

Compliments of Charese John

AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

THE MAGAZINE CELEBRATING LIFE IN AMERICA

ISSUE 125



Charese John



What's Good The Art of Food Entertaining
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HAVE A
holly-jolly
HOLIDAY

ISSUE 125
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Front of Tear Out Card 1



Back of Tear Out Card 1





AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

Dear Bill and Judy,

Happy Holiday's, Friends!

It's my Favorite Time of the Year!

Tis the Season for festive togetherness and making "New" memories with loved ones and friends!

Here at Charese J. Entertaining, "Intentionality" is not just an overused phrase, it's our way of life! We love true connectivity and helping our clients and friends with hosting well. While this season is full of tree trimming, gift giving and shopping; we tend to focus on people and how to enrich our time spent together.

In this issue of American Lifestyle, we showcased a Farmhouse Chic Christmas Dinner with our dear friends at their beautiful home in Davidsonville, MD. We used family heirlooms to decorate the dinner table and focused on natural touches picked from their home garden. We featured our fabulous DCity Smoked Turkey to make its grand Holiday appearance and a delicious recipe for Sweet Potato Pound Cake from Michele's kitchen.

This issue also explores a variety of holiday happenings from coast to coast, including a guide to one San Francisco hotel's magnificent seasonal displays, a behind-the-curtain look at a Texas theater's productions, and an aptly named outdoor marketplace in Pennsylvania that goes all out for the holidays.

If handmade gifts, seasonal treats, and twinkling lights strike your fancy, a trip to Peddler's Village, only a short drive from both Philadelphia and New York City, might be in order. This quaint outdoor shopping center is full of wares from small businesses and artisans, making it the perfect place to experience holiday bliss while checking items off your gift list.

May you have a memorable and joyous holiday season!
As always, it's a pleasure to share this magazine with you.

Love,

Charese...



Charese John

www.Charesejentertaining.com

What's Good The Art of Food Entertaining
IG: @ChareseJ



AMERICAN LIFESTYLE

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THE AMERICAN DREAM CAME TRUE FOR THE OTTERBEIN FAMILY WHEN ADAM OTTERBEIN IMMIGRATED FROM GERMANY TO BALTIMORE IN 1881, BRINGING HIS FAMILY'S OLD-WORLD SUGAR AND GINGER COOKIE RECIPES FROM THEIR VILLAGE BAKERY. HIS GREAT-GREAT-GRANDSON, BEN OTTERBEIN, SHARES A LOOK AT HIS FAMILY'S SWEET SUCCESS.



BAKING UP A BELOVED BUSINESS

interview with **ben otterbein** | written by **bonnie joffe** | photography by **dan whipps of whipps photo**



What is your role in Otterbein's Cookies?

My official title is vice president. I oversee the business's operations, including sales, purchasing, payroll, and company growth. My dad, Mark, is a fourth-generation owner and the company president, although his role now is more of a silent partner.

Did you help when you were a kid?

It was always assumed that my siblings and I would go to work with Dad every day during summer vacation—and I do have early memories of that. Once I was deemed old enough, I was tasked with putting stickers on the bags.

When did you decide to join the business?

After graduating high school, I worked for two years at Otterbein's. But being twenty years old and wanting to have a little fun, I decided to attend college. After graduating, I worked for a small company doing project management for small business owners and soon realized how much I loved helping them.

In 2015, my dad was contemplating retirement, so I decided to return home with my fiancée to begin working in our family business. The timing and synergy were in line, and I knew we were coming back for all the right reasons.

I was excited to have the opportunity to breathe life back into the business. My attitude was "Let's light some fire and grow this thing."

Why do you think the business has survived for more than 140 years?

My grandfather Joe took over the company from his father and ultimately had three retail locations. My dad then joined in 1979 and began discovering ways to take it to the next level. However, in the early 1990s, food stores started putting in their own in-house bakeries. My dad knew the only way for our business to survive was to sell our cookies to regional grocery store chains. Our first big breakthrough was securing shelf space in Giant Food Stores, and other large chains followed suit.

What makes your cookies stand out, and which are your best sellers?

We keep it simple—every cookie is thin and crispy. Our secret recipe for success is twofold: all our ingredients can be easily

found in your kitchen and we use a premium line of French chocolate crafted for top professional pastry chefs. By far, our best seller is our chocolate chip cookie, followed by our sugar cookie.

What is the secret to your success?

We know how important it is to produce a superior product every day. We don't cut corners on flavor; each batch must taste amazing. Our mission remains the same as when we started in 1881: Simple ingredients. Simple baking. Simple pleasures.

For more info, visit otterbeinscookies.com



written by **allison gomes**
photography by **fairmont**

A FAIRMONT HOLIDAY

THERE ARE MANY DESTINATIONS AND SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFERINGS ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO CONSIDER, BUT ONE PLACE YOU MAY WANT TO MOVE TO THE TOP OF YOUR LIST LIES IN THE HEART OF SAN FRANCISCO. THE GRAND FAIRMONT HOTEL IS RICH IN HISTORY, BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE, AND HEARTWARMING EXPERIENCES FOR VISITORS BOTH YOUNG AND OLD.

