THE HOLIDAY ISSUE

Found Family
Gay Gift Guide
Gay Holiday Films to Watch
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Reader’s Gift Guide
An Ace on Holiday Dating
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IS BLOOD THICKER THAN WATER?

A look into LGBTQ+ friendships

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN STAFF WRITER

It’s the holiday season, and all across the country, people are planning out just how they’ll celebrate — and survive — the next couple of months with family. For many, the idea of sharing a hot meal and reminiscing about childhood memories with loved ones is sacred, but for others, the next few months can feel like a special section of hell, especially for LGBTQ+ people who may feel disconnected from the families of their birth.

While holidays are a great way to celebrate families and traditions, it is important to remember this time of year that blood is not what makes a family, and that there can be plenty of love to go around for found families and friend groups looking to share this time of year.

Science proves that LGBTQ+ friendships are special

Being able to travel home and spend time with loved ones who accept and reaffirm one’s identity is a luxury often not afforded to LGBTQ+ people. A shocking survey by the Pew Research Center found that 80% of queer adults have faced rejection by their birth families after coming out.

Family is vital to a young person’s development, not only emotionally but financially as well. The UCLA Williams Institute found that 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ+, and that this is a factor that contributes to their status as unhoused.

The holidays can make loneliness feel magnified for those who are unable to spend time with loved ones and can even serve as a reminder of what they’ve lost.

However, for Queer people living in safe spaces like Seattle, opportunities to form pseudo-families or “found families” have given many a place to celebrate in an environment of love and acceptance.

Queer friendship is a magical thing, a phenomenon that social scientists have recently begun studying, to try to understand what it is that makes LGBTQ+ friends feel more like found families. In the study “Homophilia, Close Friendship, and Life Satisfaction Among Gay, Lesbian, Heterosexual, and Bisexual Men and Women,” researcher Brian Gillespie found that “gay men and lesbians, in particular, receive more substantial social support from friends than heterosexual men and women.”

In his study, Gillespie theorized that the reason LGBTQ+ friendships are so strong is related to minority stress theory. “Minority stress theory proposes that GLB individuals are likely to experience rejection as a result of their marginalized sexual orientation and must learn to cope and adapt to a potentially inhospitable social environment,” he explained.

Gillespie also found that friendship is vital for LGBTQ+ people in forming their identities and sense of self, and concluded that “sexual minorities may not only want more friends but need more friends compared to their heterosexual counterparts.”

A rich history of LGBTQ+ friendships

While social experiments may not be required to understand that friendship is important to LGBTQ+ people, that sentiment is confirmed time and time again, both by recants of personal stories and examinations from research studies.

Historians have also discovered that the phenomenon of Queer friendships date back centuries, although these close relationships were often not seen as Queer at the time. Author Maria Popova described the idea of “romantic friendships” of the last century as “that strange, wonderful, and often messy network between the two and the inevitable discombobulation of our neatly organized relationship structures that happen when romantic love and friendship converge.”

While holidays are a great way to celebrate families and traditions, it is important to remember this time of year that blood is not what makes a family.
An Ace reflection on dating during the holidays

by Georgia Skerritt
SGN Intern

During my most recent visit to the website for the Ascentia Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), I stumbled upon a post from one community member that summed up common fears people have this time of year: "No one to share the holidays with!" The post was exactly what I expected: this person relies on family for company during this time of year and often feels that they’ll be "left behind" if their parents or siblings decide to spend the season with their partners and in-laws. The rest of the thread was filled with others validating and relating to the experience.

Holidays can be hard for everyone for so many different reasons: high travel costs, the stress of experimenting and hosting guests, balancing work and home life, a rocky relationship with food... the list goes on. For those of us in the Queer community, we may also be dealing with estrangement from friends or family, or celebrating with people we aren’t "meant" to.

Human beings are wired for social connection, and it’s no mystery that this time of year is historically known for moments of love, connection, and celebration. There’s also the fact that holiday movies (movies in part are almost required to center around a narrative of family, friends, and/or romance, further reinforcing the idea that the holidays are the right time to fall in love). I’m not going to say as much as the next person — I love the idea of seeing all my favorite people in one place and feeling the good vibes.

At 21, I’m living at home with my parents and sister at the moment and will very happily celebrate the holidays with them. My sister will probably have a Friendsgiving dinner if we can manage it, and I have even more to look forward to when other friends come home for college this winter break. I will by no means be alone this holiday season, and yet this post left me with a familiar pang of anxiety because of one thing that has changed for me in the last year: this is my first holiday season since coming out to terms with my sexuality.

I started questioning my relationship with sex in January, and have since learned a lot about the sexuality spectrum and the complexities of attraction, sexual or otherwise. There has been a lot to unpack, a lot to learn, and a lot to unlearn. One thing I have learned a lot about is the idea of Aromantic and Asexual people living in a society that so heavily enforces romance and sex as pillars of a good life. This social conditioning is part of the reason I struggled for so long to find an identity that made sense to me, and it is something that I am still trying to unlearn.

As I write this article, I describe myself as Gray-Asexual and Panromantic, meaning that my sexual attraction to others is based on emotional connection, but I am romantically attracted to everyone through my ideality feelings as it fluctuates almost every day. One of the most beautiful and liberating parts of discovering my asexuality has been allowing myself certain standards and boundaries while dating.

For a long time, sex was something I did to keep people around, not something I did for myself. Yes, in more serious relationships I enjoy having sex with my partner to make them happy and to feel more connected to them, but it’s never been something that motivates me and of itself. In many ways, dating on the Ace spectrum can be empowering, because it allows us to set our needs and our boundaries higher up on the priority list without feeling as guilty or ashamed or broken. Understanding my own experience has given me some self-compassion, something I wouldn’t trade in a heartbeat. Still, it doesn’t make the failed attempts at dating any less disappointing. When I do find someone who I click with, there’s a part of me that tries not to get my hopes up. As sad as I am to admit it, telling people about my asexuality has often led to our relationship fizzling out somehow. Yes, prioritizing your needs and boundaries as an Ace person is a courageous and noble act of self-love, but it can still feel like you’re letting people down (or like they’re letting you down).

