

2021

Holiday Guide

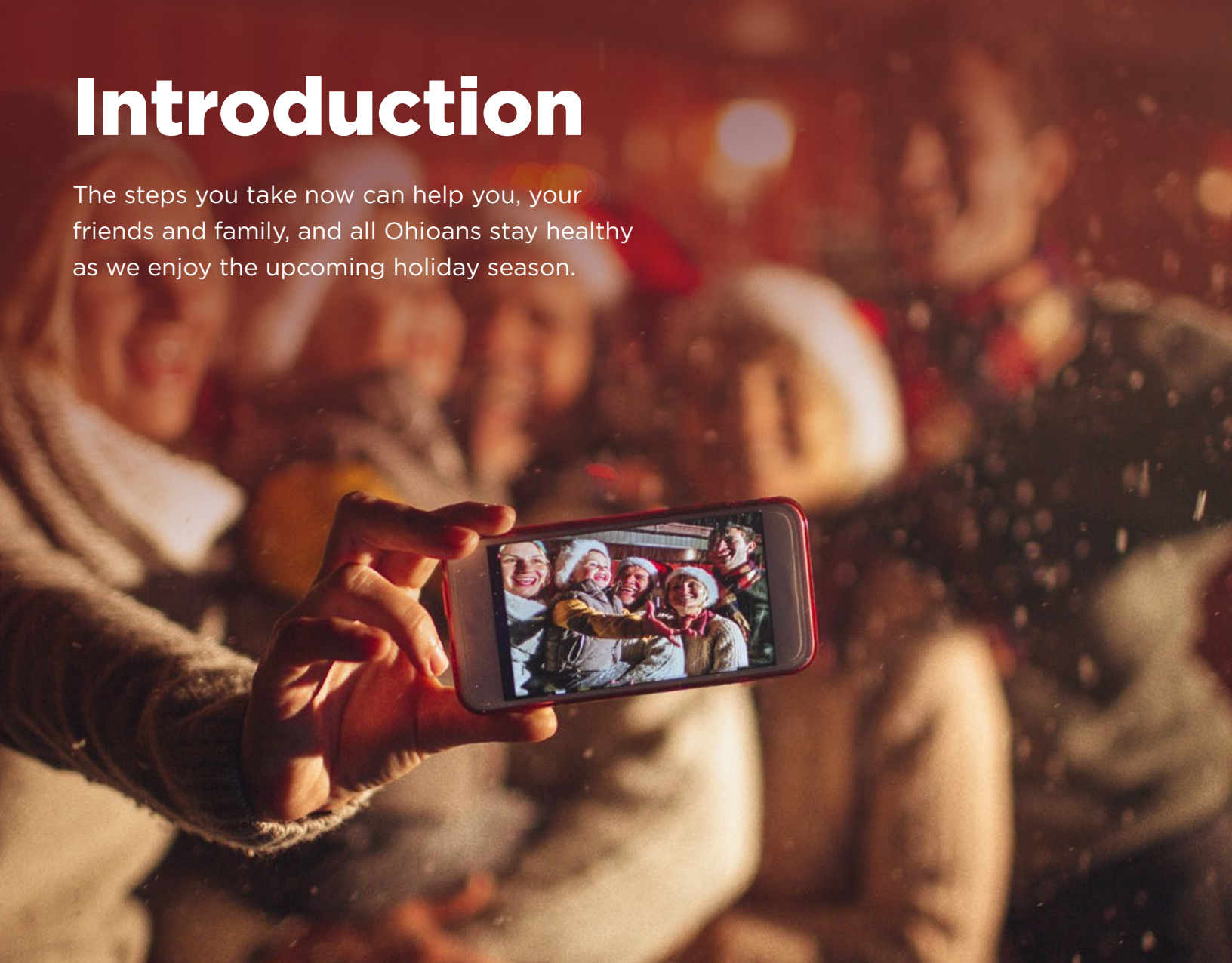
Keep Your Family Healthy This Holiday Season

Ohio | Department
of Health

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Introduction

The steps you take now can help you, your friends and family, and all Ohioans stay healthy as we enjoy the upcoming holiday season.



This holiday season, Ohioans are looking forward to the chance to gather once again with loved ones to celebrate and make new memories. As you look toward Thanksgiving and other fall and winter holidays, the Ohio Department of Health is sharing the best tips for keeping your families safe and healthy. No one wants to celebrate the holidays under the weather so please keep in mind that we continue to face an ongoing threat of respiratory illnesses — like COVID-19, the flu, pneumonia, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) — and other infectious diseases. We are in a remarkably better place than we were a year ago, thanks to the creation and widespread distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines. Still, we must remain vigilant to ensure everyone is protected this holiday season. The good news is that the COVID-19 vaccines have proven to be powerful weapons against the virus. They are now available for all Ohioans 5 and older. Clinical trials and research have shown that the vaccines are safe and effective and have minor side effects. Having as many people as possible vaccinated is our best way to move past the COVID-19 pandemic.

