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RADIANT WAXING
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 40% 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 an 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 has been lost.

However, for Queer people living in safe spaces like Seattle’s 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+ friend groups feel more like found families. In the study “Homophobia, 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 hostile 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 recounts 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 interplay between the two and the inevitable discombobulation of our newly organized relationship structures that happen when romantic love and friendship converge.”

Although it can be difficult for historians to distinguish which friendships of the past were Queer, because society tended to be more homosocial, the consensus is that such close friendships have always been important to people. Romantic sentiments have been tied to friendship in texts dating as far back as the Bible, in which a verse claims “The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself...” Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

English literature is riddled with examples of close male friendships, and physical acts of adoration blurring the lines between romantic and platonic. However, as the study of sociology and laws regarding homosexuality became more prominent, acts of affection between same-sex friends became rarer and rarer, especially for male-identifying people. Perhaps it is the rarity of platonic same-sex affection that makes the phenomenon so special and enduring to this day.

Friendship for LGBTQ+ people is as vital as familial bonds. Friends are often the people there to reassure and comfort, and celebrate life’s big events with those living far from the ones who raised them. Close friends keep us grounded, the community gives us life, and platonic intimacy is sometimes just what a person needs on cold winter nights.

So, this holiday season, if you don’t have a birth family to travel home to, don’t be afraid to reach out to your LGBTQ+ friend group for a Friendsgiving feast, and remind those close to you just how much you love them.
An Ace reflection on dating during the holidays

by Georgia Skerritt
SGN Intern

During my most recent visit to the website for the Accessibility Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), I stumbled upon a post from one community member that sums 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 sharing their experience.

Holidays can be hard for everyone for so many different reasons: high travel costs, the stress of entertaining 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 yet open with.

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 particular are almost always center around a narrative of family, friends, and romance, further reinforcing the idea that the holidays are an opportunity to love and be loved. I think I’ll embrace it just as much as the next person—I love the idea of seeing all my favorite people in one place and hanging out for the evening. At 21, I’m living at home with my parents and sister at the moment and will very happily spend the holidays with them. My sister will probably have a Friendsgiving night if we can manage it, and I have even more to look forward to when other friends come home from college for their 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 something 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 existence 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 I am still trying to unravel.

As I write this article, I would describe myself as Grey-Asexual and Panromantic, meaning that my sexual attraction to others is based on emotional connection, but I am romantically attracted to everyone though my identity feels like 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 in 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 more 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 it is 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 any time 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, what with the combination of stressful relationships, shopping, finances, 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 be a gauntlet for those in recovery. Through attending holiday celebrations, it is possible to maintain sobriety.

There are practical ways to keep things in check. The key is to avoid relapse or overindulgence 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 non-alcoholic options?
- How will I get home if I feel uncomfortable and need to leave?
- Are there thromboelastograph relapse triggers? Is there a risk of re-engagement?

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, sponsor, 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 non-alcoholic options to enjoy, and holiday mocktails are popular because they provide a safer option and a better choice for sober guests," said Marcel Geme of Addicted.org.

Non-alcoholic 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 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 RecoveryBeginns.
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 "promote 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 become 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 litterbox, even if they had previously been trained to do so.

The stress reactions of animals in the shelter 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 appear 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 understand 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 out 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 they can wait for their forever family in the comfort of a " FTC HOME! " Anybody is welcome to apply.

Foster parents can choose a pet to bring into their home, and work as an advocate in finding their forever family. They are responsible for taking care of the foster pet, making sure they get to vet appointments, and most importantly, reassuring them that 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 Paris, 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 get the pet out of the shelter for a few hours, burn off some energy, and also get 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 SAn fostersofg@gmail.com.

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

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 Buck ley) 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 luminous Jonathan Bennett) come together to decorate their childhood home in their family’s trademark fantastic, over-the-top style before the house is sold.