A WORLD-RENOWNED HOTEL

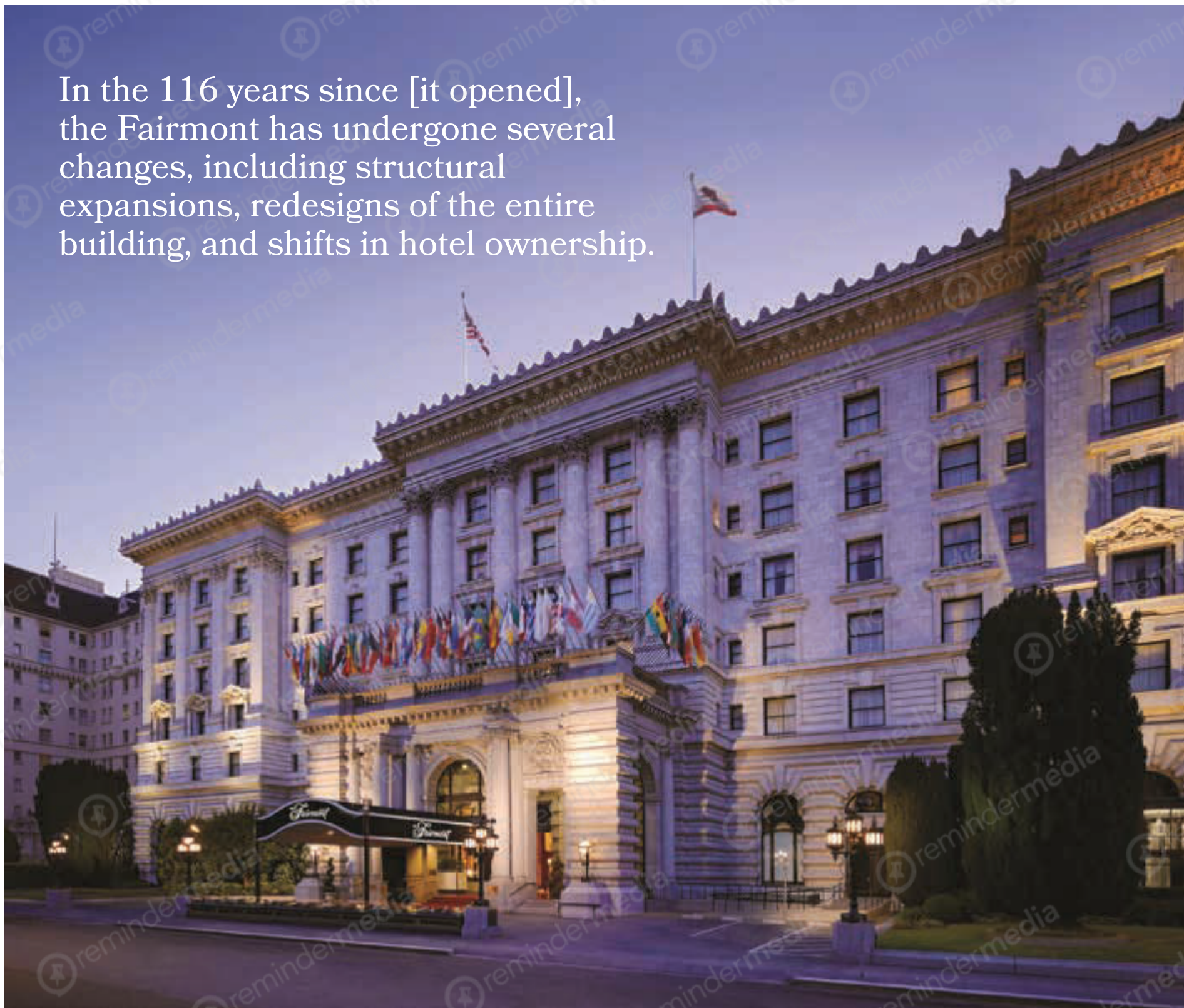
The Fairmont Hotel began in 1903 as the dream of two sisters, Theresa Fair Oelrichs and Virginia Fair Vanderbilt. The pair wanted to create a boutique hotel in the center of the city in honor of their father, Senator James Graham Fair. However, weeks before its debut in 1906, the hotel was destroyed by a fire following an earthquake that rocked much of San Francisco. It had to be built yet again from the ground up, and exactly one year later, it finally opened its doors.

In the 116 years since, the Fairmont has undergone several changes, including structural expansions,



The Fairmont Hotel began in 1903 as the dream of two sisters, Theresa Fair Oelrichs and Virginia Fair Vanderbilt.

In the 116 years since [it opened], the Fairmont has undergone several changes, including structural expansions, redesigns of the entire building, and shifts in hotel ownership.



redesigns of the entire building, and shifts in hotel ownership. Through it all, its opulence has remained undeniable. Guests can visit the Cirque Room, the first bar to open in the city following the end of Prohibition, or stop in to see the elegant Venetian Room, which has hosted performances by Ella Fitzgerald, Nat King Cole, Marlene Dietrich, Joel Grey, Bobby Short, Vic Damone, and James Brown, to name a few. It's best known, though, for being the ballroom where Tony Bennett first sang "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" in 1961. The hotel was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

But while it's a wonder to see at any time of year, the holiday season at the Fairmont is unlike any other, making it a must-visit for a luxurious winter getaway.

A WINTER WONDERLAND

"For over a century, Fairmont San Francisco has enchanted guests with its joyful holiday festivities, dining, and exuberant seasonal ambience," says Michelle Heston, executive regional director of public relations for Accor Hotels, who has worked with the Fairmont Hotels and Resorts for the last seventeen years. From the Saturday following Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, the hotel is transformed for the holidays, transporting guests to a magical and festive new world. The fun starts with a beautifully decorated twenty-three-foot-tall Christmas tree in the lobby and expands into a host of other wonderful and whimsical sights.

Gingerbread house

For over a decade, the Fairmont's lobby has been home to a life-sized gingerbread house during the holiday season. In 2022, executive chef Michael

Quigley led and meticulously planned the construction of the two-story structure, which stood more than twenty-two feet high and twenty-three feet wide and used thousands of home-baked gingerbread bricks and more than one ton of royal icing and candy decor. The house typically takes more than 520 hours to build, light, and outfit each year.

To bring the glorious gingerbread house to life, the hotel's pastry chefs partner with See's Candies, a chocolate and candy company headquartered in California. They decorate the baked bricks with lollipops, candy canes, and chocolate confections, adding color and vibrancy to the house. (While you may be tempted to pluck a piece of candy right from the walls, you should try the sweet offerings at the See's Candies pop-up location in the Fairmont lobby instead.) When the season comes to an end, the house frame is recycled and its edible elements are composted.

However, the fun with the gingerbread house doesn't end there. If you're looking for something a little extra special to do with your loved ones, you can book a private dining experience for up to eight people *inside* the house. Everyone can enjoy afternoon tea or dinner while taking in the delicious scents and sounds of the holiday season.

Holiday tea experience

Afternoon tea, featuring fine china and delicious accoutrements, has been a part of the magic of the Fairmont since the very beginning. During the holidays, guests can create new memories and traditions with Fairmont's Holiday Tea at the Laurel Court Restaurant and Bar. Sit back and enjoy loose-leaf teas such as creamy



Earl Grey and Egyptian chamomile, assorted fresh-baked pastries, tea sandwiches, and other delectable sweets including macarons and yule logs. Heston considers this her favorite tradition, and she regularly takes her mom, daughters, sister, and niece. “Everybody is feeling festive and willing to put on a fancy outfit during the holidays,” she says. It’s an opulent, sophisticated experience that all ages can enjoy.

