

# 12 days of holiday entertaining

By Erin Davis, Tribune News Service on Nov. 2, 2016 at 12:00 a.m.

On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me ... 12 holiday entertaining ideas. If another holiday season has you feeling more like fa la la la blah, than jolly, it's time to switch things up. Here are 12 holiday decor, theme and feasting ideas to keep your tinsel twinkling and your spirits merry and bright. We'll even throw in a couple recipes to start your holidays on a delightful (rather than frightful) note.

## 1. HOLIDAY CHILI COOKOFF

Don't wait for the Super Bowl to allow friends an opportunity to showcase their chops at chili cooking. Chef Marlene Moore of Pechanga Resort & Casino suggests spicing up the holidays with her Temptation Hearty Southern Style Chili (recipe below). As host, instead of serving a traditional chili accompaniment like cornbread, treat guest to a holiday-inspired bread like Delish's Chai-Spiced Tea Loaves.

## 2. FROSTY MIRRORS HAVE A VERY SHINY GLOW

Caroline Bailly, owner of L'Atelier Rouge, specializing in floral events and design, explains that using mirrors is a great way to bring out and accentuate festive colors. "Use a mirror as a table runner or tray. Make sure that it has a frame, and you should have lots of light-candles-or other reflective surfaces, iridescent materials and small pieces like collections of small vases," Bailly says. For an added touch that creates a wintry feeling, Bailly recommends using frost spray around the edges of a mirror to give it the effect of a frozen pond.

## 3. SMALL PAPER PACKAGES (AND HORS D'OEUVRES)

Why spend back-breaking hours preparing a traditional holiday meal when you can make a big impact by serving small tidings of joy? "I like to set out a couple appetizers," says celebrity event and wedding planner Andrea Freeman, "Such as ham with rosemary-Manchego scones, so people can create their own sandwiches." Also check out trending 2016 holiday minis like Smoked Gouda and Herb Puffs and Salmon Tartare in Wonton Cups ([HGTV.com](http://HGTV.com)).

## 4. WINE-DING UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Party host Audra Quinn says why simply delight guests with wine when you can have them Read Between The Wines? "I invented this wine-tasting game to inspire players to write their own

creative tasting notes while sampling new wines," Quinn explains. "To play, each guest brings a bottle of wine. Every round introduces a new wine and a new theme card, such as 'Compare this wine to a celebrity,' or 'if this wine had a job, what would it do?'" Responses will evoke easy and celebratory conversation to liven an already festive environment.

## 5. OH WHAT FUN ... COCKTAILS ALL THE WAY

A big trend in entertaining this holiday season is going big on preparation so more time can be spent on enjoying time with guests. Trisha Antonsen, chief cocktail officer at Drizly, encourages large-batch cocktails to help achieve this goal. "You can prep most ingredients ahead of time and then mix them right before company arrives," she says. Try Antonsen's personal Jingle Juice Punch (Drizly.com) or Bourbon Ginger Cider (recipe below), which can both be made in advance and are sure to bring the desired tidings of joy to all partygoers.

## 6. MISMATCHING AND MISTLETOE

Another ongoing decor preference we've witnessed in 2016 for entertaining: eclectic stylization. For this holiday season, Danny Seo, host of NBC's "Naturally" and author of the new cookbook "Naturally, Delicious: 100 Recipes for Healthy Eats That Make You Happy," recommends using what you already have. "It's not only resourceful, it's also a bit unexpected and unique," Seo says. "If you have a collection of mismatched glasses, use them as votive holders or vases. If you want to create a more cohesive look, spray paint them the same color." And don't forget to look outside your own backyard. Branches, berries, leaves, pinecones and moss can go a long way in adding a natural ambiance to your holiday repertoire, according to Seo.

## 7. HANUKKAH DELIGHTS

Move over latkes, this holiday season is offering some delicious sweet sensations. Serve guests twists on traditional Hanukkah treats like tangy-sweet Cranberry Rugelach (TasteofHome.com), Tyler Florence's Blueberry Blintzes with a lemon ricotta filling (FoodNetwork.com) and Molly Yeh's Mini Pumpkin Sufganiyot made with cranberry or raspberry filling ([forward.com](http://forward.com)).

