road leading to Mount Vernon. As the forest opened into meadows, a myriad of emotions must have rushed through his mind as his beloved home, candlelit at twilight, came into view. Perhaps he simply hoped that Martha's decadent yuletide Christmas Pye awaited him.

The day before, Washington had resigned as General of the Continental Army, informing the United States Congress that "having now finished the work assigned to me, I retire from the great theatre of Action ... I hereby offer my Commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life." Like most of the exhausted, but free, nation, the Washingtons were overdue for a peaceful holiday season. The war had raged for over eight years.

GEORGE AND MARTHA

The early American power couple exchanged vows on the Twelfth Night of Christmas on January 6, 1759. Though neither George nor Martha left written reflections on their wedding, family members recalled several days of festivities.

George, then 27, married recently widowed Martha Dandridge Custis and welcomed her two children, Jack and Patsy, to Mount Vernon. At 28, Martha was no shrinking violet. She had already proven herself capable of managing her late hus-

band's expansive estate, which included numerous enslaved people.

Together, the Washingtons settled into married life, overseeing a large property and household while carrying worries familiar to today's parents. Son Jack was more drawn to romance than study, and daughter Patsy struggled with epilepsy, passing away in 1773 at just 17.

WARTIME MARRIAGE

Meanwhile, the American colonies careened toward war. On June 15, 1775, George Washington accepted command of the newly formed Continental Army and set off to Cambridge, Massachusetts. Martha joined him in time for Christmas, facing her new role as "Lady Washington," as she was known, with calm reserve, while inwardly "shuddering at the sound of guns."

Holiday festivities would have to wait, as General Washington spent Christmas Day imploring Congress to provide more funds to feed and clothe the army. While Christmas celebrations in the late 1700s were quieter religious occasions, they still marked the passage of time.

The following Christmas night found Martha safely back at Mount Vernon, while her husband famously conquered snow and ice to lead his troops across the Delaware River toward victories in Trenton and Princeton. Though the Washingtons often spent Christmas apart during the



3

PHOTO CREDIT: SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM, GIFT OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION



4

war, George summoned Martha each winter, and she would join him as soon as safety and weather allowed.

In February 1777, Nathaniel Greene, a key general during the Philadelphia Campaign, wrote that "Mrs. Washington is excessive fond of the General and he of her. They are very happy in each other." Another observed that Washington's "Worthy Lady seems to be in perfect felicity while she is by the side of her Old Man as she calls him."

Autumn 1777 brought the Battle of Brandywine and a series of defeats, surprise attacks and retreats through Chester County during British General Howe's Philadelphia Campaign, which ended with the British occupation of Philadelphia. Washington's army, exhausted, short on supplies and with morale fleeting, hastened to Valley Forge before Christmas.

Martha arrived in February to her husband's cramped fieldstone headquarters, which he described as "exceedingly pinched for room." She wrote that "officers and men are chiefly in huts, which they say is tolerable comfortable. The army are as healthy as can well be expected." Likely at George's urging, she avoided describing the true hardships of Valley Forge. Conditions were far harsher, but despite the winter of disease, shortages, frigid temperatures and death, the Continental Army emerged unified, trained and resolute.

In January 1779, George and Martha marked their 20th anniversary at a Twelfth Night ball at the Philadelphia home of Sam-

uel Powel, a former Philadelphia mayor. Nearly five years would pass before George finally rode up his driveway to Mount Vernon to join Martha at home for the holidays at last. With her husband safely home, Martha later remarked that she "anticipated that from that moment [they] should have grown old together, in solitude and tranquility: this ... was the first and fondest wish of [her] heart."

The war stretched across years and through Chester County's fields and valleys, testing the Washingtons as much as their soldiers. Yet by war's end, the promise of peace and the chance to spend Christmas together was finally restored. ♦

Heather Reiffer is an A250 Friends Outreach Officer of the Community Foundation and nonprofit consultant. She wrote this article to raise awareness of Chester County's role in our nation's fight for freedom and build engagement for 2026, the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. To get involved, contact America 250 Friends at the Chester County Community Foundation, A250Friends.org.



1. Portrait of Martha Dandridge Custis Washington by Rembrandt Peale, c. 1853
2. Portrait of George Washington by Rembrandt Peale, 1795
3. Early lithograph of Mount Vernon by Thomas Doughty, 1832
4. The restored headquarters of George Washington at Valley Forge, open to visitors, with "Washington's Flag" in front

Martha's Christmas Recipes

After the war, the Washingtons celebrated Christmas with family and friends. Guests flocked to Mount Vernon for fox hunts and lavish dinners, festivities made possible by the long hours and days of preparation by enslaved household servants, cooks and butlers under Martha's direction.

Martha's surviving cookbooks described a Christmas pie filled with turkey, goose, pigeon and chicken that was spiced with salt, black pepper, nutmeg and cloves. In 1786, George expressed regret that David Humphreys, his former military aide, could not join them for their Christmas to "aid in the Attack of Christmas Pyes ... on which all the company ... were hardly able to make an impression."

Another Washington family favorite was Martha's decadent Great Cake, served at their Twelfth Night dinner. This rich confection, from a recipe passed down by granddaughter Martha Parke Custis, required 40 eggs, four pounds of butter, four pounds of sugar, five pounds of flour and five pounds of fruit, enriched with brandy, madeira, nutmeg and mace.

Modern adaptations of Martha's Christmas Pie and Great Cake recipes (making a smaller quantity with just three eggs) can be found at MountVernon.org/Inn/Recipes.



Giving Back Guide

CONSIDER GIVING INSTEAD OF BUYING



Community Warehouse Project of Chester County

This group collects and redistributes donated furniture and household goods to those in need — helping people move into furnished homes at no charge. Help with the next step after a previously unhoused family gets shelter — when they need help turning their place into a home.

Ways to Give. Check the online Wish List and give the gift of a space heater, coffee maker or new sheets for a new home. And, while you're filled with the spirit of giving, consider sorting through your gently used but usable furniture or household items to donate, too. CommunityWarehouseProject.com

EVERY YEAR WE ALL HAVE SOMEONE ON OUR HOLIDAY gift list who insists they “don’t want another thing.” Instead of feeling frustrated, consider this as a chance to give a double gift. You can spread holiday spirit further by giving a gift in their honor to a local nonprofit and multiply the good cheer with what’s called an alternative gift.

This year the Chester County Food Bank, ChesterCountyFoodBank.org, and West Chester Food Cupboard, WestChesterFoodCupboard.org, likely spring immediately to mind. So why not start by setting up a gift for yourself with a sustaining contribution that helps out all year?

Then consider other suggestions below to give where you live.



French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust

Remember Mother Nature this holiday season. Land conservation and environmental nonprofits often miss the gift list, yet their work protecting our quality of life and our land for future generations doesn’t take a holiday. French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust is just one local option. Also consider Natural Lands, Brandywine Conservancy and Willistown Conservation Trust for a “green” gift this holiday season.

Ways to Give: Gift a French & Pickering membership, ranging from Naturalist (\$50) to Trailblazer (\$1,000+) level. Or make a one-time or monthly sustaining donation. FrenchAndPickering.org



Friends Association

For over 200 years, Friends Association has worked to eradicate homelessness. From their West Chester-based office, they continue to offer emergency shelter for families and help prevent homelessness through eviction prevention, case resolution and housing stability programming. Help give a family the stability of a home to share together for the holidays and beyond.

Ways to Give: Fund a family’s stay, support the staff or give gift cards for families to use as they choose. FriendsAssoc.org



Seniors and Paws

Since 68% of seniors with pets feel less lonely and caring for pets boosts their mood, it’s a win-win to help seniors keep and care for their pets in a safe and loving home. This group provides help with pet food, vet services and future pet-care planning, focusing on low-income seniors, veterans and those with disabilities. Give the gift of company and joy.

Ways to Give: Donate in the name of your pet-loving friend to make sure a senior doesn’t have to choose between eating and feeding their furry companion. Donations also support buying pet toys and funding visits. SeniorsAndPaws.org



1. Chester County Food Bank
2. Community Warehouse Project
3. Volunteer English Program



Volunteer English Program in Chester County (VEP)

“Teaching English while transforming lives.” For almost 40 years, this non-profit has provided English language instruction to adult immigrants and refugees in Chester County. About 300 adults from 40 countries are helped annually by 300 volunteers. By giving the gift of language, your donation in someone’s name helps an adult immigrant gain skills, safety and independence.

Ways to Give. \$100 donation buys four workbooks for students to work with free tutors. \$150 pays to match a tutor-student pair. \$250 helps cover costs for volunteer tutors. VolunteerEnglish.org ♦

4. Friends Association Family Center
5. French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust
6. Seniors and Paws

Books for the Holidays

Shelley Laurence,
Main Point Books

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS filled with joy. But let's be honest — it can also come with a fair bit of pressure, especially when it comes to gift-giving. That's why so many folks love giving books. There's something truly meaningful about unwrapping a book that was chosen just for you.

If you feel the same, keep reading. There's plenty of holiday magic ahead. And here's a gifting tip: tuck a personal note inside the cover — a simple touch that turns a thoughtful gift into an unforgettable one.

KIDS FIRST

Let's start with the children, because let's face it, the holidays are all about them. **"The Christmas Sweater"** by Jan Brett is a beautifully illustrated book about an adventurous boy and an adorable pug in a Christmas sweater who saves the day after an adventure goes off the rails. *Kirkus Reviews* called it "A merry choice for Christmastime."

Who's looking forward to some snow this season? Kids will love **"A Snow Day for Amos McGee"** by Philip and Erin

Stead. When a predicted snowfall fails to materialize, zookeeper Amos McGee heads for home. But when a surprise storm blankets the town, what does his lovable squad of animals do? Visit the friendly zookeeper and play in the snow, of course!

And don't sleep on **"The Pirate Moms"** by Jodi Lancer-Grant. This joyful, funny adventure about Billy and his two eccentric mothers proves that being different is what makes family so special. And the lively illustrations bring pirate chaos into ordinary life.

How about a lovely holiday book that will stick with children all year long? Kids will like **"The Gift of Words"** by Peter H. Reynolds. It's an inspirational holiday story celebrating the power of words. This sweet tale offers a vision of generosity, love, hope and peace that they can reread any time of year.

Need more ideas for the youngsters in your life? Check out this article on the website, *CountyLinesMagazine.com*, for a list of new books for kids. You're welcome.

NEXT THE COOKS

Now to the adults in your life. If you've got a cook on your list, you can't go wrong

with a new cookbook. After all, you win because you get to eat well, too! **"Something from Nothing"** by Alison Roman features more than 100 deceptively simple, casually stylish, impossibly delicious recipes that make the most of your pantry. Everything from starters to main courses and sides. And you probably have all the ingredients on your shelves already!

The bestselling author of "Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat" is back with another great collection of painstakingly tested, soul-nourishing recipes that bring joy and a sense of communion. If you want to know how Samrin Nosrat feeds her guests, check out **"Good Things."** This book features a treasure trove of Nosrat's favorite recipes that she cooks for herself and her friends.

THEN EVERYONE ELSE

Everyone has someone on their list who just likes a good yarn, right? **"The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny"** by Kiran Desai is an immersive novel of love, family and finding a place in a swiftly globalizing world. It's the sweeping tale of two young people navigating the many forces that



shape their lives: country, class, race, history and the complicated bonds that link one generation to the next.