Santa suites

For a one-of-a-kind experience, the Fairmont offers two specially decorated suites dubbed Santa and Mrs. Claus’s home away from home. Decked out in holiday decor, the whimsical wonder of the suites creates an unforgettable seasonal escape perfect for young children. If you feel inspired by the grandeur of the lobby’s life-sized gingerbread house, a stay in the suites also comes with the option of building your own house while sipping

on an array of holiday-themed hot chocolate—all within the comfort of your own room.

A stay at the Fairmont in San Francisco is sure to delight anyone in your family, both young and old. From its historic halls to its charming holiday attractions, it offers visitors an opportunity to delight in all the magic of the season.

For more info, visit fairmont-san-francisco.com



SIMPLE STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR HOME

written by **matthew brady**
photography by **getty images**

With a new year approaching, now is a good time to make a game plan for maintaining your home in both the short term and the long term. After all, Old Man Winter traditionally causes the most property damage, and he's just getting crankier. Recent winter storms were some of the costliest in American history: they caused approximately \$6 billion in insured losses in 2022 and a record \$15 billion in 2021.

So it's likely not a matter of if but *when* your home will start showing signs of aging and weather damage. But you can protect it—and give it the gift of extended life—by taking the following steps.

Inside your home

Your home is your castle. It's where you can retreat to after a long day and where your family feels comfortable and safe. Keep it that way for years to come by making sure each of its vital areas is in tip-top shape.





Doors and windows

These openings keep the outside and inside temperatures where they belong, so you should periodically check that they're structurally sound, especially around their perimeters. Simply run your hand around their frames to see if you feel air filtering in. If you do, or if you notice any flaking, shrinking, or peeling caulk,

fix it as soon as possible. In addition, look for fogging or condensation within a window, which can be a red flag that it needs to be replaced.

Pipes and ducts

Your home's plumbing is often out of sight, out of mind—until there is a problem. Typically, the biggest culprit is leaks, which can cause extensive

water damage and mold buildup. But you can prevent these issues by regularly checking your pipes and faucets for any drips or cracks. Also, turn off and drain outdoor spigots before winter, and consider insulating them with foam to prevent freezing. Finally, don't forget your dryer ductwork. You or a professional should clean it out at least once or

twice a year to eliminate the threat of fire caused by lint buildup.

Basement

If you have an unfinished basement, there are several things you'll need to check on to keep it in good shape. First and foremost, you should clean your sump pump at least three to four times a year to



ensure it's doing its job: pumping water out of your home. You can test your pump by slowly pouring a bucket of water into it; it should kick in if it's working properly. Also, if you have French drains in your basement, periodically declutter them to prevent water blockages.

In addition, monitor your basement walls and window wells for evidence of water seeping in, which can result in brown or black mold. If you spot either, get it tested and remediated as soon as possible—for the safety of both your home and your family.

HVAC

Your HVAC system keeps the air and heat circulating through your home, so a faulty unit can obviously be problematic for your family. It can also be pricey—total HVAC replacements can cost upward of \$10,000 or more. Taking steps to maintain your current one will help

you avoid this financial burden down the road. To maximize its overall efficiency, change its filters every one to two months, make sure there's ample space around your inside unit, and frequently check that debris hasn't fallen onto or into your outside unit. Also, have a professional do a tune-up once or twice a year.

Outside your home

The exterior of your home is its year-round defense, specifically designed to protect your dwelling from the elements—but that doesn't mean it will last forever. To help shelter the place that provides *you* shelter every single day, give some attention to the following areas.

Roof

Your roof prevents precipitation like rain and snow from falling into your home, so maintaining it should be of utmost importance.



YOU OR A PROFESSIONAL SHOULD CLEAN [YOUR DRYER DUCTWORK] OUT AT LEAST ONCE OR TWICE A YEAR TO ELIMINATE THE THREAT OF FIRE CAUSED BY LINT BUILDUP.



Depending on the materials and craftsmanship, a roof should last at least fifteen to thirty years, but some roofs can last fifty years or more—and you can help increase that longevity. Weather permitting, get onto your roof at least twice a year to clean off any debris and inspect it for loose or damaged shingles or flashing that needs replacing. In winter, do a visual inspection from your yard to avoid an icy rooftop, and, if need be, carefully remove accumulated snow with a roof rake.

Gutters

In some respects, a roof is only as good as the gutters it's connected to; without properly working gutters, water can stream into your siding and foundation

with disastrous results. This is especially true in cold climates: since ice weighs a whopping fifty-seven pounds per cubic foot, it can put an enormous amount of strain on these structures. Prevention is key. Frequently remove any debris from your gutters (especially during fall and early winter) to make sure water can flow out of them, reattach sections that are getting loose, and make sure any accompanying downspouts aren't blocked.

Siding and foundation

When it comes to a home's exterior, the roof is usually the star of the show. But that doesn't mean you

should ignore your siding and foundation. If you inspect your siding frequently for cracks, chips, peeling paint, and loose sections, you can make repairs right away and better protect your home. Pay particular attention to window frames and other edges to make sure the siding is flush with its respective trim; if it's not, reapply exterior caulk. And once a year, clean your siding to remove dirt and mold, which could creep inside the siding itself and into your home.

When it comes to protecting your home, one of the simplest things you can do is also the most important: walk around its exterior to inspect



your foundation, taking note of any cracks. Vertical ones tend to be somewhat standard as a result of the structure settling, and you can usually seal them yourself. However, stair-step and horizontal cracks may indicate that there's a serious foundation issue, so consult with a foundation professional as soon as possible if you find any.

Odds are your home will be the biggest investment you make in your life, so you'll want to take steps to keep it safe and sound for the long haul. With a little forethought, especially before winter, you can go a long way toward accomplishing that goal.

DESIGN THAT DEFIES THE STATUS QUO

interview with **ginger curtis** | written by **lauren kim** | photography **as noted**



THE CHARMING
GUEST COTTAGE
THAT WON CURTIS
HGTV DESIGNER
OF THE YEAR.



Designer Ginger Curtis, winner of the 2021 HGTV Designer of the Year Award and author of the book *Beauty by Design: Refreshing Spaces Inspired by What Matters Most*, built her firm, Urbanology Designs, at one of the toughest points of her life. She shares how she used color and the unexpected to dramatically transform a Craftsman Tudor-style home in the Dallas suburbs.

How did you get started in design?

I was at the tail end of chemotherapy for an aggressive cancer that had spread. My treatment lasted for eighteen months, and it started right after my daughter finished her own treatment for leukemia. It was a lot—I'd never had to fight so hard for something in my life.

