



Inside This Issue:



Nutcrackers and Christmas 1

Popular Holiday Plant: Poinsettia 2

Classic Holiday Cookies 2

Making Sure Your Car is Winter Ready 3

Keeping Vitamin D Levels Up With Limited Sunlight3

It Happened In December4

Inflation at 6.2%4



Nutcrackers and Christmas

These functional dolls have been made in parts of Germany and the Czech Republic since the late 1600s, but Nutcrackers began to be associated with Christmas after World War II, when American soldiers brought them back as presents from German Christmas markets.

Widely popularized around Germany and Europe from the early to mid 1800s, strong-jawed figures normally represent toy soldiers but can also be miners, the police and kings.

In 1816, the book *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* was published by the German author E.T.A. Hoffmann. It tells the story of a little girl called Marie, whose toys come to life on Christmas Eve and a Nutcracker leads the fight against an army of mice.

The French author Alexandre Dumas adapted the popular story in 1844, renaming the girl Clara, and the Russian composer Tchaikovsky and his choreographer friend Marius Petipa produced a two act ballet called “The Nutcracker” in 1892 with a well received musical score.

A series of revisions attempted in England and Russia followed, but the ballet seems to have finally taken hold in the USA on Christmas Eve 1944, launched by the San Francisco Ballet and performed every Christmas Eve since.



The New York Ballet followed in 1954, and it remains a popular Christmas tradition across the USA and around the world.

whychristmas.com/customs/nutcrackers.shtml

Popular Holiday Plant: Poinsettia



One of the most popular holiday plants, the familiar red Poinsettia or Flame Leaf plant, is actually a shrub native to Mexico.

These plants are forced into bloom just in time for the holiday season. Place your plant near a sunny window where it will receive at least six to eight hours of diffused light per day. Be aware that exposure to direct sunlight can burn bracts and leaves.

Water your poinsettia whenever the soil surface feels dry to the touch. Saturate completely until water runs through the drainage holes. Do not let the plant sit in water. Overwatering can kill a poinsettia - wilting leaves are usually the first sign of overwatering.

Maintain a temperature of 65 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit during the day to keep your poinsettia in bloom as long as possible.

thespruce.com/poinsettias-keepers-or-compost-1403587

Classic Holiday Cookies

Ginger Snaps



$\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, softened
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed brown sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons ground ginger
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cloves
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
1 egg
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mild-flavor molasses
2 cups all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup powdered sugar

Cream butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, baking soda, spices, and salt. Beat in egg and molasses until combined. Stir in flour. Cover and chill for 2 hours or until dough is easy to handle.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Place the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup coarse sugar in a small bowl. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; roll balls in sugar. Place balls 2 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.

Bake about 10 minutes or until tops are crackled and edges are firm.¹

1 - bhg.com/recipe/cookies/gingersnaps

Hazelnut Shortbread

1 cup raw, peeled hazelnuts
2 cups flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
1 cup unsalted butter, softened
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup light brown sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Toast hazelnuts until fragrant. Remove from oven, cool, and chop coarsely.

Beat the butter and sugar, until well combined, then stir in order: vanilla extract, salt, flour, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the hazelnuts.

Roll dough into a 2 to 3 inch thick cylinder, wrap in parchment and refrigerate until firm (30-60 minutes).

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. When dough is firm, unwrap and slice into $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch rounds.

Place on parchment lined baking sheets and sprinkle with remaining hazelnuts. Bake for approximately 13 minutes until a deep golden brown.²



2 - joyofbaking.com/shortbreads/HazelnutShortbread.html

Making Sure Your Car is Winter Ready



The chances of vehicle breakdowns increase in winter, as ice, snow, fog and wind can make driving conditions challenging.

Confirm your vehicle's exterior lights are working so you can see where you're going, and you are visible to other drivers.

Keep your windshield clean and wipers in good condition. Make sure wiper fluid is filled with a winterized brand. Also be sure to maintain your oil levels.

Keep emergency supplies in your trunk, including a flashlight, shovel, de-icer or sand, some bottled water, blankets, food, warm clothes and jumper cables.