## 8. DON'T FORGET THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY

If a drummer boy is over the top, you can always consider other forms of live music to entertain your guests. "A harpist, acoustic guitar player or violinist are quite elegant," Freeman says, "and can add an ere of unexpected entertainment." If, however, a live musician is out of your budget, turn to SiriusXM's holiday music lineup featuring throwback favorites such as Bing Crosby, Nat

King Cole and The Four Tops, or contemporaries like Josh Groban, Brian Setzer and Kelly Clarkson.

#### 9. DIY IS COMIN' DOWN THE CHIMNEY TONIGHT

If DIY is your jam, there is no shortage of ideas. In term of decor, paper is powerful. Wrap boxes of all shapes and sizes in natural, metallic and retro patterns-if you have the talent, even think about sketching your own. Since the holidays inspire an attitude of giving, take a virtual stroll on Pinterest for host gift ideas and you'll strike a goldmine of DIY ideas-check out an easy pin like DIY Sharpie gift mugs, allowing you and/or your guests to make customized coffee cups to take home.

#### 10. UGLY SWEATERS ROASTING IN THE FIRE

Maybe you don't have to burn them, but word has it that the novelty of ugly-sweater parties is waning. Instead, classic entertaining is making a comeback. Rather than encouraging guests to whip out their most atrocious sweaters, encourage them to come in formal attire. Take black tie to the next step and dust off chinaware and crystal, adding hints of metallic gold and silver for serving friends. A cocktail service cart or bar will add a nostalgic touch as will taking guests' coats and purses as they arrive.

#### 11. THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Another top trend for holiday entertaining leans toward rustic. Old crates, muted beiges, grays and whites for linen, sticks and pinecones are simplistic accents to promote a festive yet comfortable backdrop for a kickback holiday party. Toss in a faux-fur throw rug and pillows for a cabinesque feel. Serve guests smoked turkey and craft beer from the tap in frosty mugs. Play up a fireplace mantel with stacks of fragrant wood. A seasonal berry pie and s'mores station for dessert will do nicely accompanied with a cozy fire and classic holiday movie.

#### 12. TWELFTH NIGHT OF CHRISTMAS

Get out of the box this holiday and into Rebecca Klemm's interactive DVD titled "The 12 Notes of Christmas," featuring a mashup of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" and the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" (NumbersAlive.org). During each of the connected videos, guests of all ages will learn about instruments, holiday celebrations and food from around the world. Each episode opens and closes with a curtain to remind all of Shakespeare as a master playwright.

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CHEF MARLENE'S TEMPTATION HEARTY SOUTHERN STYLE CHILI

Recipe makes a batch that will be plenty for dinner for three to four people for several days, or enough for a party of about 10.

5 pounds ground beef

4 cup diced onion

1 cup diced green bell pepper

1 cup diced red bell pepper

5 cloves garlic, minced

2 (10.75-ounce) cans tomato puree

1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans with liquid

1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans with liquid

\ teaspoon paprika

\ teaspoon oregano

\ cup oil

1 arbol chili pepper (roasted & crushed)

1 California Anaheim chili pepper (roasted & crushed)

Salt to taste

Place the oil in a skillet or large cast-iron pot until hot, and saute the garlic, onions, green and red bell peppers. Place the beef in the skillet over medium heat, and cook until evenly brown. Place the tomato puree, kidney beans and pinto beans into the beef and veggie mixture. Season with paprika, oregano and the roasted chili heat and salt to taste (if you like it spicier, you can add more roasted chili heat). Cover and slow cook for 8 hours on low.

Garnish options:

-Pico de gallo

-Mixed cheese

-Diced green onions

-Sour cream

-Fried fresh Japanese chili on top

-Dash of Roasted Chili Heat (sprinkle of dark chili powder, cayenne powder, onion powder, ground black pepper and cumin)

**BOURBON GINGER CIDER**

3 ounces apple cider

1 { ounces bourbon whiskey

## 1.2 Domaine de Canton ginger liqueur

Fresh ginger (peeled and finely grated)

Cinnamon stick

Combine cider, bourbon, liqueur and grated ginger in a shaker with ice.

Shake vigorously, then pour shaker contents into an old fashioned glass.

Garnish with a cinnamon stick.