While all this was happening, I decided to do a gut renovation of my home's kitchen, floors, and popcorn ceilings. A lot of people thought I was crazy, but the project actually put wind in my sails and gave me something to focus on instead of my own pain and misery. The redesign of my home also allowed me to enjoy it as a refuge and a place of peace.



© Amber Tice

My passion for design really grew out of this season of my life. It was during my greatest battle that I discovered a home can be a place that refuels and inspires you. Everyone deserves a beautiful home; it affects how we live and function. That's why, after I came out of chemo in 2015, I launched Urbanology Designs—so I could help others achieve that too.

What did you do before launching your firm?

I used to design and build furniture for local artisan shops, which was my first introduction to the design world. Then I got married and had five kids. But I found myself longing to do something more from a business and creative perspective.



© Matti Gresham

I didn't know it then, of course. At the time I was just focused on designing functional and beautiful furniture.

How would you describe your firm's design style?

Our motto is simple: defy the status quo. We aim to design spaces that are beautiful, impactful, and long-lasting so they won't trend out. The owners of the Craftsman Tudor home, a dynamic couple with two young children, had a vision that embodied this perfectly. They commissioned us to design the entry hall, study, and living room of their house in Greenway Parks (a family neighborhood in Dallas), asking for a look that was weird, funky, and saturated with color.



© Amber Tice

"EVERYONE DESERVES A BEAUTIFUL HOME; IT AFFECTS HOW WE LIVE AND FUNCTION."

beauty and practicality. We selected a mossy-green performance fabric for the sofa because it's very forgiving and looks beautiful against the black wall. The white chairs are off-limits to the children, but even so, they are well protected. The quirky accent rug is basically indestructible, and the large textured jute rug is also very durable.



© Matti Gresham



© Matti Gresham

The study has a cozy yet edgy feel. What was your inspiration for this room?

We wanted it to feel storied and lived-in instead of brand new. So we utilized a lot of deep greens, golds, and browns to create a room that's moody without being too dark since it also needed to be a practical working space. We brought in unique textures and shapes to elevate the look in a relaxed, casual way. The white-oak desk adds unexpected flair, and the vibrant yellow-green chair pops against the dark wall color. Because they love art, we also mixed in some modern art pieces. I will say, though, that one of my favorite pieces in the space is something the clients already owned: a leather settee with a perfect buttery color.

The living room has an elevated design but is still family friendly. How did you achieve this?

Since this is where the family spends most of its time, we tried to balance

We chose contrasting black and white walls to create two different experiences depending on where you stand in the room; you can see the sofa against two different backdrops. The chair feels a little midcentury modern, and the rattan lampshade also brings in a retro vibe. We paired them with organic pieces like the comfy sofa and the coffee table. The mix of styles and textures works to create a distinctive mood in the room.

How did you transform the fireplace wall in the living room?

The clients wanted to change that wall, which was covered in white, farmhouse-style shiplap. Because we didn't want to spend a lot of money on renovating the wall itself, we simply painted it black. We also added a wood mantel and installed a floating shelf for artwork. These simple changes were a very effective way to modernize the wall, and they also helped to hide a flat-screen TV.



© Matti Gresham



© Matti Gresham

"WE CHOSE CONTRASTING BLACK AND WHITE WALLS TO CREATE TWO DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU STAND IN THE ROOM; YOU CAN SEE THE SOFA AGAINST TWO DIFFERENT BACKDROPS."



Would you describe the design details you added to the hallway?

The hallway was an opportunity to create something slightly more feminine. The finishes in the entry were already new and bright, so we added lighting, artwork, a console table, and some decorative items. The table is constructed from a woven fiber that gives it texture, and we placed some modern, chunky poufs underneath it. Now when you move from space to space in the home, from the entryway to the living room to the study, there is a juxtaposition from light and organic to dark and moody. This home is a perfect example of how you can mix styles beautifully when you plan a project well.

I truly love the design of this home. We were looking to create spaces that have soul, and our clients wanted the same thing, so it was a match made in heaven.

For more info, visit urbanologydesigns.com

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COOKIE TIME!

recipes by **megan neveu**
photography by **megan neveu**

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SUGAR + SPICE COOKIES BY MEGAN NEVEU.
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It's hard to imagine the holidays without cookies. Whether you contribute to baking them or just enjoy eating them, cookies in all shapes, sizes, and flavors can bring a little extra cheer to the season. If you're looking to try something new this year, these recipes from *Sugar + Spice Cookies* are the perfect way to shake things up.

spiced mexican wedding cookies

1 cup pecans
2¼ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1½ cups confectioners' sugar, divided
Zest of 1 medium orange
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ teaspoon almond extract

Makes 32 cookies

1. Place the pecans in a small skillet, and lightly toast them over medium-low heat for 4 to 5 minutes, or until fragrant. Transfer the pecans to a food processor. Process until the pecans are fine like the texture of almond flour. Cool slightly before using in the recipe. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder and salt until well combined. Add the butter, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the confectioners' sugar and zest in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. On medium speed, beat the mixture for 3 to 4 minutes, or until light and fluffy. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl as needed. On low speed, mix in the ground pecans and vanilla and almond extracts until smooth and well combined. Scrape the bottom and sides of the bowl as needed. On low, mix the dry ingredients into the wet until well combined. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap, and chill it in the fridge for 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

3. Scoop 1-tablespoon amounts of the cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the edges are lightly golden brown. Cool the cookies on the hot baking sheet for 15 minutes. While the cookies are still slightly warm, roll them in the remaining confectioners' sugar. Cool completely to room temperature and roll them once more in the confectioners' sugar if you would like a double coat of sugar.



maple-glazed apple cookies

FOR THE BROWN BUTTER

**¾ cup unsalted butter,
room temperature**

FOR THE SPICED APPLE COOKIES

2 cups all-purpose flour

½ cup almond flour

1 tablespoon apple pie spice

½ teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

¾ cup light brown sugar

½ cup granulated sugar

½ cup unsweetened applesauce

1 large egg yolk

2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 cup shredded apple

FOR THE MAPLE GLAZE

1½ cups confectioners' sugar

1 tablespoon maple syrup

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

**1 tablespoon milk,
plus more as needed**

Makes 22 cookies

1. Melt the butter in a heavy bottom saucepan over medium heat for 7 to 10 minutes, or until the butter starts to foam. Whisk continuously until brown bits start to form. Depending on your stove and saucepan, the entire process should take 10 to 15 minutes. Immediately remove the pan from the heat, and pour the brown butter into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment to cool slightly.

2. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, almond flour, apple pie spice, baking soda, baking powder and salt until well combined. Add the sugars, applesauce, egg yolk and vanilla to the batter and mix until smooth and well combined. Stir the dry ingredients into the wet until just combined. Fold in the shredded apple until well combined. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and chill it in the fridge for at least 2 hours.

3. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

4. Scoop 2-tablespoon amounts of cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes, or until the edges of the cookies are set and lightly golden brown and the centers are slightly puffed. Keep the cookies on the hot baking sheets for 5 minutes before transferring them to a cooling rack to cool to room temperature.

5. While the cookies cool, make the glaze. In a medium mixing bowl, add the confectioners' sugar and stir in the maple syrup, vanilla and milk until well combined. Drizzle the glaze on top of the cooled cookies. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for the glaze to set before serving.



blood orange rosemary cookies

FOR THE BLOOD ORANGE ROSEMARY COOKIES

- 2 cups all-purpose flour**
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup granulated sugar**
- Zest of 3 blood oranges (¼ cup)**
- 2–3 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary**
- ½ cup olive oil**
- 1 large egg, room temperature**
- ¼ cup buttermilk, room temperature**

FOR THE BLOOD ORANGE GLAZE

- 1½ cups confectioners' sugar**
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- Zest from ½ blood orange (optional)**
- 1–3 tablespoons freshly squeezed blood orange juice**

Makes 24 cookies

1. To make the cookies, in a medium mixing bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt until well combined. In a large mixing bowl, whisk the sugar, zest and rosemary until it has the consistency of wet sand. Whisk in the olive oil and egg until smooth and well combined. Alternate mixing the dry ingredients and buttermilk into the wet until all the dry ingredients and buttermilk have been added. Rest the cookie dough at room temperature for 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

3. Scoop 1-tablespoon amounts of cookie dough onto the baking sheets, spacing them 2 inches apart. Bake for 9 to 11 minutes, or until a finger lightly pressed into the top of the cookie bounces back. Keep the cookies on the hot baking sheets for 3 to 4 minutes before transferring them to a cooling rack to cool to room temperature.

4. While the cookies cool, make the glaze. In a medium mixing bowl, add the confectioners' sugar. Whisk in the lemon juice, zest if using and 1 to 3 tablespoons of the blood orange juice, to taste. Spoon the glaze over the cooled cookies, and let it set for 30 to 45 minutes before serving.

interview with **jason crespin**
written by **andre rios**
photography by **chriselda photography | amarillo little theatre**

A DRAMATIC SOUTHWEST SHOWCASE

In the small Texas Panhandle town of Amarillo, known for its Wild West landscape and cowboy culture, another type of action is stealing the show. Jason Crespin, managing/artistic director of the Amarillo Little Theatre (ALT), explains how this venue stages prestigious theatrical productions that serve the western plains a dose of the performing arts.

SHREK THE MUSICAL

Would you talk about the origins of Amarillo Little Theatre?

You wouldn't think of Amarillo as the arts hub of our nation, but you'd be shocked! Our theater was founded in 1927 and is one of the oldest continuously running theaters in the nation. Even during major wars and COVID, we have never shut our doors. We also have a symphony here that's closing in on its centennial anniversary.

Why Amarillo?

Back in the 1920s, Oma Link Rowley, our founder, decided, *This is a great town, and it deserves great art as well.* She felt the area needed a public venue where artists and patrons could come together and witness stories in action, so she established the Amarillo Little Theatre.

The very first production held here was a play called *Three Live Ghosts*. In fact, we have a playbill of that first production in our lobby. That season also included shows like *Jazz and Minuet*, *Our Little Wife*, and *The Thirteenth Chair*. We're working on putting together a stage reading of one of these plays for our one-hundredth anniversary in a few years.

How has your theater grown since its founding?

We now have two locations. The original is called the Allen Shankles Mainstage—to honor his thirty-eight years as our managing/artistic director. It's our bigger theater and seats 453 people. This is where we do more of our family-friendly shows. For example, at this stage, we opened *Elf the Musical* in December 2022.

Back in 2001, we acquired a second location just a block away called the Adventure Space, which houses a theater and the children's academy. The theater is a black-box-type space where we do more cutting-edge shows for adults. It sits 180 people, but it's a flexible venue—we've done theater in the round, regular thrust-stage shows, and other setups. For example, we staged a great show there years ago called *Metamorphoses*. The stage surrounded a huge pool of water that the actors went in and out of, and we had rain pouring down—it was a *really* cool stage.

What is the most fulfilling part of working at this theater?

We're a nonprofit organization, and all of our performers are volunteers. We've had actors who have performed on national tours and even on Broadway, so our talent is not little, even though our name is. I love that we're one of the few organizations in Amarillo that anyone can walk into, volunteer time, and become part of a positive force for our community. It's amazing to see people from all walks of life—such as doctors, students, teachers, Christians, atheists, and nonbinary people—come together to do something positive and tell stories that challenge, entertain, and enlighten our audiences. *Clybourne Park* is a prime example of this. It's a Pulitzer Prize-winning play about racial tension and family trauma. It was amazing to stage such a brilliant show for our community.



"WE'RE A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION, AND ALL OF OUR PERFORMERS ARE VOLUNTEERS. WE'VE HAD ACTORS WHO HAVE PERFORMED ON NATIONAL TOURS AND EVEN ON BROADWAY, SO OUR TALENT IS NOT LITTLE, EVEN THOUGH OUR NAME IS."

Which have been your favorite shows you helped stage?

I've been heavily involved in this theater for over fifteen years, so I have a handful of favorites. We've staged huge, big-name productions like *Newsies* and *The Wizard of Oz* on our main stage. But I also loved directing a production of *Into the Woods* at the Adventure Space. The musical

is an intersection of different stories like "Cinderella," "Jack and the Beanstalk," and "Little Red Riding Hood." Normally it calls for a cast of at least twenty actors, but we selected five females and five males to each play two parts. We staged it in an attic-like set, as if these actors were just finding props and costumes around the room to tell their stories.

For example, a rolling ladder was used as Rapunzel's tower, a feather duster was the hen that laid the golden egg, and the actors who played both the princes and Cinderella's evil stepsisters held up curtain rods in front of them to represent dresses when they switched over. It was so much fun, and it was so fulfilling because it was one of the shows where my vision and all the pieces came together really well.