Remember falling in love with "The Cider House Rules"? Well, jump forward 40 years and check out **"Queen Esther."** John Irving returns us to the same orphanage in Maine, where Dr. Wilbur Larch takes in Esther — a Viennese-born Jew whose life is shaped by antisemitism. Hers is a story not only of survival, but a profound exploration of identity, belonging and how history plays a huge part in our personal lives. I hope I get this one as a holiday gift.

Got a history buff or two on your list? We've got you covered. **"The American Revolution: An Intimate History"** by Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns is a beautifully illustrated, human-centered history

of how America was born. It's based on the six-part PBS series that shares its name. *Booklist* raved about this one, saying, "This gripping, in-the-moment, thought-provoking, visually exciting history profoundly deepens our understanding of our nation's origins and how the past is shaping our volatile present."

Another good choice is **"The Wayfinder"** by Adam Johnson. This is a historical epic about a girl from a remote Tongan island who becomes her people's queen. *Publishers Weekly* called it "remarkable." That's high praise indeed.

How about a memoir to round out the list? One of my favorite writers is back with **"Joyride."** Susan Orlean has given us both "The Orchid Thief" and "The Library Book." In "Joyride" she shares how she

found her creative calling and purpose. And as usual, she does it with wonder, curiosity and a magical sense of delight. Don't believe me? Just ask David Sedaris, who said, "For anyone who's asked — and haven't we all — 'How does she write like that?' This wise and exuberant book is the answer. It's funny, as well. Just masterful."

Remember, these are just a few suggestions. Your local, independent bookseller will have plenty more. Visit them and happy gifting! ♦

Shelley Laurence is a bookseller at Main Point Books, an independent bookstore with a hand-picked selection for every member of the family. Check out their events, book groups and children's activities at MainPointBooks.com or on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Order online for delivery or pickup. 484-580-6978; 116 N. Wayne Ave., Wayne.

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'Tis the Season for the Stage

LOCAL THEATERS
DECK THE HALLS
WITH HOLIDAY JOY

Shannon Montgomery

THE HOLIDAYS WERE MADE for a little magic — and few places deliver it quite like the theater. As the lights dim and the curtain rises, stories of love, laughter and holiday cheer unfold before your eyes, filling the season with warmth and wonder. The sights, sounds and emotions of live performance make this time of year shine even brighter.

This year, stages across the Brandywine Valley are brimming with festive favorites and new delights. From beloved classics to musical comedies and family-friendly shows, there's something for everyone to enjoy. So grab your ticket, settle into your seat and let the holiday spirit take center stage.

CHESTER COUNTY

Chester County's theaters are aglow with holiday cheer, presenting heartwarming stories, lively music and plenty of festive spirit. Local talent lights up the stage, making it the perfect place to celebrate the season close to home.

We start, naturally, in the county seat of West Chester. The December lineup at **Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center** is filled up like Santa's sack — not with toys, but with holiday shows. On December 5, before heading to the Christmas parade, kick off the season with song at the "Holiday Cheer Concert." Uptown Studio's student performers present fresh takes on classic holiday faves, plus pop and R&B hits.

Other festive performances at Uptown include "Bright Lights," the West Chester University Jazz Orchestra's holiday concert (December 10), "Top of the World: A Carpenters Christmas Show" (December 11) and "A Not So Silent Night," a dazzling holiday cabaret (December 13). Or see a classic holiday film on \$5 Movie Mondays — popcorn included! This month's selections include, appropriately, "White Christmas," "Holiday Inn" and "The Man Who Invented Christmas." UptownWestChester.org

Also at Uptown, see **Revival Productions'** rendition of Rodgers and Hammer-

stein's "Cinderella," December 6 to 28. The December 7 matinee is a Community Day Performance, with open captioning for hearing-impaired patrons and discounted tickets, so more families can enjoy the onstage magic. Revival-Productions.com

Next up: Lionville, with the **Barley Sheaf Players'** rendition of "A Christmas Carol," December 5 to 7. This adaptation of Dickens' famous tale stays true to the original novella, while featuring the delightful songs of Broadway legends Jule Styne and Bob Merrill (of "Funny Girl" fame). The December 7 show is a relaxed performance, encouraging those with autism, ADHD, dementia and other neurodivergent theatergoers to enjoy the show while accommodating their needs. BarleySheaf.org

Then wend your way to Chester Springs, where **SALT Performing Arts** presents "Anastasia" through December 14. Based on the beloved animated feature, this Broadway sensation will transport you to a rapidly changing Russia and the glittering



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1. Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center
2. The Colonial Theatre
3. "A Christmas Carol" at People's Light
PHOTO CREDIT: BRYAN SHEFFIELD

lights of 1920s Paris, where brave Anya sets out to uncover the secrets of her past. For over a decade, SALT has teamed up with the Chester County Food Bank to help ensure no one in our community goes hungry this holiday season, collecting food at each performance (no glass containers) and donating \$1 from every ticket sale. SALTPA.com

Over in Phoenixville, the **Colonial Theatre** fills the town with holiday cheer. On December 5, Jessica Lynn returns for her fourth year at the theater with "A Very Merry Classic Christmas." A sell-out show each year, this multimedia presentation features dancers, choirs, surprises and special effects. Bring new, unwrapped toys to donate to Toys for Tots.

More holiday fun at the Colonial includes the Milk Carton Kids' holiday tour (December 11), comedian Joe DeRosa's "Home for the Holidays" (December 20) and "A Charlie Brown Christmas" with the Eric Mintel Quartet (December 20). Plus, festive films in December include "The Muppet Christmas Carol," "Home Alone," "A Christmas Story" and a special Craft Cinema screening of "Little Women" — watch the 1994 film while working on a holiday craft. TheColonialTheatre.com

On to the Main Line, where more holiday magic awaits. In Malvern, **People's Light** presents their whimsical adaptation of "A Christmas Carol" through January 4. Chester County's only professional theater company reimagines Scrooge's journey through the eyes of a child, blending original music with traditional English carols. PeoplesLight.org

Prefer your holidays with a little Halloween-y flair? Berwyn's **Footlighters Theater** has the show for you. From December 5 to 14, see "Evil Dead: The Musical." Based on the '80s cult classics "The Evil Dead" and "The Evil Dead 2," this laugh-out-loud spectacle follows five college students to an abandoned cabin in the woods, where they accidentally unleash an evil force that turns them into demons. Plus, it's the only show in town with a "Splatter Zone" — a section of the audience that gets covered in fake blood. FootlightersTheater.com

Then head south for more festive fun. On December 18, singer-songwriter John Flynn returns to the **Kennett Flash** for his annual holiday concert benefiting Camp Dreamcatcher. Enjoy an evening of music to support local youth affected by HIV and AIDS, trauma and mental health challenges. More seasonal offerings at the Flash include the Lenape Brass Ensemble's "Holiday Favorites" on December 21 and a New Year's Eve celebration with '80s tribute band The Influence. KennettFlash.org

And look forward to the **Kennett Amateur Theatrical Society's** 25th annual British panto, "Robin Hood & His Merrie Men," January 23 and 24 at Kennett High School. CallKATS.org

Last but certainly not least, see an unconventional take on the Bard's works, courtesy of the **ACT Players**. "Miscast Shakespeare" is a collection of scenes from Shakespeare's plays featuring ACT players in unexpected roles and from plays ACT wouldn't produce in their entirety. Catch the one-day-only performance December 7 at the New London Methodist Social Hall. ACTPlayers.org

DELAWARE COUNTY

Just a short drive away, Delco's theaters keep the celebration going with festive performances that shine with heart, humor and holiday spirit.

In Everybody's Hometown, the **Media Theatre** performs the beloved tale of the little orphan who could. Part of their Broadway Series, "Annie" is on stage November 28 to January 4. Or bring the kiddos to see the theater's Youth Ensemble perform "Peter Pan Jr." from December 6 to 21. Plus, the Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons tribute group, Lights Out, presents "A Very Valli Holiday" for one night only, December 21. MediaTheatre.org

Just outside town, the storied **Hedgerow Theatre Company** presents the regional premiere of Kate Hamill's stage adaptation of "Little Women," November 26 to December 28. Featuring live musical accompaniment, this fresh take on Louisa May Alcott's classic novel follows the March sisters as they grow up together amid the Civil War. New

Lancaster County Encores

Take a quick trip west, where Lancaster County's theaters bring even more holiday joy. Tickets and times online.

American Music Theatre. Through December 30, "The 2025 Christmas Show: Deck the Halls." 2425 Lincoln Hwy. E., Lancaster. AMTShows.com

Bird-in-Hand Stage. Through December 27, "The Christmas Candy Caper." 2760 Old Philadelphia Pk., Bird-in-Hand. Bird-In-Hand.com/Stage

Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre. Through December 28, "Irving Berlin's Holiday Inn." Through December 27, "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Jr." 510 Centreville Rd., Lancaster. DutchApple.com

The Fulton Theatre. Through December 28, "Elf: The Musical." December 5-28, "It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play." December 6-27, "The Nutcracker: The Musical." 12 N. Prince St., Lancaster. TheFulton.org

Sight & Sound Theatres. Through December 31, "Noah: Live on Stage." 300 Hartman Bridge Rd., Ronks. Sight-Sound.com/Lancaster

this season, audience members can enjoy live-captioning smart glasses — only the third company in North America with this technology. HedgerowTheatre.org

Then check out the **Players Club of Swarthmore's** rendition of "Hello, Dolly!" Based on Thornton Wilder's hit play, this iconic Broadway musical depicts the romantic and comic exploits of Dolly Gallagher Levi, turn-of-the-century matchmaker and "woman who arranges things." See it December 19 to January 4. PCSTheater.org

WILMINGTON

Rounding out our tour, Wilmington's theaters bring the season to a grand finale with dazzling performances, rich tradition and plenty of holiday sparkle.

First stop: historic Ardentown, home of the **Candlelight Theatre**. Through December 21, see "Christmas by Candlelight." Back by popular demand, this heartwarming yuletide celebration features your favorite seasonal and sacred tunes — plus some new surprises — all brought to life by the magic of the Candlelighters. CandlelightTheatreDelaware.org

Then head downtown for the **Delaware Theatre Company's** rendition of "Shrek: The Musical," December 3 to 21. Based on the Oscar-winning DreamWorks movie, this family-friendly show follows your favorite characters — Shrek, Donkey, Princess Fiona — as they embark on a journey to find their place in the world and discover that true beauty lies within. DelawareTheatre.org

And, of course, **The Grand Opera House's** holiday programming is filled with cheer. Highlights include "Lúnasa: An Irish Solstice Celebration" with special guest Dave Curley (December 6) and First State Ballet Theatre's annual performance of "The Nutcracker" (December 13 to 21).

Or see the Wilmington Ballet's version of Tchaikovsky's Christmas classic, December 12 to 14, at The Grand's sister stage, **The Playhouse on Rodney Square**. Also at the Playhouse, catch Meredith Wilson's "Miracle on 34th Street: The Musical," December 20 and 21. From the writer of "The Music Man" and based on the famous film, this joyous musical features beloved songs like "Pinecones and Holly Berries," "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" and "My State, My Kansas." TheGrandWilmington.org

As the curtain falls on another festive season, the magic of live theater continues to shine — in the laughter, the music and those quiet moments when the lights dim. More than a night of entertainment, the theater creates memories that last long after the final bow.

And if you're still searching for that perfect present, consider gifting tickets to a local show — a thoughtful way to spread joy and support the arts close to home.

