



Radish

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DECEMBER 2012

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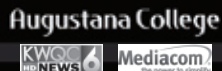
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from the editor



Photo by Paul Colletti / Radish

Ah, an unopened gift! There are few things so wonderful to have in your hand. I love the way for a few delicious moments before you fall to unwrapping it, a package could be anything — anything at all. A jar of sunny marmalade. A pair of socks knit in the softest yarn. A key to a door you've never opened before, hinting at adventure. I admit, sometimes I get so lost in thoughts of what a gift could be, I almost want to leave it just as it is, unopened and full of promise.

It's an impulse born out of my deep appreciation for the abundance this world offers, but even more so for its capacity to delight. The most mundane object, wrapped as a gift, isn't so much disguised as revealed: suddenly, we see it for the marvelous thing it is. Once, for example, I watched a friend unwrap a bundle of shredded newspaper and eight sharp sticks given to him by his son. The shredded newspaper was for his compost bin, and the sharp sticks were to roast marshmallows — as his son explained, the next time they built a fire, his dad wouldn't have to hunt up sticks or spend time whittling them with his knife. And he could take a break from shredding newspaper to amend his compost. Instead, they'd have more time to spend together. It was one of the best gifts I've ever seen given.

The gift of the gift, if you will, is not just that it is something given to us unasked, but that it is given in a moment set apart. We have a chance really to appreciate what makes it wonderful, to hold it in our hands and say a heartfelt thanks to the person who gave it. It would be shortsighted to say it is the wrapping alone that transforms an otherwise commonplace object into something terrific. Rather, it's that shared moment of giving and receiving something with love and gratitude — something my young friend, with his newspaper and sticks, understood intrinsically at eight years old.

This month in Radish we're excited to bring you a round up of ideas for your own holiday gift giving, from memberships in local organizations with benefits that last all year to new ways to wrap gifts that are a little more eco-friendly. Plus, you'll find festive appetizers for your holiday gathering and reflections on carrying the spirit of the season into the year ahead. However you choose to celebrate, we wish you holidays full of the true gifts of the season.

— Sarah J. Gardner
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Radish
HEALTHY LIVING FROM THE GROUND UP

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Radish uses soy-based ink and recycled content in its newsprint and is 100 percent recyclable.

the grapevine

From our readers

"Love the magazine! I pick it up at Hy-Vee — hopefully before they run out. It is great, and I pass it on to my daughter and her family."

— *Kaye Junion*

Soup's on (Nov. 2012): "My mom made the broccoli soup from the new issue and it was delicious! We had it with cottage cheese instead of sour cream."

— *Margeaux Fincher, Bettendorf, Iowa*

Beg Your Pardon

In the November issue of Radish, we neglected to include contact information for yoga therapist Rebecca Licandro in the article "A healing art." More information about Licandro and her practice can be found at sunlightyogatherapy.com. We apologize for the oversight.

On the Road with Radish

Want more Radish? Thanks to Friends of Radish, you can find the magazine this month at the following event:

- The Congregation of the Humility of Mary Holiday Movie and Gift Swap, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 6, at the Humility of Mary

Center, 820 W. Central Park Ave., Davenport. Bring new or gently used items for re-gifting to this free event and swap them for items to wrap and give to people on your list. While there, enjoy a screening of "The Story of Change," a short film that explores how citizens hold the key to a better world. For more info contact Lisa Martin at (563) 336-8404 or lmartin@chmiowa.org.

To discover more upcoming events of interest, see the events calendar at radishmagazine.com.

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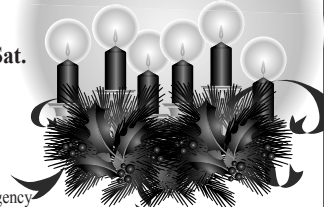
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healthy living from the ground up

features



6 O tannenbaum
For Port Byron family, holiday traditions are evergreen.

8 Bite by bite
Festive appetizers for your holiday gatherings.

10 All wrapped up
Creative, eco-friendly alternatives to traditional gift wrap.

16 Keep on giving
This year, give a gift that delights for months to come.

in every issue

2 from the editor

3 the grapevine

on the cover



A gift wrapped in plain paper can heighten the excitement of discovering what's inside.
(Photo by Paul Colletti / Radish)

departments

12 eating well
Soy, rice or other? We put dairy alternatives to the test to find the best chai.

14 body, mind & soul
Faith in motion: Imani! Dancers Ensemble connect the spirit with dance.

18 environment
A better burn: Get cozy with some eco-friendly fireplace alternatives.

20 health & fitness
An app each day: Harness the power of your smartphone to get yourself fit.

22 health & medicine
Tender relief: Yoga and massage can help with fibromyalgia pain.

24 outdoors
On the lookout: Tips for successfully observing wildlife in winter.

26 good business
That's the spirit! Handcrafted beverages shine at LeClaire distillery.

32 food for thought
Beyond the banquet: With the right frame of mind, every meal can be a feast.



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What do 4,500 square feet of bamboo paneling, low-flow water fixtures that create a 36 percent water savings and solar panels that produce 388,000 kilowatt-hours of energy annually add up to? They are just part of what earned the recently constructed KONE building in Moline a platinum Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification — the first building in Illinois to achieve this highest LEED rating. Read more about it at radishmagazine.com.



healthy living

O tannenbaum

For Port Byron family, holiday traditions are evergreen

By Becky Langdon

Jon Mumma didn't take over Hidden Pines tree farm in Port Byron, Ill., until 2010, but he's been growing Christmas trees there since he was a child. "Pretty much as soon as I could carry a bucket of tree saplings I was out there helping," he says.

Jon's father planted the first trees at Hidden Pines in 1973. Though he worked full-time at John Deere, he was looking for something to do outside on the weekends. Jon says, "He got in the Christmas spirit. It was one of his favorite times of the year."

With a grove of pine trees, firs and spruces for a backyard, and customers flocking to the house during the holiday season, Jon had a different childhood than most. The entire family took part in planting, caring for, and selling the trees that surrounded their ranch in the country. As adults, Jon and his siblings continued to return home for the weekends with their families to help with the trees.

When his father passed away in 2009, Jon already possessed the knowledge and experience he needed to take over the cut-your-own Christmas tree business. He and his family moved into the house in which Jon grew up where Christmas trees were part of his life year round.

The Mummas grow a variety of trees including Blue Spruce, Fraser Fir, Douglas Fir, Concolor Fir, Scotch Pine, White Pine and Red Pine. The spruce and fir trees, which have short needles, have been gaining popularity over the pine trees in recent years, Jon says.

He has gradually reduced the number of pine trees he plants because they're more labor-intensive, require more pruning, and they have been more susceptible to disease for him.

As for his own preferences, Jon tends to lean toward the firs and spruces as well. "The Fraser Firs are really nice trees," he says. "They have



Carrie, Caitlin, Cassidy and Jon Mumma at Hidden Pines tree farm. (Photo by Gary Krambeck / Radish)

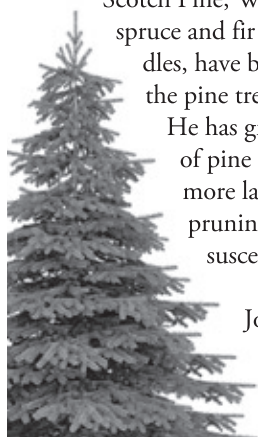
short needles that don't poke you and strong arms, which are good for holding ornaments."

