

2020
2021



Safely celebrate the holiday season

A guide to help you protect your loved ones
during the COVID-19 pandemic

A BIG SPECIAL

Thank you

to the Stark County Health Department for generously sharing the content and template of its holiday guidance to help us create this guide for the safety of all Ohioans.



HOWEVER YOU CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY SEASON,

Remember

Many more of our friends and neighbors are in need due to the financial hardships of the pandemic. Donate to food banks and shelters if you are able to do so.

More Ohioans are lonely and isolated this year due to distancing measures. Find ways to reach out with virtual or drive-by visits, or send cards, packages, or video messages.

Don't forget to thank those who have been serving us all so well during the pandemic, such as mail carriers and delivery drivers, grocery workers and bus drivers, healthcare workers and first responders, and so many others.

Please always remember our veterans and military members.

For additional guidance on holiday gatherings, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 ["Holiday Celebrations"](#) page.

Please read along for more ideas on safely celebrating specific holidays during this year's fall and winter seasons.

Celebrate Safely

The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic is to celebrate holidays at home with members of your household. If you decide to get together with others, please keep the gathering small (10 people or fewer) and stick to the basics:

Everyone should wear a mask who can safely do so.

Make sure everyone washes their hands frequently and uses hand sanitizer.

Whenever feasible, stay 6 feet away from one another.

Regularly disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

If you are sick, remain home and stay away from others as much as possible.

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Diwali, often referred to as the “festival of lights,” is a major five-day holiday for those of Indian heritage, celebrated by Hindus as well as members of the Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist religions. The festival marks a new year and reminds us of good triumphing over evil by celebrating specific gods and goddesses. Traditions include lighting oil lamps called diyas, designing sand or powder “rangoli” patterns, playing cards, displaying fireworks, and savoring lavish meals.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Organize a virtual lighting of diyas with loved ones.

Deliver homemade, pre-wrapped treats to family and friends.

Hold a virtual card game.

Discover who can make the nicest rangoli pattern. Try making a pattern with your household or small group and virtually share with family and friends who cannot be with you this year by sending photos or videos.



Try one of the many delicious Diwali recipes, like Besan Ladoo, Sweet Boondi or Khurma, from Seattle-based blogger [Cook with Manal!](#)



Bring some color to your home for the festival of lights with this simple [diya craft](#), or one of more than [100 different](#) crafts and activities to do on Diwali.

Thanksgiving

NOVEMBER 26

Thanksgiving is an American holiday that celebrates gratitude. Traditions include feasts headlined by turkey, parades, football games, and expressions of thanks.



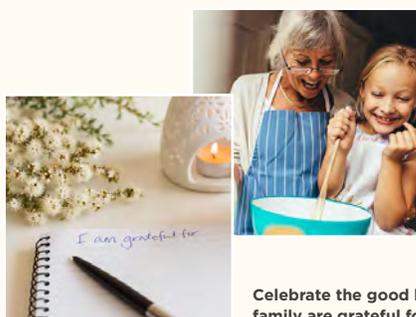
SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Have a small dinner for those who reside in your home, and organize a virtual call with extended family to discuss everyone's feasts and what they are thankful for.

Have your own parade. Drive by homes of neighbors or family members to wish them a Happy Thanksgiving.

Missing the turkey trot? Take a walk with your family to help work off your holiday meal.

Dig out those old photos and videos of Thanksgivings past, share your favorites with relatives, and ask them to do the same. Have the most tech-savvy family member create a shareable video combining all the contributions.



Bring Ohio blogger *Plowing Through Life's* family tradition to your table with this recipe for [Grandma's Farmhouse Dressing](#).

Celebrate the good by creating an easy [Thankful Jar](#) with little notes of the things you and your family are grateful for this year.

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of a temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees, who rebelled to overcome the oppressors who had desecrated the temple. While they only had enough oil to keep the menorah candelabrum lit for one day, the candles miraculously continued burning for eight days. Traditions include menorah lightings, special foods fried in oil, including potato pancakes called latkes, spinning four-sided tops called dreidels, and gift-giving.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Organize a virtual menorah lighting with a local temple or with family members outside of your household near and far.