This is not to say that dating as an Ace person is a futile pursuit. It’s not hopelessly plagued with heartbreak or disappointment. But it does come with a unique set of challenges, and I’d be lying if I said that I’m not more aware of these as the holiday season rolls in. I’m still young, and no one in my age bracket and/or social circle is planning on settling down anytime soon, but I am still left wondering what holidays may look like down the road.

The struggle with holiday sobriety is real

by Michael Leach
Special to the SGN

Over the holidays, there is an increased number of holiday work events, family gatherings, and social functions. It is the time of the year to celebrate with family and friends.

While it is a joyous time for most families, it can be challenging for some, with the combination of stressful relationships, shopping, family dinners, and endless family gatherings. Achieving a perfectly sober holiday is a struggle, but not impossible.

Despite relapse triggers or the temptation to overindulge, the holidays do not have to mean jeopardizing recovery or one’s choice to abstain from alcohol. Lasting recovery or sobriety does not mean missing out on all the holidays festivities and celebrations; it just means being smart about it.

There are practical ways to help maintain sobriety. Perhaps the best way to avoid relapse or overindulging during the holidays is to have a well-thought-out plan. Initially, there are some things to consider when attending holiday celebrations, for example:

• Who will be at the party? Is there anyone there who could compromise your sobriety?
• What do I say when someone offers me a drink, and are there nonalcoholic options?
• How will I get home if I feel uncomfortable and need to leave?
• Are there any relapse triggers?
• Is there a risk of overindulgence?

Knowing what you are getting into with each holiday celebration makes it easier to avoid vulnerable situations. However, you may require some support. Going to these parties with a sober friend or another person who is not drinking alcohol over the holidays is often beneficial.

Other aspects of a support system for someone in recovery could be 12-step meetings, sponsors, a treatment center, or friends and family. A support network is vital when in recovery, especially around the holidays.

As for drinks at parties, “There are endless nonalcoholic options to enjoy, and holiday cocktails are popular because it provides a safer option and a better choice for sober guests,” said Marcel Gemme of Addicted.org.

“Nonalcoholic options also eliminate the risk of drinking and driving,” he added. According to Washington State’s Traffic Safety Commission, on average, 100 people are arrested between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day, and 50% of roadway fatalities are due to impaired driving.

One critical point that many people neglect is to take care of yourself. The acronym HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) is an excellent way to remember basic needs. When people become hungry, they are more susceptible to anxiety and stress. The same occurs when someone becomes angry or lonely. Sleep is often neglected during the holidays; adequate sleep is critical to maintaining sobriety.

Finally, create new traditions and find the holiday spirit. It is essential to look beyond the parties, gifts, and celebrations. Find the real meaning of the holidays’ joy, compassion, and kindness. Discover gratitude in every moment. Write down everything that you are grateful for as a reminder.

While in recovery, gratitude is essential to the process and could help anyone through the holiday season. It is the season of giving and giving thanks. Every day during the holidays is a new reason to celebrate sobriety.

Michael Leach has spent most of his career as a healthcare professional specializing in substance use disorder and addiction recovery. He is a certified clinical medical assistant, and contributor to the healthcare website Recovery Begins.
Foster a pet and save a life at the Seattle Animal Shelter

by Lindsey Anderson
SGN Staff Writer

‘To bond with an animal is to understand what unconditional love feels like. A pet does not care who you love or what gender you are, only that you are willing to show them kindness and friendship. Although animals are willing to show unconditional love to the people who take care of them, there are too many currently waiting behind bars for someone to see their worth.

The Seattle Animal Shelter was opened in 1972 to “protect public safety and enforce animal-related ordinances” in the city. In the 50 years since, it has also helped to house and adopt out thousands of dogs, cats, and small critters (rabbits, mice, guinea pigs) to loving families all over King County.

Too many pets!

Since the start of the pandemic, the shelter has become overwhelmed with animals. This is due in part to state and city ordinances that prevent the shelter from opening back up to its pre-COVID visiting hours. It has also seen an uptick in animal surrenders since the beginning of the pandemic, due to people’s “pandemic pets” not working out the way they had hoped.

While the Seattle Animal Shelter does not euthanize pets for time or space, there are still very harmful consequences to the animals when it becomes overcrowded.

For dogs, an overfull shelter means much more stress. The noise levels inside the facility can be overwhelming very quickly. Stimulation, paired with the anxiety of being in a new, cold, unfamiliar environment, often leads to behavioral and health issues for these dogs. Many will refuse to eat or develop stomach issues.

Others who come into the shelter well behaved quickly deteriorate, losing their confidence and years of training.

For cats, the stress of a full and noisy shelter can also mean their behavior becomes altered. Some cats deal with stress by becoming more aggressive and less willing to trust people. Others will act out by “spraying” or refusing to use a litter box, even if they had previously been trained to do so.

The stress reactions of animals in shelters can make them seem less adoptable to potential new families. A once-friendly pup can look aggressive when they’re stressed out and barking from behind a cage door. A cuddly kitten might only be interested in hiding from those hoping to meet them, and appears antisocial.

For those that do make it out after their behaviors have been altered, the chance of being returned is great. When an animal returns to the shelter, its behavior often deteriorates even faster. The animals do not bond with what has happened to them and why their new family has rejected them yet again. Unlike people, dogs and cats do not have the proper ability to process the situations they are in. They face a return to the shelter with confusion, and can often become depressed.

Hope in the dark

While this cycle can feel hopeless, there is a solution! The Seattle Animal Shelter offers a wonderful foster program, where members of the community can help by taking a pet out of the shelter and into their home. The foster program allows adoptable animals to get away from the stress of the animal shelter so that they can wait for their forever family in the comfort of a “practice home.”

Anybody is welcome to apply. Foster parents can choose a pet to bring into their home, and work as an advocate in finding its new family. They are responsible for taking care of the foster pet, making sure it gets to its vet appointments, and most importantly, making sure it is loved.

The pets that usually go into foster care first are dogs who have been in the shelter the longest, dogs recovering from an injury or medical procedure, and puppies who need socialization skills that they cannot get at the animal shelter.

