

**The Soil Tells the Story at Shared  
Abundance Organic Farm**

Pgs. 4 & 5

**Have Yourself a Rowdy  
Little Christmas**

Pgs. 20 & 21

THE  
*Vine*

BriarPatch Food Co-op | Winter 2025/26



# THE *Vine*

## Winter Issue

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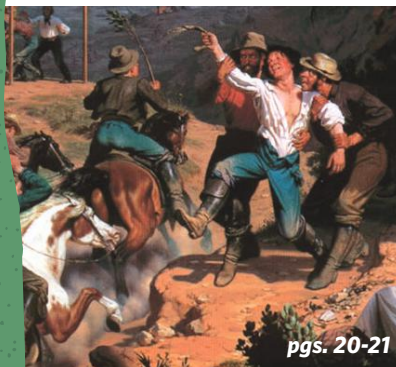
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experience (and  
extra content), see  
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### On Our Cover:

Sweet Bunny Dreams by Seanan Maher.

*Follow us!* See the latest photos &  
videos highlighting the best of BriarPatch!  
[@briarpatchcoop](https://www.instagram.com/briarpatchcoop)



# Don't feel like cooking?

**Pre-order your complete BriarPatch Deli Holiday meal today!** Savor the flavors of the season, including fresh ham, two kinds of potatoes, cranberry sauce, pies and much more. All pre-cooked and ready to heat and then eat. Order through 12/19 or while supplies last!

**Pick up will be available at either store Monday, Dec. 22 through Wednesday, Dec. 24.**



## *The Holiday Meal Pack*

— feeds 4-6

- 3 lbs of Maple Brown Sugar Ham
- 8 oz Maple Brown Sugar Glaze
- 16 oz Green Bean Almondine
- 16 oz Cornbread Stuffing
- 16 oz Roasted New Potatoes
- 16 oz Roasted Sweet Potatoes
- 8 oz Orange Cranberry Sauce
- 1 Pumpkin Pie with Ginger Crust

## *The Holiday Whole Ham Meal Pack*

— feeds 8-10

- 7-8 lbs Fully Cooked Boneless Ham
- 16 oz Maple Brown Sugar Glaze
- 24 oz Green Bean Almondine
- 24 oz Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Dried Cherries
- 24 oz Roasted New Potatoes
- 24 oz Roasted Sweet Potatoes
- 24 oz Cornbread Stuffing
- 16 oz Orange Cranberry Sauce
- 1 Pumpkin Pie with Ginger Crust
- 1 Vegan Apple Pie



**Pre-order your  
holiday meal here**

[briarpatch.coop/event/holiday-ham](http://briarpatch.coop/event/holiday-ham)





# THE SOIL TELLS THE STORY AT Shared *Abundance* Organic Farm

Photo credit: Shared Abundance Organic Farm

**T**hree miles away from Auburn BriarPatch is a relatively small farm, just 13 acres. But what it contains feels much, much bigger.

Shared Abundance Organic Farm owner Ruthanne Jahoda initially purchased the land with the intention of turning it into a safe space for young people with drug and alcohol dependencies. "My first goal was to buy land and then to create a space where these people could have good food, a good environment and loving people around them," she explained.

However, once her mission began, Ruthanne started to really connect with the land and the elements. She found herself more compelled to watch, wait and listen to the land. As she listened, her gut told her that another path was to be paved.

Following her intuition, Ruthanne began cleaning up the land, which included a kiwi orchard that had been overgrown by blackberries due to seven years of neglect. After three years of hard work to restore the orchard and the farm, Shared Abundance was officially organic certified in 2000.



High tunnel of seedlings

**"However, once her mission began, Ruthanne started to really connect with the land and the elements."**

Having been a hobbyist organic farmer since the age of 18, "I thought it would translate easily across. I've been a gardener, I can be a farmer." But, as Ruthanne discovered, the learning curve was bigger than she anticipated. "It's been one baby step after another."

Today, the farm grows a plethora of different foods, including kiwi, microgreens,



A late fall Sacramento market





Winter sorting and boxing kiwi for stores



Ruthanne and Alex harvesting kiwi

raspberries, figs, grapes, persimmons, olives, lemons, pomegranates, plums, apples, peaches and even a beautiful crop of roses which she sells and makes tea from. All from her 13-acre farm!

## The Organic Life

Keeping the farm organic was critical.

"It is my job to be part of my culture and my society, and my clean farming is where I have my activism," Ruthanne stated. "It's the work that I want to do. I think it's a big statement, even though it's quiet. It's what I do because it's what I believe is my spiritual work."

She leans on things like kelp and fish fertilizer, which deters pests by disrupting their sense of smell and taste, and other natural practices like companion planting. All of this equates to very little pest pressure around the farm.

Diversity is a big component to her farming, which she uses as part of her organic practices. Ruthanne said that when she first took over the land, she wanted to see what would grow naturally and found that

it actually helped reduce pest pressure. Around the property are also owl and bat houses, which help control pests. "I feel like I'm partnering with the natural world in my farming. The natural world has its own way—through diversity—of discouraging harmful infestation."

Shared Abundance is one of the local farms that BriarPatch relies on for fresh produce during the winter months, including kiwis, microgreens and Meyer lemons. "Selling seasonally is so amazing for the land and the people—to have a real, true relationship with what is available in our area, and to take advantage of that."