The Concolor Firs, another popular variety, differ from many evergreens because of their unique aroma. "They don't smell like traditional spruces or firs," says Jon's wife, Carrie, who has spent many years at the farm since she and Jon were high-school sweethearts. "They have almost a citrus smell, like a lemon or an orange." Like the Fraser Firs, their needles aren't as sharp, and both varieties tend to hold their needles well, a desirable Christmas tree quality.

The selling season keeps the Mummas busy

during the holidays, but two other times of the year also demand more attention. April means planting season at Hidden Pines. Jon purchases saplings from a nursery, which they plant by hand about a foot from the stumps where other trees had grown. Christmas trees tend to grow about a foot per year, so the trees they plant in April will likely not sell for several years when they reach 6- or 7-feet tall.

The other busiest time of year is around June when the Mummas prune the trees, removing leaders and shaping them to look like Christmas trees. They hire three or four high-school students to help



alongside the other family members during these busy seasons.

During the rest of the year, the Mummas take care of general maintenance at the tree farm, which involves tasks like mowing and clearing out any dead trees. The good thing is the trees don't require some of the labor-intensive tasks that crops on traditional farms require, such as watering and crop rotation. "They're pretty hardy trees. They can grow in clay, soil, pretty much anything," says Jon. "They don't need a lot of water."

Though evergreens tend to be hardy trees, Jon says they were still affected by the drought this year. He lost quite a few saplings, which have the hardest time during drought conditions. Those losses may lead to a slimmer selection of trees a few years down the road. In general, however, water isn't a big issue. "If Christmas trees are dying, you know it's a bad drought," he says.

As the trees grow and the years go by, some trees get too big to sell. The Mummas usually select one of the larger trees for their living room, which has a vaulted ceiling that can accommodate it. The other large trees may find their way into people's homes in a different shape. Last year Jon donated these trees to his cousin's Boy Scout troop to use in making wreaths for their annual fundraiser. "They sold so many wreaths, they came back three times for more greens," he says.

Jon will often have a big pile of greens from trees they've cut down at the farm for customers to take to use on fireplaces and around their houses. He says, "When I was a kid I used to sell them for 50 cents or a quarter and make money on the side that way." As an adult now, he laughs at the thought that it was probably a job his parents gave him to keep him occupied on the weekends. His mom used to make garland out of the extra greens as well.

The best part of the business for the Mummas is the experience of selling the Christmas trees. Every weekend from Thanksgiving to Christmas, the family gets together at Hidden Pines. Carrie and other family members plan a menu for the season and cook a big lunch for all the workers. "The food is the best part," Jon jokes.

The customers who come to pick out trees are often not strangers, but the same families year after year. "They bring their kids and dogs and have a picnic," he says. "They throw a football around, drink hot chocolate and pick out a tree." And now Jon and Carrie's own daughters, ages 3 and 7, are starting to take part in the experience, serving hot cocoa and popcorn to customers.

Hidden Pines offers memorable experiences for the Mummas, but it also means a lot of hard work — work that is sometimes done during snowy and icy conditions. On top of that, Jon works full-time for HON Furniture in Muscatine, Iowa, and Carrie for State Farm Insurance. Jon says, "There are no days off from Thanksgiving to Christmas." What makes the hard work of continuing the tree farm worthwhile for the Mummas is bringing joy to the whole family and to all the families who patronize their business each year.

Hidden Pines is located at 4614 221st St. N., Port Byron, Ill., and is open 8 a.m.-4 p.m. every Friday, Saturday and Sunday through Christmas. Becky Langdon is a regular Radish contributor.

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healthy living

Bite by bite

Festive appetizers for your holiday gatherings

By Sarah J. Gardner

If you love eating cookies, the holiday season is clearly your time to shine. I know. I am in the cookie lovers' camp. Thin and buttery or studded with chocolate and nuts, slathered in icing or sandwiched with jam, the wealth of cookie confections is never more on display than during the holidays — which, if you're not careful, can quickly lead to cookie burn out. The solution? A variety of treats, both savory and sweet, at your next holiday party. If you are looking for appetizers that won't suffer in comparison when set out next to your famous Santa-shaped snickerdoodles, try any one of these crowd-pleasers. Your guests will be delighted.

Inside-Out Apple Strudel Bites

2-3 tart, crisp apples, such as Granny Smith or Jonathan apples	1/3 cup raisins
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice	1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons brandy	1/3 cup brown sugar, packed
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest	1/3 cup walnuts
	2 packages (2 ounces each) frozen mini phyllo cups

Peel, core and finely dice the apples. Place in a bowl with the lemon juice and brandy; toss to coat. Add lemon zest, cinnamon and brown sugar. In a food processor, pulse walnuts to a coarse, crumbly texture resembling corn meal. Add walnuts to the apple mixture and stir to combine well. Refrigerate for 4 hours or more (up to 24 hours) to allow flavors to develop.

When ready to eat, place individual phyllo cups on a baking sheet and bake for 3-5 minutes at 350 degrees (be careful not to scorch). Allow to cool before transferring to a serving dish. Spoon heaping tablespoons of the apple mixture into the phyllo cups. Serve at room temperature.

— Recipe by Sarah J. Gardner, Radish editor

Spiced Pineapple Chunks

2 large cans (20 ounces) pineapple chunks
1 cinnamon stick
1 tablespoon sugar
6 whole cloves
1/3 cup cider vinegar
2 cardamom pods

Drain pineapple, reserving 1 cup juice. In a saucepan, combine the reserved juice with the sugar, vinegar, cinnamon, cloves and cardamom. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Uncover and discard cinnamon, cloves and cardamom. Add pineapple. Return to a boil; cook and stir for 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat, allow to cool, and store in cooking liquid in a covered container. When ready to serve, arrange pineapple chunks on a rimmed plate and drizzle with the cooking liquid (can be re-warmed). Place a container of toothpicks nearby for easy snacking.

— Recipe adapted from *Taste of Home* magazine



Festive Lentil Dip

1 cup red lentils
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 medium onion, diced
3 garlic cloves, minced or pressed
1/4 cup raisins
2 teaspoons garam masala
1 1/2 cups peeled, cored, diced apples, pears or a combination of both
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup apple cider
1/2 teaspoon salt

In a medium saucepan, bring the lentils and 2 1/2 cups water to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer until the lentils are very soft and most of the water absorbed — about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a skillet and sauté the onions, apples (and/or pears) and garlic with a dash of salt, for about 5 minutes on medium heat. Add raisins and garam masala. Continue to sauté for 10 minutes more, until tender.

Combine lentils, onion mixture, lemon juice and apple cider, and using an immersion blender or food processor, puree to a slightly chunky texture. Add salt to taste. Serve either chilled or at room temperature with chips or a vegetable platter.

— Recipe adapted from *"Moosewood Restaurant New Classics"*

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QUAD CITY
BOTANICAL
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healthy living

All wrapped up

Creative, eco-friendly alternatives to traditional gift wrap

By Sarah J. Gardner

It doesn't seem like it should fit. Along with twinkling trees, frosted cookies and family gatherings filled with song, a garbage bag stuffed to bursting with wads of discarded wrapping paper is among the most enduring memories from my childhood holidays. I can picture it even now, plopped down in the middle of the room, where we played around it with our new toys.