Brandon is a supporting character, whose movements in the film along with his husband Jake (a nondescript Brad Harter) 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 masquerade themselves to their family. The effort here is to show no difference between the two brothers and their respective relationships, perhaps softening the edges to endure straight and lows. But the moment between Brandon and Jake is so shrill that in whispers and ellipses 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 lightweight and quirky on 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 a nice energy and charisma that elevates Buck ley’s performance.

A still underutilized Harter 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 this is dropping 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 Huges (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 Sixteen Candles (my high school movie character crush!), Patrick, like Jake, is handsome and confident, poppin' deep cherries in big good looks. There is a shy awkwardness between them, from both getting to know someone new, but the anxiety of reconciling that to the image you've held in your memory. Though there is not much to this love story with one too many plot points (including a long digression to save an old train station), the tenderness of the courtship was my favorite.

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 plus here is Dresher, 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 caretaker 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 meddler. This is far from true. While her role in the movie is limited, her presence in the film is that of a daughter, a woman who is able to blend in as a father figure, bringing a bit of a innocuous, Nickleby-like energy to these scenes. The story is full of promise, but what works best is the two leads, real-life Gay couple Lewis and Lee. You feel as if you have the two on screen together. There’s no friction here. Heart? Not so much. Call it a “network note.” But casting two Gay actors relieves the viewer from having to make a leap of imagination and, overall, it works well.

The Gay cowboys Christmas movie
Yet, still, I was searching for something romantic. Maybe even a little sex appeal? For this, I turned to Dashing in December (2020). An interesting cinematic blend of the Western terrain and a Lesbian love story. The film is a foray into the world of Amy Sherman-Palladino’s Gilmore Girls, Dashing brings both the romance and the heat to hit that sweet spot. The space guitar and tinkling piano score sets the mood for love. Recently single hotshot financier Wyatt (de-chiselled Peter Porte) returns to his childhood home in Colorado, where his widowed mom Deb (a delicate Andie McDowell) runs the family horse ranch with the help of sweet-natured stable hand Heath (an effortless Juan Pablo di Pace).

Wyatt’s high-school girlfriend Blake (a solid Caroline Harris) and her mom both know Wyatt and Heath are Gay but decide not to tell either, at first. Not quite like Setup, this plot device allows the men to make their own choices about each other. Though it is a fact that they are more similar than they thought. They are both uptight and reserved, cheerfully and charmingly. Decidedly dashing. And everyone around them loves them individually, but especially together.

Being released through Paramount, this production is a little more money to push the envelope. There is more room for character development and dramatic intensity. The courtship is given time to ignite, breathe, and solidify. The scenes flow nicely between intimate, two-character scenes and elaborated, holiday-themed sequences. A Shania Twain needle drop at the local honky-tonk with an impeccably choreographed line dance transported me to another astral plane.

And I got the feel I was looking for when the camera unashamedly swings on Porte’s ample anatomy in tight underwear (from front to back) before Wyatt innocently bumps into Heath, who is also in his underwear. You won’t see that on Hallmark.

Beyond the skin, there is a romantic moment when Wyatt unexpectedly is swept off his feet. He is surprised and enchanted, which leads to the sweetly anticipated first kiss. But as the plot unfolds, the unconfident power dynamics at play eventually unravel the romance to devastating effect. It’s not satisfactorily solved, but it does end happily (of course). Many plot points.

But what stands out about this film is that it feels wholly sophisticated and contemporary: the complicated bonds between all characters, the way the holiday is woven throughout the narrative and art direction, and of course, the sweeping, cinematic landscapes. Although it’s a movie with so many ups of hot cocoa, I can report there were absolutely no liquids in the film. Aside from that, the film’s real strength is in the casting. Once again, we have two Gay actors in Porte and di Pace. Porte’s husky allure is even muted by di Pace’s easy sensuality. But it is di Pace’s sensitive portrayal in a series of monologues about his family and romantic history that is the film’s emotional core. The ranch is a token of what Wyatt left behind, but what has saved Heath’s life.