“Fostering is a wonderful experience for you and your family — you can feel good knowing you have helped save a dog’s life. Even better, you’ve created space in the shelter to accommodate other homeless dogs. Foster dogs provide companionship and purpose. Your act of kindness is repaid in rewards that are beyond words,” said Patti, a Seattle Animal Shelter foster coordinator.

For pet lovers who feel fostering is too big of a commitment, the shelter also offers programs to “check out a dog” for a day or to do an overnight. This allows people interested in going on a day trip, such as a hike or a venture to the beach, to bring a high-energy dog with them. This helps to get the pet out of the shelter for a few hours, burn off some energy, and also gets them noticed by members of the community who might be interested in adoption.

Those interested in applying to become a foster parent for the Seattle Animal Shelter should email SAGfosterdogs@gmail.com.

For more information on adopting or volunteering with the shelter, check out https://www.seattle.gov/animal-shelter.

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NOVEMBER 18, 2022
SGN 7
Picture this: Ambitious, big-city young professional returns to quaint hometown for the holidays, meets boy with charming, devastatingly beautiful locale, endures exhilarating Christmas-related events, faces various reckoning of life-changing choices. Fairy-tale ending concludes under mistletoe being whisked away in sleigh ride into snowy, love-filled future, which pans out accompanied by blaring, up-tempo version of “Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)” roll end credits.

The fact this never happens in real life is part of the attraction of the hometown holiday romance, a particular genre of made-for-TV romantic comedy spearheaded by the Hallmark Channel that has become one of the enduring cultural phenomena of the past 20 years.

Does true love exist? This is the question that has plagued humankind since time immemorial, and launched a successful industry that tugs on people’s heartstrings and services their mortal need to say and hear “I love you.” That format has evolved from delivering printed ephemera through the post office to streaming video on your smart device is no surprise.

Since its inception in the early 1980s, the central character of a “Hallmark movie” has been a cisgender female. Formerly queens like Patty of Five’s Lacey Chabert and Full House’s Candace Cameron Bure dominate the genre due to the winning combination of nostalgia about their past fame and their general likeability and transferable qualities as contemporary figures. Though the typical storytelling style is inherently gendered and binary (which invites deserved criticism) the beauty of this landscape is that it is a fully contained, sterile, insular space. Within the bubble, these characters are safe from harm. Anything is possible. Especially love.

And this safety is precisely why LGBTQ+ people were an unwanted market for this genre. Queering the trope is now the new challenge for networks and filmmakers. Centering the story on a gay protagonist seemed to be the next logical step. As unrealistic the circumstances may be, and though full representation of all queer and cultural experiences may never be scripted, it is an opportunity to escape the cinematic realism of recent mainstream queer storytelling centered around adversity by eliminating well-trodden obstacles completely. No one has to overcome coming out or face a tragic death. Here, we can fall in love and live happily ever after? Yes, please.

The Gay brother

Although the Hallmark Channel’s first Christmas movie centering a Gay couple, The Holiday Sister (whichdebuts on December 11), will be a historic moment on this canonically conservative channel, it dipped its toes into Gay waters only just a couple years ago with The Christmas House (2020). That centered on straight, cisgender Mike (a charming Robert Buckley) returning to his hometown in upstate New York, where his parents Phyllis and Bill (sweetly played by Sharon Lawrence and Treat Williams) and his Gay brother Brandon (a sharply burnous Jonathan Bennett) come together to decorate their childhood home in their family’s trade-mark fantastic, over the top style before the house is sold.

Brandon is a supporting character, whose movements in the film along with husband Jake (a nondescript Brad Harder) revolve around their private journey of adopting a child. While commendable in featuring a story that many same-sex couples experience, there is no explicit language about the couple’s Gay life, although there is a momentary scene where Brandon and Jake quietly mug themselves to their lament. The effort here is to show no difference between the two brothers and their respective relationships, perhaps softening the edges to endure straight and lonesome. But the moment between Brandon and Jake is so shrivelled in whispers and ellipes that it left me underwhelmed. Here I am in 2022, shouting into the void that was 2020: “Just say Gay!”

The film is poorly drawn compared to its sequel, The Christmas House 2: Deck Those Halls (2021), which is much more light-hearted and quirky in pace and dialogue, giving a bit more Modern Family and Schitt’s Creek vibes. The sequel brings the brothers back together for a home-decorating duel on a reality TV competition. Bennett gets a lot more scenery to chew and brings in a nice energy and charisma that elevates Buckley’s performance.

A still undeniably Harder is a bland, supportive partner, but he has some nice moments as the solid pragmatist in contrast to Brandon’s wild antics. But the big moment is between the real siblings, where queerness is still only obliquely referenced, although there is a tongue-in-cheek button to the scene that allows for forgiveness. One thing the movie does well, though, is its choreography of real family issues (like co-parenting, work-life balance, aging, and blended family) among the spirited holiday fun.

Boy meets boy

Although The Christmas House series jump-started the Gay Hallmark holiday-movie canon, neither film is very romantic. For this I turned to The Christmas Setup (2020) on Lifetime. New York City lawyer Hugs (an amiable Ben Lewis) returns to his hometown of Milwaukee with his bestie Maddie (a delightful Ellen Wong) to celebrate the holiday with his empty-nest mom Kate (a winning Fran Drescher) and embarks upon a whirlwind romance with high school crush Patrick Ryan (a handsome Blake Lee).
I liked how ordinary these two characters are though one has a skyrocketing big-city career and the other is a retired young app developer, the two are still the boys they once were in high school. In a bit of tribute to Storrie’s Glasser and Jackson Ryan, my high school movie character crush), Patrick, like Jake, is handsome and confident, popular, deeply interested in good looks. There is a shy awkwardness between them, from both getting to know someone who is too busy to notice your presence, in your mind. Though there is not much to this love story with too many plot points (including a long digression to save an old train station), the tenderness of the courtship was most affecting.

I appreciated the casting of the non-white person as the best friend, Wong shines, bringing a contemporary lightness to the movie without being inauthentic. But the real dirty here is Drescher, dashing in and out of scenes with aplomb. Her familiar signature voice may grate to some ears, but Queer kids from the '90s who wished to have a fabulous character like her Fran Fine character from The Nanny will feel comforted.