## A Perfect Partnership

"When I first started [farming], I started with the kiwis because that was the thing that was neglected here that

**"Diversity is a big element to her farming, which she uses as part of her organic practices. Ruthanne explained that when she first took over the land, she wanted to see what would grow naturally and found that it actually helped reduce pest pressure."**

I reclaimed," said Ruthanne. "I had 17,000 pounds of kiwis on that first harvest. I didn't know what to do with them, so I started calling distributors."

Which turned out to be more difficult than it seemed. After receiving a less than warm welcome from others, she decided to give BriarPatch a call, asking if she could show us her kiwis. Naturally, we gave a resounding "Yes!"

"It was like I was talking to a human being, not a corporation. The human being-ness behind the co-op energy has supported me throughout my entire farming experience. I feel that you guys love me as much as I love you."

Of course, she supplies other outlets with her beautiful produce, including farmers markets and other co-ops. Incredibly, Ruthanne sells just as many kiwi locally as she does in the Bay Area.



Read the rest of the article in the digital edition  
[mobimag.co/bp-vine/w26](https://mobimag.co/bp-vine/w26)



Ruthanne harvesting with the winter sun shining down





# BriarPatch is a Special Place to Work

By Chris Maher, CEO



Every other year, we invite our staff to share their honest and constructive feedback through a comprehensive workplace satisfaction survey. We facilitate this via an objective third-party consultant who does this work for many other co-ops across the country. This year, 222 out of 223 eligible staff participated in the survey. The results reflect a workplace culture built on respect, inclusion and shared commitment to our mission.

I'm humbled and appreciative to know that our employees think that BriarPatch is a truly great place to work.

Staff were asked to score their agreement with a series of questions about our workplace, with 5 indicating the highest level of agreement and 1 being the lowest. Out of 70 questions, 61% received scores of 4.0 or higher, and none scored below 3.0. Compared with over 250 surveys from food co-ops across the country, BriarPatch stands out as exemplary, with 22 of 55 benchmarked questions landing in the top quartile—and none in the bottom. This means our staff are significantly more satisfied than the national average in our industry, and that's something to celebrate.

## What We're Excelling At

Our team's feedback highlighted many strengths that make BriarPatch a special place to work. Staff shared that they feel heard, respected and appreciated—and that management genuinely cares. Many described BriarPatch as the most inclusive and welcoming workplace they've experienced, where people are encouraged to be themselves and bring their full selves to the job.

Strong relationships and a deep sense of purpose shine through. People love their coworkers, feel connected to our mission and take pride in helping feed and serve our community. One employee said it best: *"I LOVE MY JOB! It's beautiful to wake up in the morning, excited to come to work."*

## Opportunities for Growth

Alongside the overwhelmingly positive feedback, our team also offered thoughtful suggestions for improvement:

- **Communication:** Some team members would like more timely updates when changes happen. We're hearing a desire for increased communication and information sharing.
- **Training:** We recognize that training staff is essential for their success, and staff recognized recent improvements in our training programs and want more. We're committed to building more consistent and supportive development experiences.

- **Efficiency:** A few departments need stronger systems to help things run more smoothly. We'll continue working on better coordination and documentation of procedures.
- **Compensation:** While our benefits are appreciated, we know cost of living is a concern for many. We're actively evaluating ways to better support our staff financially.

## Moving Forward Together

We're proud of what these results say about the heart of BriarPatch—and grateful for the honesty and thoughtfulness of our staff. Their voices help shape our direction and our values in action. We use this feedback in our annual business planning to guide improvements, strengthen what's working and ensure that everyone who walks through our doors—staff, shoppers and Owners—feels the care and community that define us.

Thank you to our incredible team for your dedication, and to our Owners and shoppers for supporting a workplace where people thrive.







# Values are What Drive Our Work at BriarPatch

By Rachel Berry, BriarPatch Board President

**D**o you remember why you decided to become a BriarPatch Owner? While the discounts are a great perk, many of us make the investment to join because of shared values—we believe in the kind of work BriarPatch is doing in the world. When I first became an Owner 16 years ago, it was the shared value with organic and regenerative agriculture that inspired me to join. Now I understand that BriarPatch is driven by a broad set of values that improve the health and wellbeing of our communities in a wide variety of ways.

In this issue of *The Vine*, our CEO Chris Maher highlights our achievements around employee satisfaction, one of the core values of our co-op, because employees are not just workers, they are the creators of our success, they are fellow community members and we want them to thrive.

Corporate supermarkets, driven by profits, typically see labor as a cost to be minimized through part-time positions and minimal benefits. What makes BriarPatch different is that it is driven by policies and practices that reflect our core value of employee wellbeing. As a

result, we offer largely full-time positions with a benefits package highly valued by our employees—rated 4.5 out of 5 on a recent survey. And when 'Hero Pay' was initiated during COVID for frontline workers, BriarPatch was one of the few (if only!) supermarkets that maintained that pay raise even after the major threats of COVID had passed, because of our value-driven practices.

Values are what drive our work at BriarPatch, and I am grateful for the community leaders who came together nearly 50 years ago to start our beloved cooperative with big hearts and a big vision. Year after year, I feel proud about spending my food dollars at BriarPatch because I know the policies and practices of this business are rooted in core values that promote the health and wellbeing of

***"In this issue of *The Vine*, our CEO Chris Maher highlights our achievements around employee satisfaction, because employees are not just workers, they are the creators of our success, they are fellow community members and we want them to thrive."***

I hope you read Chris' report on our recent employee survey results, it's quite an achievement! Measures like these are in place to help us reflect on how well we are achieving our core values and to identify opportunities for improvement.

our community—the people, the plants and the planet. Thank you for shopping at BriarPatch and being part of our cooperative impact in the Sacramento watershed.