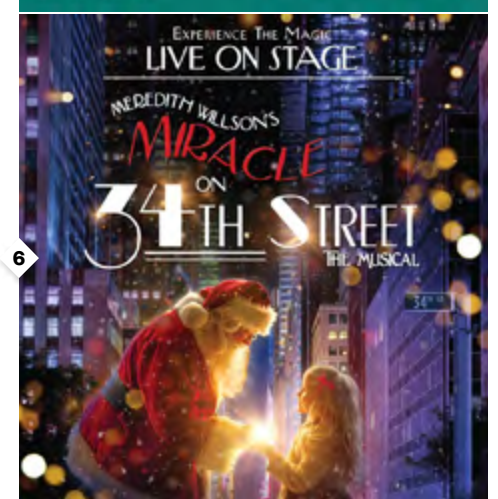
Happy holidays! ♦



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4. The Media Theatre
5. Hedgerow Theatre Company
6. The Playhouse on Rodney Square

A Season of New Finds in West Chester

MORE PLACES TO SHOP SMALL AND FIND MEANINGFUL GIFTS FOR EVERYONE ON YOUR LIST

Shannon Montgomery

PHOTO CREDIT: WEST CHESTER NEWS

THE HOLIDAY SEASON IN West Chester is always magical. Twinkling lights glow along brick-lined streets, shop windows sparkle with festive displays, and the scent of evergreens drifts through the winter air. It's the perfect time to stroll downtown and discover gifts that feel personal — chosen by local hands, not algorithms.

This season, West Chester's retail scene shines especially bright, with new shops joining longtime favorites. From vintage finds to contemporary style and hand-made treasures, these welcoming spots make it easy to find something special for everyone on your list. So bundle up, sip something warm, and let us guide you to new places to shop small and spread big holiday cheer.

FOR THE TREASURE HUNTER

After picking out late-season produce and artisan goods at the West Chester Growers Market, cross the street and climb the front steps of 14 West Chestnut Street to find **Tiger Snake Vintage's** new digs. Quickly outgrowing their space at the Gay Street Commons, this vintage boutique found a new home this summer in a bright, refurbished historic home, showcasing unique finds around every corner — vintage jewelry, accessories, trinkets, home goods, art, books, even upcycled clothing.

"Virtually everything in my shop is completely one-of-a-kind — you won't find anything else like it!" said owner Lisa Karen. "Each piece is lovingly hand-picked by me and meticulously curated so you feel that same sense of wonderment and discovery I did."

For a truly distinctive gift, Karen recommends a custom vintage charm bracelet or necklace kit. "You can choose your chain and charms, and get all the tools and instructions needed for assembly. This makes it not only a super unique, personalized gift, but also a fun experience for the recipient."

Or, for Philly sports fans in your life, pick out a "Jawn" — a "perfectly worn-in vintage sweatshirt, embroidered with cheeky Philly-centric phrases," as Karen puts it.

Check Out: Holiday happenings at Tiger Snake, including a pop-up with West Chester-based vintage brand **Hazy Daze Thrift** during Small Business Weekend, November 29 and 30, and a Custom Pet Portrait Ornament Workshop with local artist Heather Carey on December 12. Follow @TigerSnakeVintage on Instagram for more.

FOR THE FASHIONISTA

Next head to 125 North Church Street and peer into windows adorned with **DAM Fashions'** black-and-yellow logo. Inside this fashion house, opened in August 2024, admire chic clothing and elegant gowns by local designer Deborah Ann Mack, a finalist in Elton John's Style Icons competition this year.

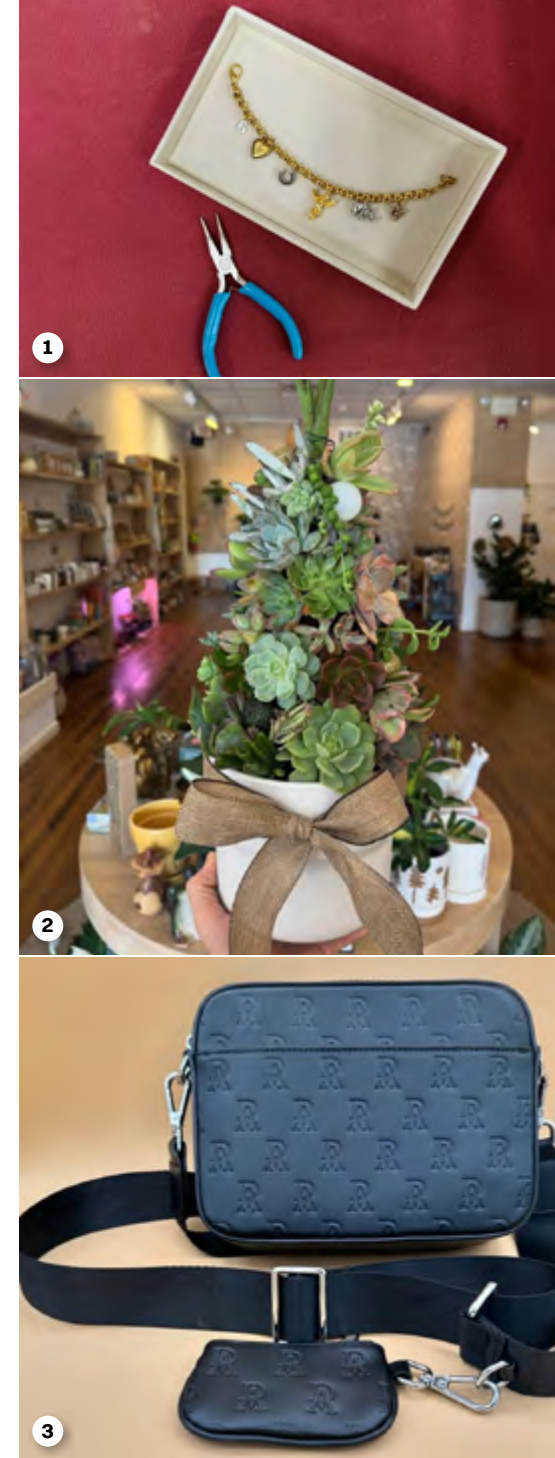
What makes DAM special is that every garment is custom-made by Mack and tailored to fit you. "My designs are timeless, sophisticated and have a luxury, sustainable fabric that's breathable, leaving the body warm in the winter and cool in the summer," Mack said. The boutique also offers custom-made crossbody bags, new "stress-styled" knit hats, socks, jewelry and a selection of coats.

For holiday giving, Mack recommends a gift certificate for exclusive, made-to-order clothing. With your input, she'll create your perfect garment — coats, dresses, pantsuits and more — with delivery straight to your door. Getting ready to walk down the aisle? This past summer, DAM unveiled a new bridal collection, offering original designs as well as restoration and redesign services for heirloom gowns.

Check Out: A special Christmas display created by Mack at the Chester County History Center on November 22, and DAM Fashions' pop-up tent at the Christkindlmarkt on December 13.

FOR THE GREEN THUMB

Continue down North Church Street — stopping for a steamy peppermint mocha from Turks Head Cafe or Twin Valley Coffee along the way — to find a plant lover's mecca on the corner of Gay Street. After a successful first year, **The Green House**



1. Tiger Snake Vintage's vintage charm kit
2. "Make Your Own Succulent Christmas Tree" workshop at The Green House
3. DAM Fashions' crossbody bag

moved to this larger storefront, 43 West Gay Street, in the summer of 2024.

Today, the former Fairman's Skate Shop is a warm, inviting nursery chockfull of leafy plants in house-made pots set atop wooden tables, on shelves lining the walls and filling

Old Favorites

While West Chester’s retail scene keeps growing with exciting new-comers, longtime shoppers know the holidays wouldn’t be complete without a stop at these beloved mainstays. Here are just a few of our tried-and-true local faves.

Blink. A longtime Gay Street boutique known for chic, modern women’s fashion and accessories. 136 W. Gay St. On Instagram @BlinkWestChester

Creep Records. Indie spirit shines at this shop offering vinyl, music merch and unique pop-culture gifts. 133 W. Gay St. ShopCreep.com

Green Eyed Lady. A treasure trove of eclectic jewelry, distinctive women’s clothing and vintage finds. 132 W. Gay St. GreenEyedLady.online

Kaly. A West Chester staple for stylish clothing, jewelry and fair-trade gifts with artisan flair. 37 W. Gay St. KalyClothing.com

Malena’s Vintage Boutique. A destination for vintage-loving fashion fans, filled with curated clothing, accessories and designer gems from decades past. 101 W. Gay St. MalenasBoutique.com

Phineas Gage. Stylish men’s shop specializing in modern classics, refined accessories and thoughtful gifts for the well-dressed. 29 S. High St. Phineas-Gage.com

Pine + Quill. A unique home-and-lifestyle boutique offering décor, art-work and locally made goods with warm, modern style. 23 N. Walnut St. PineAndQuillShop.com

Sunset Hill Jewelers. A trusted family jeweler offering fine jewelry, custom designs and heirloom-worthy holiday sparkle. 23 N. High St. SunsetHillJewelers.com

Tish Boutique. Trend-driven women’s clothing and accessories, perfect for fashionable gifting and festive seasonal style. 138 E. Gay St. TishStyle.com



- 4. Ree Gallagher Studio + Gallery
- 5. DRK MTTR
- 6. Sissy the cat at Jojo & Co.

the large corner window space. Plus, a cozy workshop space hosts pottery and terrarium-making classes as well as private events.

“Our shop is special due to our wide variety of products,” said owner Peter Giuffre. “We’re primarily a houseplant store, but we also carry organic baby products, skincare and nontoxic, sustainable home products.” For your favorite plant parent, Giuffre suggests their line of PLANTS merchandise — tees, hoodies and totes designed in house.

Check Out: Holiday-themed workshops, including “Make Your Own Succulent Christmas Tree.” Check their website and @TheGreenHouseWC_ on Instagram.

FOR THE MODERN GOTH

Continue east along Gay Street until you spot the simple black sign for **DRK MTTR**, hanging above a storefront with black-trimmed windows, displaying mannequins dressed ... all in black. (Sense a theme here?) Opened in March 2024, this one-of-a-kind boutique at 128 East Gay Street is home to a hand-picked collection of new and vintage clothing — exclusively in black.

“What makes DRK MTTR unique is the shop’s commitment to the combination of elegance and edginess,” said owner Courtney McGee. “Each item is multidimensional and versatile — you can wear it in more elevated or relaxed settings, depending on how you style

it. As our shop’s motto says, ‘half vintage, half contemporary, all black!’”

For holiday gift-giving, McGee suggests choosing something personal. “A gift should express something about the giver and the receiver and what makes their relationship special,” she said. “And when all else fails, a gift card can be nearly as good, especially when shopping vintage or in a curated shop like DRK MTTR.”

Check Out: DRK MTTR’s annual Color Day Sale during Black Friday weekend, November 28 to 30. “This is the only weekend of the year when we offer our incredible, mostly vintage, color pieces in addition to our normal stock of black items,” McGee said. Plus giveaways and homemade DRK MTTR sugar cookies, which are, of course, black.

FOR EVERYONE ELSE ON YOUR LIST

Still hunting for those last few perfect presents? These new local shops will help you wrap up your list in style.

Opening its doors in July, **Jojo & Co.** (235 E. Market St.) offers vintage jewelry, hand-crafted stationary, custom paintings, artisan candles and other treasures hand-picked by local collector Jojo Zhou. Look for Sissy, the adorable shop cat!

Or head to newly opened **Ree Gallagher Studio + Gallery** (127 E. Chestnut St.). After years of traveling to juried art shows, local jewelry artist and maker Ree Gallagher decided to settle down, opening her new shop in September. In addition to her hand-crafted jewelry, Gallagher features works by other local artists and curated vintage.