From the title of the movie, you might think it telegraphs Kate as the typical medals and the other is a retired young app developer, the two are still the boys they once were in high school. In a bit of tribute to Storrie’s Glasser and Jackson Ryan, my high school movie character crush, Patrick, like Jake, is handsome and confident, popular, deeply interested in good looks. There is a shy awkwardness between them, from both getting to know someone who is too busy to notice your presence, in your mind. Though there is not much to this love story with too many plot points (including a long digression to save an old train station), the tenderness of the courtship was most affecting.

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With the holidays just around the corner, now is the perfect time to start planning your spread!  
I have been in the kitchen a lot lately and decided it was time to start my preparations, so I made a collection of my favorite holiday-inspired recipes, modified to fit a tighter budget (especially important now, with the rising cost of living across the state). While these dishes may not be as simple as buying a can and heating it up or making a quick trip to the store, they will put you more in touch with what you are putting into your body and provide greater nutritional content.

If you are looking to top your cooking game this season without breaking the bank, give a few of these recipes a try!

Soft and Simple Dinner Rolls 
Makes 8-12 rolls; Total cost: $3.65
Ingredients: what is a great example of human ingenuity. Especially when it is soft, chewy, and fresh out of the oven. These rolls are simple to make and get that familiar, sugar soft texture of store-bought dinner rolls with much more flavor.

- 3.5 cups all-purpose flour - $1.37
- 1 packet instant yeast - $0.90
- 1 teaspoon salt - $0.03
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt * - $0.04
- 2 tablespoons salted butter (softened) - $0.41
- 1 egg - $0.30
- Water

Preheat your oven to 375°F. In a small dish, combine the yeast, sugar, and 2 tablespoons of warm water and stir. Let sit for about 10 minutes to bloom the yeast (you should see some bubbles).
In a larger bowl, mix the flour and salt. Add the yeast mixture and 1-1/4 cups water and stir to form a sticky ball of dough. Knead a few times to incorporate all the flour.
Grease a clean bowl with a teaspoon of butter and transfer the dough ball to the bowl. Cover with a damp towel and allow to rise for about 1 hour or until roughly doubled in size.

Butter your hands and coat the dough in 9:12 equal portions (depending on how many you want each roll). Keep your hands well buttered, roll each portion into a ball and place it in a buttered 9” x 12” glass baking dish. Cover with a damp towel and let rise another 1-1/2 hours.

Beat the egg in a small dish and brush over the tops of the rolls (you probably won’t use the whole egg).
Bake at 375°F for 30 minutes or until the tops are golden brown.

* I used Diamond kosher salt. You want to use about half as much if using other salt.

Tart and Tangy Cranberry Sauce
Makes about 2 cups; Total cost: $1.88
Personally, I am not a big fan of the canned cranberry sauce normally seen in grocery stores around the holidays. It lacks what cranberries are abundant in tarts! This recipe brings out that lovely flavor and results in a slightly thinner consistency for easier spreading.

- 2 cups fresh cranberries - $2.00
- 2 cups sugar - $0.75
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch * - $0.08
- Zest of 1 lemon ** - $0.25
- 1 cup of salt

Water

Combine the cranberries, water, salt, and sugar in a small saucepan and heat over medium heat until you hear the cranberries popping. Once most cranberries have popped, use a spoon to mash them against the side of the pan.
Reduce the heat to low and whisk in the cornstarch, making sure to break up any clumps. Cook for around 20-30 minutes or until thickened to your desired consistency. Add lemon zest a few minutes before you are ready to serve.

* More cornstarch can be used if you want a thicker sauce.
** Lemon juice can also be added if you want your sauce to taste a bit more lemony.

Roasted Veggies You Actually Want to Eat
Serves 6-8, Total cost: $9.60
Sweet potatoes and green beans are both major components in classic holiday casseroles, but I usually find these to be less than appealing. Usually, the green beans are way overcooked or from a can, meaning they lose their amazing crunchy texture. The sweet potatoes are loaded with extra sugar and marshmallows, which I find completely unnecessary. This recipe adds another classic winter veggie, beets. Enjoy the warm, earthy flavors and delicate textures of these nutrient powerhouses.

- 2 beets - $2.99
- 2 sweet potatoes - $2.29
- 8-12 ounces fresh green beans - $3.29
- 1/2 cup sweet yellow onion - $0.19
- 2 tablespoons olive oil - $0.35
- 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning - $0.22
- 1/2 cloves of garlic, minced - $0.25
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt * - $0.02
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper - $0.04

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Peel the beets and sweet potatoes and chop them into about half-inch cubes, keeping the veggies separate. Trim the ends of the green beans. Gather the remainder into a bunch and cut in thirds.

Place the chicken in the oven to roast for 50 minutes at 45°F and another 10 minutes at 375°F. The chicken skin should be well browned, and the juices will run clear when it is done.

* I used Diamond kosher salt. You want to use about half as much if using other salt.

Marvelous Mashed Potatoes
Serves 6-8; Total cost: $4.13
Mashed potatoes are a must or break a meal, especially a holiday one, so I focused on getting the best result possible with this recipe. These are just the right level of creamy and are a great way to supplement your meal. They can also be made with any variety of potatoes, as opposed to many recipes that suggest only specific, more expensive varieties. I hope you enjoy this as much as my family did.

- 6 large potatoes - $1.25
- 3 teaspoons kosher salt - $0.06
- 1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning - $0.22
- 4 tablespoons butter - $0.82
- 1/2 cup sour cream - $0.85
- 2 cloves minced garlic (or roasted garlic; see Optional below) - $0.25
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese - $0.68
Optional: Chicken drippings, 4 cloves roasted garlic, mashed into a rough paste

Peel and chop potatoes into half-inch cubes. Add the potatoes to a medium pot along with 6 cups of water and 2 teaspoons of salt and bring to a boil over medium/high heat.
Reduce the heat to medium once boiling and simmer until the potatoes are easily poked with a fork (about 20-30 minutes).
Strain the cooked potatoes and return to the pot. Turn off the burner. Use a potato masher to break up to roughly mash the potatoes. Add in the sour cream, garlic, and butter and mash until you reach desired consistency and the ingredients are thoroughly combined.
Put the heat back on low and stir in the cheese, I teaspoon of kosher salt, and the poultry seasoning until combined. Continue to gently stir until heat the cheese is melted and fully incorporated. Serve.