# Spice Spice Baby



## Anise

Distinctly sweet, with a licorice-ness to it and hints of cinnamon and clove. Powerfully aromatic, it goes deep with warmth and spiciness, yet there's a clean, minty sensation that whispers. Think sambuca and sometimes pho.



## Nutmeg

Once considered so valuable that it drove colonial trade wars, it's actually two spices in one—nutmeg (the seed) and mace (the red covering around the seed and no, it has nothing to do with defense spray). Potent—just a pinch can change the dimensions of dishes. Described as warm, slightly smoky and comforting.



## Cinnamon

The dried inner bark of trees in the laurel family. You've seen it in sweet and savory dishes—from cookies and cakes to mole and shawarma. Cinnamaldehyde, more casually known as cinnamon oil, is said to have antifungal properties too.



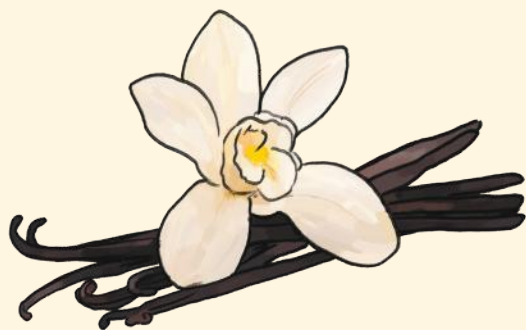
## Ginger

Known for its zing, ginger is one of the most vibrant and versatile spices out there. Used to treat indigestion, nausea and inflammation, it was popular among sailors to prevent seasickness. Take note, bakers: fresh ginger is not interchangeable with dried or ground ginger.



## Clove

Bold and peppery, pungent and spicy, earthy and bitter with an aroma and flavor that lingers. Just a pinch goes a long way. Once used as a toothache remedy, clove oil is so potent that it can numb your mouth, thanks to a chemical called eugenol. Use whole cloves to infuse flavor slowly, but for instant intensity, opt for the ground version.



## Vanilla

Needing little introduction, it's known for its soft, creamy sweetness. The most widely used flavor in the world, vanilla is found in cakes, cookies, coffee, sauces and even seafood dishes. However, it is one of the most labor-intensive spices, with each vanilla orchid needing to be hand-pollinated when grown outside of its native land of Mexico.



It's cookie swap season. Time to dough your thing and get baking! Many of the season's spices are true overachievers—pulling double duty in sweet treats and savory eats. So, let's spice things up!



## Allspice

Not actually a mix of spices, it's so named because of its complex and layered flavors, resembling a combo of cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. Commonly found in Caribbean, Middle Eastern and Latin cuisines, it can be used in both sweet and savory dishes, and even in beverages like mulled wine and spiced cider.



## Mint

Notoriously hardy, spreads quickly, making it both a blessing and curse. That signature chill? That's menthol tricking nerves into sensing cold. Pairs perfectly with lamb, peas, potatoes and yogurt-based sauces on the savory side, and in ice cream, chocolate and candies on the sweet side.



## Dark Molasses Gingerbread

This recipe is from Edna Lewis and Scott Peacock. The granddaughter of an emancipated slave, Edna Lewis is considered the doyenne of Southern cooking, championing the use of fresh, seasonal ingredients and giving traditional dishes a refined touch.

- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, more for pan
- 2 cups cake flour, more for pan
- ¼ tsp baking soda
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 ½ cups dark molasses
- 1 cup heavy cream, chilled
- 1 cup Greek whole milk yogurt
- ½ tsp vanilla
- 2-3 Tbsp caster sugar
- Pinch of sea salt
- Optional: ½ tsp fresh lemon zest

Preheat oven to 350°. Butter and flour an 8-inch round baking pan. Sift flour, baking soda and baking powder into a large mixing bowl. Blend in spices and salt with a wire whisk.

In a small pan, bring 1 cup water to a boil. Melt butter in it, then whisk water into flour mixture. Beat eggs and add to mixture, along with molasses. Whisk until well blended. Pour into pan.

Bake 40-45 minutes or until a skewer plunged into center comes out with no trace of raw batter. Interior will be moist. Serve warm with yogurt whipped cream.

To make yogurt whipped cream: Whip heavy cream on medium speed until you get soft peaks.

Keep whipping, and add yogurt, vanilla and lemon zest (if using). Slowly add in sugar.

Whip until peaks hold when you lift the whisk.

Use immediately or store in refrigerator for several days.



# COMMUNITY Spotlight

## Fall Scrapbook



**Pure Pours & Perfect Pairings: A Biodynamic Wine & Cheese Pairing with Katrina Frey of Frey Vineyards - 9/18**



**Dogs 4 Dogs Promo on National Hot Dog Day when 1 lb of hot dogs purchased = 1 lb of dog food donated - 10/10**



**Oktoberfest: A Sausage and Non-Alcoholic Beer Pairing in our Grass Valley Café - 10/2**



**Shelf-stable food donation to Auburn Interfaith Food Closet - 9/19**



**Community Connections: Managing Wildfire Risks at Home with UCANR Fire Network and Placer Resource Conservation District - 10/1**



**Fresh & Fun Fair in the Grass Valley Community Room - 10/10**



# OWNERS' Info



## Why Be a Co-op Owner?

### Owner Appreciation Months

Each year, Owners can take 10% off one shopping trip in February, April, July, September and December. This schedule is subject to change.