Find out who makes the best latkes. Fry latkes for family and friends, seal portions in separate containers, and drop them off. Do a virtual tasting and settle the debate over whether they are best served with applesauce or sour cream.

Organize a Hanukkah drive-by parade for your eight closest family members or friends.

Drop off gifts ahead of time and hold virtual opening parties throughout the holiday.



It's hard to beat a delicious latke — especially when the [fried-and-true recipe](#) comes straight from the kitchen of Ohio's famed Katzinger's Delicatessen.



Use cardboard and paint to make [watercolor dreidel shapes](#) — which can be strung onto a garland, hung on the refrigerator, or admired in any way you choose.

Winter Solstice

DECEMBER 21

The winter solstice is the official beginning of the winter season, which brings cold weather, snow, and hot cocoa.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Hold socially distanced sledding or skiing gatherings outdoors.

Hold a virtual snowman building contest with family and friends and share photos online. Have a non-participant select the best one. Winner gets bragging rights for the winter!

Head to the park or walk through the neighborhood for an outdoor scavenger hunt with your family. Use lists or bingo cards to keep track of items such as birds, icicles, holiday lights, snow shovels, animal tracks, or frozen leaves.

Organize a socially distanced snow angel party with family or friends. Make sure everyone stays 6 feet apart and wears a mask.



Whether snow is falling or not, create your own snowballs with these cinnamon pecan [snowball cookies](#) from Ohio blogger [The Spiffy Cookie](#).

Make a cotton ball snowman, print some snow-themed educational activities, or take your snowman game to a new level with these great ideas from [Mom on the go in Holy Toledo](#).

Las Posadas

DECEMBER 16 TO DECEMBER 24

The Mexican holiday of Las Posadas (the inns) commemorates the journey of Joseph and the pregnant Mary, mother of Jesus, from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They were unable to secure lodging and found shelter in a stable, where Jesus was born. A main tradition involves daily processions featuring visits to participating homes representing inns, with a celebration at the last stop. The event incorporates scripture readings and Christmas carols, star-shaped piñatas, and fireworks.

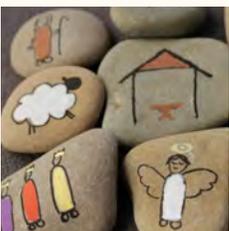
SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Pray the Rosary (prayer beads honoring Mary) with relatives, virtually or over the phone.

Plan a virtual parade, gathering family and friends online and “visiting” each participant’s home.

Have families perform individual Christmas pageants in their homes, recording the performances to share them with older relatives.

Drop off mini piñatas filled with treats and gifts for family and friends.



Make [nativity story stones](#) to tell the story of the stable birth, or craft [felt poinsettias](#) to decorate your home, hang on your tree, or send to loved ones.



Wash down your feast and warm up with [rompope](#), or Mexican eggnog.

Nochebuena, which means “the good night,” tends to be the biggest feast of the Christmas season for Latinos. Traditions include singing villancicos (Christmas carols), smashing a piñata, making a lechón (roasted pork) dish, setting off fireworks, and playing dominoes.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Sing villancicos virtually with family and friends via video chat.

Drop poinsettias, Flor de Nochebuena, at the doorsteps of loved ones.

Since your recipe for lechón likely makes enough to share, create to-go boxes with pork, rice, black beans, and lime wedges for family members to pick up on your porch.

Organize a virtual dominoes tournament. Use dominoes in a different way, ask everyone to make a falling domino design and vote for your favorite.



The centerpiece of a Nochebuena meal is **lechón**, roasted pork, cooked with citrus juice and generously seasoned.

In Mexico, children often break a star-shaped piñata on Nochebuena. Add to the fun by letting kids help [make their own piñata](#) this year.

Christians celebrate this holiday to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Traditions include decorating evergreen Christmas trees in the home, decorating homes with lights, receiving an overnight delivery of gifts for children from Santa Claus, and singing classic holiday songs like "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Organize a drive-by caroling event to surprise loved ones or hold a virtual caroling party.

Decorate your home with Christmas lights and invite family and friends to drive by for pre-wrapped cookies and to see the light display. Encourage neighbors to do the same for a drive-by light display block party.