* I used Diamond kosher salt. You want to use about half as much if using other salt.

Oven use
In addition to using simple, cheap ingredients, I made an oven usage plan to reduce energy consumption when preparing all these dishes at once. This reduces time and can save a few bucks on the electric bill by cooking multiple things at the same time and avoiding heating up the oven. The plan I used is as follows:
Preheat the oven to 45°F.
Add in the chicken. Cook for 35 minutes. After 35 minutes has passed, add the first round of most vegetables (beets) and bake for another 15 minutes.
Reduce the temperature to 375°F and add the rest of the vegetables. Bake for another 10 minutes.
You can remove the chicken at this point if it is fully cooked and add in the rolls to bake for 30 minutes. Vegetables and rolls should finish around the same time!

My challenge for this meal guide was to make something that would serve about 6-8 people and still cost under $50. With prices on everything going up, this was certainly a challenge, but I was able to successfully create delicious results on a budget.
The price of the ingredients was calculated using QPC Capitol Hill prices and dividing those amounts into the recipe to make the recipe. The Seattle tax of 10.25% was also added, and the grand total came out to $43.75. They are also a great way that good food and hosting a holiday gathering doesn’t have to break the bank.

Share your dishes and connect with me on Instagram @jullivanastykitchen.2. Happy holidays!
Happy Holidays!

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**Mr. & Mr. Claus mugs**
- Two glazed-ceramic Santas are better than one when you cop SUNNY&TED’s hand-painted Mr. and Mrs. cocoa mugs, available in three blush-faced skin tones and two genders to accurately rep your festive Queer holiday decor.
  - [https://sunnyandted.com](https://sunnyandted.com), $27.50 each

**Whiskey a go go**
- Lift holiday spirits (in handsome drinkware, like Baccarat’s Harmonic Double Old-Fashioned Tumblers) by offering party guests a sampling of your home bar’s top-shelf reserves, like Blade & Bow’s Kentucky Straight Bourbon, Chichilnisky Pot Still Irish Whiskey, and Westward American Single Malt Stout Cask—a holy trinity all its own.
  - [http://www.reservebar.com](http://www.reservebar.com), $48, $57, $91

**Happy Hanukkah tea gift set**
- **Subarzweets**
  - VAHDAM India’s Har Mandi—special assortment of hiscious herbal, chai, and black teas—paired with Subarzweets’ handmade, small-batch biscotti-cookie hybrids (the lemon-thyme flavor is what the chef’s kiss emoji was meant for)—is the treat-yo’self pick-me-up you’ll crave after eight crazy nights.

**America the Beautiful annual pass**
- One of your niece-learns resolving to travel more in the new year? Set ‘em up for success with the National Parks & Federal Recreation Lands America the Beautiful annual pass, providing access for the holder (plus guests) to over 2,500 federal sites in the United States, including parks, monuments, battlefields, protected wildlife refuges, national seashores, and more.
  - [https://www.recreation.gov/pass](https://www.recreation.gov/pass), $80

**Yves Durif grooming set**
- Yves Durif didn’t reinvent the Italian-made, natural rubber resin petite brush and comb that bears his synonymous-with-style name, but he did make these luxury tools sexy AF so you can feel like a million bucks.

**Boarderlie charcuterie**
- A far cry from the shelf-stable meat-and-cheese gift box loaded up on at your local mall’s pop-up shop, Oprah-approved Boarderlie charcuterie boards are chef-made daily and feature hand-selected artisan cheeses, meats, dried fruits, nuts, and chocolates on keepsake Acacia platters.
  - [http://www.boarderlie.com](http://www.boarderlie.com), $129-239

**Wagged Tails custom “a-paw-red”**
- Memorialize your loved ones’ recently passed pets with Wagged Tails’ custom-printed apparel and accessories, including T-shirts, tumbler, totes, and mugs, emblazoned with their favorite heaven-sent smash faces. Keep the Kleenex close.
  - [https://www.waggedtails.com](https://www.waggedtails.com), page 16-67

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*see GIFTS page 16*
Dough Bowl candles
Drop a needle on Aunt Dolly’s holiday vinyl before lighting the wicks on Stonard’s Simply Southern dough bowl candles and you’ve got yourself an instant country Christmas. https://stroudsgypsies.com/products/collections/country-holiday

Cantilever toolbox
Utilitarianism is a hallmark of Japanese design, and Toyoo’s handcrafted cantilever steel storage and tool boxes are no exception, with two handy adjustable upper trays and eight removable dividers housed in a handsome, spacious shell deserving of double-takes. https://www.placewares.com/products/cantilever-steel-storage-and-tool-box-$229

Habibi Santal Journey
Can’t go wrong with a fresh scent tucked under the tree or inside a stocking, and it doesn’t get any fresher (or spicier) than Habibi’s Santal Journey, with notes of dry cedarwood, oud, and sandalwood atop whisks of crisp pear and precious Orris. https://fosterhabibi.com/collections/fragnances-for-him/products/santal-journey-opq-2-5-ft-3-$119

NQI GTS e-moped
In sport mode, the NQI GTS e-moped’s top speed is a hair-straightening 30 mph, thanks to a 60V26a14 Bosch motor, fourth-gen lithium battery tech, and a few bodyshop elves who’ve watched 2 Fast 2 Furious 2 many times. https://www.miiu.com, $2700

Rotate watchmaking kit
Challenge your better-half gadget geek over holiday break with customizable Rotate watchmaking kits — available in easy, medium, and hard configurations — that come complete with parts, tools, and a user-friendly guide to keep the engraver at a Christian minimum. https://rotatewatcher.com, $995–$225

Coravin x Keith Haring wine opener
Art and wine go together like Saint Nick and snowmen doodles, which is why the Coravin x Keith Haring Timeless Stixx Art-ist Edition bottle opener — featuring the late artist’s iconic dancing figures in black and white — will look just as good on your dinner-party tablescape as it will on display. https://www.coravin.com/products/keith-haring, $300