For the artist in your life, stop by **Nightingale Materials** (118 N. High St.) for high-quality supplies, local art and thoughtful gifts for creatives of every kind. Open since April 2024, this family-run shop also offers classes and workshops — the perfect present for sparking inspiration.

And for your favorite book lover, you can’t go wrong with a gift from **Bookmarks** (100 E. Gay St.), opened in August 2024. Inside this charming historic house, you’ll find top new releases and titles from local authors — children’s books downstairs, adults



- 7. Bookmarks
- 8. Nightingale Materials
- 9. West Chester Christkindlmarkt

West Chester Christmas Parade



The parade kicks off a month of free holiday festivities during *Chester County Hospital Lights Up Holiday Weekends in West Chester*.

It all begins with the **Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony** on the steps of the Historic Courthouse at 6:30 p.m. Enjoy dance and musical performances and the lighting of the new 28-foot-tall Christmas tree, the second artificial tree in the parade’s history, adorned with 150 individual branches and 16,000 white LED lights. The tree will light up an entire block of downtown West Chester through January.

Then find your spot along the parade route to enjoy all the fun starting at 7 p.m. under the lights of professionally decorated blocks sponsored by local businesses. This year there will be more marching bands, as well as award-winning floats, sparkling performances and, of course, Santa’s much-anticipated appearance.

The **2025 West Chester Christmas Parade** will also hold a competition for “Best Commercial Parade Float” and “Best Nonprofit Parade Entry,” with winners in both categories receiving a trophy and bragging rights. Be sure to dress for the weather for this rain or shine event.

The ceremony will feature returning parade emcees GABC meteorologist Adam Joseph and Kathy Romano of B101.

The spirit of Christmas continues with **Chester County Hospital Lights Up Holiday Weekends in West Chester** and a lineup of musical performances, Santa sightings and opportunities for photos with the popular guy, toy drives and more. See West Chester Events in this issue for details.

Visit GreaterWestChester.com for street closures and parade night parking and a map.

upstairs — plus a selection of bibliophile-approved gifts.

Still searching for that just-right gift? Mark your calendar for the 6th annual **Christkindlmarkt** on Saturday, December 13. Over 100 vendors line Gay Street, offering handcrafted and locally designed products, such as art, ceramics, jewelry, homewares and more. Plus, enjoy photos with Santa, carolers and more live music — and keep an eye out for the Grinch!

FOR A SHOPPING WEEKEND

Turn your holiday shopping into a week-end of festive fun with a stay at the **Hotel Indigo**. This six-story boutique hotel at 39 East Gay Street is decked out for the holidays, ready to welcome you with open arms and luxurious amenities.

“You’ll be delighted to wander West Chester during this beautiful time of year and not have to rush home, because you can easily go up to your room,” said Abigail Lewis, regional director of sales. Drop off your shopping bags, then head downstairs



Room 109 at the Hotel Indigo

to the onsite restaurant, West Chester Seafood Kitchen. Later, unwind with a drink at Room 109, a moody speakeasy tucked into the hotel’s basement, before turning in for the night.

Got a hectic house overflowing with holiday guests? Put up out-of-town family members at the hotel, and make their stay even more memorable with a special package. “Packages include Pet Getaway, Daily Parking, Romantic Escape — which includes \$75 to West Chester Seafood Kitchen and a box of chocolates — and lastly, Longwood Gardens Experience,

which includes two tickets to the breathtaking Longwood Gardens,” Lewis said.

Before checking out, don’t forget to pick up a gift card to West Chester Seafood Kitchen — or any of the borough’s other fine restaurants — for the foodie on your list!

As you wrap up your list, enjoy knowing your gifts came from right here — chosen with care by people who call this place home. Happy shopping, and happy holidays. ♦

Research assistance by Caitlin Du Bois.

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Downtown West Chester



Holiday Shopping Guide

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Tish Kids | 32. True By Kristy |
| 2. Old Soul Design Studio | 33. On The Go Mobile |
| 3. Bobbles & Lace | 34. Mainline Custom Clothiers |
| 4. Mayday Coffee & Shop | 35. Kaplan's Fine Jewelry |
| 5. Artistic Eyewear | 36. Hop Fidelity |
| 6. CCHC Museum Shop | 37. Kilwins West Chester |
| 7. Visual Expansion Gallery | 38. La Chic Boutique |
| 8. Sabrina Ann Couture | 39. Coins of Chester County |
| 9. Nightingale Materials | 40. Sunset Hill Jewelers & Fine Arts Gallery |
| 10. Big Diamond Importers & Fine Jewelry | 41. Bookmarks |
| 11. KALY | 42. DRK MTTR |
| 12. The Green House | 43. Tish Boutique |
| 13. Clara Mae Company | 44. Pine + Quill |
| 14. Le Berger | 45. Graham Painting Studio |
| 15. Deborah Ann Mack Designs | 46. Prince of Puff |
| 16. Tiger Snake Vintage | 47. Ever After Bridal |
| 17. Turks Head Wines | 48. The Painted Plate |
| 18. Malena's Vintage Boutique | 49. Woman's Exchange |
| 19. Precision Eye Care | 50. Church Street Gallery |
| 20. Tiger Snake Vintage | 51. All the Dogs |
| 21. Vape & Beyond | 52. Art Trust Gallery at Meridian Bank |
| 22. May 23 Clothing & Accessories | 53. Éclat Chocolate |
| 23. Creep Records | 54. Bryn Mawr Running Co. |
| 24. Pomp West Chester | 55. A Taste of Olive |
| 25. Bookstore Bakery | 56. Mimi's Tea Cottage |
| 26. H. Rose Boutique | 57. Kati Mac Floral Design |
| 27. Blink | 58. Jawn Supply |
| 28. Green Eyed Lady | 59. Ginkgo Arts |
| 29. Taylor's Music Store | 60. Phineas Gage |
| 30. Thistle Be Perfect | 61. G-Spot Modern Retro Thrift Boutique |
| 31. e.b.c. Brown Studio | |

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West Chester Events



THROUGH DECEMBER 13

Holiday Window Decorating Contest. Dozens of businesses in Downtown West Chester will create special holiday displays in their storefront windows, and you get a chance to decide who wins! Professional judging done by the Public Arts Commission (PAC), plus there's a People's Choice Award. DowntownWestChester.com

THROUGH DECEMBER 21

West Chester Railroad. Santa Express: *Weekends, Dec. 6–21*, join Santa for a journey through the Chester Creek Valley. **Christmas Tree Train:** *Nov. 30, Dec. 7, 14*, take the train to Wiggins Tree Farm to cut your own tree. *Trains depart at 203 E. Market St., West Chester. \$10–\$40. Times and tickets, WCRailroad.com*

THROUGH DECEMBER 24

Sunset Hill Fine Arts Gallery Annual Miniature Art Show. The show features paintings by a variety of artists in many mediums, subjects and artistic styles, perfect for the beginning collector and those with small spaces. *23 N. High St. SunsetHillJewelers.com*

THROUGH JANUARY 2

Holiday Weekends in West Chester. *Through Dec. 20, Fri & Sat*, West Chester Borough Balladeer Carolers roam around downtown, Fri, 5 to 7; Sat, noon to 2. *Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 20*, catch Santa cruising through the borough on a classic fire truck, 3 pm. *Dec. 5*, Hometown Christmas Parade, tree lighting at 6:30 pm on the lawn of the courthouse, and the parade at 7. *Dec. 10*, Toy Drive Breakfast, 7:30 to 9 am, free to everyone who brings a new, unwrapped toy to St. Agnes School, *211 W. Gay St. Dec. 13*, photos with Santa and holiday concert at M&T Bank, *10 N. High St.* Free hot chocolate and coffee. *2 to 4 pm. For details, GreaterWestChester.com*



THROUGH JANUARY 2

"Gifted"—the Annual Holiday Exhibit at The Art Trust. Give the gift of original art. 25 talented artists' work is for sale — paintings, ceramics, fiber art and more. Net proceeds of art sales go towards art scholarships. *Dec. 11*, Bourbon & Bubbles, *5 to 8 pm. 16 W. Market St. Gallery hours, Mon–Fri, 9 to 4:30 pm. TheArtTrust.org*

NOVEMBER 30–JANUARY 3

Chester County History Center—Season of Lights. A display of the rich culture of Chester County's diverse population. Twinkling lights, festive displays, decorated trees, international cuisine and multicultural activities for all — a multi-sensory experience that transcends cultural boundaries. *Nov. 30*, opening night offers culinary delights, family programs and entertainment, 3:30 to 7:30. *225 N. High St. MyCCHC.org/SeasonOfLights*

DECEMBER 5–30

Holiday Events at Uptown! Knauer Performing Arts Center. *Dec. 5*, The Holiday Cheer Show; *Dec. 6–28*, "Cinderella;" *Dec. 9*, Elementrio: Three Tenors; *Dec. 11*, Top of the World: A Carpenters Christmas Show; *Dec. 17*, Dueling Pianos; *Dec. 23*, Nefesh Mountain. **Films:** *Dec. 8*, "White

Christmas;" *Dec. 15*, "Holiday Inn;" *Dec. 22*, "The Man Who Invented Christmas;" *Dec. 29*, "Cool Runnings." *226 N. High St. Times and tickets, 610-356-2787; UptownWestChester.org*

DECEMBER 6

Holiday Concert with BVS Brass Quintet. Surrounded by over 300 years of history at the Chester County History Center, you'll enjoy arrangements by Brandywine Valley Symphony's brass quintet, celebrating the holidays with the joyful sounds of carols and festive classics. *225 N. High St. 6:30 pm. \$10–\$30. BVSymphony.org*

DECEMBER 6

Santa at the Square at Marshall Square Park. Santa will be on hand in the gazebo for pictures with the entire family. Food trucks, holiday crafts and live music on hand for all to enjoy. *200 E. Marshall St. 4:30 to 6:30. West-Chester.com*

DECEMBER 6

Breakfast with Santa. Come to the Chester County History Center to meet Santa and enjoy breakfast. *9 to 11 am. 225 N. High St. \$15. Pre-registration req. West-Chester.com*

DECEMBER 6

37th Annual West Chester Charity Ball. Friends Association celebrates over 200 years of serving families in our community, and the Charity Ball has helped in their mission to end homelessness in Chester County. Enjoy dinner, music, dancing, auctions and more. The theme this year is "Holiday in the Tropics." *West Chester Golf & Country Club, 111 W. Ashbridge St. 6:30 pm. \$200. FriendsAssoc.org/Charity-Ball*

DECEMBER 6

West Chester Public Library Holiday Home Tour. *See Holiday House Tours in this issue. WCPublicLibrary.org*

DECEMBER 6

American Helicopter Museum Presents SantaFest 2025. Santa arrives at 11 am, ready to hear children's wish lists. Bring your cameras to take pictures and enjoy hands-on activities such as holiday crafts and STEM activities. They are again proud to be a drop-off site for Toys for Tots. *1220 American Blvd. 10 to 2. \$15, members and children under 2 free. HelicopterMuseum.org*

DECEMBER 13

6th Annual Christkindlmarkt. The holiday market features over 90 vendors offering handcrafted and locally designed products, such as art, ceramics, jewelry, homewares, food and more. Hosted by Chester County Art Assoc. and Downtown West Chester. *Gay St. (between Darlington & Matlack Sts.). 11 to 6. Free. DowntownWestChester.com/Christkindlmarkt*



Many events are part of Chester County Hospital Lights Up Holiday Weekends in West Chester, presented by the Greater West Chester Chamber of Commerce. Visit GreaterWestChester.com



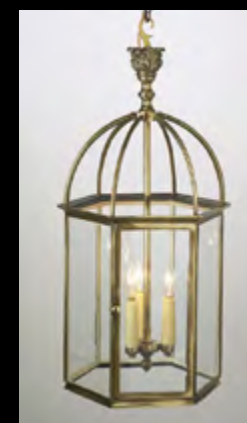
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HOLIDAY

WINDOW SHOPPING



IT'S THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN WE LOOK forward to making special memories with family and friends — the perfect time to gather together and head to one of the many events featured in this issue or plan a day of visiting some of the unique boutiques and shops you'll find right here.