Hold a virtual tree-trimming event, followed by virtually watching a favorite Christmas movie together with hot cocoa.

Create a holiday season to-do list or bingo card with ideas for celebrating the holiday, such as making paper snowflakes, building a gingerbread house, baking cookies, writing to Santa, or learning about a holiday tradition in another country. Share the list with family and friends and touch base regularly to compare progress.



Make a delicious treat and have some fun with this Ohio State Fair blue-ribbon recipe for [cutout cookie dough](#). When paired with a simple [three-ingredient icing](#), the results are perfection!



Get festive by making these [clothespin ornaments](#) or [paper ornaments](#) that can adorn your tree or be gifted to relatives and neighbors.

Kwanzaa

DECEMBER 26 TO JANUARY 1

Kwanzaa is an African American holiday celebrating life. It was established in 1966 to embrace African culture and is based on various African harvest festivals. Traditions include music, storytelling and poetry, an African feast, the lighting of a kinara candleholder, and reflection on the seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Hold virtual kinara lightings with extended family and friends.

Hold a virtual celebration of music.

Drop off some fresh vegetables or a pot of groundnut stew to a loved one.

Ask family and friends to write or share a favorite poem or story. Gather virtually to read them aloud to one another and collect them in a booklet that can be used during future gatherings.



Gather around the table with rich, flavorful [collard greens](#).



Using a disposable plate and a few craft supplies, kids can make their very own [paper kinara](#).

New Year's Eve is marked by reflection over the previous year and hope for the coming year. Traditions include parties that culminate in a midnight celebration with noise makers and champagne, making resolutions to improve upon oneself in the coming year, and special New Year's Day meals.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Send a message of peace or reconciliation to help heal a rift with a family member or friend.

Make resolutions and virtually gather with friends and family on New Year's Day to share them as well as your hopes for the new year.

Look up the 2020 year end "Top Ten" lists of films or music and listen to or watch your favorites, or try something that you might not usually choose.

Host a virtual New Year's Eve party with family and friends. Send noisemakers and party horns in advance and make sure everyone is signed on at midnight for a noisy goodbye to 2020 and welcome to 2021. Even though it was a tough 2020, ask everyone to share a bright spot from the year.



Do you have a traditional New Year's Day meal? Whether it is eating **pork**, **sauerkraut**, **pickled herring**, or **black-eyed peas**, we hope it brings you luck in 2021!

Upcycle some toilet paper rolls into fun-filled **New Year's Eve crackers**, which can be stuffed with confetti, candy, trinkets, balloons—or anything you choose.

Epiphany, also called Three Kings' Day, celebrates the visit to the newborn Jesus by the three magi, or three kings, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is the final of the Twelve Days of Christmas and immediately preceded by Twelfth Night. Traditions include a kings' cake with tiny baby figurine baked inside, special songs, and small gifts hidden in children's shoes (to represent gifts given to Jesus by the Magi).

SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Host an at-home crown-making contest using a non-participant judge. Crafters must wear their crowns to show them off during a virtual visit.

Bake mini kings' cakes and leave them on the doorsteps of family, friends, or neighbors.

Have children dress up in their best kings' wear and host a fun drive-by parade.

Explore the kings and their gifts online. Learn their names and discover information about their gifts. Assign different fact-finding tasks to family members and share what you discover virtually.



Need a recipe to scale down your kings' cake? Try making these [mini kings' cakes](#).



Find some inspiration for crafting [child-sized crowns](#).

Orthodox Christmas

JANUARY 7

Orthodox Christian religions from Eastern Europe and the Middle East celebrate Christmas according to the Julian Calendar used by Julius Caesar. Traditions include fasting before the holiday, enjoying music, and churches lighting a small fire of blessed palms and burning frankincense to commemorate the three wise men's gifts to baby Jesus. Additional traditions are associated with specific Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Organize a virtual watch party to celebrate Christmas Mass with your local church or a church abroad.

Hold a virtual gathering to share favorite songs of the season.

Send Christmas cards with a greeting and prayer to people from your church who are homebound.

Hold virtual cooking parties ahead of the holiday, with a different person sharing a beloved recipe during each party.



