



*A Room with a View.*

## DECEMBER 2024



## NOTES & NEWS

### Get Cozy With a Cup of Coffee

Caffeine shouldn't get all the credit for making you feel awake and alert. Experts say that the antioxidants in coffee—even decaf—may improve cognitive function.

### Handcrafted Happiness

Knitting, drawing and woodworking are just some of the handicrafts that can amp up your happiness. Experts studying the benefits of these pursuits say making something with your hands fosters creative thought, which can produce moments of joy. Crafters also report feeling more energetic and enthusiastic not only while working on a project, but also after completing it.

### Dazzling Ball Drop

More than 1 million spectators crowd New York City's Times Square every Dec. 31 to watch the famed New Year's Eve ball drop at midnight. Over the years, the materials used to make the ball have included wood, wrought iron, aluminum and crystal, and the number of lights adorning it has increased from 100 in the early days to more than 30,000 today.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Double Up on Gift Cards

December is a great time to take advantage of gift card promotions. For example, a restaurant might offer a free \$10 gift card with the purchase of a \$50 gift card. With retailers, the offer could be a free gift card with a product purchase.

### Online Security

Before you enter personal information on a website, check the URL. A secure site will have "https" instead of "http" at the beginning of the address. Another clue is to look for a lock symbol, which usually appears next to the URL or in one of the corners of the browser window.

### Picking a Pear

Pears are a popular winter fruit. When picking one out for eating, experts say to check the neck. Press your thumb or finger against the area around the pear's stem. If the fruit gives slightly, it's ready to eat. If it's hard, it's not ripe, and if it's too squishy, it's overripe.

### Reading Challenge: Revisit a Favorite

December can be a busy month, so seek some peace and quiet by rereading a favorite book. It could be a new title you discovered this year or a cherished story from childhood. Make some hot tea or cocoa, cozy up with a blanket and find comfort in a familiar tale.

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# TRIVIA WHIZ



## Cosmic Odds and Ends

Besides planets, moons and stars, what else is floating out there in space? Asteroids, comets and meteors, to name a few billion. Learn the differences between these celestial wonders as well as some out-of-this-world facts!

- Made of rock, metal and other minerals, asteroids are sometimes called “minor planets.” The first asteroid ever discovered, Ceres, is actually classified as a dwarf planet due to its mass.
- Most asteroids are located between Mars and Jupiter, in a region called the asteroid belt.
- Though asteroids can vary widely in size—from just 30 feet in diameter to over 300 miles—their total combined mass is less than that of Earth’s moon.
- Comets are known as “dirty snowballs” because they’re formed of frozen gases, rock and dust. As they approach the sun, the heat causes them to glow, and solar winds blow the gas and dust into long tails.
- A comet’s tail can stretch for millions of miles. However, the particles that form the tail are spaced so far apart from each other that other objects—including Earth—can safely pass through the tail’s path.
- Meteoroids are essentially crumbs that break off from a comet or asteroid. Once they enter the Earth’s atmosphere, they’re called meteors, nicknamed “shooting stars.”
- Meteors that survive the heat of the atmosphere and land on Earth are called meteorites. Studying meteorites has revealed information about the universe’s history.

## Reap the Rewards of Classical Music

From Bach to Beethoven, Mozart to Mendelssohn, classical music is admired by many—and research shows that listening to this genre can result in a symphony of health benefits!

*Improves memory and focus.*

An optimal soundtrack for studying and reading, classical music helps the brain absorb and retain new information. People who listen to classical music also tend to perform better on memory-related tasks.

*Reduces stress.* Listening to classical music lowers the body’s levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, while also boosting dopamine, one of the brain’s “feel-good” hormones. Some hospitals play classical music to help patients feel less anxious before and after surgery.

*Lowers blood pressure.* Multiple studies show that classical music’s

calming properties significantly lower blood pressure and heart rate, decreasing the risk of heart attack, stroke and other conditions.

*Relieves pain.* By stimulating the brain’s reward center, classical music affects how the body feels pain, providing relief.

*Promotes healing.* Classical music helps ICU patients recover more quickly from trauma by stabilizing heart rate and breathing, as well as reducing instances of delirium. Rehab programs for stroke and brain injury patients incorporate classical music to improve cognitive functions.



## Keep Your Traditions Trim This Holiday Season

Cooking large feasts, exchanging presents, decorating our homes—many cherished holiday traditions typically use a lot of resources. But with a little effort, these festivities can be eco-friendly as well.

*Decorating.* Despite what those inviting store displays imply, you don’t need to buy new holiday décor every year! If you do need to replace something, research eco-friendly options. For example, look for LED lights, which use less energy and will last for years.

*Shopping.* Consider giving experiences, such as event tickets or museum memberships, instead of “things” that can be great in the moment but forgotten, broken or tossed in the long-term. Consumables—anything that will be used up, like food or soaps—are another eco-friendly option.

*Gift wrap.* Get creative with gift-wrapping materials. Brown grocery bags, newspapers and magazines, pages from old books and maps can all be upcycled into wrapping paper. Or try *furoshiki*—the Japanese art of wrapping objects with fabric. Some gifts can also be packaged in jars, baskets and decorated boxes that don’t need additional wrapping.