Although substituting a recycling bin for the trash bag might seem like the easiest way to make this holiday practice more eco-friendly, not all wrapping paper contains fibers that can be recycled. According to Brandy Welvaert of the Waste Commission of Scott County, their facilities accept other holiday paper items for recycling — paper gift bags, tissue paper, greeting cards and long cardboard tubes — but wrapping paper does not make the list.

Laura Berkley of Rock Island County Waste Management says they do accept some wrapping paper for recycling, but they cannot recycle paper that is glittery or that “feels plastic-y.” Wrapping paper that has been laminated, however thinly, or that has metallic fibers also is a no-go. And the wrapping paper that can be recycled needs to have as much tape as possible removed from it.

Sounds like a lot of work! With a little creativity, however, holiday gift wrapping not only can be more earth friendly, it can also be a lot of fun. Best of all, once the packages are unwrapped and the kids are playing with their gifts, you can sit back and bask in the holiday cheer, no sorting required — which, if you've been woken up at 5 a.m. by members of the household who can't wait a minute more, may just feel like a bit of heaven.

Cover it in cloth

Wrapping gifts in fabric is nothing new — in fact, in Japan, a tradition dating back to the eighth century known as furoshiki exists that, similar to origami, uses a pattern of folds to create artful shapes for cloth packaging. Many tutorials exist on the Internet, including a useful video at recyclenow.com and a series of diagrams at tinyurl.com/ye2zqb, to help wrap packages of different sizes and shapes. You can purchase several yards of holiday fabric at a craft store to use and reuse for years to come, or if you'd prefer a vintage look, keep your eyes out for holiday napkins, towels, tablecloths and scarves at resale shops.

Of course, traditions also exist closer to home of wrapping gifts in fabric — what is a Christmas stocking, after all, if not a cloth container for small presents? You can build on this tradition if your family practices a gift exchange by having each member draw somebody else's stocking from a box at the beginning of the month that they must fill by Christmas Eve. Or, if you prefer larger gifts placed beneath the tree, start a new tradition by making cloth gift sacks that can be used year after year. If you can sew a pillow case, you can sew a piece of fabric into a



Photo by Paul Colletti / Radish

sack: just fold a length of fabric in half and sew up two sides. Tie it off at the top with a bit of ribbon or velvet cord. Like your favorite ornaments and heirloom holiday figurines, these gift sacks can become treasured “signs of the season” when they appear beneath the tree each year.

Like the song says

Not for nothing does the popular holiday song extol “brown paper packages tied up with string.” Although at first blush, brown paper can seem a little workaday compared to the glossy wrapping we’re used to, the plainness of the paper can actually heighten the excitement when the colorful contents emerge from their paper covering. You can find large, inexpensive rolls of brown paper at craft stores or save some change and use paper from grocery sacks turned inside out — both of which can be easily recycled once the package is unwrapped.

If you’d like to add a bit of panache to your packages, get the kids involved by asking them to cut out white paper snowflakes that can be glued to the packages once wrapped — unlike tape, glue does not have to be removed before paper is thrown into the recycling bin. For a splash of color, make use of all the holiday catalogs that come in the mail by cutting the pages into strips that can be glued in bands around the package in place of ribbons. Or, try crinkling and smoothing the brown paper several times before wrapping a gift in it. This will produce an interesting pattern of creases and will have the extra benefit of making the paper softer and more supple to wrap around packages with odd edges.

**What is a Christmas stocking,
after all, if not a cloth container
for small presents?**

Holiday hide ’n seek

In days of yore, when Christmas trees first became popular, it was traditional to hide small gifts among the boughs as part of the decorations. Come Christmas morning, family members would have fun searching the tree for their gifts. Although it would take one heck of a fir to hold that new bicycle, toy oven and hand-knit sweater from Aunt Eleanor on the gift list this year, you can still have fun with this tradition and cut down on wrapping paper by hiding gifts throughout your living room or home. Then, make a game of finding them Christmas morning. Clues as to their locations can even be attached to the tree to use as a starting point. Just imagine, instead of a mad tear through one box after another that’s done in 10 minutes — the patterns on the paper already forgotten — a Christmas gift search can prolong the joy of uncovering gifts and lead to memories of holiday adventure that last long after the gifts are gone.

Sarah J. Gardner is editor of Radish.

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Sweet Potatoes: Flavor with apple juice and a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Mashed potatoes: Whip with skim milk and roasted garlic.

Stuffing: Oven baked with sautéed onions and celery.

Cranberries: Use whole cranberry sauce rather than jellied sauce...
or cook fresh ones... Yummy!

Dinner Rolls: Choose whole wheat, high fiber breads.

Nuts: Add to sweet breads, veggies, salads and desserts.

Pie: Slice your favorite pie into 10 pieces instead of eight.

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eating well

Soy, rice or other?

We put dairy alternatives to the test to find the best chai

By Laura Anderson Shaw

When you've got chai tea, all you really need is a good book, a warm blanket, and a place to curl up on the couch, right?

Well, sort of. After a recent taste test, our staff learned quickly that the type of milk you throw in the mix matters quite a bit, too. Traditionally combined with dairy, chai works wonderfully with alternatives like soy and almond milk as well. That got us wondering. With an ever-expanding lineup of dairy alternatives at the market, which would make for the tastiest beverage?

At our blind taste test, we sipped, discussed, praised (and in one instance, roundly rejected) the many tastes and textures revealed by the different combinations of chai mixed with soy, almond, oat, hemp and rice milk.

When we learned which was which, we had a debate on our hands. A couple of staff members were not fans of the oat milk combination because it had a bit of an aftertaste and was a tad on the gritty side, as though the ingredients didn't blend well. I, on the other hand, found that the oat milk chai was my favorite. It was very sweet and had a fullness to it the other samples lacked. I could easily get over the grittiness for the creaminess!

When it came to the almond and soy milk samples, some taste testers described the resulting chais as very smooth with a "clean taste" and "no lingering

aftertaste." However, a couple of other staff members, myself included, found these samples to be flat, watery and not as sweet as some of the other chais.

There was more consensus on the rice milk. This chai was thicker and described as "nicely spicy" and consistent with a "lingering spicy aftertaste." One staff member who is in the habit of buying almond milk said the bright, spicy taste of the rice milk inspired her to make a switch the next time she was in the store.

At the very bottom of the rankings was the mix of chai with hemp milk. When it comes to nutrition, hemp milk had the second to lowest calorie count per cup of all of our dairy alternatives, behind only almond milk. It's too bad it didn't have a more balanced flavor-to-benefits ratio. Off-putting white flakes floated atop the light brown drink, and it smelled and tasted almost grassy.

Not much of a milk drinker, dairy or otherwise? Chai recipes typically call for half chai mix, half milk, but for a change of pace, you can forgo the milk completely and add your favorite apple cider. When the spices in the chai meet the slight tang of the cider, the flavors fuse together to create a flavor that can only be described as "ahh."

So which would be your cup of tea? Grab your milk — be it new or familiar — or some cider, whip up some chai and have yourself a beverage adventure.

Laura Anderson Shaw is a frequent Radish contributor.



Paul Colletti / Radish

Spiced Chai Mix

4½ cups water	1 teaspoon orange zest
1 stick cinnamon	1 3-inch piece of fresh ginger, unpeeled, sliced into thin rounds
8 whole cardamom pods	10 teaspoons of black tea (or 10 bags)
3 whole star anise pods	½ cup brown sugar
10 whole cloves	1 tablespoon honey
½ teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg	1 tablespoon vanilla
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper	

In a large saucepan or medium pot, bring the water to a boil, and remove from heat. Add the spices, orange zest, ginger and tea, and allow the mixture to steep for 15 minutes.