Limited Edition Don Quijote X Coquito NYC drink kit
Add a little Latin flavor to your living-room Christmas film fest with a screening of Alfred De Villa’s Nothing Like the Holidays and a traditional coquito with a Don Quijote in hand. The limited-edition collab kit between the rum maker and Latina-owned Coquito NYC comes with everything you need to mix it up, including coconut milk, spiced, and a bottle of Reserva 7. https://www.dong.com, $75

Nuzzie weighted blanket
Dasher and Dancer will have to pull double duty delivering hefty, chunky Nuzzies, one-of-a-kind breathable, thermoregulating, and sustainable weighted blankets (in holiday hues like rich rose and the emerald green) for all your snowy-season snuggles. https://shopnuzzle.com, $300–$329

Mikey Box is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than a hundred outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyontravels.
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MAKE ART
So you’re ready — almost — for the holidays, except for those few tricky gifts that you just can’t seem to figure out.

How about books? Even to wrap them, they make people happy to get them. Why not look for these great ones?

Fiction

Lovers of fantasy stories will love Illuminations by Alan Moore, a collection of short stories with an underlying theme of comics and the industry. Perfect for the young graphic novel reader.

For those who like novels with a twist, wrap up The Storyteller’s Death by Ann Davila Cardinal, the tale of a girl who learns, at age 18, that she is a storyteller, which is something that’s passed down through the women of her family. The blessing turns out to be a curse when she sees a murder that happened long ago. Give it with The Strange Inheritance of Lush Ferns by Rita Zany Chen, also a story of a young fortunate teller and a vision she may or may not have wanted.

The person who loves to people-watch and connect with, well, everybody will want Iona Ivanova’s Rules for Commuting by Clare Pooley, a story of a commuter by watching the other people on the train — until the day something happens, and commutes suddenly become something more. Pair it with Has Anyone Seen My Tears? by Christopher Buckley, a hilarious novel about living during the pandemic, when one’s health is the least of one’s worries.

Give the historical fiction lover A Woman of No Importance by F. Dietrich, the tale of an African woman who’s captured and sent to a plantation in Puerto Rico for the sole purpose of having babies that are always taken from her immediately after they’re born. How she survives and heals is part of this book’s appeal.

The reader who loves to laugh will thoroughly enjoy Read Me by Penn Jillette, the story of an almost 25-year-old who inherits a pile of debt from his horrible father, and it’s due to the (even more horrible) loan shark when the guy turns 21. Will a roll of the dice eliminate his problems? He’s the person who gets this book and finds out.

And if you’ve got a father or son on your gift list, see if you can get them to share The Ski Jumpers by Peter Geye, the tale of a son who can never forgive his father, a father who has just started learning, and a brother who’s caught in the middle.

General nonfiction

The reader who wants a little diversity in their selection will love Latin America: From Early Explorers to Corporate Leaders by Nicolas Kanellis, PhD, which is absolutely filled with mini-biographies of Latin American heroes, heroines, and inspirations, and it’s perfect for any reader age 14 and up. Give it with Indigenous Firsts: A History of Native American Achievements and Events by Yvonne Wakim Dennis, Arlene Hirschfelder, and Paulette F. Mohin, which has fast facts about the achievements of Indigenous Americans.

If you’re looking for something unusual for someone science-minded, then find The Handy Engineering Answer Book by Delcan Tolbert Smith, PhD, Ashwarya Pavan; Nicole Patterson, PhD; and Debra Ann C. Butler, PhD. It’s perfect for anyone who works in or dabbles with any kind of engineering today. It’s also the kind of book your dedicated science fan needs.

For the person who always embraces the good in life, Inciting Joy by Ross Gay will be a welcome gift. It’s a collection of essays on the things that make us happy, that cause us to count our blessings and smile, and that gather us together. Wrap it up with Wippler Hour by Cassie Holtman, PhD, and help someone decide what’s worth their joy.

There’s just no way your animal-loving recipient won’t want a copy of Possums Are Not Cute! by Ally Barn carnivores. It contains adorable photos of possums of all ages, in cute poses and just living their best lives. Bonus: possum facts and trivia! Give it along with Sentient: How Animals Illuminate the Wonder of Our Human Senses by Jackie Higgins, for a gift that’ll make your animal lover roar.

The historians on your gift list will enjoy Mutinous Women: How French Convicts Became Founding Mothers of the Gulf Coast by Joan DeJean, the true story of 132 women who were taken from France to the mouth of the Mississippi and released in 1791 — partly because they’d been accused of crimes they didn’t commit, and because they were considered a commodity: women were needed in the new settlements. Pair it with The Women of Rothschild by Natalie Livingston, about influential women in one famous family, women who left their marks on the world, despite the men in the family who tried to shut them out; or with The Scandinavians Hamptons by Bill Shaffer, the story of a Gilded Age scandal and the beginning of tabloid-style journalism.

They will also whoop it up, the wrapping comes off The Escape Artist by Jonathan Freedland, the story of a man who actually broke out of Auschwitz and lived to tell the world what was going on. It’s a true story that reads like a deadly thriller.

For the person who is obsessed with current events, Adrift by Scott Galloway could be the gift this year. It’s a book of charts, where America’s been, where we seem to be heading, and how our leaders are leading. Give it with My America: Historians Take on the Biggest Lies and Lies About Our Past, edited by Kevin M. Kruse and Julian E. Zelizer; together, these books are both eye-openers, for sure.

Or give them The Storm Is Upon Us: How Qanon Became a Movement, Cult, and Conspiracy Theory of Everything by Mike Rothschild. It’s an eye-opener. Add it to Seek and Hide by Amy Cjada, about our right to privacy throughout history, what it means, and how the demand for privacy today can be a good thing or a bad thing, or Conspiracies and Secret Societies, third edition by Brad Steiger and Sherry Hansen Steiger. It could anyone not want to own one of the last books by these two late, great authors?