*Food.* Billions of pounds of food are thrown out every year. Plan your holiday menus so you don’t go overboard preparing food that won’t get eaten. If you do have leftovers, encourage guests to take some home.





## WIT & WISDOM



### Foul-Weather Games

In snow, sleet, fog and rain ... dedicated athletes continue to play! Intense weather conditions can transform already exciting sports events into legendary moments. Maybe Mother Nature wanted to get in on the action in these high-stakes games:

Dec. 31, 1967: Known as the "Ice Bowl," this championship game between the Green Bay Packers and the Dallas Cowboys remains the coldest game in NFL history, at minus 15 degrees and a wind chill of minus 48 degrees. The Packers' home turf, Lambeau Field, froze solid when the heating system failed, and officials' whistles stuck to their lips. The Packers powered through, though, defeating the Cowboys 21-17.

Oct. 22, 1997: According to sportscaster Bob Costas, Game 4 of the 1997 World Series had "ideal conditions for baseball—if you happen to be a penguin." Snow flurries and a wind chill of 18 degrees inspired the nickname "Snow Globe Game." The then-Cleveland Indians (now the Guardians) defeated the Florida Marlins 10-3.

Jan. 1, 2011: It wasn't cold weather that caused the 2011 NHL Winter Classic to be delayed by seven hours, but thunderstorms paired with unseasonably warm temps in the 40s. These conditions meant the outdoor ice rink was at risk of flooding, and although the late start time prevented that from happening, players still encountered puddles caused by intermittent rain. Despite the soggy skating, the Washington Capitals defeated rivals Pittsburgh Penguins in one of hockey's most memorable matches.

### Sparkling Green Tea Cranberry Spritzers

Add a refreshing twist to your holiday celebrations with this delightful drink!

#### Ingredients:

- 4 cups water
- 4 single-serving green tea bags
- 1 cup 100% cranberry or cranberry-pomegranate juice
- 1/2 cup plain seltzer or club soda, chilled
- 4 orange slices, for garnish

#### Directions:

In a small saucepan over high heat, bring water to a boil. Remove pan from heat. Submerge tea bags in water and steep for 4 minutes. Remove tea bags and discard.

Let brewed tea cool for 30 minutes. Pour into a large pitcher. Stir in cranberry juice. Refrigerate until chilled, about 2 hours.

To serve, pour tea-juice mixture over ice and top off with seltzer or club soda. Garnish with orange slices.

**Tip:** For an even more festive and flavorful beverage, make cranberry-flavored ice cubes! Simply fill an ice cube tray with cranberry juice and freeze until solid.

*Find more recipes at [Heart.org/eatsmart](http://Heart.org/eatsmart).*



"The more positivity, love and light you reflect, the more light is mirrored your way."

—*Suzy Kassem*

"Reflection is one of the most underused yet powerful tools for success."

—*Richard Carlson*

"The journey into self-love and self-acceptance must begin with self-examination ... until you take the journey of self-reflection, it is almost impossible to grow or learn in life."

—*Iyanla Vanzant*

"The moon is the reflection of your heart and moonlight is the twinkle of your love."

—*Debasish Mridha*

"Self-reflection is an important stage to diagnose, develop and strengthen your creativity."

—*Pearl Zhu*

"Let the days be steeped in color and perfume and music and loveliness; let them glow with all the fire of the opal, and reflect in their many-faceted hours a thousand charms and visions of beauty."

—*Lilian Whiting*

"Art is not a reflection of reality, it is the reality of a reflection."

—*Jean-Luc Godard*

"Reflection is the lamp of the heart. If it departs, the heart will have no light."



—*Abdallah ibn Alawi al-Haddad*

"Let go of rejections and focus on self-reflection. For it is within that you will find the light you seek."

—*Amy Leigh Mercree*



## December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	 9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	 20	21
22	23	24	<b>Christmas</b> 25	26	27	28
29	30	31	<h1>DECEMBER</h1>			

## “This Month In History” DECEMBER

**1901:** With a goal of setting rules and safety standards, representatives from over 60 universities meet to form the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States. In 1910, the organization was renamed the NCAA.

**1924:** At age 2, Judy Garland makes her stage debut at her father’s movie theater in Grand Rapids, Minn.

**1948:** The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Defining

fundamental freedoms of all human beings, the document has been translated into more than 500 languages.

**1973:** Astronauts on NASA’s Skylab 4 mission take a 7-hour spacewalk, the longest at the time.

**1987:** Ron Hextall of the Philadelphia Flyers becomes the first NHL goalie to score a goal by intentionally firing the puck into the other team’s net.

**2001:** “The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring” premieres. It was the first film in the trilogy based on author J.R.R. Tolkien’s fantasy series.

**2007:** At 81, Queen Elizabeth II becomes the oldest ever monarch of the U.K., surpassing her great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria.

**2016:** Global retailer Amazon makes its first delivery by drone. The package arrived at its destination 13 minutes after it was ordered.