Make a day of it. Browse the shops on these pages, stop in a museum, be inspired by the sparkle of stunning jewelry or the excitement of a brand new ride for the New Year. And be sure to enjoy a festive lunch or dinner, too, at a locally owned restaurant.

At *County Lines*, we wish you happy shopping! And the happiest and most wonderful of holidays! To our readers and advertisers, we say thank you. We hope your season will bring you great joy.

PENNSYLVANIA

Exton

Deck the halls this holiday season with 18th-century through Victorian-era original and reproduction furniture, lighting fixtures and furniture hardware. Visit the showroom at **Ball & Ball** to find unique gift ideas, including candlesticks, lighting, lanterns and fire-place accessories made on the premises in brass, tin, copper and hand-forged iron and bronze. All perfect gifts for this holiday season. Open Monday–Thursday, 8 to 4:30; Friday, 8 to 1. 463 W. Lincoln Hwy. (Rt. 30). BallAndBall.com



Ball & Ball
610-363-7300 • BallAndBall.com

There's no place like **Ron's Original Bar & Grille** this holiday season! Offering a family atmosphere, Italian fare and some of the best craft beer around, they invite you to stop in for a bite, enjoy some takeout, delivery or curbside pickup, or call them to cater your next event. Eat Clean. Live Well. Feel Good. 74 E. Uwchlan Ave. RonsOriginal.com

Malvern

The culinary passion at **Fattoush** brings a commitment to crafting memorable dining experiences for their guests. Serving humus, falafel, stuffed grape leaves, baba ghanouj, shawarma wraps, gyro and more. Bring your bottle, they'll set the table. 182 E. Lancaster Ave. Fattoush-HealthyDining.com

The holidays can be a hectic and stressful time of year. Let **Tonino's Pizza & Pasta Co.** take the worry out of planning your holiday gatherings with custom party platters featuring all your Italian favorites. You can also order a Seven Fish Dinner for two available for pickup on Christmas Eve. Tonino's offers private holiday dining, and gift certificates make a great gift to pick up at the restaurant. Delivery and curbside pickup are always available. 235 Lancaster Ave. ToninosPizzaAndPasta.com

Newtown Square

Get your holiday plants and flowers at **Mostardi Nursery**. Featuring distinctive plants for every season, Mostardi's offers a selection that will have your home looking fresh, green and festive. The Christmas Shop features trees, wreaths, poinsettias, garden accents, ornaments and accessories. Mostardi's is dedicated to providing avid gardeners and homeowners with plants for every season and every reason. 4033 West Chester Pk. (Rt. 3). Mostardi.com



Mostardi Nursery
610-356-8035 • Mostardi.com

Paoli

Michael Cook Jeweler is proud to continue providing award-winning customer service. Their exquisite collection of exceptional jewels from around the world are personally curated by owner Michael Cook. Dazzling diamonds, elegant one-of-a-kind colored gemstones and lustrous pearls in both classic and contemporary styles are artfully displayed in their new showroom located at 1500 E. Lancaster Ave. Open Mon–Fri by appointment. MichaelCookJeweler.com



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West Chester

Happy holidays from **Mercedes-Benz of West Chester**, who are excited to share the holiday cheer from their state-of-the-art showroom in the heart of Chester County. Whether you're looking to upgrade your current vehicle or simply admire the luxury of Mercedes-Benz, their showroom offers a sleek, modern space to explore the latest models and enjoy an elevated customer experience. From their family to yours, they wish you a season filled with health, happiness, peace and the joy of driving a Mercedes-Benz. Visit today and discover why Mercedes-Benz of West Chester is the perfect place to kick off the New Year in style. *1260 Wilmington Pk. MBOfWestChester.com*



Mercedes-Benz of West Chester
484-559-7093 • MBOfWestChester.com

DELAWARE
Centreville

Happy holidays! **Adorn Goods** welcomes you to enjoy the destination and experience the joy of in-person shopping this holiday season at their modern general store located in Centreville, DE. Adorn Goods is a charming, small shop environment for all your perfect gifts and fine pantry items. Truly unique, with something for everyone. Stop in, shop and stay awhile. *5712 Kennett Pk. AdornGoods.com*



Adorn Goods
302-575-9657 • AdornGoods.com

Wilmington

Shop unique gifts for all ages at the **Delaware Museum of Nature & Science**. From books to science kits, outer space to nature, plush animals to rocks and minerals, mugs and museum memberships, you can find gifts for everyone in the Museum Store. *4840 Kennett Pk. DelMNS.org*



Delaware Museum of Nature & Science
302-658-9111 • DelMNS.org

At *County Lines*, we wish you happy shopping! And the happiest and most wonderful of holidays! To our readers and advertisers, we say thank you. ♦

Happy Holidays!

TIPS
to CYO
Christmas Tree



TIS THE SEASON TO GATHER THE family, bundle up, pile into the car, and head to a local tree farm to cut your own (CYO) Christmas tree. Let the scent of fresh pine and search for the perfect shape inspire you to bring home your dream tree.

To make the quest easier, here are tips to help you prepare, pick and preserve your tree for its starring role in your holidays.



Prepare: Before you head out, check the farm's website or social media for hours, kinds of tree and what they provide (saws, twine, help). Measure your space — ceiling height plus tree topper — and the tree stand. Bring gloves, tarp, rope and measuring tape and clear out your car to make room. Dress warmly, with waterproof boots, for walking the fields. And plan to go early in the season for the best selection of freshest trees. When that plan falls through, plan to have a glorious day anyway!



Pick: Decide what type of tree you want — that helps focus your search. For example, firs (Fraser and Douglas) keep needles the longest, while spruces boast strong branches for lights and ornaments, but pines fill the house with that Christmas-y scent. Tough choice! Carefully inspect all prospects. Walk around each one to check its shape on all sides, examine the trunk for straightness, and do the fresh test — tug a branch to check that needles aren't falling off. When you find your dream tree, cut low and close to the base for the healthiest trunk.



Preserve: First step is to saw off about half an inch from the bottom of the trunk to help it absorb water. Then immediately place it in plain water (no need for sugar, bleach, etc.). Check the water level often, as trees can "drink" a quart of water daily. When you bring your tree inside, place it away from heat and sun and continue to check the water level. Finally, keep the holiday green by recycling your tree. There are plenty of options.



Where to Go: Local favorites include Boswell's Tree Farm (Collegeville), Clark's Christmas Tree Farm (Cochranville), Westlake Tree Farms (Pottstown), Wiggins Christmas Trees (Thornton) and Yeager's Farm & Market (Phoenixville), all family-run, festive and full of holiday spirit. ♦



MEASURING MONARCHS

MAKE PLANS WHILE MONARCHS WINTER IN MEXICO

Kit Werner, Natural Lands

EVERY FALL, MONARCH BUTTERFLIES ACROSS eastern North America travel thousands of miles to spend the winter in the mountaintop forests of central Mexico. They cluster by the hundreds in oyamel fir trees — a sacred fir that protects the butterflies from the cold and precipitation — waiting for early spring, when they’ll begin the journey back to our region. For the past two decades, scientists in Mexico have estimated the population of monarchs overwintering there by measuring the acres of trees occupied by the butterflies.

Last winter, the population of winter monarchs in Mexico occupied about 4.4 acres, double the area of the previous year, giving hope for this beloved pollinator that has faced decades of decline. Experts believe the surge in numbers was due to favorable weather conditions during fall migration, unlike the previous couple of years, when there were extended droughts and major storm events.

But, before we start to celebrate this nearly 100% increase, scientists believe 15 acres of roosting monarchs is needed for the population to stabilize — far more than the 4.4 acres measured in 2024.

What can be done to help sustain this growth? While planting native milkweed species — the only plants larval monarchs eat and lay eggs on — is critical, it’s only a part of the complex puzzle of this species’ survival.

AVOID CAPTIVE REARING

Surveys demonstrate that the summertime breeding population of monarchs is relatively stable, but the overwintering population

has declined for the past 25 years, though less so in the past decade. This would indicate that the problem is migration.

One recent study, which aggregated about 2,600 community scientists’ observation of monarch “roosts” along the fall migration route, showed a decline in roost sizes that increased from north to south along the flyway. The data shows the roosts in Texas are about 80% smaller than they were 17 years ago.

While experts don’t fully agree on the reasons for this decline, many point to a dramatic increase in captive-bred monarchs. On the face of it, rearing monarch caterpillars in predator-proof enclosures seems like a great way to help the species. Yet, amateur captive breeding — which has increased apace with concern for the threatened species — can negatively impact overall species health by spreading disease, reducing genetic diversity and creating competition for limited resources. Several studies have shown that captive-bred monarchs have lower survival rates.

PLANT NATIVE MILKWEED

A little protozoan parasite, *Ophryocystes elektroscirrha*, or OE for short, is causing big problems for these imperiled pollinators. High OE levels in adult monarchs have been linked to lower migration success as well as reduced lifespan, mating success and flight ability. The parasite travels with monarchs, and, as the butterflies sip on milkweed flowers, they inadvertently deposit OE on the plants’ leaves. When caterpillars hatch and feed on the tainted foliage, they ingest the OE.

When native milkweed species die back, the parasite dies along with them. However, nonnative tropical milkweed (*Asclepias curassavica*) remains evergreen through winter, allowing OE levels to increase year over year. And, emerging research suggests that tropical milkweed may become toxic to caterpillars when the plants are exposed to the warmer temperatures associated with climate change.

As a way to help feed monarchs, more and more people have been planting tropical milkweed. Ironically, much like captive breeding, well-meaning people are contributing to the butterfly’s challenges.

PLANT MANY NATIVE SPECIES

Native milkweed species — which include common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and poke milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*) — are essential for monarch caterpillars. In fact, milkweed is the only species of plant the caterpillars can eat. It’s also a great source of nectar for all pollinators. To plant milkweed seeds in our area, do so in late fall, because they need the cold of winter to germinate.

But milkweed alone is not enough for adult butterflies. Planting a diversity of summer- and fall-flowering native plants ensures there are food sources throughout the adult stage of their life cycle. This not

only helps monarchs, but also benefits native bees, wasps and flies. Top choices for pollinator-friendly plants include goldenrods, coreopsis, monarda, purple cone-flower, Joe Pye weed, asters, phlox and ironweed.

“At Stoneleigh, we’ve observed a few nectar superstars that draw an impressive number of pollinators, including wild mint (*Mentha arvensis*), anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*), showy goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*), clustered mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*) and aromatic aster (*Symphyotrichum oblongifolium*),” said Ethan Kauffman, director of Stoneleigh: a natural garden. “These plants enrich biodiversity and are incredibly beautiful — great additions to any yard, garden or container.” ♦

Natural Lands is dedicated to preserving and nurturing nature’s wonders while creating opportunities for joy and discovery in the outdoors for everyone. As the Greater Philadelphia region’s oldest and largest land conservation organization, member-supported Natural Lands has preserved more than 125,000 acres, including 42 nature preserves and one public garden totaling more than 23,000 acres. Nearly five million people live within five miles of land under the organization’s protection. Land for life, nature for all. NatLands.org

1. Monarch butterflies arriving at Michoacan, Mexico, after migrating from Canada
2. Swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) in bloom with a monarch butterfly feeding on nectar in the flowers
3. Monarch caterpillar on milkweed leaves

Help Collect Observations

The International Monarch Monitoring Blitz is a call to action for anyone interested in the species’ conservation to contribute to community science conservation efforts. The information collected by thousands of volunteers each year helps researchers assess population trends.