Perogies, potato-filled dumplings, are often staples at the Orthodox Christmas table.



Turn popsicle sticks into **star-shaped ornaments** to hang throughout the home or on your Christmas tree.

Orthodox New Year

JANUARY 14

Also referred to as the Old New Year's Day, the Orthodox New Year is celebrated by many members of Orthodox religions according to the Julian Calendar. Traditions include dinner dances and buffets and special New Year's Day liturgies.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Make favorite foods that would traditionally be part of your celebration and drop them off for elderly loved ones and other family members.

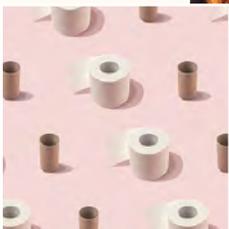
Hold a virtual gathering to share what you are most thankful for as you head into a new year.

Hold a virtual dance party, with those who are able sharing a special dance with a loved one at home. Those who are alone can share a favorite song that makes them think of the people they love, or dance solo.

Enjoy a livestream of the famous fireworks by the Serbian Orthodox Church of St. Sava in Belgrade. Host a virtual watch party with your family and friends so they can join in on the celebration of 2021.



A popular Greek tradition is to eat [vasilopita](#), a sweet bread with a coin hidden inside. Whoever finds the coin in their part is said to have luck during the year.