The diversity of the cast brings a modernity to the film, having thoughtful and three-dimensional characters played by people of color like Harris and di Pace breaks the stereotype that only white people can come from these kinds of places, and ultimately, play these kinds of roles.

And lastly, Andie McDowell is a Queer icon, obviously through her outrageous cameo in Magic Mike XXL but also with Dashing, adding another jewel to her crown.

For a Queer viewer of a certain age, the hometown holiday romance is a chance to go back in time and experience a first love, to replay lost youth, now as adults. It is an opportunity to escape into the fantasy. And there’s the trick: for so long we were never included in these kinds of stories, and now that these films are gaining traction, it’s a joy that Queer people can finally participate in this holiday tradition. Some may cringe at the lack of realism, but most will dream.

Christmas House and Dashing in December are available on Amazon Prime, as is Christmas House 2, which will also be shown on the Hallmark Channel on Nov. 21. The Christmas Setup can be seen online on Lifetime, Hulu, and Amazon Prime.
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: texture! This recipe brings out that lovely flavor and results in a slightly thinner consistency for easier spreading.
2/3 cup fresh cranberries - $0.20
2/3 cup sugar - $0.25
1 teaspoon cornstarch - $0.08
Zest of 1 lemon** - $0.25
Sugar
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 tart.

Roasted Veggies You Actually Want to Munch.
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 appetizing. Usually, the green beans are way overcooked and/or from a can, meaning they lose their amazing crunch texture. The sweet potatoes are loaded with added sugar and marshmallows, which I find completely unnecessary. This recipe adds another classic winter veggie, beets. Enjoy the warm, earthy flavors and delicate texture of these nutrient powerhouses.
3 beats - $2.99
2 sweet potatoes - $2.29
8-12 ounces fresh green beans - $3.29
3/4 sweet yellow onion - $0.19
2/3 tablespoons olive oil - $0.35
1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar - $0.02
1/2 teaspoon salt - $0.02
1/2 teaspoon pepper - $0.24
Preheat the oven to 425°F. Place 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 into thirds.

Place chicken in the oven to roast for 50 minutes at 435°F and another 10 minutes at 375°F. The chicken 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 can be used to 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 separate drippings. They can be made with any variety of potatoes, as many recipes that suit your only specific, more expensive varieties. I hope you enjoy this as much as my family did.
6 large potatoes - $1.25
3 tablespoons 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) - $0.25
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese - $0.68
Optional: Chive garnish, 4 cloves roasted garlic, mashed into a rough paste
Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place 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 peeled with a fork. Strain the cooked potatoes and return to the pot. Turn off the burner. Use a potato masher to mash the potatoes until smooth. Add 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 chives, 1 teaspoon of kosher salt, and the poultry seasoning until combined. Continue to gently stir and heat until 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 recipe to reduce energy consumption when preparing all these dishes at once. This recipe can be made one to two days in advance and can save a few bucks on the electric bill by cooking multiple things at the same time and avoiding heating the oven every single time. I plan to use as is as follows:
Preheat the oven to 455°F.
Add the chicken. Cook for 35 minutes. After 35 minutes has passed, add the first round of root vegetables (beets) and bake for another 15 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 375°F and add the rest of the veggies. 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. Veggies and rolls should finish around the same time!

My challenge for this meal guide was to make something that would serve above 6-8 people and still costs under $50. With prices on everything constantly rising, 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 QFC Capitol Hill prices and dividing those by 2, as the amount needed to make the recipe. The Seattle tax of 10.25% was also added, and the grand total came out to $43.79. This is a great sign that good food and hosting a holiday gathering doesn’t have to break the bank.
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The ultimate guide to GAY GIFT GIVING 2022

BY MIKEY ROX
SPECIAL TO THE SGN

Drawing a blank on what to gift the gays and folks on your holiday shopping list? Consider these thoughtful presents picked exclusively for your LGBTQ+ friends and fam:

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 cheer. https://sunnynandted.com, $27.95 each