Don't forget your tires! Check for good air pressure and tread depth on all weather or snow tires – and have chains available if needed.

forbes.com/uk/advisor/personal-finance/2021/12/01/8-top-tips-to-prepare-your-home-and-car-for-winter

Keeping Vitamin D Levels Up With Limited Sunlight

Vitamin D, also known as the Sunshine Vitamin, is involved with several functions in the body, including immune function, bone and muscle health, mood and brain health, blood sugar regulation, and healthy blood pressure. A healthy level also provides protection against diabetes and certain types of cancers. ¹

Most northern regions across the United States and into Canada won't get enough sunlight to allow the body to absorb enough vitamin D throughout the winter months, so when sun levels are low outside and chilly weather puts a damper on your outdoor plans, take steps to ensure you're getting enough of the sunshine vitamin.

Check Your Vitamin D Levels. It is important to know your vitamin D levels at least annually, so you know if you need a supplement or not. If possible, testing summer and winter could provide a better idea of how your levels change with the seasons.

Get Outside.

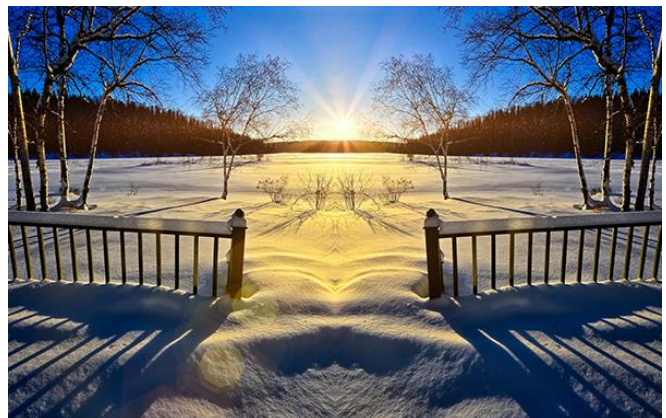
Even if it's cold, a 15 minute walk outside, three times weekly is enough to boost your vitamin D levels.

Supplement Vitamin D if needed. The minimum daily recommendation for vitamin D is 600 IU (International Units) per day, but you can test and consult with your physician about the appropriate supplement levels for you.

Eat vitamin D-rich foods.

Integrate fatty fish like salmon or tuna, mushrooms, egg yolks, cheese, or fortified dairy, soy milk, orange juice, and breakfast cereals for a diet that boosts your D levels.

1 - askmen.com/fitness/nutrition/best-vitamin-d-supplements.html



2 - askmen.com/fitness/health/best-ways-to-get-vitamin-d-in-your-body-during-winter.html

It Happened In



December 1, 1990 –

England was connected to mainland Europe through a railway tunnel under the English Channel. This day marked the break in the last rock layer.

December 6, 1877 –

In his West Orange, New Jersey lab, Thomas Edison recorded "Mary had a Little Lamb" to demonstrate his phonograph invention which recorded sounds using a revolving cylinder wrapped in tinfoil.

December 15, 1964 –

Canada adopted its current national flag, with a red maple leaf on a white background.

December 21, 1993 –

The Soviet Secret Police (KGB) was abolished by Boris Yeltsin.

December 31, 1781 –

The first American bank, the Bank of North America, was chartered by the Confederation Congress and opened on January 7, 1782, in Philadelphia.

1 - historyplace.com/specials/calendar/december.htm

Inflation at 6.2%

October's consumer price index (CPI), widely accepted as a proxy measuring U.S. inflation, made its largest leap in 31 years, rising 6.2% year-over-year.

The Federal Reserve maintains their transitory expectation that inflation will begin to moderate in 2022, allowing for a more balanced strategy than the aggressive interest rate increase some are calling for. Their TNT (Taper, Narrow, Tighten) approach to handling inflation will be balanced with the goals of promoting full employment and helping the economy fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. ¹

This may extend a higher than average inflation rate through 2022 and possibly beyond, as measures are more balanced than aggressive.

During the 20-year period from October 2001 through

September 2021, the 12-month change in CPI was only negative for 11 of 240 months. Annual inflation averaged 2% during the past two decades. ²

Planning that inflation will continue into the foreseeable future, and budgeting for annual spending increases, can help maintain your lifestyle in retirement. Adjusting your projected budget to include annual inflation increases can help maintain your lifestyle in retirement. Extending that average inflation rate of 2% per year into the future, a \$50,000 budget in 2021 would need to increase to \$60,950 by 2031 in order to have the same purchasing power.

1 - forbes.com/sites/advisor-intelligence/2021/11/24/inflation-interest-rates-and-the-fed

2 - bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/consumer-prices-increase-6-2-percent-for-the-year-ended-october-2021.htm