### 5% off all BriarPatch brand supplements. Be well and save!

### Opt into e-Receipts and automatic Register Round Up

Email [hellobriarpatch@briarpatch.coop](mailto:hellobriarpatch@briarpatch.coop) to sign up.

### Senior Discount

Owners 67 and wiser may apply to receive 2% off every day and 5% on Wednesday.

### Be a PatchWorks Volunteer

Receive 15% off on up to two shopping trips each month when you volunteer at select nonprofits.

### Special Orders

Owners can get special savings for case discounts at our Grass Valley location.

**Check out more Owner benefits** at [briarpatch.coop/join-the-co-op](http://briarpatch.coop/join-the-co-op)

## Board Members and Meetings

### Board of Directors

Check our website for our Board roster.

To contact all the Directors, email: [directors@board.briarpatch.coop](mailto:directors@board.briarpatch.coop). For individual Directors: first name and last initial (i.e. [rachelb@board.briarpatch.coop](mailto:rachelb@board.briarpatch.coop)). Letters may be left at Customer Service.

### Upcoming Board Meetings

The upcoming meeting agenda is available at least one week prior to the meeting. Owners are welcome to attend Board Meetings. Please contact Mary Hunter for more information: [maryh@briarpatch.coop](mailto:maryh@briarpatch.coop).

**Tuesday, December 9, 2025**

**Tuesday, January 27, 2026**

**Tuesday, February 24, 2026**



### Board Committees

To find out more about the Board's standing committees, please add the following Committee names to the subject line when you email us at [directors@board.briarpatch.coop](mailto:directors@board.briarpatch.coop).

Board Development Committee  
Finance Committee  
Executive Committee  
Governance Committee



## Ends Policies

**BriarPatch Food Co-op exists so that members of the communities in which we live, work and serve will benefit in ever-increasing ways from:**

- Vibrant and sustainable organic and natural foods grocery stores;
- An inclusive and resilient regional food system;
- An equitable and expanding cooperative economy.

## Give Back & Save!

Save 15% on your shopping trip at BriarPatch when you volunteer 6 hours with a local nonprofit.

*Join the team!*

[briarpatch.coop/patchworks](http://briarpatch.coop/patchworks)

**BRIARPATCH**  
**patch**  
**WORKS**  
**VOLUNTEER TEAM**



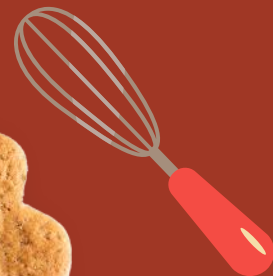


# Sleigh All Day, Bake

Joy isn't seasonal, and neither is a good cookie. Whether you're decking the halls or just surviving a Tuesday, these sweet treats bring the cheer, no matter the time of year. So preheat that oven, cue the cozy vibes and remember: every day is a great day for cookies.

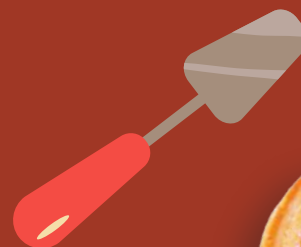
## *Speculaas*

A spicy snap of holiday tradition! These Dutch and Belgian cookies are typically baked for St. Nicholas Day (December 6th)—so yes, put out your shoe and hope it's filled with cookies instead of socks. The name "speculaas" may come from the Latin for "mirror"—perhaps because these cookies reflect the spice-forward spirit of the season. Cut them into your favorite shapes and have some festive fun.



## *Flourless Peanut Butter Cookies*

Rich and peanut buttery to the max. Flourless, fuss-free and dangerously good, they bake up with a shortbread-like crumb—but only if you don't overbake them (seriously, trust us). Feeling extra? Smush two together with jam, ganache or marshmallow fluff for a sandwich cookie that slaps.



*Check out digital!*

Find the recipes online  
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# All Year.



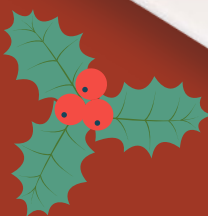
## Linzer Bars

Think of these as the express version of a 17th-century Austrian classic: the Linzer torte. The original is a fancy almond latticed shortcrust cake and red currant jam. Ours? Raspberry jam, buttery crust, zero royal baking appointments required. It's tradition, streamlined.



## Bourbon Pecan Shortbread

This is what happens when classic shortbread gets invited to a holiday cocktail party. Shortbread hails from Scotland, where it was beloved by Mary, Queen of Scots and traditionally served during Hogmanay (Scottish New Year). But we've swapped the Scotch for bourbon, tossed in toasty pecans and made it y'all-friendly.



## Chocolate Pistachio Biscotti

A cookie with ancient credentials—biscotti go all the way back to Roman times, when they were basically the granola bars of marching legions. The name means "twice cooked", which explains the crunch. Ours are upgraded with chocolate, pistachios and cranberries for a more modern take.