Strain the mixture into a 4-cup measuring cup or bowl, discarding the spices. Add the sugar, honey and vanilla and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Pour the mixture into a jar and store in the refrigerator, where it can keep for up to 2 weeks.

To serve, mix 1 part strained tea mixture with 1 part milk or dairy-free alternative of choice. Heat for a warm beverage or pour over ice.

— Recipe adapted from "A Wooden Nest"

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Faith in motion

Imani! Dancers Ensemble connect the spirit with dance

By Ann Ring

American dancer, choreographer and renowned pioneer of modern dance, Martha Graham once said, “Dance is the hidden language of the soul.”

Dorian Williams Byrd can relate. As founder, director and choreographer of Imani! Dancers & Studio for Cultural Arts, Byrd has dedicated her entire life to dance. Once she steps onto center stage, Byrd unconsciously readies herself for what’s to begin. It’s as though dance is a part of her autonomic nervous system, that it’s not only her language but that it is her soul. “I feel as though I was born to dance,” she says.

With a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in dance from Juilliard and a Master of Arts degree from the University of Iowa, Byrd has taught dance at Augustana College, where she still teaches part time, since the 1980s. In 1989, while also teaching youngsters at Davenport’s Junior Theatre, she was asked to give a dance performance at a Quad City Martin Luther King celebration. After that day, Byrd was asked to perform at a number of community events, and Imani! was founded later that year. (Her Studio for Cultural Arts was formed in 2007.) Besides teaching at Augustana and running her dance studio and company, she’s also an enrichment instructor for Davenport public school’s Stepping Stones after-school program.

Byrd’s love for dance and connecting with people from different cultures has taken her around the world. Her students and audiences are the fortunate recipients of her varied background in classical, modern, ethnic and folk/traditional dance, as well as choreography, theater, storytelling and costume design.

Appearing athletic and fit at 64 years old — even with two hip replacements — in the dance room, located at the Roosevelt Community Center in Davenport where the Imani! Dancers & Studio for Cultural Arts is located, Byrd explains Imani! “Our

name means ‘faith’ in Swahili, which reflects our desire to do all to the glory of God, whether our dance themes are sacred or secular.”

Dance classes are offered three nights a week for children 4 years old through adults. While her sessions vary, this fall Byrd and four other studio teachers taught ballet, hip-hop “creative combo” (which is ballet and tap), and Afro-modern. She also is holding auditions for her Imani! Dancers Ensemble, which performs throughout the year at various community events. The dance company rehearses Sunday afternoons, and apprentice dancers are required to take lessons through Imani! Dancers Studio.

During a one-hour Afro-modern dance class, she explains dance a bit further: “In modern dance we use the floor, the torso, the body ... whereas in ballet you have a codified body of movement.” The Afro-modern dance class is just that — a combination of modern dance (“but easy on the joints,” Byrd says) with African influence. Her relaxed style of teaching is perfect

for anyone with the proverbial two left feet. Students follow as Byrd leads and instructs. She leaves plenty of room for improvising and missteps that are bound to happen.

Linda Van Houtte, one of Byrd’s faithful students for at least eight years, considers what dance has meant for her. “I think something that makes you feel good is important to your soul.”

The Imani! Dancers Ensemble will be performing at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 28 at a Kwanzaa celebration held at the Martin Luther King Center, 630 7th Ave., Rock Island. Admission is free, though attendees are encouraged to bring canned goods to donate. For more information about the performance, call (309) 292-3306. More information about Dorian Byrd and the Imani! Dancers Ensemble can be found at imanidancersstudio.com. Ann Ring is a frequent Radish contributor.

Dance students Kennisha Entsminger (front), Teleah Thomas (middle) and Jaiveiona Cooke (back). (Photo by Gary Krambeck / Radish)





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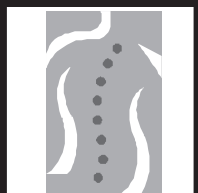
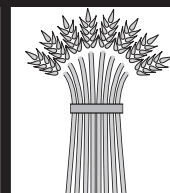
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holiday gift guide

Keep on giving

This year, give a gift that delights for months to come

By Leslie Klipsch

It's here. The season to scratch your head over your gift list, wondering how soon is too soon to give another tie to your father and whether your friend's taste really matches that sweater. Why not gift out of the box instead? According to research conducted by the American Psychological Association, when it comes to a return on your investment, experiences tend to make people happier than material possessions. Gift memberships to local organizations offer a great way to deliver delight beyond the holiday season. Whether the folks on your list like good food, new adventures or greening their community, the Radish region is rich in opportunities to give the gift that gets them out and about.



A QCWOC member on a June 2012 outing to Palisades Kepler Park. (Submitted)

SIERRA CLUB (EAGLE VIEW GROUP)

Where: Meetings take place at the Moline Public Library.

What it does: The Eagle View Group is the Quad-Cities branch of the Sierra Club, the largest grass-roots environmental organization in the U.S. According to Jodi Zimmerman, membership chair, the group is active throughout the year — hosting an environmental film fest, maintaining a water-testing group, and taking a variety of outings.

Cost: Members can join for an introductory cost of \$15. This includes membership, a subscription to Sierra magazine and discounts on travel.

How to sign up: illinois.sierraclub.org/eagleview; email Jodi Zimmerman at dz1492@mchsi.com.

QUAD CITIES WOMEN'S OUTDOOR CLUB

Where: Iowa and Illinois Quad-Cities.

What it does: The Quad Cities Women's Outdoor Club provides outdoor fun to women of all ages and ability levels, offering four to six organized events monthly that range from campouts to CrossFit, kayaks to high ropes courses. According to Chris Ciasto, current president of QCWOC, "Our members come to our events to learn new things about playing outdoors and end up learning new things about themselves, too."

Cost: \$20/year; \$10/half-year.

How to sign up: Download a membership application at qcwoc.com.

DUBUQUE FOOD CO-OP

Where: Corner of Washington and Ninth Street, Dubuque, Iowa (under construction).

What it does: Located in downtown Dubuque's Historic Millwork District, the Dubuque Food Co-op is slated to open its doors in late spring/early summer of 2013 and will be a full-service grocery store that emphasizes



healthy, locally grown, organic and sustainably produced foods and other products. "The co-op aims to be a catalyst, helping to grow and strengthen the local food system and providing a year-round outlet for fairly priced, healthy and natural foods," says Will Hoyer, board treasurer.

Cost: A lifetime membership is \$100.

How to sign up:
dubuquefoodcoop.com;
info@dubuquefoodcoop.com.

NEW PIONEER FOOD CO-OP

Where: 22 S. Van Buren St., Iowa City, and 1101 Second St., Coralville.

What it does: The New Pioneer Co-op has an excellent reputation of stocking hard-to-find gourmet items, artisanal cheese, hand-selected wines, and a variety of locally grown and produced items. "A large percentage of in-season produce is local," says Jennifer Angerer, marketing manager. "We have the freshest seafood in town, plus wonderful locally raised meats. We also have an incredible

pastry department and hearth breads that you can't find just anywhere." Though the co-op is open to everyone, members pay a lower shelf price for groceries.

Cost: A one-time investment of \$60.

How to sign up: (319) 358-5513;
newpi.coop.

RIVER ACTION

Where: 822 E. River Drive, Davenport.