Whiskey a gogo
Lift holiday spirits (in handsome drinkware, like Baccarat’s Harmonie 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, Chендэоага Pot Still Irish Whiskey, and Westward American Single Malt Stout Cask—a holy trinity all its own. http://www.reservebar.com, $48, $57, $91

Happy Hanukkah tea gift set
+ Subharzsweets
VAHDAM India’s Hanukkah-special assortment of hiscious, herbal, chai, and black teas—paired with Subharzsweets’ 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. https://www.vahdam.com/products/happy-hanukkah-assorted-tea-gift-set, $24, https://www.subharzsweets.com, $45

America the Beautiful annual pass
One of your nieces/nephews 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 200 federal sites in the United States, including parks, monuments, battlefields, protected wildlife refuges, national forests, and more. 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 tool sexy AF so you can feel like a million bucks. https://www.yvesdurif.com/shop/yves-durif-comb-and-petit-brush, $105

Boarderie charcuterie
A far cry from the shelf-stable meat- and-cheese gifts mom loaded up on at your local mall’s pop-up shop, Oprah-approved Boarderie charcuterie boards are chef-made daily and feature hand-selected artisan cheeses, meats, dried fruits, nuts, and chocolates on keepsake Acacia platters. https://www.boarderie.com, $296-239

Wagged Tails custom “a-paw-red”
Memorialize your loved ones’ recently passed pets with Wagged Tails’ custom-printed apparel and accessories, including T-shirts, totes, and mugs, emblazoned with their favorite heaven-sent smush-faces. Keep the Kleenex close. https://www.waggedtails.com/collections/frontpage, $18-67

see GIFTS page 16
Dough Bowl candles
Drop a needle on Aunt Dolly’s holiday vinyl before lighting the wicks on Strand’s Simply Southern dough bowl candles and you’ve got yourself an instant country Christmas. https://strandedinyoubemarco.com/collection/schristmas-candles-gifts-collection, $24-79

Cantilever toolbox
Utilitarianism is a hallmark of Japanese design, and Toyo’s handcrafted cantilever steel storage and tools 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, $129

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 whips of crisp pear and precious orris. https://forhabibi.com/collections/fragrances-for-him/products/sandal-journey-olp-2-5-fl-oz, $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 60V26Ah Bosch motor, four-batt lithium battery tech, and a few bodyshop elves who’ve watched 2 Fast 2 Furious 2 many times. https://www.niq.com, STBD

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 tools, and a user-friendly guide to keep the cogs turning. https://rotatethewriter.com, $195-225

Coravin x Keith Haring wine opener
Art and wine go together like Saint Nick and snickerdoodles, which is why the Coravin x Keith Haring Timeless Stix+ 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 tabletop as it will on display. https://www.coravin.com/products/keith-haring, $350

Limited Edition
Don Q Rum X Coquito NYC drink kit
Add a little Latin flavor to your living-room Christmas film fest with a screening of Alfredo De Villa’s Nothing Like the Holidays and a traditional coquito with a Don Q kick 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, spices, and a bottle of Reserva 7. https://www.donq.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 snow-day season snuggles. https://shopnuzzle.com, $199-329

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? Easy to wrap, 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’s a storyteller, which is something that’s passed down through the women of her family, but the blessing turns out to be a curse when she sees a murder that happened long ago. Give it with The Strange Inheritance of Leah Fleming by Rita Zorzini, also a story of a young fortune 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 advice columnist who becomes a serial killer by watching the other people on the train — until the day something happens, and commuters suddenly become her prey.

Pair it with Has Anyone Seen My Tres? by Christopher Buckley; a hilarious novel about being alive during the pandemic, when one’s health is the least of one’s worries.

Give the historical fiction lover A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the Young Princess Diana, 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 Random by Penn Jillette, the story of an almost-23-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? You’ll find the person who gets this book and finds out.