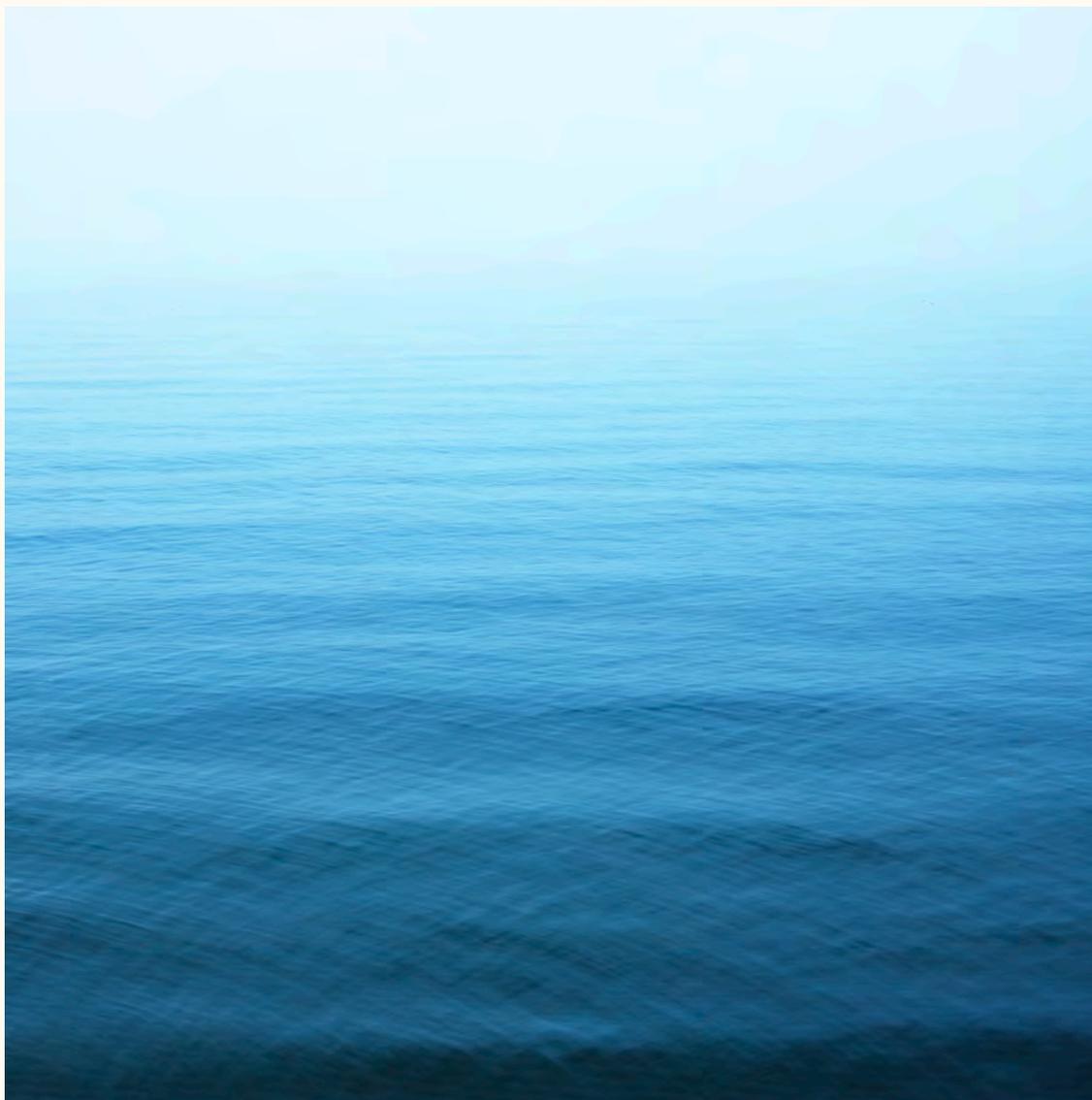


Make your own "fireworks," using a toilet paper roll and paint to create [paper displays](#) of fireworks celebrations.

Orthodox Epiphany

JANUARY 19

Orthodox Epiphany celebrates Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. Traditions include diving after a cross tossed into a river or body of water and the blessing of houses with holy water.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Hold an in-home blessing. Ask your priest the best way to do this in accordance with religious tradition.

Hold a virtual gathering with family and friends to discuss Jesus's baptism and what it means to each of you.

Who was John the Baptist? Find an online book or site to learn more about his life.

Make a visit with members of your household to a nearby body of water. Invite others, reminding them to wear masks and practice social distancing.



In some countries, tradition has it that people jumping into cold waters drank red wine and plum brandy to warm up afterward. Try a family-friendly [non-alcoholic sangria](#) to honor the tradition.



Find instructions for a [dove mobile](#) as part of a Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America lesson plan for children.

Bodhi Day

JANUARY 20

Bodhi, a Buddhist holiday, commemorates the day that the historic Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, attained enlightenment through meditation. It is believed that he achieved enlightenment while sitting under the Bodhi tree, still a site of pilgrimage in India. Traditions include meditation, prayer and study, the lighting of candles, bringing a ficus or fig tree into the home, decorating with fig leaves arranged in the shape of a heart, and eating a morning meal of milk and rice.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Organize a virtual meditation.

Make heart-shaped decorations and send to loved ones.

Consider sending a Bodhi day recipe for rice and milk to family and friends to try.

Livestream the Bodhi Day service at your local Buddhist temple.



Often, Buddhists will mark the day with a meal of rice and milk. This [traditional porridge](#) made of milk, rice, sugar, and cardamom powder, can be served warm or cold.



This is a day to reflect and meditate. Haven't tried it before? Here are [eight easy steps](#) for beginners from OhioHealth.

Tu BiShvat, or “New Year of the Trees” is often referred to as the Jewish Arbor Day or Earth Day. It is believed to have started as an agricultural festival that welcomes spring. Traditions include holding a ritual seder meal, planting trees, and tracing family roots.



SAFE WAYS TO CELEBRATE

Organize a virtual seder meal to mark the holiday with family and friends.

Have a new plant or two delivered to your home, or plant some seeds indoors to nurture until spring.

Read a book about the planet and plan to do one thing going forward to reduce your carbon footprint.

Plan a day to virtually speak with older relatives to learn about your family tree. Keep a record and create a tree that can be shared with relatives online.



It is tradition to eat the fruit of the Seven Species on Tu BiShvat — grapes, dates, pomegranates, figs, olives, wheat, and barley. These [Tu BiShvat truffles](#) blend a few of those ingredients into a delicious treat.

Many families spend Tu BiShvat planting a tree, working in a garden, or doing something else to show some love for trees and the earth. Try this indoor option of a [windowsill herb garden](#).



Your mental health is just as important as your physical health.

Ohio CareLine: 1-800-720-9616



Help is available 24 hours a day,
seven days a week

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TOGETHER 
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