What it does: Ride the River. Floatzilla Paddle Celebration. Taming of the Slough. Sound familiar? River Action hosts a variety of activities throughout the year with an aim to foster the environmental, economic and cultural vitality of the Mississippi River and its riverfront in the Quad-Cities region.

Cost: Tax-deductible memberships begin at \$15 (student rate) and go up to \$100. Different membership levels offer various benefits and all include a free copy of River Action's eddy magazine and admission to the narrated Riverine Walks exploring the history and natural vitality of the river.

How to sign up: (563) 322-2969;
riveraction.org.

TREES FOREVER

Where: Iowa and Illinois.

What it does: Over the past 23 years, Trees Forever's programs and projects have resulted in planting more than 3 million urban and community trees, enhancing hundreds of miles of roads and trails, and restoring and protecting over 160 miles of streams and waterways. Mark Signs, director of development, says that Trees Forever members support all of the tree planting and care projects, especially two program areas that are not funded by other major sponsors — disaster-recovery work and youth programming.

Cost: Suggested donation of \$35.

How to sign up: (800) 369-1269;
treesforever.org.

IOWA NATURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Where: Des Moines.

What it does: A statewide, private nonprofit, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation protects and restores Iowa's land, water and wildlife for present and future generations. Since it was founded in 1979, INHF has helped protect more than 130,000 acres of natural resources in Iowa.

"Through their support, our members get to make a permanent difference in protecting Iowa's natural areas for generations to come," says Laura Johnson, communications specialist at INHF.

Cost: Donors become members with gifts of \$25 or more, which includes a subscription to a quarterly magazine as well as the INHF full-color calendar.

How to sign up: (800) 475-1846;
inhf.org/membership.cfm.

QUAD CITY BOTANICAL CENTER

Where: 2525 Fourth Ave., Rock Island.

What it does: Beth Peters, visitor services coordinator for the Quad City Botanical Center, describes it as a "jewel in the Quad City area," noting that the center educates more than 10,000 school-aged children each year. Members enjoy free admission to the Botanical

Center, discounts on bus trips, daytime rentals and select gift-shop items, as well as a reciprocal agreement with more than 150 gardens in the United States.

Cost: Various membership and gift options are available, including Individual (\$35), Couple (\$50), Family (\$65) and Family Plus (\$80).

How to sign up: (309) 794-0991;
qcgardens.com.

NATIONAL MISSISSIPPI RIVER MUSEUM & AQUARIUM

Where: 350 E. Third St., Dubuque.

What it does: The National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium is the most comprehensive center for rivers in the United States. Yearly, the museum educates more than 180,000 visitors, including 17,000 children on school-related field trips. The Museum & Aquarium uses a unique blend of historic exhibits and artifacts with living aquarium displays to tell the complete stories of rivers. Director of marketing and sales John Sutter says that the grandparents' membership is an especially popular gift item.

Cost: \$125 for a Family or Grandparents Membership.

How to sign up: (563) 557-9545 ext. 213;
rivermuseum.com.

For additional gift membership ideas, visit radishmagazine.com.



Top: A young visitor takes part in an activity at the National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium. (Submitted)

Left: A view of the Mississippi River from Mines of Spain Recreation Area, an INHF project. (Gary Hamer)

A better burn

Get cozy with some eco-friendly fireplace alternatives

By Jeff Dick

The snap-crackle-pop of wood burning in a fireplace brings a seasonal glow as well as welcome warmth during the winter months. Keeping a wood fireplace fed is an ongoing task, though, requiring a steady supply of logs that do not provide the most energy-efficient way to heat a room. Most of the heat goes up the chimney, and naturally produced carbon monoxide must be safely vented.

Homeowners looking for less work than an open-air fireplace can retrofit with an “insert” — a sealed, air-tight firebox with a liner that goes up the chimney of an existing fireplace. There are several types of inserts: electric-powered “glow logs” which provide a faux fireplace look but negligible heat; wood-burning units that function in a contained, less wasteful and safer way; and gas-powered units. Both of the latter can heat large-sized rooms, depending on output, which is measured in British Thermal Units (Btu).

Inserts generally come with circulating blowers, but using these electric fans isn’t a must. Radiant heat is still available in the event of a power outage. Wood-burning inserts, which make use of logs or pellets made of wood or other kinds of organic material, burn fuel at a slower rate than open fireplaces — typically eight to 10 hours rather than only a few. The inserts sell for upwards of \$2,500.

Gas inserts are a bit more efficient than wood-burning inserts and have a greater ease of operation. They require only annual maintenance (whereas wood requires daily tending when in use) and produce heat quickly after being ignited. Gas inserts also can be comparatively less expensive, with units starting at \$2,000.

First popular in the ’90s as a way to combat rising natural gas and heating-oil prices, corn or wood-pellet stoves offer another option for homeowners. Burning corn doesn’t give off carbon monoxide, only carbon dioxide, so dangerous emissions aren’t an issue. Nevertheless, for home insurance purposes, installed stoves have to meet safety standards for proper venting. The units need frequent cleaning to remove unburned ash.

Ron McDonald, owner of McDonald Corn Furnaces in Maquoketa, Iowa, sells units made by Harman and St. Croix. “Stove buyers usually have ‘connections’ — a brother or somebody — with their own corn. I have a corn stove in my house and seldom use the furnace,” he says.

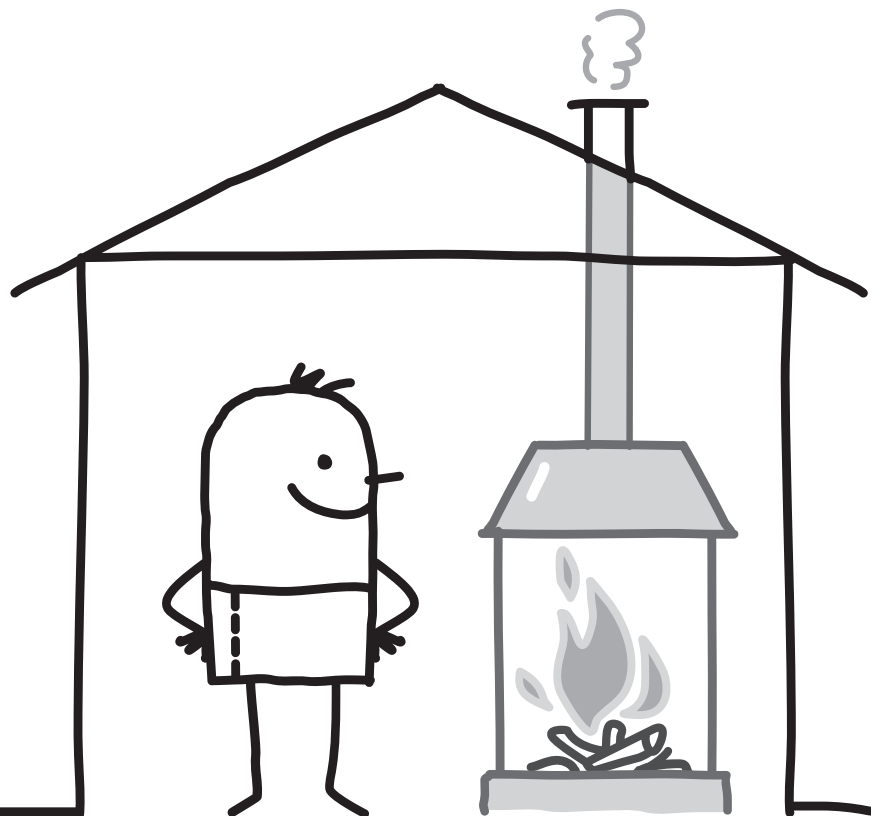
Most corn stoves also can burn other grains, such as wheat or barley, or biomass (mixed ingredient) pellets, McDonald says. But biomass pellets tend to clump together, requiring “agitation” to break them up, and they’re hard to find. Wood pellets are the most practical and easily available. Farm & Fleet, Menards, and other big-box stores sell them for about \$4 per 40-pound bag. Some of these chains sell pellet stoves as well.

