

Last Minute

# Holiday Gift Guide

A supplement of the  
**Cortland Standard**  
Thursday, December 3, 2020  
and **Celebrate!**  
Saturday, December 5, 2020



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**SEE OUR AD ON PAGE 8**



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**If you're looking for a gift for someone who loves their phone, these options are sure to please.**

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. A portable Bluetooth speaker for use at home and on the go | 4. A touchscreen cleaner key-chain to put an end to smudges | 7. A smartphone car mount for safe, hands-free navigation | 10. A set of wireless earbuds or headphones that block out ambient noise                |
| 2. A solar phone charger for the tech-savvy environmentalist  | 5. A compact smartphone projector for a cinema experience   | 8. A wallet case to keep all essentials in one place      | .....   |
| 3. A portable power bank for charging any time or place       | 6. A pair of touchscreen gloves for winter texting          | 9. A smartphone lens to capture stunning photos           | <i>For these smartphone accessories and more, visit your nearest electronics store.</i> |

# How to Help People in Need



The holidays are an ideal time to give back to your community. If you have the means and want to help the less fortunate, here are a few local causes you can support.

## Toy drives

Numerous local groups and businesses organize fundraisers to ensure every child in the community gets a present at Christmas. In some cases, you might be matched with a kid so you can use information about their age and interests to buy a personalized gift.

## Gift wrapping

Look for kiosks set up in stores and shopping malls where volunteers will expertly wrap your gifts in exchange for a donation to a local cause. This is a great way to give back to your community and check a task off your holiday to-do list.

## Food baskets

Many organizations collect nonperishable items to support low-income families during the holiday season. As a volunteer you can help sort donations, pack boxes or deliver baskets. Alternatively, you can make a donation to your local food bank.

To find out how you can help members of your community during the holidays, reach out to charities and organizations in your area.

## Anonymous donations

If you know someone who's experiencing financial hardship, there are plenty of ways to offer your support during the holidays without making the person feel uncomfortable. Consider secretly dropping off presents for their children or mailing them a gift card from a local shop.

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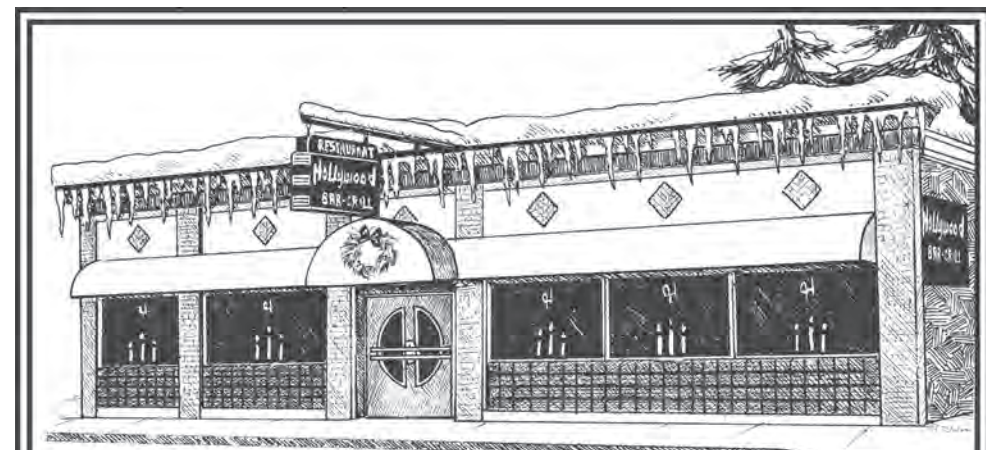
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• GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE •



# Give yourself the gift of a Christmas album

Nothing compares to listening to an entire Christmas album while you decorate the tree, prepare a meal or wrap gifts. Here's why you should add a few more holiday albums to your collection this year.

### You'll create a festive atmosphere

Traditional carols are an ideal way to set the mood and spark fond memories of holidays past. Alternatively, you can choose an album that reimagines Christmas classics with a country, pop, jazz or techno twist. With options that span every style and genre, there's a holiday album to suit every

type of occasion, whether it's a boisterous party or an intimate gathering.

### You'll help support local artists

The music industry has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, as it forced artists to cancel live performances. Buying a holiday album from a local singer, musician or band is a great way to discover new talent and give the regional music scene a much-needed boost.

Visit a music store in your area or follow local artists on social media to find out about new holiday releases.

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## Meatballs with a honey-balsamic glaze

These delightfully seasoned meatballs are a great complement to your holiday meal. They also make a fantastic appetizer.