SISTER ACT

What is the process of planning a show?

We have a selection committee made up of ALT board members and some community members. They come up with a list of potential shows they think would be good for our theater. That list then goes to me and our staff to narrow it down because sometimes they'll suggest shows that we just cannot do. We can't do *Hamilton* yet, for example.

"ONCE WE KNOW WHAT SHOWS WE'RE DOING, WE VOTE ON WHO THE DIRECTOR WILL BE FOR EACH, AS WELL AS THE MUSIC DIRECTOR, THE CHOREOGRAPHER, ETC. THEN, I'LL MEET WITH OUR SET DESIGNER, CHOREOGRAPHER, AND MUSIC DIRECTOR TO DISCUSS THEMES AND CONCEPTS."

We decide on about ten plays and ten musicals, and then we actually go to the audience in the spring and ask them to vote for the ones they want to see next season. We review the votes to make sure that we don't have two similar shows. We try to do one golden age musical and a more contemporary musical. Last year was a great example: we did *Guys and Dolls* and *Elf* after.



NEWSIES



THE SOUND OF MUSIC

FROZEN



THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME

Once we know what shows we're doing, we vote on who the director will be for each, as well as the music director, the choreographer, etc. Then, I'll meet with our set designer, choreographer, and music director to discuss themes and concepts.

About nine weeks out, we advertise and hold auditions. Once we put a cast list together, we jump right into rehearsals. We like to have about six weeks of rehearsals for a play and eight weeks for a big musical. Then we have a set-work call for people to build the set, paint it, place props, etc. A set designer, production team, and tech team come together to build our sets; we also hire local people and purchase local supplies to give back to our economy.

There's always so much work going on at the same time. For example, we closed *Clybourne Park* on a Sunday afternoon. That evening, we tore down the set to hold the first cast meeting for *Clue*. It's a huge endeavor for everyone involved, but that's part of the fun.

For more info, visit amarillolittletheatre.org

A HOLIDAY HIDDEN GEM

written by **matthew brady** | photography **as noted**

During the holiday season, everyone's trying to find the perfect gift for their loved ones. Many times, people may look far and wide (even if it's just online) for something grand and flashy, only to finally say "That's the one!" when they stumble upon a small, handmade object at a local market.

One place brimming with such treasures can be found in the Pennsylvania countryside, where you can experience all the wonder that Peddler's Village has to offer.

Spanning forty-two acres in Lahaska, Pennsylvania—a small community located about forty miles from Philadelphia, eighty miles from New York City, and ten miles from New Jersey—Peddler's Village exemplifies *holiday destination*. It offers over sixty shops, seven restaurants, a family entertainment center, and more, all in a charming, eighteenth-century outdoor setting.

The history

It all began as one couple's vision for a local hamlet. Earl and Sheila Jamison owned some farmland and chicken coops in the surrounding area along with Bountiful Acres, a produce market. In 1961, they jumped on an opportunity to buy more land and the next year opened Peddler's Village, which at the time featured fourteen shops and a single restaurant.

But the Jamisons didn't want this to be like the standard strip malls that were popular at the time. Earl was a farmer by trade and Sheila went to horticulture school, so they literally dug in to create a beautiful, pastoral landscape. In addition, they decided on a colonial-style theme, converting dilapidated farm buildings into country buildings. As a result, visitors can walk along winding brick walkways, gaze at antique decor, and visit shops that look like shoppes. There's even a real windmill and an authentic working waterwheel attached to the village's gristmill. Through the next two decades, the Jamisons continued expanding Peddler's Village by adding more land and more shops, and even

a quaint, selfie-inducing gazebo on its upper village green, helping it become the Peddler's Village of today.

The happenings

You can easily spend all day at Peddler's Village because the grounds feel like one large treasure hunt. Whether your treasure of choice is furniture, fine art, food, fun, or festivals, you're sure to find it at this award-winning venue.

Shopping and eating

When you visit a place called Peddler's Village, you know you can expect plenty of merchants peddling their wares. And indeed there are rows upon rows of stores throughout the village selling just about everything imaginable, from local artwork to European fashion. For example, its specialty-food stores offer fare like olive oil, jerky, and gourmet popcorn, and its home-focused shops feature one-of-a-kind handmade gifts, such as soaps, candles, and ornaments. There's even a hat shop!

Of course, if you're going to spend hours shopping, you'll need sustenance—and the eateries at Peddler's Village are as distinct as its shops. Visit the restaurant that helped start it all, the Cock 'n Bull, to dine on meals like Chicken Pot Pye and Beef Burgundy, or go a little more casual with burgers and pizzas at the Buttonwood Inn. You can even grab a giant Bavarian pretzel at Peddler's Pub. Want quick eats to munch on while shopping? There's a cupcake bakery for something sweet, a poke bowl place for something more filling, and even an old-fashioned soda bar where you can wet your whistle.

Kid fun

All that shopping may sound awfully enticing to adults, but if you have



© Paul Boger

children, Peddler's Village has you covered with several toy stores. There's also Gigglesberry Fair, an awe-inspiring, child-friendly indoor complex that can entertain kids and kids-at-heart all day with various play areas and a dedicated café.

Perhaps its biggest highlight, though, is Gigglesberry Mountain. Spanning three stories and six levels, this dual obstacle course and maze is loaded with bridges, slides, and tubes galore. Upping the excitement is its ground-level "berry blaster," a machine that shoots thousands of foam balls skyward to produce a rainfall of foam fun. And no trip to Peddler's Village is complete without



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© Paul Boger



© Paul Boger

When you visit a place called Peddler's Village, you know you can expect plenty of merchants peddling their wares. And indeed there are rows upon rows of stores throughout the village selling just about everything imaginable, from local artwork to European fashion.



© Andrew Barth



© PV

somebody in your group riding the star of the Gigglesberry show: its Grand Carousel. More than a century old, this classic ride features hand-carved wooden figures and nearly a thousand lights.

Special events

To enhance your experience, Peddler's Village offers timely experiences throughout the year, including an ice-carving display, Spring FunFest, a summer sandcastle spectacle, and Scarecrows in the Village and Pumpkin Carving Contest in the fall. Also popular are the village's fruit-themed events, which harken back to the Jamisons' farm roots. Besides the strawberry celebration in May, there's their blueberry- and peach-focused summer events and an apple festival in the fall.