When corn was relatively cheap instead of seven bucks a bushel, corn stoves selling for upwards of \$2,000 had a much shorter time frame to pay for themselves. Although they are finding it tough to compete with natural gas, stoves burning wood pellets or cheaply-sourced corn stand a better chance of competing with pricey home heating oil. Most heating-oil users have converted to liquid petroleum gas or propane; for those who haven’t, there’s a small niche market for biofuel blends currently finding favor as alternative fuel in diesel-powered vehicles.

In its October 2009 issue, Consumer Reports looked at pellet stoves and, based on fuel costs three years ago, found that “it may take 20 years for a pellet stove to pay for itself. It costs about 15 percent less than oil, nearly 40 percent less than electricity but 25 percent more than natural gas.”

For those less concerned with the bottom line than reducing use of fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy sources, stoves and inserts still offer options.

Jeff Dick is a regular Radish contributor, often writing on consumer-related topics.



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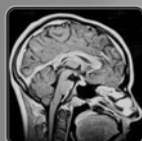
1. Preheat broiler.
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3. Place pita on baking sheet; arrange apple slices on top. Place under broiler for about 3 minutes or until apples begin to soften.
4. Sprinkle with cheese and return to broiler for a few more minutes until cheese is browned in spots. Cut into wedges to serve.

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health & fitness

An app each day

Harness the power of your smartphone to get yourself fit

By Brian Todd

Do you have a smartphone in your pocket or purse — or perhaps waiting for you under the Christmas tree? With the right apps, this miracle device can monitor your health, make you more fit and improve your diet.



MapMyFitness

Exercise App



Actually a suite of apps ranging from MapMyFitness and MapMyRide to MapMyDogWalk and MapMyRun, you can get an accurate route of your outing, complete with distance covered, speed, time, elevation and calories burned during your workout. In the paid version, the app's voice controls will keep you motivated as you run, hike, cycle or just meander. The app uses GPS to give a live map of your path, letting you know where you've gone while it calculates the healthy benefits of your exercise.

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GymPact

Exercise App



Let's face it, going to the gym can be a chore. You need to get your gym clothes in your gym bag — hopefully after you've washed them — drive to the gym, find parking ... see, the excuses just keep coming. But GymPact pays you for going to the gym. Make your pact on how often you'll work out, and set the stakes — how much money you pledge that you'll go. If you make all your gym visits, you keep your money and earn cash from those who skip out. It's the ultimate motivator.

FREE

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Nokia
Windows

SparkPeople

Multifunction App



Connected to a huge fitness and diet website, the SparkPeople app is one of the most popular multipurpose health and fitness apps, tracking calories, exercise and both daily and long-term goals. For example, you can set daily calorie intake goals, then track your calories by logging what you eat. The tracker uses its library of common store-bought foods and average calories for produce and meats to determine how much you've consumed. You can even track other items such as carbohydrates, folic acid or other nutrients listed on packaging.

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✓ Android
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Nokia
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Endomondo

Exercise App



This app is for folks who take their exercise seriously. Why else would it offer a low-power mode so your battery doesn't run out during six-hour workouts? Plus, the app features a "coach" that offers you audio encouragement to meet goals, get feedback on how many calories you've burned and beat your previous best workouts. Endomondo uses a phone's GPS to track distance in real time, giving you an up-to-the-moment read on your workout.

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or
\$3.99
pro version

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WebMD Mobile

Healthy Living App



Check your symptoms to help troubleshoot what's wrong with you, learn about treatments for what ails you and find information on the latest drugs and diet supplements. The app also gives basic first aid information on common emergencies and, if things look serious, can help you find a doctor, hospital or pharmacy close to your current location. The website also offers other mobile apps such as WebMD Baby and WebMD Magazine.

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FitClick

Multifunction App



A weight-loss program on your phone, FitClick Diet and Workout Tracker features a food journal, calorie counter and exercise tracker so you can monitor what you've burned as well as what you've eaten. A database of foods helps you track those calories as you watch your daily input. The social network features let you join weight-loss groups to get support and share your diets with you fellow warriors in the battle of the bulging waistline.

\$3.99

✓ Apple
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RunKeeper

Exercise App



Using GPS, the app tracks your path as you run, cycle, walk or simply stroll, noting distance and time to give you an accurate depiction of your workout. Tracking features allow you to target specific goals such as weight loss, improving your time on a set course or calories burned. "It tracks where you go, times, speed, distance, etc.," says Krystal Trammell, a mother of four and a friend from Texas. "You can also map out routes in advance via your computer with Google maps."

FREE

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CarbLovers Diet

Healthy Living App



Based on the cookbook that tells you it's OK to have that potato, The CarbLovers Diet app gives you recipes and meal planning that includes the kinds of things Dr. Atkins warned you about. The weight-loss feature can help you count calories and carbohydrates so you don't overindulge but, that said, any app that puts fries back on the menu is worth a download.

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Tender relief

Yoga and massage can help with fibromyalgia pain

By Lindsay Hocker

Fibromyalgia's cause is unknown, but fibromyalgia's symptoms are all too familiar to millions. In the United States alone, the disorder is estimated to affect 10 million people according to The National Fibromyalgia Association. That's nearly one in every 30 people.

Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by impacting the way a person's brain processes pain signals.

While there is no cure for fibromyalgia, there are medications that can help control symptoms, and "exercise, relaxation and stress-reduction measures also may help," according to experts at the Mayo Clinic.

Deb Godsil, of Moline, knows the pain of fibromyalgia well. She first began experiencing symptoms in 1992, and those symptoms intensified in 2002 after a spinal injury.

Deb's husband, Matt Godsil, is an Illinois-licensed massage therapist who offers Fibrossage — a massage approach geared towards helping people with fibromyalgia. "Massage definitely helped me cope and manage and get as far as I did in my day," Deb says.

Fibrossage includes gentle body work and trigger point release. Trigger points are taunt bands of muscle or knots that result in pain. Matt says they must be released extremely gently.

"For fibromyalgia, the more gentle the body work, the more effective it is," Matt says. Massage can help those with fibromyalgia in a variety of areas: with pain management, pain reduction, headache reduction, improved sleep patterns, and a reduction of fatigue.

Matt says most first-time clients start with a one-hour massage session, which costs \$65. All new clients have an in-take interview before their session begins. Clients can also opt for a half-hour session, which is \$45, and then pay \$10 more for each additional 15 minutes.

Yoga is another modality that can make a difference for those coping with fibromyalgia. Johanna Welzenbach-Hilliard, of Davenport, is a teacher at the Davenport School of Yoga in Bettendorf and leads a class in yoga for fibromyalgia and chronic pain. She also gives private lessons.

Over the years, she's heard people say, "I can't do yoga, it's too hard," or that they can't do yoga because of physical limitations. Welzenbach-Hilliard has an interest in therapeutic yoga and likes sharing it with people who once thought they couldn't do it. "Yoga is for everyone, and it's about mastering the mind," she says.