Start to finish: 30 minutes  
Servings: 24 meatballs

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 2/3 cup breadcrumbs
- 1 tablespoon old-style mustard
- 250 grams ground pork
- 250 grams ground beef
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3/4 cup ketchup
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon yellow mustard
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons balsamic reduction
- 2 tablespoons chives, finely chopped

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
2. In a small pan, melt half the butter. Add onion and 1 clove of garlic, and cook over medium-high heat until the onion is translucent. Pour into a large bowl and let cool.
3. In the same bowl, add the milk, egg, breadcrumbs, old-style mustard, pork and beef. Salt and pepper to taste. With your hands, combine the mixture until it's uniform and then form it into 24 bite-size meatballs.
4. Place the meatballs on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Bake in the oven for 12 minutes.
5. While the meatballs cook, melt the rest of the butter in a pot. Add the rest of the garlic and cook for a few minutes. Add the ketchup, honey, soy sauce, yellow mustard and balsamic vinegar. Salt and pepper to taste. Mix well and let simmer for about 5 minutes.
6. Once the meatballs are cooked, transfer them into the pot and gently mix until they're well coated in sauce. Place them one by one on a plate.
7. Top the meatballs with the balsamic reduction and chives. Place a toothpick in each one to make them easier to serve.



## Cherry tomato and fresh mozzarella mini skewers

These lovely little appetizers are easy to make, delicious and sure to brighten up the holiday dinner table. Feel free to double the recipe so there's plenty to go around.



Start to finish: 15 minutes  
Servings: 24 skewers

### INGREDIENTS

- 7 ounces fresh mozzarella, cut into 24 pieces
- 24 small, fresh basil leaves
- 12 orange or red cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic reduction
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- Pepper, to taste

### DIRECTIONS

1. On a toothpick or small wooden skewer, place a piece of mozzarella followed by a basil leaf. Add a piece of tomato, making sure the interior side is face down on the plate. Repeat this for all 24 skewers.
2. Drizzle the olive oil and balsamic reduction on the skewers. Sprinkle with sea salt and add pepper to taste.

Fresh mozzarella is usually sold in brine in the fine cheese section of your local grocery store.

## Gazpacho shooters

Does a high-spirited holiday season leave you feeling exhausted? This vibrant and refreshing drink is packed with vitamins that will give you the energy boost you need to continue celebrating.

Start to finish: 1 hour 30 minutes  
(30 minutes active)  
Servings: 8 small portions

### INGREDIENTS

For the gazpacho

- 1 cup croutons
- 2 large ripe Roma tomatoes, seeded and cubed
- 1 cucumber, peeled and seeded
- 1 red pepper, seeded
- 1/2 red onion, cubed
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
- 2 cups tomato juice
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- Salt and pepper, to taste

For the garnish

- 1 small tomato, seeded and cubed
- 1 Lebanese cucumber, seeded and cubed
- 1/2 red pepper, seeded and cubed
- Sea salt, to taste
- 16 fresh basil leaves

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, place the croutons and add 1/2 cup of room temperature water. Set aside.
2. In a blender, puree the tomatoes, cucumber, pepper, onion and garlic. Drain the croutons and add them along with the tomato juice, vinegar, oil and spices. Continue to blend until the mixture has a smooth, uniform texture. Chill in the fridge for at least an hour.
3. To serve, pour the gazpacho into shooters or small ver-rine-style glasses. In a small bowl, mix the chopped tomato, cucumber and pepper. Top each glass with about 1 tablespoon of the vegetable mixture. Sprinkle a pinch of sea salt over each and garnish with 2 basil leaves.





Start to finish: 1 hour (30 minutes active)  
Servings: 24 brownies

#### INGREDIENTS

For the brownies

- 1 cup butter, room temperature
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 4 eggs
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

For the icing

- 1/3 cup butter, room temperature
- 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 2 cups icing sugar
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 24 strawberries, hulled

## Santa Claus brownies

Are you looking for the perfect holiday dessert? Children and adults alike will enjoy this playful and seasonal twist on traditional brownies.