The holidays

As fun as Peddler's Village is throughout the year, it truly shines during the holiday season. The buildings and landscape are decked out in a million lights, the lampposts are adorned with ribbons and wreaths, and the smell of gingerbread fills the air. You truly can't get any quainter.

The festivities kick off with the annual Grand Illumination Celebration on November 17, when pop-up food stands abound, live music fills the air, and Santa and Mrs. Claus turn on the village's lights and officially welcome the holiday season. In addition, the popular Gingerbread Competition and Display begins, so make sure to see all 100-plus entries and vote for your favorite.

It's also time to shop for presents! The merchants of the village host an open house with extended hours that same weekend, where you'll find one-of-a-kind gifts for everyone on your list—from authentic German food and crafts at Fehrenbach Black Forest Clocks & Gifts to hand-forged decorative hardware at Knobs 'N Knockers to merchandise with your family coat of arms at What's in a Name. As you walk from shop to shop, you'll be enthralled by entertainment, special performances, and even merry carolers dressed in Victorian garb.

Can't make it for the opening weekend? Then come back in December for a visit, when Peddler's Village holds its annual Holly Jolly Weekend, an event that ups the holiday spirit with Santa Parades

throughout the village. To make the most of your trip, stay the night at the village's quaint Golden Plough Inn, a country inn that offers ambience, hospitality, and amazing views of the grounds.

All in all, Peddler's Village is a shining example, literally and figuratively, of how much enjoyment can be had if you stray off the beaten path during your adventures. If you are in the greater Philadelphia or New York area during the holidays, be sure to visit this charming colonial complex and treat yourself to a truly unique seasonal experience.

For more info, visit peddlersvillage.com



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AN AMERICAN PARADISE IN THE CARIBBEAN

written by **andre rios** | photography by **getty images**

ST. JOHN



Located over 1,000 miles southeast of Miami, Florida, the US Virgin Islands (USVI) has a distinct flair unlike anything else you might encounter in the Caribbean's cerulean seas. It's rich with opportunities for both adventure and sheer relaxation—from lounging away in a hammock to snorkeling among flourishing sea life to trekking through jungle ruins. Should you gaze upon the pastel architecture on the bustling island of St. Thomas, traverse the sparkling beaches of the verdant St. John, or taste the local cuisine on the largest island of the archipelago, St. Croix? Experience all three, and much more, as part of a travel itinerary you won't soon forget.

Tourists welcome

Traveling to the USVI is particularly breezy thanks to its American territory status, a title it has held since 1917. No passport is needed, nor is there the hassle of exchanging currency—these islands proudly accept US dollars.



ANTIGUA



ST. THOMAS



ST. THOMAS

The weather is warm and sunny year-round, with temperatures only dipping as low as the 70s on average in the winter, making it a popular escape for snowbirds in search of warm refuge.

The simplest way to access the USVI is by air via St. Croix's Henry E. Rohlsen Airport, from which you can take a charter boat or ferry to the other islands, or you can opt to venture here by seacraft from nearby destinations like Antigua or Puerto Rico. Cruise ships that depart from Florida also make ports of call on the island of St. Thomas. However you choose to arrive, the breathtaking contrast of clear blue waters and stark-white sand will make for a gorgeous welcome mat.

A place to rest your head

As a popular destination for worldwide travelers, the islands are blooming with accommodations to suit year-round tourism. Book a stay at an all-inclusive resort in the territory's capital, Charlotte Amalie—the jewel of St. Thomas—or select a more private, romantic hotel in St. John just a short drive from the aptly named Honeymoon Beach. Alternatively, consider historical accommodations in the towns of Frederiksted and Christiansted on St. Croix, which offer authentic cultural experiences that allow you to live as the locals do.

Local flavor

Gastronomy in the USVI is as diverse as the islands themselves, including American staples in pubs and hotels as well as local fare that's characteristically spicy yet comforting. Savor dishes born from the range of cultures that have historically inhabited these islands, such as johnnycakes made from fried

flour served with curry or pot fish. And you certainly won't want to miss the national dish, fish and fungi, which consists of cornmeal dumplings served with seafood fillets. It's an adventurous offering that may sound odd, but it's a source of pride for locals who've developed their own family recipes for this celebrated meal. Bold eaters may also enjoy conch fritters, or fried sea snails; these are served at just about any restaurant featuring local cuisine.

One of the USVI's most popular exports is rum, which you should sample right from the source at the Cruzan Rum Distillery in St. Croix. The islanders have enjoyed this spirit for over 250 years, and it has become a vital export for the local economy. Explore local fare such as these to learn how the modern USVI developed from a history of Caribbean natives and Danish occupation to West Indian influence and American inclusion.

A spirit of freedom

A leisurely stroll through the cobblestone streets of St. Croix exposes many facets of the USVI's fascinating cultural history. For instance, old-world Danish architecture adapted for Caribbean life lines the picturesque streets in the town of Christiansted, offering sights like arched palaces in tropical green and yellow. There's also Frederiksted's landmark Fort Frederik, a grand, auburn-colored base originally established to defend against the pirates who once terrorized the surrounding seas. It eventually became a symbol of freedom after local uprisers forced the Danes to free the island's slaves—making the declaration at this very site that all islanders could live in freedom. The spirit of liberty for all citizens lives



ST. CROIX

FAR-FLUNG FROM AMERICA'S MAINLAND, THE US VIRGIN ISLANDS TELLS OF A WHOLLY UNIQUE CULTURAL HISTORY.

ST. JOHN



on today, as lively reggae beats and warm smiles light up the streets of the islands.

Discover more fascinating history at St. Croix's Estate Whim Museum. This colonial-era sugar plantation preserves artifacts and structures that harken back to the islanders' role in farming valuable crops like sugar, tobacco, cotton, and indigo. In previous centuries, only the European settlers of the USVI profited from their rich soil. However, today tells a different story: the islanders trade local wares at independent markets and events like the annual St. Croix Agriculture and Food Fair.

Excursions and adventures

Just as the islands themselves are about more than their photogenic scenery, the lively tropical waters between them conceal a whole other world under the surface. Whether you're a water-sport enthusiast

or a landlubber, these Caribbean excursions fit perfectly on any vacation itinerary.

Sea outings

Book a day cruise on a catamaran into the calming seas, then strap on your snorkel and swim among schools of fish as they meander across the colorful sea floor. Excursion packages offer stylish amenities like cocktails as you traverse the waters and play with sports equipment like paddleboards. For a sophisticated experience, take a sunset dinnertime cruise featuring appetizers and beverages as you sail to a fine restaurant—pulling right into its port for dinner and then enjoying desserts and cordials on your return journey to your hotel. To get the full scope of the available excursions, ranging from guided sea tours to solo adventures, talk to a representative at your hotel or schedule tours online through a travel site like Tripadvisor.