For example, gathering data on the number of both monarch caterpillars and milkweed plants allows for calculating a “cat”-to-milkweed ratio. Researchers use this ratio to estimate the size of the monarch population.

Want to get involved? Plan to join annual butterfly counts, including the **North American Butterfly Association’s** count on July 4 (NABA.org/Butterfly-Counts) and the **Mariton Wildlife Sanctuary’s** annual summer count (check the website for dates). Or any time of year, submit lepidoptera observations to **iNaturalist** and **ButterfliesAndMoths.org/Node/Add/Sighting**.

HOLIDAY Getaways in Under Two Hours

Edwin Malet



IT'S DECEMBER. SOME OF US will be traveling for the holidays — spending hours planning, hours in airports, hours in planes, trains or cars, and even more hours checking in and settling in. Maybe not the ideal holiday we hoped for.

Perhaps what we're secretly yearning for is to experience the onset of winter, the cheer of Christmas and dawn of the New Year in a different setting but without all the work. A light getaway, but close to home?

Within a two-hour drive, there are a variety of exciting places offering light shows, horse-drawn carriages, ice-skating rinks, train rides, parades of lighted boats, candlelit house tours, arts and craft fairs, break-fast and pictures with Santa. We've chosen four options to heighten your holiday spirit: Lancaster County, Chesapeake City, Jim Thorpe and Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

LANCASTER COUNTY

Only an hour or so away, Lancaster is one obvious choice for the holidays. Think of the famous attractions like Dutch Winter Wonderland and Kitchen Kettle Village. Add in wonderful restaurants for every taste, many welcoming accommodations, and a host of excellent shopping opportunities. Plus, it's a wonderland for kids at Christmas time.

Start with Penn Medicine Park (formerly Clipper Magazine Stadium) in Lancaster City. A minor league ballpark during warm months, it's lit up with hundreds of thousands of animated, color-changing lights, all synchronized to music, all experienced from your car. There's a walking portion as well, with over 100 decorated trees, live reindeer and Santa. It's spectacular!

In nearby Strasburg, you can join Santa on the Paradise Express, Christmas Trolley, Christmas Caboose Charter, Night Before Christmas Train or Christmas Tree Train. On the Night Before Christmas train, you'll see the classic Christmas story, while on the Christmas Tree Train, you can pick out your fresh holiday tree.

At Christmas in Barnyard at Country Barn, you can also cut your own tree. Kids will be especially captivated by giant slides, barnyard animals, straw pyramid, hedge maze, Elf Scavenger Hunt and much more.

And in Elizabethtown, a few miles to the west of Lancaster City, visit the 285-acre Stone Gables Estate, where you can drive through a three-mile, 600,000-light display and take the narrated Santa Express train, featuring several replicas of antique train

cars. You'll be visited by Santa and stop in his animated workshop.

CHESAPEAKE CITY

For a quieter, more romantic December, head about 70 minutes to the south of West Chester to Chesapeake City, Maryland. Situated on the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, this charming town hosts several B&Bs, good restaurants, antique stores, an art gallery and the C&D Canal Museum. Not that this destination is without its amusements. Check out the town Christmas tree made entirely of crab pots!

On December 6, you can watch the city's 3rd annual Lighted Boat Parade. Good vantage spots for enjoying the parade include from Pell Gardens, Bayard House, Schaefer's Canal House and the Chesapeake Inn. Boats will cruise down the C&D Canal, past the Chesapeake City Bridge, and then head into the basin by the Chesapeake Inn at about 5:30 p.m. The parade is for charity, so bring nonperishable food items or canned goods collected at local restaurants.

On December 13, enjoy a walking tour of the city's historic district and admire the beautiful Victorian architecture of its 19th-century homes. Along the way, hear strolling carolers singing your favorite classic holiday songs. Horse and carriage rides will also be available to cap off an enchanted evening surrounded by the glow of Christmas lights.

JIM THORPE

If you haven't heard of Jim Thorpe, you should. He was a Native American sports legend, the first to win a gold medal — actually two — in 1912 at the Olympics. Later, he played professional football, baseball and basketball. In 1953, he was buried in the town of Jim Thorpe, although he had no prior connection to the town. The town had been called Mauch Chunk until it was renamed to attract attention and to create a national memorial.

Tucked into the Lehigh Gorge, the town of Jim Thorpe features a variety of architectural styles: Federal, Greek Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne and others. These beautifully preserved buildings are the foundation of much of its tourism. Taking a trip on the Jim Thorpe Trolley Company's tour is a great way to see the town,

1. Strasburg Rail Road
PHOTO CREDIT: DISCOVERLANCASTER.COM
2. Christmas Spirit Light Show at Penn Medicine Park
3. Stone Gables Estate
PHOTO CREDIT: DISCOVERLANCASTER.COM
4. Crab-pot Christmas tree in Chesapeake City
5. Carriage ride in Chesapeake City





6. Christmas in Jim Thorpe
7. Chesapeake City Lighted Boat Parade
8. German Christmas Village in Baltimore
9. Inner Harbor Ice Rink
10. Santa Train Ride on the the Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway

some beautiful natural scenery, and many of the historic buildings along Broadway, including the Mauch Chunk Opera House and the Old Jail Museum. The town's Victorian buildings are decorated with lights, garlands and candles. The 70-minute tour includes a live narration of some of the most interesting history of the town.

In December, the town holds its annual Olde Time Christmas celebration, with special events held over three weekends, beginning December 5 with the tree lighting ceremony in Josiah White Park. The festival continues with strolling carolers and musicians, holiday shopping, horse and carriage rides, gingerbread house contest and plenty of free family activities.

A December trip to Jim Thorpe wouldn't be complete without a Santa Train Ride on the Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway. The railway follows the majestic Lehigh River over bridges into Lehigh Gorge State Park, traversing high-rising cliffs, forests and mountain scenery. Some of the vintage coaches date back to 1917. Yet another highlight — Santa and Mrs. Claus greet passengers on

board. Look for hot chocolate and cookies, which are often available nearby at the station, to end a perfect trip.

BALTIMORE'S INNER HARBOR

About two hours away, Baltimore's Inner Harbor has much to offer beyond the usual stops at the National Aquarium, Maryland Science Center, American Visionary Art Museum — for fun all year round.

In December, under the stars, among the skyscrapers, city lights and tall ships, nestled by the bay, the Inner Harbor ice rink is spectacular! Strap on your skates! Your kids will love it! So will your spouse, parents, friends.

The weekend of December 6 and 7 features local artists, craftsmen and other makers at The Holiday Makers Market at Harborplace. Load up on gifts, such as vintage wear, toys and musical instruments. Choirs will sing! Restaurant pop-ups will offer comfort food and seasonal cocktails!

For the entire month, on the western edge of Inner Harbor is the German Christmas Village, a lovely setting to create lasting holiday memories. Modeled on Nuremberg's historic 16th-century Christkindlesmarkt, the market features over 65 vendors in charming wooden booths. The Glühwein Pyramid is the market's stunning highlight. Crafted in Germany, standing 35 feet tall and illuminated with 3,000 lights, the pyramid is visible throughout Inner Harbor. You can get mulled wine — glühwein — there, also from Germany, made with red wine, orange slices, cinnamon sticks, cloves and sugar, with flavors like blueberry, cherry and baked apple. Mmmm!

There's more fun on the historic carousel and 65-foot Ferris wheel and at the beer garden. Warm up with a mug of glühwein, or enjoy a stein of German beer from the Hofbrau. Chow down on bratwurst, schnitzel, raclette cheese dishes and other selections of German cuisine.

Oh! You can visit with Santa as well. ♦

For more information about these destinations go to: DiscoverLancaster.com, ChesapeakeCity.com, PoconoMountains.com and Baltimore.org.

Festive Fun!

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- Cecil County Christmas Parade
- Lighted Boat Parade
- Oliver at Milburn Stone Theatre
- Poplar Hall Parade of Horses & Christmas Market
- Chesapeake City Candlelight House Tour
- And More!

DiscoverCecil.com

Luxury Lakeside Living

IN CHARMING CHADDS FORD—80 HEYBURN ROAD

Laurel Anderson

“I HAD A VISION FOR THIS PROPERTY when I first saw it,” said Amy Trojecki, who oversaw the latest transformation of the stunning secluded waterfront home on Karver Lake. She and husband Joe Dominguez, were returning to the area after a three-year hiatus in Chicago and were searching for a special property.

Almost a year passed before they returned to this legacy property, originally granted to William Penn and later owned by such local notables as Karl Kuerner, A. Atwater Kent and George Heyburn (the road’s namesake). “I knew it would be a lot of work to update and create the light, bright feel we wanted, but I had a plan,” continued Amy. “And I wanted to make the most of the lake views.”

Set on seven acres, the one-of-a-kind home is 12,000 square feet with seven bedrooms and nine bathrooms. “It’s a big home, yet every room has a purpose. The three of us actually use all the rooms,” Amy added. “And it’s wonderful for entertaining for Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Eve with our extended family. Plus, our daughter’s friends love to come for sleepovers. There are hidden staircases, nooks and special places.”

And who wouldn’t enjoy a private lake? “There are bass and bluegills in it,” added Joe. Amy shared the story of a grandfather who asks to bring his grandson fishing there each year.

THE TRANSFORMATIONS

Originally built as a Friends meeting house, the structure was converted to a

typical Pennsylvania farmhouse using stone from a nearby quarry. And, like many historic properties, it was added to and updated to suit a variety of tastes.

The prior owners teamed with Archer & Buchanan Architecture and Dewson Construction to remove historically inconsistent features and to add complimentary spaces needed for modern living in the now-stately Georgian mansion. Local artisans’ craftsmanship is reflected in architectural details, wood flooring and preserved period hardware.

Part of Amy and Joe’s reinvention of the property, with the help of Curtis Cruse Construction, created a chef-centered, eat-in kitchen, anchored by a massive marble island and surrounded by amenities like high-end Gaggenau and Sub-Zero appliances (three dishwashers!), full-size wine

fridge, built-in coffee station and featuring expansive lake views. Other key projects included updating bathrooms, repainting inside and out, removing walls, exposing stone walls and opening up the space.

Meanwhile, the home became more energy efficient: outdated windows replaced, LED lights swapped in, natural gas heating installed, fireplaces converted to gas. The result is a tasteful blend of period-appropriate details showcased in a thoroughly modern setting.

HIGHLIGHTS

Three thoughtfully designed stories plus a lower entertainment/recreation level embody modern livability. A few highlights.

A soaring light-filled foyer, marked by a grand staircase and expanses of honey-stained wood floors, foreshadows

the scale of the bright, high-ceiling rooms throughout. To the right, two home offices, separated by pocket doors, encourage working from home, while to the left a welcoming gathering space with twin fireplaces warming the sitting and dining areas beckons. Toward the front of the home is a more casual family room accented by an original stone wall.

Ah, the kitchen! Surrounded by custom cabinetry and integrated appliances the modern dream kitchen mixes stone and wood to create a space where everyone will congregate and enjoy meals in the cradle of the bay window overlooking the lake.