## Palmiers

Ooh la la! Simple and elegant and easy to make with store bought puff pastry. Palmiers are a staple of any French patisserie. Buttery, not-too-sweet and you can customize them—swap out straight up sugar for cinnamon sugar or skip the sweet altogether and use parmesan instead for a savory affair.



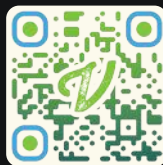


# Flavors OF FIRE

**G**et ready to light your culinary fire! From charred to blackened, smoked to torched, these sizzling techniques bring heat, flavor and a little drama to every dish. So grab your spatula, fan those flames and prepare for a menu that's bursting with smoky, searing, steamy goodness. Your taste buds are in for a full-blown flavor inferno!

*Check out digital!*

Find recipes with  
flavors of fire here  
[mobimag.co/bp-vine/w26](http://mobimag.co/bp-vine/w26)



## *Charred*

No, this isn't burning your food (though we've all done that accidentally—whoopsie!). This technique coaxes out the smokey and bittersweet by letting the ingredients "kiss" the flame long enough to blister. Think charred peppers, corn or Brussels sprouts. The charred trend took off in the early 2000s, inspired partly by Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines. A blackened edge = big flavor payoff.



## *Torched*

Previously limited to giving crème brûlée (or, "burnt cream" in English) with its shatter-worthy sugared top, torched foods have since gone a bit rogue. Today, you can find torched raw seafood for nigiri, caramelized fruit and adding some razzle dazzle to tableside cocktails and desserts. It's all about the spectacle—and flavor.





## Smoked

No blowing smoke here. Dating back at least 6,000 years, smoking is one of the oldest food preservation methods, used to help keep meat safe longer. Different woods impart distinct regional flavor signatures. What was once a survival tactic has since become a bit of an art, from Southern BBQ to Nordic smoked fish to Japanese bonito flakes.



## Stewed

Ah, comfort food's love language. Not always the prettiest of dishes, stewing dates back thousands of years to when humans first discovered that *slow + low heat = culinary magic*. Tough meats and hard veggies turn meltingly tender, all while absorbing the stew's many flavors as they simmer. Stewing proves that patience pays off.



## Blackened

This isn't about scorching your food past the point of no return. Rather, blackening is all about bold, Cajun-spiced swagger. This method was popularized in the 1980s by Chef Paul Prudhomme, who coated fish in butter and a punchy spice blend, then cooked it in a ripping-hot cast iron pan until the seasonings formed a dark, flavorful crust. The rest, as they say, is culinary history.



## Fire Roasted

A little rustic and romantic, this method evokes images of cooking over a crackling campfire under the stars. Which is historically accurate. Today, the term often refers to food roasted over an open flame or high heat that mimics wood-fire cooking. So a little less feral. Fire-roasted tomatoes surged in popularity in the '90s, resulting in deeper, smokier flavors that beat basic canned tomatoes.



# Fireside Almanac 2026



**M**eaning of Fire: For countless generations, fire has been honored as a guardian in the dark months, its glow believed to keep away ill fortune and wandering spirits. Flames were seen as purifying, able to burn off the old year's shadows and make way for renewal. At the same time, the hearth's warmth called people together, turning the simplest spark into a circle of kinship and story.





**Hearth Games:** For ages, people gathered around the hearth for both light and warmth. During the dark days of winter, that meant a lot of time was spent together. A favorite hearth game was “Fortunately, Unfortunately,” in which people create a story by taking turns adding a sentence that begins with “Fortunately” or “Unfortunately.” Another was Jackstraws, an early version of Pick-Up-Sticks using yarrow stalks or other types of straw or twigs. Just like today’s version, the goal was to pick up the sticks one at a time without disturbing the others.

## Seasonal Superstitions

**Light:** In ancient cultures, especially Celtic and Norse, the longest night—the Winter Solstice—was a time when spirits crossed into the realm of the living. As such, protection rituals like lighting candles and burning sage were used to ward off darkness.



**Animals:** It was believed that if animals grew thick coats early in the season, a harsh winter was ahead. Similarly, cows lying down or cats sitting with their backs to the hearth were believed to signal impending snow or cold. Logical, yes.



**Good Luck:** In these dark times, people would do whatever they could to find a metaphorical and literal light at the end of the tunnel. Signs of a mild winter included playful cats, squirrel sightings and/or birds nesting low. Cattle and sheep that remained calm? Well, that was indicative of stable weather ahead.

**Bad Omens:** Not all signs lead to positive outcomes, however. In winter, a murder of crows gathering in a tree or hearing an owl hoot near home were

warnings of death or misfortune. Dogs howling repeatedly at night during winter was believed to be a warning of death or dark forces nearby. Proceed with caution!

**Fun Fact:** Folklore says that the width of the black bands on a Woolly Bear Caterpillar predicts winter severity. More black means a harsher winter, while more brown means milder conditions.



**Ghosts:** Take note, Halloween lovers! In some cultures, including Japanese and Scandinavian, winter is seen as a time when spirits are most active due to long nights and the “thin veil” between worlds. Winter was a common time for ghost stories and ancestor-honoring rituals. Spooky stories around the hearth, anyone?!

*Check out digital!*

For more fun  
Fireside Almanac  
facts, scan here!