EMBARK ON A SNORKELING OR DIVING EXPEDITION FOR AN AMAZING SWIM AMONG THE CORAL.

Coral dives

There are endless sea life adventures to relish, but every USVI visitor should consider the Buck Island Reef National Monument an essential stop. This preserved paradise located north of St. Croix is rich with ecosystems like barrier reefs, shapely rock formations, and underwater forests. Take a guided tour to learn about the fascinating ecology of this natural wonder as you trek across the island's grounds, then embark on a snorkeling or diving expedition for an amazing swim among the coral.

Forest hikes

The adventures are far from over when you return to the mainland. Enjoy thrills like a hike through St. John's dense tropical forests, where you can spot wildlife such as colorful bananaquit birds flitting through the branches and wild donkeys grazing freely throughout the forest. Then explore the ruins of the Cinnamon Bay Plantation, featuring stone structures reclaimed by Mother Nature and covered in forest flora. And be sure to inspect the beaches for sea turtles that have come to bask in the Caribbean sun.

Sky views

To get a bird's-eye view of the USVI, book a ride on the St. Thomas Skyride, a cable car that carries visitors 700 feet above the sea. Take in breathtaking views of St. Thomas's bustling seaport, the glimmering waters of the Caribbean Sea, and the untouched islands in the distance. From this vantage point, you can observe the true beauty of this destination, which is impossible to comprehend unless you see it firsthand.

Far-flung from America's mainland, the US Virgin Islands tells of a wholly unique cultural history. The locale welcomes visitors to savor its enchanting splendor however they would like: travel hand in hand with a partner for a romantic getaway, book beachside thrills with family, or partake in the energetic Caribbean nightlife with friends. But one thing is certain for all who touch ground here—you will grow attached to this paradise territory, and leaving it behind may feel like leaving a piece of your heart on its shore.

For more info, go to visitusvi.com

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

written by allison gomes

From putting up a tree immediately after Thanksgiving to cooking a special meal for loved ones, the holidays are filled with many different traditions. These annual rituals vary from house to house, but they also differ across the globe. Take a closer look at eight special holiday celebrations from the various cultures of the world.

Diwali, India

This five-day festival of lights celebrates the triumph of good over evil. Observances vary by region and religion, but many people will light rows of clay lamps outside their homes throughout the festival, symbolically bringing light into the darkness.

Dongzhi Festival, China

During China's winter solstice festival, families gather together, make symbolic offerings to their ancestors, and enjoy traditional delicacies such as *tangyuan*, a rice-ball dish that symbolizes reunion and prosperity.

Hogmanay, Scotland

This Scottish New Year's Eve celebration dates all the way back to the Vikings' winter solstice festivals in the eighth to tenth centuries. Different parts of the country have since formed their own traditions, such as Edinburgh's street party and fireworks display, Stonehaven's fireball parade, and Biggar's bonfire in its town center.

Junkanoo, The Bahamas

This festival celebrates the strength and resilience of the Bahamian people in the face of many adversities. What started as a simple masquerade around the Christmas holiday has transformed into parades of colorful costumes, elaborate dance routines, and wonderful music held on December 26 and January 1 throughout the region.

St. Lucia's Day, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Italy

Each year on December 13, these countries hold a festival to recognize the works of St. Lucy, or Santa Lucia, an Italian martyr. In many places, a young woman representing St. Lucy leads a procession of children dressed in white with lights in their hands or hair to represent bringing hope and light into the darkest part of the year.

St. Nicholas Day, the Czech Republic, Netherlands, and Belgium

Observed on December 6, this holiday is a day of gift giving in honor of St. Nicholas's good deeds. Children will often leave shoes or

stockings outside their bedrooms the night before that are then filled with small gifts like candy.

Three Kings Day, Spain and Latin America

This celebration held on January 6, the twelfth day of Christmas, is marked by street parades and special performances. Observances vary by region, but typically children will place shoes outside their houses for gifts, many will enjoy a king cake with a hidden coin, jewelry, or small toy, and families will take down and burn their Christmas trees.

Toji, Japan

Japan's winter solstice is a tradition that symbolizes harmony and balance in life. It falls on the longest night and shortest day of the year, during which many observers take a *yuzu-yu* (a yuzu citron bath) and eat *toji-gayu* (a rice porridge) for good health and luck in the coming year.

Holiday Entertaining Gems



Four Key Points For A Stress-Free Holiday Dinner

The Food Make it a Focal Point

Hosting a holiday dinner is an exciting endeavor, but it doesn't mean you have to spend hours in the kitchen if that is not your ministry. If it isn't, you can always call me and we can make magic!

The Tabletop Layers of Seasonal Items & Lots of Luxury

Aside from delicious food, the foundation of any great holiday dinner begins with your table design. One detail transforms your gathering into a luxurious affair with your choice of table accessories! This year try: holiday greenery, fresh garland, mini reefs, pears & pomegranates.

The Bar Pull out the Good Stuff & Fancy Glassware

Enhance with a well-curated beverage selection. Make your cocktail or spirit a talking point. Don't forget to create festive mocktails for your young people & designated drivers!

The Entertainment Keeping the Energy Level High


Everyone dislikes boring dinner parties. Ensure your mood music does not distract from conversation but adds to it. Liven it up after dinner! A little dancing or toe tapping helps to digest a great meal.



Front of Tear Out Card 2



Back of Tear Out Card 2

 **Michele's Sweet Potato Pound Cake**


Ingredients

- 3 C All-Purpose Flour, sifted if lumpy
- ½ tsp Baking Soda
- 1 tsp Kosher Salt
- 1 C Unsalted Butter, room temperature
- 1 tsp Ground Cinnamon
- ½ tsp Ground Nutmeg
- 1 ½ C Light Brown Sugar, packed
- 1 C Sweet Potato Purée
- 6 lg Eggs, room temperature
- 1 tsp Vanilla Extract
- 1 tsp Almond Extract
- 1 C Whole Buttermilk, room temperature
- Zest of one orange — for garnish

The Glaze

- 2 C Confectioner's Sugar
- ¼ C Orange Juice with Pulp
- ½ tsp Fresh Vanilla Bean

For Instructions
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