The open kitchen space extends to another family area, this one with a massive stone fireplace and windowed nook overlooking the lake — a place for savoring morning coffee or sunset glass of wine.

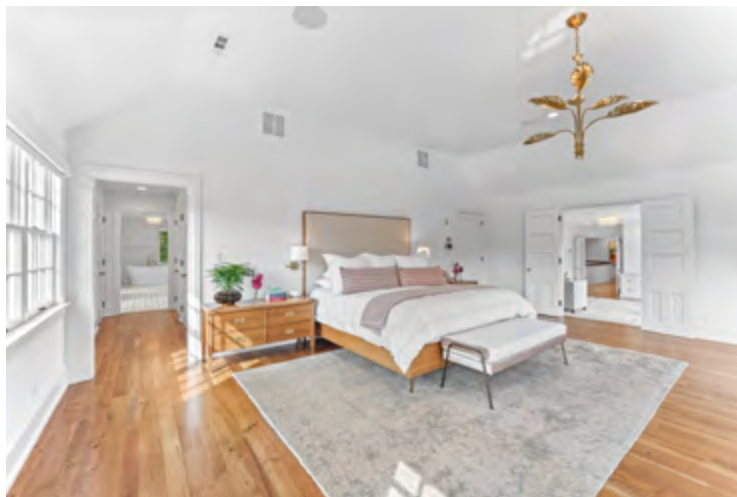
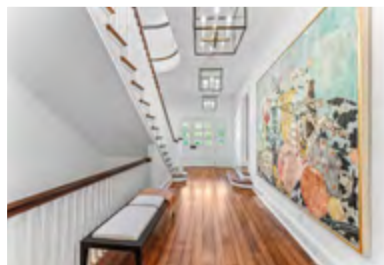
The updated decks, accessed through French doors, provide more space for enjoying the property to the sounds of the nearby water feature.

The back of the home includes the on-trend scullery, walk-in pantry, large mudroom with cubbies and countless closets, washer-dryer, extra fridge and two powder rooms.

OTHER FEATURES

A convenient back staircase leads to the primary suite, with sitting room and balcony overlooking the lake, his-and-hers walk-in closets (plus shoe closet), a wall of additional closets, and a spa-inspired bath with soaking tub.

Down the hallway, lit by a skylight, is a smaller suite with sitting room and bath (perfect au pair suite), along with three additional en suite bedrooms and a laundry. Two more bedrooms, bathroom plus a bonus space are on the third floor.



On the lower level find a marble bar area with lake views, home theater, craft room, and fitness suite with steam shower and sauna, along with unfinished space. And outside, in addition to a whole-house generator, are a three-bay carriage house plus attached two-car garage with room for vehicles, hobbies and more storage.

NEXT STEPS

The family is now headed to their next adventure. What will they miss most? “Waking to the lake. And seeing the wildlife — deer, foxes, herons, cranes,” Amy and Joe chimed in. (Though some might miss the 30+ closets!) ♦

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FIRELIGHT & Brandy

LUXURIES OF
CHRISTMAS PAST
AND PRESENT

Liz Tarditi

THERE'S A REASON BRANDY AND COGNAC FEEL so at home in December. Long before they were sipped from crystal snifters, these “burnt wines” were practical. They were distilled so that delicate wines could travel without spoiling. Dutch traders carried these casks across Europe and into the New World, leaving their word, *brandewijn*, in our glasses and on our map in the Brandywine Valley. Even Tolkien’s hobbits cross the “Brandywine,” a reminder of how deeply these names echo in our imaginations.

Here are a few to sample this holiday season.

HERITAGE IN THE KITCHEN

At the holidays, brandy often shows up in the glass and in the kitchen. A festive brandy punch, brightened with citrus and spice, takes a seasonal twist with America’s oldest licensed spirit, **Laird’s Blended Applejack Brandy** (\$22.89). It’s a drink so impressive George Washington once asked the family for the recipe.

In the kitchen, cooks rely on brandy to soak dried fruit for fruit-cakes, flame a plum pudding or deepen the flavor of French onion soup and sauces. The aromas — dried fruit, spice, caramel, oak — echo the seasonal scents of pine, citrus and firewood.

That’s what makes a fine bottle the perfect gift. It carries both heritage and pleasure, with a versatility that goes well beyond the after-dinner pour. Try **Rémy Martin 1738 Accord Royal Cognac** (\$63.99) with aromas of plum and fig jam, rounded by toffee, brioché and a finish of butterscotch and dark chocolate. Cheers!

COGNAC: THE JEWEL OF BRANDY

All cognac is brandy, but not all brandy is cognac (it’s like all bourbon is whiskey, but ...). Brandy is the umbrella term for spirits distilled from fruit wine — apples, pears, cherries or grapes.

Cognac, however, is the jewel of the category, crafted only in its namesake corner of France, under centuries-old rules. Its cousin, Armagnac from Gascony, offers a deeper, rustic style. Both rely on a humble grape, ugni blanc (known in Italy as trebbiano).

To taste it before distillation, try **Vigneti Romio Trebbiano Romagna** (\$9.99), a straw-colored white wine with intense flavors of tropical fruit and flowers, with hints of green apple and light grassy notes. In the right hands, this simple white grape becomes something extraordinary: amber in the glass, velvet on the tongue and a drink perfect for the season.

THE KING’S REQUEST

Among the most recognized names, Hennessy remains the world’s best-selling cognac, celebrated for its approachable style and consistent quality. **Hennessy Cognac VS** (\$39.99) delivers bright fruit and oak spice, while **Hennessy Cognac VSOP** (\$65.99) adds deeper layers of vanilla, toasted almond and apricot — a gift that feels both classic and current.

“VSOP” itself dates back to 1817, when England’s future King George IV requested a “Very Superior Old Pale” cognac from Hen-



nessy, a classification still used today for blends aged a minimum of four years.

COCKTAILS THAT GLOW

Brandy isn't only for sipping neat. It also shines at the center of holiday cocktails. The classic champagne cocktail (sugar cube, bitters, a splash of brandy, topped with bubbly) becomes a showstopper with **Veuve Clicquot Yellow Label Champagne Brut** (\$63.99), **Angostura Bitters** (\$20.49) and **Courvoisier Cognac VS** (\$68.99).

The fusion of younger and older cognacs offers a fruity, delicate taste and a bouquet filled with ripe fruit and spring flowers. As an after-dinner treat, sip an indulgent chocolatey Brandy Alexander made with **Christian Brothers Brandy VS** (\$12.99), **Jacquelin's Creme de Cacao White** (\$13.99) and local farm-fresh cream.

If you're all partied-out or nursing winter sniffles, nothing comforts like a hot toddy with a nip of **Paul Masson Grande Amber Peach Brandy** (\$9.99).

TREASURES FOR THE COLLECTOR

For those who treasure the transcendent, **Louis XIII Cognac** (\$4,799.99) is the pinnacle — a legendary blend of eaux-de-vie aged from 40 to 100 years in Limousin superior oak tierçons (wooden barrels holding 500 liters) that span generations and presented in a handcrafted, individually numbered crystal decanter with a distinctive 18k gold neck and spiked design.

For something a bit less extravagant, **Courvoisier Cognac XO Royal** (\$284.99) builds on the XO house style with a blend matured up to 30 years, combining Fins Bois and Grand Champagne lots with toasty oak influence.

Another option, **Rémy Martin Cognac XO** (\$245.99) showcases rich depth and complexity in a more accessible expression, marrying fruit, spice and refined warmth.

HERITAGE IN THE HOLIDAY GLASS

This season, whether poured neat by the fire, mixed into a festive punch or wrapped as a gift, brandy and cognac connect us to both history and celebration. They're luxuries meant to be shared, warming hearts as well as our glasses.

Wishing you a warm and wonderful holiday season in your hearts and homes.

And please, always drink responsibly. ♦

Liz Tarditi, WSET II, is an entrepreneur and classically trained chef with 35 years' of culinary experience. She graduated from Villanova University and the Culinary Arts program at the Art Institute of Seattle. Liz has worked for Fine Wine & Good Spirits for several years, becoming a Wine Specialist in 2020. She enjoys pairing wine and food for special events and celebrations. See her at the Villanova Fine Wine & Good Spirits location.



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Food News

A few of our favorite things to share this month about local food and drink

Better Doughboy.

Warm, buttery, made-from-scratch biscuits are coming to the former Mae's West Chester spot. Watch for **The Biscuit Lady's** early 2026 opening featuring a rotating menu of 15+ biscuit varieties (savory and sweet), plus holy biscuits (deep-fried biscuit dough with toppings, think donuts), nine breakfast and lunch sammies, La Colombe espresso, lattes, hot and cold brew coffee. Made with love and lots of butter. 39 W. Gay St., West Chester. Visit TheBiscuitLady.com



No Password Required.

An underground speakeasy on the Main Line? It's about time! Hidden beneath the new-ish Vietnamese restaurant Maison Lotus (former Margaret Kuo's), through an unmarked door, find **Jade Rabbit**, a low-lit, low-key cocktail bar with eight bar seats plus 18 at tables, where cocktails are the focus. Order a la carte, five-course food and cocktail pairing (\$145) or three-course cocktail progression (\$65). Currently open Thursday and Friday nights. 175 Lancaster Ave., Wayne. Maison-Lotus.com/JadeRabbit



Find Food.

That's the name of a new tab on the **Chester County Food Bank's** website, because 55% of food insecure households in Chester County are ineligible for government food assistance. Now add the impact of recent program cuts, including SNAP, on our neighbors. Consider helping out now by making tax-deductible donations of cash or food, hosting a food drive, volunteering, giving a tribute holiday gift — rather than another trinket — or participating in other programs. ChesterCountyFoodBank.org



More Buttery.

In addition to three new locations (Ardmore, Malvern Station, Bryn Mawr coming soon), **The Buttery** flagship on Malvern's King Street has been redesigned and refreshed, reviving its role as a gathering space. Now boasting 62 indoor seats (up from 18), plus more outdoor seating and extended hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), The Buttery also expanded its menu to include pizza, tartines, more sandwiches and bowls. Stop in for treats like eggplant focaccia, lemongrass rice bowl or seasonal panzanella. 233 E. King St, Malvern. MalvernButtery.com



Mother.

The new taco+ place (replacing Estrella Tacos) in Downingtown announced itself: Tacos. Margs. Beer. **Mother** is here. Sample elevated tacos (confit duck carnitas, beef cheek barbacoa), empanadas (smoked pumpkin), starters (paella bites), guacs (hot spiced maple bacon), mains (chorizo sloppy joe, quesabirria). Local beers, including from upstairs neighbor East Branch Brewing, cocktails, wine (some local, too). Open Tuesday–Thursday at 3 p.m., weekends at noon. 202 E. Lancaster Ave., Downingtown. MotherTaco.com

Sanctuary in a Bowl

SOUP'S ON THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Liz Tarditi



THE HOLIDAYS ARRIVE WITH A PARTICULAR KIND of momentum — parties stacking up, errands multiplying, and traditions insisting on attention even when we're already stretched thin. Somewhere in the middle of the rush, most of us start craving the opposite of all that sparkle and noise: something warm, slow and restorative.

Soup has always filled that role. It's a small sanctuary in a bowl, a reminder that comfort doesn't need to be complicated to be deeply felt. It's also one of the oldest through-lines in human cooking. Long before there were holiday schedules, electric lights or grocery lists, there was broth bubbling over a fire, plus whatever grains, roots, bones and vegetables a household could spare.

