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HOMEOWNER'S — UPDATE —

Deck All the Halls

Decorating for the holidays often starts in the living and dining rooms, but the magic doesn't have to stop there. With a little inspiration and creativity, you can infuse every room with seasonal cheer. Consider these decor ideas to make your entire home fun and festive.

Foyer

Give your entryway a jovial jolt by swapping out artwork for winter-themed pictures and landscapes. Place mini trees on either side of the door for a touch of nature. If you have a staircase near your entry, consider draping a garland along the banister or attaching colorful ribbons to the spindles.

Kitchen

Add extra warmth to your kitchen with holiday-themed hand towels, or display seasonal produce like persimmons and squash. Attach a wreath to your backsplash, and hang a homemade garland of dried fruits above your coffee bar. Place a gnome or nutcracker on your island or bar as a whimsical touch for holiday hosting.

Bathrooms

Give a subtle nod to the holidays with small additions to bathrooms. Swap out soaps for seasonal scents like pine, apple-cinnamon or peppermint. Place artificial moss with a pinecone or two on a shelf or countertop, and tie ribbons, dried flowers or garlands to sconces.

Bedrooms

Sprinkle holiday charm in the bedrooms while maintaining their relaxing vibe. Change out bedding with wintry linens, or add a fuzzy blanket on top for extra coziness and comfort. Toss on some holiday-themed pillows for instant joy. Arrange flameless candles of varying sizes on window ledges for a timeless, warm glow in the evenings.

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Is a White Elephant Hiding in Your Home?

If you need a quirky, light-hearted or gag gift for a white elephant exchange, chances are you already have some swap-worthy gems. Raid your rooms for these fun finds.

Also in this issue...

**Is a White Elephant
Hiding in Your Home?**

**Home Checklist Before
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Bathtubs vs. Showers

Spiced Hot Cocoa

Print this issue.



- Retro ornaments or an old holiday sweater can start new traditions with a new owner.
- Unused candles that never really sparked joy for you might make someone else's day.
- The like-new slow cooker you got when you moved into your first home — bonus if it's still in the original box!
- Random picture frames with some goofy photos inserted.
- Novelty glassware or mugs may find their forever home in someone else's kitchen.
- Old yard sale items that never made it out of your yard.
- An unopened DVD television series that's sure to scratch someone else's binge-watching itch.
- Your company-branded stress balls, pens or other promotional freebies you couldn't throw away at the office.

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Home Checklist Before You Travel

Nothing spoils a winter vacation faster than worrying about something going wrong at home. Before you leave, a little bit of prep can mean a more relaxing getaway. Be sure to address and assess these household tasks.

- **Set your thermostat** to an appropriate temperature. You don't want your home to use unnecessary energy while no one is there.
- **Visit *USPS.com* to schedule a hold on your mail** and select a date to resume delivery. An overflowing mailbox can signal to others you're out of town.
- **Fix leaks in sinks, showers and toilets.** Consider shutting off your main water supply, if necessary.
- **Unplug small, non-essential appliances**, such as toasters and coffeemakers. Disconnect electronics to avoid damage if your home experiences a power surge or outage while you're away.
- **Empty all trash cans** before you leave so you don't come home to a house that smells bad.
- **Entrust a friend or neighbor** to take care of any household issues that may come up while you're gone.

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Bathtubs vs. Showers

Let's Clean Up the Dilemma

The choice between a bathtub and a shower is more than personal preference — it's about lifestyle, space and resale value. What works for you might not work for another. So, when choosing, it's wise to consider your needs as well as the needs of a future owner.

Showers Steal the Spotlight

Walk-in showers are increasingly popular, especially for their user-friendly design. Many homeowners are opting to replace rarely used tubs with larger, feature-rich shower suites.

Bathtubs Still Hold Value

A bathtub remains the preference for families with young children and pet owners. Soaking tubs also provide a certain level of relaxation, which can boost your home's marketability.

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Spiced Hot Cocoa

Ingredients

3 oz. milk chocolate, coarsely chopped
2 oz. dark chocolate, coarsely chopped
4 cups milk
¼ tsp. ground ginger
Pinch of pumpkin pie spice
1 cinnamon stick
2 star anise pods

For serving:

Cinnamon sticks
Mini marshmallows
Ground cinnamon

Directions

In a large saucepan, combine chopped chocolates, milk, ginger, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon stick, and star anise pods. Cook over low heat for 5 minutes, whisking frequently, until chocolates melt and mixture is smooth.

Discard cinnamon stick and star anise pods. Pour cocoa evenly into 4 mugs. Garnish with a cinnamon stick, marshmallows and a sprinkle of cinnamon.

Serves 4

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