For your media-obsessed friend, It’s Not TV: The Spectacular Rise, Revolution, and Future of HBO by Felix Gillette and John Koehn is a nice look at how we watch television, even in an age of streaming. It will go well with a book that reads like a movie: Same Ground by Russell Wangerin, about a journey across America, in search of a family story.

For the loner in your life, or the person who longs for connection, On Belonging by Kim Samuel might be a great gift. It’s a book for our times, in four categories: isolation in our relationships, belonging in nature, being alone in political spheres, and a sense of belonging to our inner cores.

Pair it with The Newlyweds: Rearranging Marriage in Modern India by Mami Chirk, about three modern couples who’ve set aside tradition and arranged marriages in favor of love on their own terms.

The reader who’s concerned about migration and immigration this year will want to read Nomad Century: How Climate Migration Will Reshape Our World by Gisa Vinos, who says that climate change will cause worldwide change in cities, and Somewhere We Are Human, edited by Reyna Grande and Sonia Guananasca, which is a collection of stories from migrants and new citizens.

Is there a parent on your gift list, one that continually gets to the end of their rope? Then give What to Do About Your Troubled Child by Laura J. Stevens, MS, and Richard W. Walker, Jr., MD, about behavioral disorders in children ages 3-11, and how to cope with them.

If you know someone who is interested in the paranormal, then give them Here & Hereafter by Tyler Henry, who is a Hollywood medium. What can they learn from the dead? Find out by adding Hollywood Horrors by Andrea Van Lusdingham. Oh, the scandals and murders in Tinseltown past!

Won’t your reader enjoy Great Short Books by Kenneth C. Davis this holiday? The answer is yes: this book is about books — specifically, more than 30 short novels by authors you know and don’t know. Wrap it up with a gift certificate to your favorite bookstore.
Families We Keep

LGBTQ People and Their Enduring Bonds with Parents

RIN RECEZK AND EMMA BOSLASS-MITCHELL

For people who love dark, gothic, romantic mysteries, give Mourning Light by Richard Goodkin, the story of a man who can't let go of the guilt he feels since his lover died. Coincidentally, that death happened on the exact same day he met another man that he can't stop thinking about.

For those who like a good memoir will want to read A Place Called Home by David Ambrose, a tale of homelessness, foster care, coming out, and how sheer determination put all that in one man's past.

For someone who made a difficult decision this year, Families We Keep by Rin Recez and Emma Boslass-Smith is a good idea. It's a look at LGBTQ people who have decided to stick with their family, though there may continue to be a struggle for acceptance or a total lack of it. It means work, and this book might help. Know your giver before giving this book.

Until recently, there haven't been a lot of books about bisexuality, which is why you might want to give Bi: The Hidden Culture, History, and Science of Bisexuality by Jilam Shaw to someone special. There's a lot more to know about the subject. From genetics to identities, celebrities to monogamy.

The Trans reader on your gift list will want to own Pat, Crazy, and Tired: Tales from the Trenches of Transformation by podcaster Van Lathan, who writes that being fat was harder than being Black. Needless to say, this book is funny and inspirational, and the recipient will love it. Pair it with Side Effects: The Being Trans and Feeling Bad by Hil Mahatine. For those who sometimes struggle, this book is a great accomplishment.

For the reader who loves history, The Women's House of Detention by High Ryan could be the perfect gift this year. It's the story of a prison in New York's Greenwich Village that, for nearly 45 years, was the landing place where thousands of women, gender non-conforming people, and Transgender men. Angela Davis was there. So was Alfei Shailer. This book takes the reader there, too. Add it to Manifesto: Wrongly Convicted Women Reclaim Their Rights by Valenta Beatty. Mystery.

Mystery: "of a certain age" will absolutely love Shot Crime by Soho Crime, the story of a journalist who's about to expose corruption in the Mexican government, but she's thwarted in many ways. When she's found dead in her motel bathroom, Cocoran, then the AP's Mexico bureau chief, goes in search of answers. Speaking of answers, give it with For Ever, Witness by Edward Jones, the story of a double murder in Seattle more than 30 years ago. The trail went cold... until the use of DNA became more common and other technology put the case front and center. Sometimes, the setting of the story is everything. Case in point: All That Is Wicked by Kate Winkler Dawson. In 1871, Edward Ralff was awaiting execution— but several people wanted him released because of his intelligence. Was his brain too refined to belong to a killer? Add it to Killer Collections: Dark Artifacts from True Crime by Paul Gambino, a loaded-with-photos anthology of items associated with murder.

![Image courtesy of Legacy Lit](image1.png)

"The realtest person who longs for the meaning of home will have to want The Long Road Home: On Blackness and Belonging by Debra Thompson, a book with one foot in America, one foot in Canada, and a search for place between them. Wrap it up with Fruit Punch by Kendra Allen, a coming-of-age memoir about growing up a woman in the South. The historian will enjoy The Grimkeans: The Legacy of Slavery in an American Family by Kerri K. Greenidge, a sweeping and detailed story of two slave-owning sisters who became fierce abolitionists, and the legacy they left to the Black people to whom they were related.

![Image courtesy of Soho Crime](image2.png)

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![Image courtesy of Penguin Books](image3.png)

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For LGBTQ readers:

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For someone who made a difficult deci-
The Human Side of Innovation: The Power of People in Love with People by Mauro Porcini

Forewords by Raman Lajugata and Indra Nooyi

Image courtesy of Berrett-Koehler Publishers

Business
What do you give the businessperson who's also a people person? The Human Side of Innovation: The Power of People in Love with People by Mauro Porcini, which shows why it's best to have a business to put people first, always, and unapologetically. Readers want to know where the next trend may emanate from.

The entrepreneur in your life might enjoy Launchpad Republic: America's Entrepreneural Edge and Why It Matters by Howz and John Landry. Let them know that history agrees with their can-do spirit. It would go well with With Plymouth: How Cities Are Creating Their Own Futures by Tom Alberg, about how businesses can partner with cities to attract the brightest employees and citizens.

For the person whose dream is to head a corporation, Leading Lightly by Judy Michael could be the perfect gift. It's a book that advocates for a gentler way of leadership, one that's easier on the led as well as the leader. You're the Leader. Now What? by Richard Winters, about being a good leader, from the Mayo Clinic, would be a nice complement too.