"Stone Soup," that old tale of strangers coaxing a village to contribute what little they had, rings especially true this time of year.

Soup has always been communal, resourceful and generous. It meets people where they are.

This month's Brandywine Table features five soups that embody that spirit in different ways. Two come from **Ron's Original Bar & Grille** in Exton, a local institution where scratch-made still means something. Not everyone has time during the holidays to caramelize onions for half an hour or brown tomato paste until it sweetens and darkens — but Ron's does.

Their French onion soup leans into the old-world method: onions cooked slowly until deeply golden, enriched with wine and stock, and finished under a bubbling cap of cheese. It's comfort with a touch of ceremony. Their Italian cream of tomato soup builds its richness the same way Italian grandmothers have for generations — start with paste, give it patience and let the flavors unfold.

Balancing those are three soups made for home kitchens, each offering a different kind of solace. An adaptable potato leek soup is rustic and chunky, silky and pureed, or chilled into a refined vichyssoise for the rare quiet winter evening. Bazillion bean soup that makes its own broth as it simmers blends beans and vegetables as time turns them into something hearty and sustaining. And yes, even a nod to some storytelling with a classic borscht from the real Alice's Restaurant! The bright, earthy soup that shows up in European kitchens and American counterculture alike. (Arlo Guthrie wasn't wrong — sometimes borscht really is exactly what you want.)

Together, these soups invite you to slow down. To step out of the holiday buzz for a moment and let something warm and honest take its place. When the days grow colder and the calendar grows louder, a pot of soup — homemade or picked up from a kitchen like Ron's — reminds us that comfort is still simple. And it's waiting on the stove.

Ron's Original French Onion Soup

Deeply caramelized onions and a splash of wine turn humble ingredients into gold. Under a bubbling lid of Gruyère or provolone, this timeless soup is a simple luxury that never goes out of style.



Serves 8 to 10

Soup:

- 1 gal. beef stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 oz. fresh thyme (about 1 packed C. whole sprigs)
- ¼ C. demi-glace
- 6 oz. clarified butter (about ¾ C.)
- 4 lbs. mixed onions (red, white, yellow), thinly sliced
- 1 T. minced garlic
- 1 T. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 2 T. brown sugar
- ½ C. port wine
- 2 C. merlot

For topping each serving:

- 1½-inch-thick slice baguette, toasted
- 3 thick slices cheese (Gruyère, provolone or blend to overlap bowl)

In a large stockpot, combine stock, bay leaves, thyme and demi-glace. Bring to a boil, then reduce by about half.

In another large pot, melt butter over medium-low heat. Add onions, garlic, salt, pepper and brown sugar. Cook slowly until onions are deeply caramelized (about 25–30 minutes), stirring to prevent sticking. Add both wines. Increase heat to medium and cook until wine has reduced by half.

Strain the reduced stock to remove herbs, then pour into the onion mixture. Return to a gentle simmer and cook 10 minutes to blend flavors.

Ladle into oven-safe crocks, leaving room to top each with a

toasted baguette slice and overlapping cheese. Broil until browned and bubbling. Serve hot.

Ron's Original Italian Cream of Tomato Soup

A silky, richly flavored tomato soup built from caramelized paste and herbs, finished with cream and tender pasta for a hearty Italian twist. Ron notes that for a gluten-free version, use gluten-free pasta.



Serves 8 to 10

- ½ lb. butter, divided
- 2 C. chopped onions
- 1 T. minced garlic
- ½ T. granulated garlic
- 1, 6-oz. can tomato paste
- 2 T. sea salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp. thyme
- 2 T. dried parsley
- 2 qt. chicken stock
- 1, 14-oz. can crushed tomatoes
- ½ C. cornstarch
- 1 pt. heavy cream
- 1 oz. fresh basil (about ½ C. chopped)
- 6 oz. cooked orecchiette pasta

In a large pot, melt half the butter over medium heat. Add onions and both kinds of garlic and sauté until soft and lightly caramelized.

Stir in tomato paste and cook about 10 minutes, stirring often, until the paste darkens and forms browned edges (to build the soup's depth of flavor).

Add salt, pepper, thyme, parsley, chicken stock and crushed tomatoes to deglaze the pan. Bring to a rapid boil and cook 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, melt the remaining butter and whisk in cornstarch to form a smooth roux.

Add the roux and cream to the tomato mixture and simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened. Stir in fresh basil and cooked pasta. Serve hot.



Crockpot-Friendly Potato Leek Soup

Few recipes are as forgiving or adaptable as potato leek soup. With the same ingredients, you can create a rustic crockpot comfort, a velvety dinner-party starter, or a chilled vichyssoise in warmer months. Once you know the base, it becomes a blank canvas for whatever the season — or the cook — has in mind.



Serves 10 to 12

2 qt. organic chicken stock
3 large russet (baking) potatoes, peeled and halved
2 medium red (waxy) potatoes, scrubbed and diced ¼–½ in. (skin on)
2–3 bunches leeks, white parts only, trimmed, well-washed and sliced into half-moons
2 sticks salted butter
1 qt. heavy cream
Salt and white pepper to taste

For frizzled leeks garnish: Cut white/light green parts of leeks lengthwise into matchsticks and toss with a tiny bit of olive oil. Air fry for 5 minutes until crispy, or fry in hot oil for 1 to 2 minutes. Remove with tongs and drain on paper towels. Arrange as garnish.

Pour stock into a large crockpot or slow cooker. As you peel and cut each russet potato, drop the pieces directly into the liquid to prevent browning. Add diced red potatoes, chopped leeks and butter. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 hours, until the russets are fork-tender but not falling apart.

Using a slotted spoon, transfer the russets (not the diced reds) in batches to a blender, adding enough hot leek broth and some cream to blend smoothly. Fill the blender only halfway (hot liquid expands). Pulse a few seconds (over-pureeing makes potatoes gluey). Return each batch to the crockpot, continuing until all russets are blended and reincorporated.

Allow to come back to heat for about 30 minutes before serving. (Unused portions should be chilled quickly in an ice bath before storing cold.)

Stir in any remaining cream. Season with salt and white pepper to

taste. The red potatoes remain in small chunks for texture. Garnish with leek frizzles or any toppings for a loaded baked potato.

For a refined vichyssoise: Make a day in advance. Peel all potatoes at the start, puree the entire soup and pass through a fine-mesh sieve. Then chill quickly over an ice bath. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Serve cold. Garnish: caviar, smoked salmon or trout, lemon oil.

Bazillion Bean Soup

This soup bridges the Depression-era thrift of my grandmothers and the comfort of my cooking for my own daughter — simple ingredients turning into something rich and sustaining. As it simmers, it makes its own savory broth, filling the house with a warmth that travels through generations. My kid loved the name, so she forgot all about the veggies!



Serves 10 to 12

1, 20-oz. bag mixed dry soup beans, artificial flavor packet discarded (or 2 heaping C. mixed beans from bulk), fully hydrated after a 1- to 2-day soak
Water, as needed to cover
1–2 lb. bacon, chopped (measure with your heart)
1 large turnip, diced
2 carrots, chopped
1 onion, diced
1 large head (about 20 cloves) garlic, chopped
1 tsp. kosher salt, more to taste

Soak the beans in a large pot, covering with 2–3 inches of water, for 1–2 days, changing the water as needed. If your mix includes large white lima beans (butter beans), give them the full soaking time. Drain the beans and set aside.

In a large soup pot, cook the bacon over medium-high heat until lightly browned and the fat has rendered. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon and set aside.

In the bacon fat, add the diced turnip and carrots and cook over medium-low heat about 5 minutes, scraping the fond as the veggies sweat (a flat-edged wooden spatula helps). Add the onion and cook

3 minutes more, then stir in the chopped garlic and diced potatoes. *Pro tip:* When chopping vegetables for soup, match the size of your dice to the size of the beans. A spoonful that holds many elements at once is more satisfying.

Add the drained beans to the pot and mix well. Cover completely with about 2 inches water, again, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pot. Add the kosher salt and reserved bacon.

Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Using a slotted spoon, skim the grey scum from the top. Cook 4 to 6 hours, stirring occasionally and adding more water as needed, until the beans are tender. Test by biting a larger bean (texture should be velvety not floury). For a thicker texture to the soup, continue simmering until some of the smaller beans break down and the soup becomes stew-like.

Garnish with plenty of shredded cheese and crusty bread ... and maybe even more bacon.

Alice's Restaurant Cabbage Borscht

The Alice of Arlo Guthrie's song "Alice's Restaurant Massacre" operated a few food spots in the Berkshire Mountains years ago and authored a cookbook that included this hearty and easy recipe. Our editor, Jo Anne Durako, made it each winter for many years. Can be made with vegetarian stock, but must include a dollop of sour cream on top.



Serves 8

6 C. beef bone broth or vegetarian stock
Meat from the bone broth
1 tsp. each salt and pepper
1, 28-oz. can tomatoes, with liquid
1 small head cabbage, shredded
½ C. raisins
2 onions, chopped
Juice of 1 lemon, more to taste
2 T. sugar, more to taste
Sour cream
Optional: chopped beets, carrots, potatoes, caraway seeds

In a large pot, combine the beef bone broth and broth meat, along with the salt and pepper.

Next add the canned tomatoes with their liquid, shredded cabbage,

Finishes That Make Soup Shine

Toppings aren't just decoration. They transform a humble bowl into something memorable. A sprinkle here, a drizzle there, and suddenly the kitchen smells warmer, the soup tastes deeper and everyone thinks you did more work than you actually did.

For toppers, think in contrasts: crispy against creamy, bright against rich, sharp against mellow. A handful of croutons, toasted nuts or seeds, or a quick tangle of frizzled leeks gives texture that keeps each spoonful interesting. Herbs (fresh, not dried) wake up even the quietest broth. Dill, chives, parsley, thyme and basil all have different personalities. Just drop them in at the last second so they stay vibrant.

A swirl of something silky — cream, olive oil, chili crisp, browned butter — adds aroma and visual drama. A spoonful of pesto, tapenade or salsa verde can turn a familiar soup into something entirely new. Even pantry staples like lemon zest, cracked pepper, smoked paprika or a splash of vinegar can lift the whole bowl with almost no effort.

And don't forget the sidekicks. Good bread, toasted or warmed, belongs with almost every soup. Shredded or shaved cheeses melt into a gentle richness. A dollop of sour cream or yogurt softens bold flavors. And if you happen to have leftover bacon, well ... no one has ever complained.

Toppings are tiny gestures, but they're also invitations to slow down, savor and enjoy the small transformation that happens when comfort food gets just a bit of extra care.

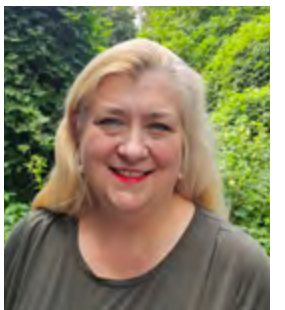
raisins and chopped onions.

Place on low heat and cook slowly for an hour.

Add the lemon juice and sugar, and cook for another 15 minutes. Taste and adjust for sweetness or sourness, adding more lemon or sugar as needed.

Serve in large bowls with a large dollop of sour cream. ♦

Liz Tarditi is a chef and wine specialist with more than 30 years of experience in food, wine and event planning. She holds degrees from Villanova University and from a Seattle culinary arts program founded by a Certified French Master Chef, where she trained in a classic brigade-style kitchen. Liz later ran her own catering company and has worked as a wine specialist in Pennsylvania. She brings her training and lifelong passion for seasonal, approachable cooking to Brandywine Table.



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