[mobimag.co/bp-vine/w26](http://mobimag.co/bp-vine/w26)





# Let's Wrap it Up:

## A QUICK LOOK AT FUROSHIKI

**F**uroshiki, the Japanese art of wrapping items in cloth dates back over 1,200 years. Today it is typically used as a beautiful and sustainable alternative to gift wrap. The basic idea behind taking the time and effort to wrap a gift is to show the recipient your respect and care for them. It's not just about the present. It's also about the presentation. Originally designed for use in bath houses in the eighth century, furoshiki was used to carry everything people needed for the bath in a big square(ish) cloth. They would spread their items and the cloth out on the dressing room floor to stand on while changing. This is where the name comes from—"furo" meaning bath, and "shiki" meaning to spread out.

Today, most people opt to tie together the corners of the fabric, but another traditional method of securing it is with *tomekos*—discs similar to a riggers belt buckle.

Aside from the eco-benefits of furoshiki, it also makes for an additional gift that recipients can keep.

Standard furoshiki sizes start at about 14 inches for a small wrap going all the way up to almost 7 feet for giant items, but really, you can use whatever size works best for your gift. Traditional furoshiki cloths are slightly rectangular, but there's really no wrong way to prep your cloth. If using fabric that will fray, it's a good idea to add a hem. Otherwise, for other fabrics, no sewing is needed!

There are lots of great how-to resources online to learn more. So, let's get to wrapping.





# Santa Paws Approved:

## Handmade Gifts for Your Furry Overlords

**G**lue, pompoms and fur? What could pawssibly go wrong? Nothing, because you'll be the alpha crafter of the pack, feline quite accomplished when you watch your little terrors tear apart your lovingly presented furoshiki-wrapped DIY pet gifts.

### Kitty Wand

You may already have everything you need for this toy, just look around the house! Get creative and change things up based on what the recipient kitty likes. This is also a great craft to get the kids involved in.

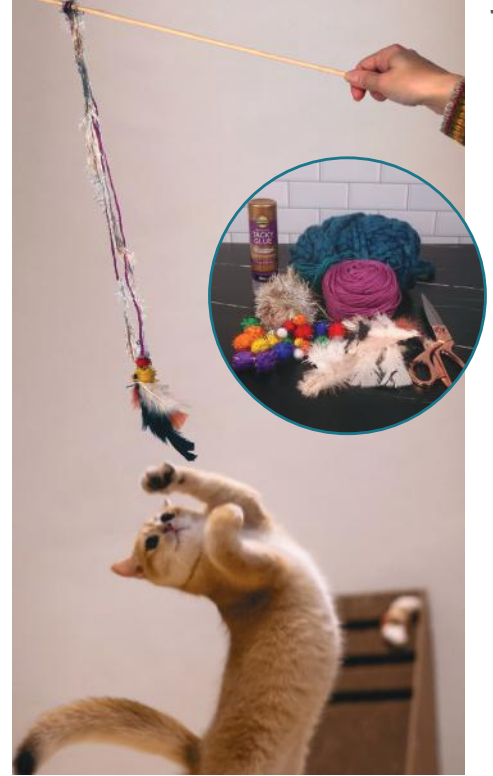
#### Supplies

- Wand (wooden dowel, broken windmill, stick)
- Decorations (feathers, pompoms,

- bells, ribbons)
- String or yarn (15" to 24" or just eyeball it)
- Measuring tape
- Craft glue
- Scissors
- Sewing needle, as needed

#### Instructions

1. Cut a 2-foot wooden dowel and sand the end smooth.
2. Cut several strings of varying lengths—some about halfway down the wand, others slightly longer.
3. Tie feathers, bells, ribbons, etc. to string ends for texture and color.
4. Fold the strings in half and tie them together securely with the string that will attach to the wand.
5. Apply craft glue to the end of the dowel and wrap the main string around it several times to secure.
6. Allow glue to dry before having fun with your kitty companions!



### Easy Peasy Pooch Scarf

#### Knit or Crochet Pet Scarf

If you know even one knitting or crochet stitch, you can make this adorable and warm pet scarf.

#### Supplies

- Yarn
- Knitting needles or crochet hook
- Scissors
- Measuring tape
- Tapestry needle

#### Instructions

1. Knit or crochet a rectangle based on sizing chart, leaving a long tail to stitch together.
  - a. If this gift is for your pet, measure their neck size from the nape of their neck to just under the top of their chest.

- b. If you're not sure of the recipient's neck size, you can approximate and use a stretchy yarn and/or stitch so that it can be pulled over their head.
2. Using a whip stitch (or similar), sew the ends together to make a circle.
  3. Sew into place and/or use a button or two to do the same while adding a bit of bling.

#### Standard dog collar sizes (make scarf 1-2" larger)

Small Dog: 8"-12"

Medium Dog: 12"-18"

Large Dog: 18"-26"

# HAVE YOURSELF A *Rowdy Little Christmas*

**N**evada City is known for its annual Victorian Christmas celebration, filled with mulled wine, hoop skirts and top hats. But what was Christmas actually like during the Gold Rush?

## *The Reality of It*

The holidays were ambivalent for early miners in the area. Panged by homesickness, yet they still reveled in the cooling balm of “boys will be boys” antics and a sense of freedom and spontaneity as early celebrations were often fueled less by planning and more by the sheer abundance of alcohol. These were young men with more whiskey than gold nuggets in their hands, generically speaking, but they

made the best of it.