If there's a new grad or a newly unemployed, just looking person on your gift list, look for Self Yourself by Dr. Cindy McGovern, all about making and promoting a personal brand that employers will find irresistible.

Another book for prospective leaders: True North by Bill George and Clifton, about authenticity in leadership and how to keep it. Also look for When Women Lead by Julia Boorstin, for the female entrepreneur who's ready to succeed.

For someone who watches their pennies, or who's thinking about dabbling in cryptocurrency this coming year, give Cash: Cards, Crypto and the War for Our Wallets by Brett Scott, which goes deep into the new frontier that is digital financing. Pair it with Finance for the People by Pueo de Leon for a nicely balanced gift.

The reader who loves a good business biography will enjoy Happy at Any Cost: The Revolutionary Vision and Fatal Quest of Zapppos CEO Tony Hsieh by Kristen Grind and Katherine Sayre, about a beloved business and the visionary who created and nurtured it.

The business leader who enjoys looking into the future may like reading Redesigning Work: Reimagine Your Organization & Make Hybrid Work for Everyone by Lynda Gratton, about how to make a worthy office work successfully. Win it up with Competing in the New World of Work by Keith Ferrazzi, Kian Gohar and Noel Weyrich, about radical adaptability in business today.

Science
For those who love the movies, half the fun is wondering if what's on the big screen is really possible. Licence to Kill: The Science of 007 by Kathryn Harkup looks at all the what-if's of the Bond movies, from the PON of real science, and no armchair detective will be able to resist.

Foodies would love getting Ten Tomatoes That Changed the World by William Alexander, which sews a long, juicy trail from South America and Mexico to the New World and beyond to show how one vegetable changed the way we eat.

Romantics with an inner streak of science-lover will be enthralled by Wired for Love by Stephanie Cacioppo, a neuroscientist. It's the story of her unlikely (but absolutely wonderful) romance, a devastating loss, and why we bother with love at all.

For gearheads, Racing Green: How Motorsport Science Can Save the World by Kel Chapman would make a great gift. It's the story of how innovation in our vehicles is saving lives, taking the sting out of commute, and helping environmental causes.

Health, death, and grieving
For the person who hates to exercise, hates eating healthy (let's face it), and stresses about it all, you can't go wrong with The Gospel of Wellness: Gym, Gurus, Goop, with pictures by Ken Daley, is a welcome gift. It's an inspirational book full of all the good Black men do, and that a Black boy can hope for.

The child who's having a rough holiday may want to have There Was Once a Boy in the World by Adam Lehrhaupt, illustrated by Carrie O'Neill, read to them. It's the story of a little girl who's missing something and she thinks she's the only one. It's a pretty sweet tale of loss and coping that would go well with Everything Will Be Okay by Autumn Brown, with pictures by Jody Schacher, a comforting book for when nothing goes right.

For the kid who needs a boost in confidence, Most Perfect Tour by Amy Simons, illustrated by Tamihara Anthony, is a good choice. Iris hates her hair, and she wishes it were different. Her mother's answer is perfect.

For the little reader who read: someone who entered the world this year, I'm Your Mean by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Jill Polka, is the sweetest, gentles, most perfect gift. Hint: It's really for mothers. Pair it with My Hero by Brian Biggs, which is really a good book for dads and kids.

For the kid who loves art, Opening Monkeys in the Briny by Lynn Becker, illustrated by Scott Brandridge, is about a little boy who's made a gift, and it's a great introduction to mythology and cryptology. Add it to Too Many Pigs in the Pool by Wendy Parmalee, illustrated by Iris Amaya. Yep, it's a piggy in there.

Children 6-9
Seriously, who doesn't like pizza! If so, they'll also like Pizza! A Slice of History by Greg Pizzoli, a cute, colorful illustrated, fun book on everybody's favorite food.

For the kid who loves monsters, Mythical Realms on Boxy by Stephanie Warren, illustrated by Penny Sikes, and it could be the right gift. It's full of information from National Geographic Kids about real animals that were somehow mythologized throughout history.

If there's a child on your list who loves legends, then The Return of the Christmas Witch by Dan Murphy and Audrey Wood, illustrated with illustrations by Julli Iredale, is the book. It's the story of Kristiann, who was Santa's twin sister, a mystery, a bit of Christmas darkness. (No worries, happy endings abound.)

Youth who love to be a big brother or sister, The Baby-Changing Station by Kellie Miller, illustrated by Dan Scott, is absolutely the book for it: it's a tale of a boy who isn't happy that there's a baby brother in the house, but he discovers a macabre way to change the baby, but not in diapaper changes...

Children 9-14
The young environmentalist will be so happy reading Maelstrom: Discover Earth's Irreplaceable Glaciers and Their Role in the Planet's Future which can be found under the category Science. Can you Can to Save Them by Anita Sanchez, illustrated by Lily Padula, which is full of ideas, information, pictures, and graphs, as well as a sense that kids really can save the world. Add it to Dinosaur Atlas from National Geographic Kids, a large-size book all about dinosaurs and the places they lived. Young your scientist will love it.

If there's a child who loves good historical fiction, then look for The Other Side of the Trail: The Scientific Race to Defeat a Deadly Virus by David Quammen. Yes, it's a true, but it reads like a thriller. Give it with Plagues and Their Aftermath by Brian Michael Jenkins, for a wider look through the history of that which affects us.

Children up to 6
The preschooler who loves polar bears will love getting A Bear Far From Home by Susan Fletcher and Rebecca Green, based on the true story of a gift from Norway to England, and the meaning of home. Give it with The Woddest Teddy Ever by Marcello Verdial, a story of another kind of bear and its love of a little girl.

For young environmentalists, A Planet Like Ours by Frank Murphy and Charmian Gordon, illustrated by Kayla Harren, could be a great gift. It's a sweet, uncomplicated reminder to love the earth we have.

For young Black boys, a book like Black Boy, Black Boy, Celebrate the Power of YOU by Ali Kamanda and Iroh Redmond, with pictures by Ken Daley, is a welcome gift. It's an inspirational book full of all the good Black men do, and that a Black boy can hope for.
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