

# DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



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*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.*

- Will Durant

## A Short Guide to Giving Experiences Rather than Material Goods as Gifts



The holidays should be a time of joy and wonderful memories made with family and friends. For many of us, however, the time-consuming and costly process of finding the perfect gift for everyone on our lists can create stress and sap the joy from the season. Adding to the frustration is the fact that many material possessions are enjoyed for a short period of time before ending up in the back of an overcrowded closet and forgotten. Does this sound familiar? If so, consider gifting your loved ones experiences rather than material goods this year. Giving experiences can help you avoid adding clutter to your home, while also creating lasting memories with your family and friends.

Here are some ideas:

- Purchase an annual membership at your favorite museum. Whether you'd rather visit a children's museum, art museum, or science center, most

museums offer annual passes. These are often less expensive than visiting once as a family, and will yield numerous fun and memorable learning experiences.

- Plan a visit to an escape room. Escape rooms, which are interactive games that require multiple players to use clues and strategies to solve a puzzle, have become widely popular in recent years. If there is an escape room in your city, planning a visit as a family gift could provide a fun bonding experience for adults and older kids.
- A couple's day at the spa. Relaxing and reconnecting as a couple is easy when you are being pampered! Consider buying a gift card to a local (or destination!) spa for yourself and your special someone. Whether you use it during the holiday season or at a later date, it will surely provide a welcome respite from the stress of everyday life.
- Plan a family volunteer day at a charity that is important to you. Sometimes, giving back to those in need is far more satisfying than any gift. Whether you are passionate about helping children, animals, the homeless, or another cause, involving the whole family in a day of volunteering can be a great bonding opportunity and a powerful learning experience for kids.

Source: [wellnessmama.com](http://wellnessmama.com)



### Crispy Baked Kale with Gruyère Cheese

#### Ingredients:

- One 4-ounce piece of sourdough bread, crusts removed, bread torn into 1/2-inch pieces (2 cups)
- 1/4 cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium shallot, minced
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
- 1 1/2 pounds kale, large stems discarded, leaves chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped thyme leaves
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 1/4 cups shredded Tarentaise or Gruyère cheese (3 1/2 ounces)

#### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Spread the bread on a baking sheet and toss with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Bake for 8 minutes, or until lightly toasted. Let the croutons cool on the baking sheet.
2. In a large, deep skillet, heat the remaining 1/4 cup of olive oil. Add the shallot, onion and garlic and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, 7 minutes. Add the kale, cover and cook over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 15 minutes. Stir in the thyme and

season with salt and pepper.

3. Transfer the kale to an 8-by-10-inch glass baking dish. Scatter the cheese over the kale and top with the croutons. Bake for about 20 minutes, or until the cheese is bubbling and the croutons are golden. Let stand for 5 minutes, then serve.

Source: [foodandwine.com](http://foodandwine.com)

## How to Sell Your Home During the Holiday Season While Maintaining Your Sense of Holiday Cheer

From holiday parties and visits with family to nasty winter weather, it may seem like the period between Thanksgiving and New Year is not the most wonderful time of year in which to sell your home. Some realtors echo this sentiment, and the real estate market does tend to cool down during the holidays. However, if you find yourself needing to sell your home at this time of year, don't despair! You may face less competition since many sellers do not want to balance house showings with holiday festivities, and the buyers you attract will likely be more serious as they are sacrificing time with family to search for a home. In addition, the following strategies can help you use the spirit of the season to your advantage and secure a buyer for your home, all while maintaining a sense of holiday joy for yourself and your family:

- Deck the halls – but keep it tasteful. If you normally decorate for the holidays, don't think that you have to eschew the mistletoe because your home is on the market. In fact, some decorations will help your home look warm, festive, and inviting. However, excessive or gaudy decorations will likely have the opposite effect and could distract or deter buyers. Additionally, it may be best to opt for generic seasonal decorations instead of those with strong religious overtones. Use your best judgment or ask your realtor for his or her honest opinion if you are unsure how many decorations are too many.
- Lighten up. As autumn sinks into winter, the temperatures drop and the days grow darker. To help your home shine on dreary days, open the blinds, leave the lights on even for daytime showings, and light some flameless candles to safely create a warm glow.
- Have a holiday party. Throwing a party may be low on your list of priorities when your home is on the market. However, it could also offer a great opportunity to showcase your home looking its best. Invite neighbors and

acquaintances, as you never know who could know of a potential buyer. In addition, a holiday party will help diffuse the stress of selling your home by allowing you to unwind with some seasonal cheer.

- Take extra precautions to safeguard your home. Unfortunately, not everyone is full of goodwill during the holiday season including thieves who could potentially visit your home during open houses or even private showings. To keep your possessions secure, be sure to hide expensive gifts and other prized items before potential buyers arrive (or take them with you when you leave the house!).
- Keep buyers safe and comfortable. Winter weather often brings snow, ice, and rain. While these may seem like miserable conditions in which to show your home, you can also use them to your advantage. For example, keep umbrellas and boot covers by the front door, clear your driveway and sidewalks regularly so that they are free of ice, and ensure that your thermostat is set at a comfortably warm temperature. To boost the seasonal cheer, have holiday music playing softly in the background or bake some cookies before showings. In addition to creating a festive vibe, these extra touches will encourage buyers to linger in your home and picture themselves celebrating future holidays in it!

Source: [realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com)

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