She teaches breath-centered yoga, which is about controlled breathing in addition to doing yoga poses. Welzenbach-Hilliard says there's "nothing mindless about it, your mind is always focused" and "you forget about everything else."



Johanna Welzenbach-Hilliard leads a yoga class through the Davenport School of Yoga for students with fibromyalgia. (Photo by Paul Colletti / Radish)

The benefits of yoga for someone with fibromyalgia include gentle movement for joints and muscles. The controlled breathing is calming to the nervous system and helps stimulate the immune system, Welzenbach-Hilliard says. She says people aren't worrying about pain, depression or what they need to do later in the day when their minds are focused on yoga.

Elaine Rice, of Bettendorf, is one of Welzenbach-Hilliard's students. She started the Fibromyalgia and Chronic Pain class last winter, because she has arthritis in her knees. She says she just wanted to try yoga, and the class sounded like it would be a good way to get started.

Rice has strengthened her leg muscles after starting yoga, which helps with the arthritis, and also has lost 12 pounds. "I just really feel healthier since I started doing yoga," Rice says, noting she thinks it's from both the meditation and physical exercise aspects of yoga.

She says learning to pay attention to breathing is "relaxing in and of itself."

The eight-week course of yoga for fibromyalgia and chronic pain offered by Welzenbach-Hilliard costs \$80.

Lindsay Hocker is a Quad-Cities native who currently lives in Rock Island. To contact Matt Godsil, call (309) 737-9102. Johanna Welzenbach-Hilliard can be found online at promotingwellness.net.

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On the lookout

Tips for successfully observing wildlife in winter

By Melisa Jackson

Against a blanket of snow, a sudden flash of crimson: a cardinal flits from tree to tree, lands on the ground, picks at some fallen seed. Then, creeping along the border of a thicket, a hint of orange with a tail of horizontal fire catches your eye. Could it be a fox hunting for something to bring back to its den?

For those who thrill at such glimpses of wildlife, winter is a season rich in rewards. Although summer days are longer and the weather warmer, thick foliage can create a barrier that serves to hide the animals you normally may see in plain view during winter. With just a few tips and guidelines, even the most inexperienced viewer can have an amazing experience watching for wildlife in winter, enjoying the majestic outdoor scenery.

You might not even have to venture into the cold to do it. “By viewing from a distance, you do not scare the bird or animal away and are more able to observe normal activities,” says Jan Aiels, education facilitator at Indian Creek Nature Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She suggests that even sitting in a car, if the surroundings allow, can be a good way to watch for wildlife, as a person is less noticeable tucked inside his or her vehicle.

This isn’t just a matter of human convenience. Any activity whatsoever on an animal’s part — including being startled by an observer — burns precious energy. An animal caused to flee from where it was feeding may waste further energy searching for another source of food. Conserving that energy is crucial for an animal’s survival in the long, cold winter months.

Of course, this doesn’t mean a conscientious nature lover must restrict him or herself to indoor viewing at all times. Some experiences would be missed entirely if you didn’t venture out on foot. Just remember to maintain a respectful distance if you do come across an animal, and if possible, allow it to pass before you move on. Watching from afar can be easily accomplished, says Aiels, with the use of

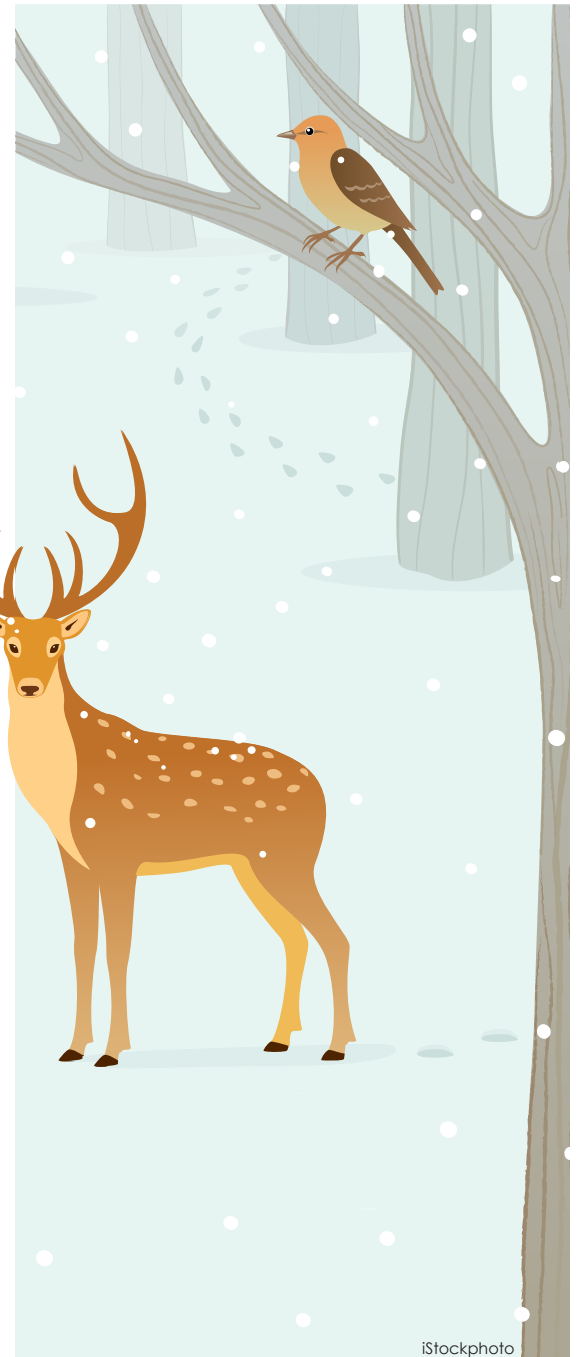
binoculars, spotting scopes or a good camera.

Brian Ritter, facilitator of Nahant Marsh Education Center in Davenport, agrees. Another key thing to have on your winter trek? Layers of clothing to keep you warm and comfortable, which will allow you to stand still as needed. Ritter suggests doubling up at the extremities, layering mittens over gloves and wool socks over cotton. “Wool wicks away moisture while keeping you warm,” he explains. This is important, especially if it is wet and snowy. Hand and foot warmers also can extend the amount of time you can keep comfortable in cold weather conditions, and they are fairly inexpensive.

Spotting animal tracks in the snow is one of the rewards for getting out into the cold. There are many different types of tracks common to this area, so a handy tip when trying to identify them is to think about your surroundings and the different creatures that frequent those habitats. “In open fields you may find fox tracks, coyote tracks, wing marks in the snow where an owl or hawk has grabbed a mouse,” explains Aiels. “In the woods, wild turkey tracks can be common, as well as squirrel, raccoon, skunk. ... River banks may treat you to otter, beaver, muskrat and various waterfowl.” The day after a snowstorm is a great time for a person to go looking for animal and bird tracks, since the snow is fresh and the wildlife comes out to forage for food.

Exploring winter’s wonderland can be as extensive as a trip to the Rocky Mountains, or as simple as driving to the edge of town. For those in the Quad-Cities, Ritter suggests Nahant Marsh, locks and dams along the Mississippi, Backbone State Park in Dundee, Iowa, as well as other local city and county parks as prime locations for winter wildlife viewing. The rich, blank canvas of winter can be filled in with the chestnut speckled spread of a hawk’s wings, or the stealthy hunt of a coyote, for anyone who is willing to take a look.