By 1870, celebrations had grown more refined. A Grass Valley Union article that year reported that Old Savage, the printing office dog, would stroll through town on Christmas Day adorned with flags, streamers and a bronze coat. “Savage (so named because he is good-natured) is especially flattered by having his bronze observed,” the article noted.

Even back then, the season’s sparkle could wear a little thin. In the same issue a writer expressed that,

“It is about as well for parents and gift-givers generally, that Christmas comes but once a year, judging from the load and stocks that were being carted yesterday from the Fancy Good stores on Mill and Main Streets, in every kind of conveyance from an express wagon through all the

ramifications down to a boys go-cart and a baby’s arms.”

In other words, they hit their merry limit.

## *Gift Giving*

Gift giving in the early years was minimal, with Christmas often being the only time people received presents or held parties. Gifts in the gold fields were typically practical like socks, scarves or mittens. In towns with children, girls might receive small quilts or handmade dolls, while boys got wooden tops or toys carved by family or friends.

As towns grew and supplies became more accessible, gift giving became more common. Local newspapers from the 1860s and 1870s were chockfull of holiday ads for cakes, pies, hams, clothing, fine China, housewares and

more. J. Cohn & Bros., “the first clothing store established in Grass Valley,” advertised “Clothing at a sacrifice!!! Bargains never before known in Grass Valley.” Music gifts, like penny whistles or harmonicas, were especially popular. A present every parent would be grateful for their kids to receive, right?!

Despite some people receiving more gifts than others, residents were happy when their neighbors “hit it big,” enough to sometimes make the local news, as an article from 1866 describing a fancy new watch that journalist M.S. Deal received. The writer says, with some



Christmas was often a time that mixed revelry and reflection, as shown in this painting by Charles Christian Nahl, 1872, entitled “Sunday Morning in the Mines”





**Lithograph from J.D. Borthwick, *Three Years in California* (1857) depicting a scene much like Dame Shirley describes in her excerpt from *The Shirley Letters*—drawing entitled “A Ball in the Mines”**

cheeky jealousy:

“Deal, it seems, did not hang up his stocking for nothing. Our friends didn’t deal as liberally with us. We got nothing at Christmas, except a cold, but this does not prevent us from being rejoiced at the better Christmas luck of a deserving member of the newspaper craft.”

## *The Naughty List*

Fitting of the Wild West, there were holiday shenanigans aplenty.

An 1877 article from *The Daily Transcript*, a Nevada City publication, recounts that someone “with an evident desire to be funny” set a rat loose in the vestibule during Christmas Eve mass. Not surprisingly, it didn’t go over well.

The church was filled with shrieks and people scattering. “Practical jokes are a good thing in their way, but we think it would take a microscope of extraordinary magnifying powers to discover any humor in a trick calculated to frighten timid women and

of Christmas presents by Santa Claus, and the distribution of gifts on the various Christmas trees about town, must have been a very unequal one, else we would not have two or three petit larceny cases to record this morning.”

That same Christmas, a fight ensued over a game of poker in a Mill Street saloon. The newspaper states that, “The parties were arrested, were brought before Justice Byrne, and they were fined ‘the usual figure.’ Fines paid.” Crime doesn’t take holidays!

## *The Christmas Nugget*

Perhaps the best tale of Gold Rush era holidays is that of “The Christmas

children.” Over 100 years later, it’s still pretty funny.

In an 1866 version of a police blotter, the Grass Valley Union—as it was called then—opined that,

“The Christmas occasion appears to have brought with it a very bad condition of morals. The apportionment

Nugget,” a story recounted in William P. Bennett’s 1893 memoir about the California Gold Rush, *The First Baby in Camp*:

On Christmas Day in 1849, Mrs. William George Wilson delivered a 12-pound boy at Canyon Creek. Soon a neighboring claim and the gold field grapevine had spread the tongue-in-cheek news that Bill Wilson had struck it rich and found a twelve-pound nugget. Most took the news literally, however. ‘News of the big find spread like wildfire up and down the canyon



**Christmas was often a simple affair during the Gold Rush and usually took place in modest homes like this.**

where hundreds of men were at work,’ wrote Bennett, ‘At once, there was a grand rush to Bill Wilson’s cabin. Every miner was anxious to see the 12-pound lump.’

The family loved every minute of the attention, so much so that they lined up the men at their cabin door, just a few let in at a time to see this miracle nugget. Some people came from more than ten miles away—quite the trek before cars.

The joke continued in the area for three more days.

“Each of the miners loved being had,” Bennett recalled, “As each squad came out of the cabin, the men solemnly asserted that the Wilson nugget was the finest ever seen.”

For more great local history, visit the Nevada County Historical Society at [nevadacountyhistory.org](http://nevadacountyhistory.org)

Photo Source: Sierra College *Snowy Range Reflections*



**Lithograph from J.D. Borthwick, 1857, “*Three Years in California*,” depicting a scene much like what was described in “The Christmas Nugget”**



# MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME:

# Midwest Style

**M**idwest holiday food is all about comfort, coziness, and a good dose of tradition. A lot of what's served comes from the agriculture that put food on the table, while other dishes bring a taste of the Old World, honoring the togetherness folks carried with them from far away. So, grab a plate, don't be shy and dig in—there's plenty to go around!

## Cheese, Sausage and Crackers

An absolute must at any Wisconsin get-together, especially around the holidays. The secret to the spread: a variety of cheeses—goat, sheep, soft, firm—crackers and sliced sausage (think summer sausage, salami or other cured meats), and you're good to go. Fill in any empty spots with more cheese. No fig jam here. And don't call it a charcuterie board.