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 9 by 13 inch baking dish. Set aside.
2. Using a whisk or hand beater, blend the butter, sugar and vanilla in a large bowl. Add the eggs and mix well. Incorporate the rest of the brownie ingredients and blend until the mixture is uniform.
3. Pour the brownie mixture into the baking dish and bake in the oven for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Set aside to cool.
4. In the meantime, whisk the butter, cocoa powder, honey and 1 teaspoon of vanilla in a large bowl. Slowly add the icing sugar and milk while blending the mixture at low speed until it reaches the desired texture. Set aside.
5. In another bowl, mix the heavy cream, sugar and the rest of the vanilla. Blend at high speed until the whipped cream is firm.
6. Once the brownies are completely cool, spread a thin layer of the chocolate icing on top. Cut the brownies into 24 equal portions. Place 1 strawberry upside down on each piece of brownie. Using a piping bag, create a circle of whipped cream around the base of each strawberry and top the fruit with a dot of whipped cream.

## Red velvet bites

This bite-size version of red velvet cake will allow your guests to sample all the desserts at your next holiday spread. You can count on these to be a crowd pleaser.

Start to finish: 3 hours (1 hour active)

Servings: 40 bites

#### INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups sugar
- 3 cups flour
- 1/2 cup cornstarch
- 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1-1/2 teaspoons salt
- 4 large eggs
- 1-1/2 cups buttermilk
- 1-1/4 cups warm water
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons red food dye
- 4.5 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
- 1/2 cup butter, room temperature
- 2 cups icing sugar
- 28 ounces white chocolate
- 1/4 cup red decorative sugar

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 7 by 11 inch baking dish. Set aside.
2. In a large bowl, use a whisk or hand beater to mix the sugar, flour, cornstarch, cocoa powder, baking powder and salt. Add the eggs, buttermilk, warm water, vegetable oil, 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract, vinegar and food dye. Blend until the mixture is uniform.
3. Pour the mixture into the baking dish, and bake in the oven for 40 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Set aside to cool.
4. In a large bowl, blend the cream cheese, butter and the rest of the vanilla. Slowly incorporate the icing sugar by blending at low speed until the mixture has a smooth, even texture. Set aside.
5. Once the cake has completely cooled, place it in a large bowl and use your hands to crumble it until it has the consistency of wet sand. Add about a 1/2 cup of the cream cheese icing to the cake at a time and mix well. The final texture should allow you to form balls that keep their shape.
6. With your hands, form 40 cake balls and squish them slightly to create a disc shape. Place the balls on a baking sheet, and put them in the fridge for about 30 minutes.
7. In the meantime, melt the white chocolate using a double boiler or water bath. Let the chocolate cool slightly while ensuring it remains a liquid. Using a fork, dip each cake ball into the chocolate so they're completely coated. Place the balls on a baking sheet and immediately sprinkle the decorative sugar. Put the balls in the fridge for 30 minutes to allow the chocolate to harden.

## Miniature chicken pot pies

This dish, served in adorable individual portions, is an ideal meal to help you unwind during the hectic holiday season.

Start to finish: 1 hour 10 minutes (45 minutes active)

Servings: 6

#### INGREDIENTS

- 6 tablespoons butter
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups warm chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy cream
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, diced
- 1 potato, diced
- 1 cup green peas
- 1 cup corn kernels
- 1 cup green beans, chopped
- 1 1/4 pounds chicken breast, cooked and diced
- 1 package (about 14 ounces) all-butter puff pastry, thawed
- 1 egg yolk, beaten

#### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large pot, melt 4 tablespoons of butter over medium-low heat. Add the flour, and whisk until the mixture is a smooth paste (commonly called a "roux"). Let cook for a few minutes, then add the chicken broth. Mix well and add the heavy cream. Salt and pepper to taste, then mix well. Let simmer over low heat.
2. In a large pan, melt the rest of the butter over medium-low heat. Add the onion and garlic, and cook for about 5 minutes. Add the rest of the vegetables, and cook for 3 to 4 minutes until lightly browned. Pour the vegetable mixture and chicken into the pot of sauce and mix well. Salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat and let cool.
3. Preheat the oven to 400 F. Coat 6 small ramekins with vegetable oil cooking spray. Unroll the puff pastry onto a flat surface and cut into circles that are about 3 centimetres wider than the ramekins.
4. Pour the chicken mixture into the ramekins. Use a basting brush to coat the rims of the ramekins with egg yolk so the pastry doesn't stick. Place one puff pastry circle on top of each ramekin, making sure the edge is sealed. Coat the top of the pastry with egg yolk.
5. Put the ramekins on a baking tray, and bake in the oven for about 25 minutes or until the pastry is golden brown. Let sit for a few minutes before serving.



Are you short on time?  
To simplify this recipe, use a frozen vegetable mixture. You don't even have to thaw it in advance.

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