Melisa Jackson is a regular Radish contributor.



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That's the spirit!

Handcrafted beverages shine at LeClaire distillery

By Brandy Welvaert

At the Mississippi River Distilling Company in LeClaire, Iowa, the spirits produced on site are crafted in small batches, sold in bottles numbered by hand. That's noteworthy, but even more so is the final product: "The first thing people are struck by is how smooth it is," says owner Ryan Burchett. "We remove the harshest alcohols and bottle only the sweetest, smoothest part of the spirit."

Burchett dreamed up the business and soon hooked his brother to help. "I told him that this was my hair-brained scheme," he says. "Next thing you know, we are leaving perfectly good, paying jobs!"

The brothers quickly learned all they could about making hard liquor, from whiskey to gin, vodka to bourbon. They traveled to Chicago to learn the process and to Germany to purchase the stills they use. Now, visitors to the distillery can get a glimpse of that education in action (as well as sip a sample of the spirits) on tours similar to what one might expect from a winery.

Although hard liquor does not share red wine's reputation for being good for your heart, drinking it in moderate amounts does provide at least one health benefit: it can raise your good HDL cholesterol levels. Moderation — defined as one drink for women and two for men per day — is key. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) links alcohol consumption with a number of serious health conditions, including cancers in both men and women — and as the amount of alcohol you drink increases, so does the risk for disease.

Fortunately, drinking in moderation is also the best way to appreciate the complex, layered flavors of the handcrafted spirits at the Mississippi River Distilling Company.

"We try to explore the flavors of the grain a little bit more because that's where we come from," says Burchett. "Our (River Baron) Artisan Spirit, for example, has a nice, sweet flavor from the corn. ... You can actually taste what the different grains do in the spirit."

Each bottle can be traced back to the specific farmer and field it came from, says Burchett. Mashers at the distillery are made from organic grains grown within 25 miles of the distillery. Although that has obvious environmental benefits, Burchett insists it makes economic sense as well.



'You can actually taste what the different grains do in the spirit.'



Ryan Burchett gives a distillery tour. (Photo by Gary Krambeck / Radish)

This arrangement profits not only the Burchetts, but also Tracy Doonan, the Reynolds, Ill., farmer who grows all the cereal grains, such as wheat, barley, and rye, that the distillery uses.

"Tracy, he called us up," Burchett explains. "He can't go dump his organic grain off at the elevator. ... He has to market his own grain. When he saw a story about us in the newspaper, he called."

The taste of home doesn't end with the mashers. The distillery has created a coffee liqueur using coffee roasted in Runnells, Iowa; a whiskey aged in red-wine barrels from Wide River Winery in Clinton, Iowa; and spirits from corn grown right in LeClaire.

"When we were looking for corn, we drove out of town and looked for the biggest blue silos," says Burchett. "We found Ryan and Dan Clark, and they thought it sounded like a great idea. They're certainly not getting rich from us taking 25 bushels of corn at a time, but one of the farmers stopped in for a sample and said, 'This is my corn? I think this is the first time I've known where my corn has ended up.'"

Brandy Welvaert is a writer and editor living in East Moline, Ill. For more information on the distillery, including hours and tour times, visit mrdistilling.com.

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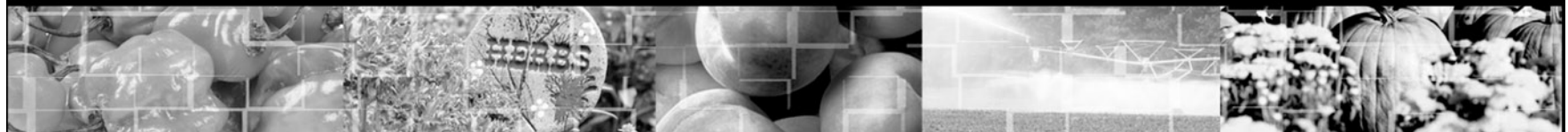
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food for thought

Beyond the banquet

With the right frame of mind, every meal can be a feast

By Leslie Klipsch

Among the many things I look forward to at holiday meals, my sister's sweet potatoes are high on the list. We're a boisterous group, so there is a lot of laughter and joyful conversation at our table, but when it comes down to it, the combination of butter, brown sugar, raisins, coconut and sweet potato make the day. Luckily, there's usually enough to take a serving or two with me, extending my culinary bliss for a few more meals.

In addition to the pleasures that live on through leftovers, I'm learning that the feelings of love and gratitude can linger as well. Though my sister is not physically with me as I unceremoniously warm up the leftovers in my microwave, if I stop to think about the work of her hands before I gobble up what's on my plate I can conjure a sense of her spirit and her love.

The mood in my kitchen might be more subdued than at a holiday table, but other people will certainly be present — though perhaps not physically. If I take a moment to think about it, all kinds of people have contributed to my post-holiday meal. Those who prepared the food, of course, but also the multitudes that made it possible.

Consider the sweet potato. If I trace my leftovers back to the source, I'll see that it involves the labor of many hands: A farmer planted a slip and tended the crop; a driver transported it over roads built by many crews to a loading dock where other people unloaded bushel after bushel; a store clerk found the potato its rightful home in the produce section; a cashier rang it up on a machine that a slew of others designed, produced, marketed and installed; someone else likely placed the potato into a bag. How can we not be just a little bit astonished by the web of work that gets the potato to the plate?

It is with this recognition of things like the



Paul Colletti / Radish

everyday stocking of shelves that we begin to invite thoughts of the sacred to our table. Like the 17th century French monk Brother Lawrence, who wrote in "The Practice of the Presence of God" that he felt God's presence even while washing dishes, all of our actions hold meaning and even the smallest gesture can be acknowledged as holy.

What might begin in the midst of a holiday feast can lead to a practice of gratitude that extends into tomorrow's leftovers. This posture helps us to be open to other people. It discourages judgment and makes us more aware of a larger community. Gratitude, studies

have shown, aids in our pursuit of happiness.

Maybe this year as you feast with family and friends, you'll be mindful of the joy manifested by sitting down at the table together. Perhaps you'll try to memorize the moment just before the meal when you take a communal pause and the words "thank you," whether audible or not, are on the tip of everyone's hungry tongues.

Psychologists and spiritual leaders encourage us to practice this posture of bountiful gratitude. Experts suggest we slow down at mealtimes, turn off screens and acknowledge the flavor and texture of every morsel. They suggest we take time to really talk with those with us at the table and be thankful to those who make the meal possible. It's the kind of advice that can sound like a tall order in the midst of an ordinary week's whirlwind of activity, but one of the unsung gifts of the holiday table is the way it shows just how easy it can be. Without even thinking about it, we naturally savor the good food and good company at the table.

Here's what I'm hoping to take away from the experience this year: Come January, with both the magic and the hustle of the holidays behind me, I'll find myself on a cold and snowy morning with a cup of coffee and a bowl of granola. Perhaps my daughter will be next to me nibbling a piece of toast. It will be a simple meal that doesn't hold the trappings of a holiday feast yet has the potential to bring the same peace, fulfillment and sense of gratitude to my day.

Sitting down to meals throughout the year, I hope to understand what so many others already know: Elaborate holiday meals and grand celebrations, though to be enjoyed and treasured, are really just a warm-up. As I've read in the fine print of some of the heartiest recipes, a meal can be just as good — if not better — when served the next day.

Leslie Klipsch is a frequent Radish contributor.

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