## Cheese Ball Bites

You betcha, we're doubling down on the cheese. Dang easy and quick to make. Roll your favorite soft cheese (farmers cheese, cream cheese, etc.) with your favorite pairings like nuts and dried fruit, herbs or even another type of firmer cheese. Two-point conversion! Go, Pack, go!

## Bacon Wrapped Water Chestnuts

These small bites will sure as heck fly off the platter. If you dare get dicey, put a spin on things by adding a small slice of jalapeño on the water chestnut before wrapping in bacon. Go for it: brush that bacon with maple syrup or honey for a shiny, sweet finish. If you're feeling fancy, try it with hoisin or teriyaki for a more savory spin.

## Steak Tartare

*Befsztyk tatarski* is a classic Polish appetizer that's a real treat for celebrations and holidays. It might feel a bit adventurous for folks who didn't grow up with it, but trust us, it's worth a try! Served with a raw egg (yes, that's right), along with parsley, pickles, mushrooms and mustard, it's old country deliciousness. Scoop with toast. *Smaczno!*

## Herring

Whether it's pickled, creamed or served with onions, it's a must-have that feels like a little taste of the Old World. Look for it next to the rye bread and maybe some boiled potatoes, because, well, carbs are life. Sure, not everyone's a fan, but those who love it will be piling it high on their plates and telling you it's "just like Grandma used to make." Pass the dill, would ya?

## Lutefisk

No Christmas would be a true Scandinavian-Minnesotan one without the lutefisk—dried whitefish soaked in lye, then boiled until tender. An acquired taste, to be sure. Perhaps it's less about loving the taste and more about preserving tradition. Uff da!

## Pierogies

*Pierogi, verenyky, kaldunai*, whatever your family calls them, these little dumplings stuffed with everything from meat to mushrooms, sauerkraut, farmers cheese, cherries or just good old potato, are always pure comfort food. Boiled or fried, served with butter, onions or a dollop of sour cream if you're feeling fancy. Now grab the clicker and that cozy throw and curl up in the Lazy Boy, why dontcha ya. Game's about to start.

## Steak Tartare







*Cheese Ball Bites*



*Pierogies*



*Lutefisk*



*Cheese, Sausage & Crackers*



*Herring*



*Check out digital!*



For a Midwest  
holiday cocktail  
recipe, scan here!

*Wrapped Water Chestnuts*





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**Fish**



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**Spoon**

**Knife**

**Apple**

**Mug**

**Carrot**

**Hot Dog**





Sustainability  
GOALS

## AND UPDATES

By Sasha Scott,  
Sustainability Coordinator



# A Greener Season: Simple Ways to Celebrate Sustainably

As the days grow shorter and gatherings grow larger, this season invites us to pause and reflect, not just on the impact of our celebrations, but on what really makes them meaningful. The glow of lights, the comfort of shared meals, the joy of giving, these are the things we look forward to. With a little intention, we can enjoy it all while treading more gently on the Earth.

Between November and the New Year, waste levels spike across the U.S. Americans generate up to 25% more trash during this time, according to *Changing America*. That's over a million extra tons each week, much of it from food waste, packaging and energy use.

Food brings us together, and it also contributes to seasonal waste. ReFed estimates that more than 300 million pounds of food are discarded on

Thanksgiving Day alone. That's more than just missed meals, it represents hundreds of thousands of metric tons of carbon emissions. A few small changes like planning meals, storing food properly and making creative use of leftovers can go a long way. We have many sustainable food storage options available for purchase in both stores. Plus, tools like Love Food Hate Waste and SuperCook make it easy to turn what you have into something delicious, reducing waste and saving money.

Lights and decorations brighten the season, and they also draw a lot of power. In one December alone, decorative lighting in the U.S. used over 3.5 billion kWh of electricity, about what 350,000 homes consume in a year. Energy-efficient LED bulbs and timers can help reduce this impact without dimming the magic. Candles add cozy warmth to winter nights and help save on electricity. Consider swapping out paraffin-based ones for beeswax or soy candles. They're biodegradable, often locally made and kinder to indoor air quality.

This is also a time of giving, and often over-giving. Shifting the focus from things to experiences

can bring deeper connection, create less waste and save money. A shared hike, a concert, an afternoon baking together or simply time set aside to catch up are gifts that last well beyond the season. If you're giving physical items, consider secondhand treasures or something handmade, and wrap it all in a BriarPatch paper bag with pinecones and a pretty ribbon.

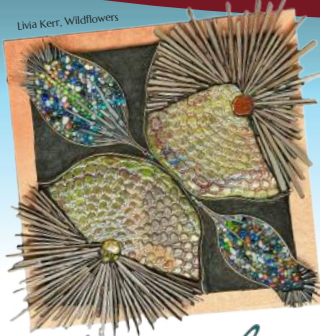
If you celebrate with a tree, locally grown options help support local farmers and reduce transportation emissions. Or opt for a living tree in a container that can be brought indoors for the holidays and then returned to the garden or patio to enjoy year-round.

At its heart, this season is about connection to each other, to tradition and to the natural world. Choosing slower, more thoughtful ways to gather and celebrate helps us nurture all three. However you mark the season, may it be filled with warmth, intention and a spirit of care for the planet, and for one another.





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