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

General Nonfiction
The reader who wants a little diversity in their selection will love Latino Almanac: From Early Leaders to Corporate Leaders by Nicolas Kandel, PhD, which is absolutely filled with mini-biographies of Latino luminaries, heroes, 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 Wakin Dennis, Arlene Hirschfelder, and Paulette F. Mohn, which has fact sheets 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 DeLen Tolbert Smith, PhD, AIA, with questions and answers by science professionals. Give it with The Book of Why: How the World Works by Daniel Kahneman, who has, no doubt, seen enough of what’s not working and needs to know why.

For the person who’s 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 Happier Hour by Cassie Holman, 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 Burgiargues. 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 historian on your gift list will enjoy Mutinous Women: How French Convicts Became Founding Mothers of the Gulf Coast by Joan Didion, the true story of 132 women who were taken from France to the mouth of the Mississippi and released in 1719 — purely 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 Rosedale by Natalie Livingstone, 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 Scandalous Hamiltons by Bill Shaffer, the story of a Gilded Age scandal and the beginning of tabloid-style journalism.

They will also whose wrap 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 Myth America: Historians Take on the Biggest Legends and Lies About Our Past, edited by Kevin M. Krenke 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 to it Seek and Hide by Amy Cuddy, 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 Shapiro Hensinger Steiger. How could anyone 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 Wanger, 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 Chakravarti, 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 Gian Vico, who says that climate change will cause worldwide change in cities; and Somewhere We Are Human, edited by Beina Grande and Sonia Guinamarcq, 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 Lumberland. Oh, the scandals and murders in Tinseltown past!

Won’t your reader enjoy Great Short Books by Kenneth C. Davis this holiday? The answer lies in this book: it’s about books — specifically, more than 50 short novels by authors you know and don’t know. Wrap it up with a gift certificate to your favorite bookstore.

See BOOKS page 20
The relentless person who logs 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 Kristen Allen, a coming-of-age memoir about growing up a woman in the South. The historian will enjoy The Grimaces: 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.

For LGBTQ readers
For the person who loves 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. 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 short determination put that all in one man’s past.

For someone who made a difficult decision this year: Families We Keep by Rini Reczek and Emma Bolyai-Smith is a good idea. It’s a look at LGBTQ people who have decided to stick with their families, though there may continue to be a stigma for acceptance or a total lack of it. It means work, and this book might help. Know your gift giver well 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 Julia Shaw to someone special. There’s a lot to know about the subject. From genetics to legalities, celebrities to monogamy.

The Tran 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: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad by Hila Mahfouz. For those who sometimes struggle, this book is a great achievement.

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 of hundreds of thousands of women, gender-nonconforming people, and Transgender men. Angela Davis was there. So was Alix Shailer. This book takes the reader there, too. Add to it Manifesting Justice: Wrongly Convicted Women Reclaim Their Rights by Valeria Bentsy.

Mystery
People “of a certain age” will absolutely adore Will You Be My Neighbor? by Deanna Raybourn, a thriller-mystery about four women who’ve worked as assassins for decades, but suddenly everyone thinks their methods are outdated. They’re sent on vacation, but it’s really no vacation. How do they get out alive? Lovers of short mysteries will love to find Reader, I Buried Them and Other Stories by Peter Lovesey. This book, in celebration of Lovesey’s more than 50 years of mystery writing, is full of mayhem and murder, and you know your gift giver will want it.

True crime
Your giftee is obsessed with the Godfather movies, eh? Well, then, you can’t go wrong with The Godmother: Murder, Vengeance, and the Bloody Struggle of Mafia Women by Barrie Laffra. The story of the women behind the men in the mob. Giving it to someone is an offer you can’t refuse. For those who can appreciate a good true crime tale set outside the US, look for In the Mouth of the Wolf by Katherine Corcoran, 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, Corcoran, then the AP’s Mexico bureau chief, goes in search of answers. Speaking of answers, give it with The Forever Witness by Edward Humes, the story of a double murder in Seattle more than 30 years ago. The trial 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 Katie 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.
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