IN THIS GUIDE, YOU WILL FIND BEST PRACTICES FOR ENSURING THAT YOUR HOLIDAYS ARE SAFE. INCLUDED ARE:

- **Tips for making a plan to ensure all eligible members of your family are vaccinated against COVID-19.**
- **Other ways to minimize your risk of transmitting respiratory viruses.**
- **Food safety information.**
- **Ideas for healthy recipes and crafts to make with your family.**

Creative Ideas

Get creative again this year to help ensure you are able to celebrate the holiday season with family and friends while also keeping everyone safe.

SOME OPTIONS TO GET THE IDEAS FLOWING:

- Make new traditions by incorporating outdoor activities into your holiday celebrations. You'll get in some healthy physical activity and a mental health boost while also keeping viruses at bay. Invite family to your neighborhood or a nearby park or join each other for a neighborhood walk or hike. Make it a walking scavenger hunt, searching for items like leaves and birds, garden gnomes, and animal tracks. Adjust difficulty for the ages of the participants.
- Challenge yourself, friends, and/or family to search out or create healthier (but still tasty) dessert, dinner, or mocktail recipes to add to your holiday meals. Plan ahead so everyone has the options in hand well before the holiday. Try these sites for ideas:

U.S. Department of Agriculture Healthy, Thrifty Holiday Menus.

American Heart Association Recipes: Holiday.

American Diabetes Association holiday recipes.

- For the bakers, how about a "Nailed It"-style dessert contest, challenging friends and family to bake ornate cupcakes, tiered cakes, or an elaborate version of a favorite holiday dessert? You decide who judges and if top prize goes to the best or worst result. Make a special gallery and showcase the debacles on social media.
- Trade recipes for your favorite foods, so you each try your hand at preparing different beloved foods from the comfort of your own home.
- Not into cooking and baking? Try your hand at holiday- or seasonal-themed crafting. Some ideas:

Gratitude chain, placemats, or tree/branch.

3-D glitter stars.

Pinecone, cranberry/popcorn, citrus, or milk carton birdfeeders.

- Decorate cloth facemasks with fabric markers, glitter, cotton, and other craft items. Maybe add a fake mustache and beard and find out who looks the most like St. Nick.
- Go caroling with members of your household. Wear masks at doorsteps and keep your distance from doorways. Carol outside nursing homes or other facilities or buildings with multiple residents — and windows. Instead of singing, dust off your boombox and treat your neighborhood to your favorite recorded holiday music. For a version that's less retro, use your cellphone and a wireless portable speaker.
- Brainstorm on your own or with loved ones to create a list of new ways to celebrate throughout the holiday and winter seasons. Mark items off your list as you complete them. Compare notes with other participants on a regular basis. (Read a holiday/ winter-themed book? Check. Make a hot cocoa bar? Check. Try a new food from a different culture or country? Check. Decorate an indoor plant? Check.)
- Choosing to play it safe by staying apart again this year? Virtual get-togethers are the safest way to gather. Use video conferencing for special holiday moments, celebrations, and traditions. Some tried-and-true ideas: Arrange a virtual song-fest, ugly-sweater contest, or holiday book club/read-along.
- Pets involved? Get them dressed up in their best holiday looks and parade them through the neighborhood.





Creative Ideas

IDEAS CONTINUED:

- Play movie bingo. Use holiday films, comedies, classics, or movies in another favorite category to fill in the squares. Distribute among family and friends and create a group text or alert to claim a “bingo.”
- Organize with neighbors to plan a block party that revolves around holiday lights. Remember to include hot cocoa, treats, and other holiday fun.
- Have an outdoor gift swap. Bundle up and find out who can open gifts the fastest wearing mittens. Or, try a porch food swap. Exchange cookies, or portions of prepared recipes.
- Host a bonfire. Ask everyone to bring a favorite treat. Or have ingredients on hand for s’mores. Be creative: Use cookie butter, peanut butter cups, or caramels in place of chocolate, add banana slices or pretzels, or sub out graham crackers for Oreo cookies or Rice Krispies Treats.
- Bring the outdoors in. Plant a windowsill herb garden.
- Make favorite foods that would traditionally be part of your celebration and drop them off for elderly loved ones and other family members.
- Think back to last year’s safe celebrations. What was your favorite new holiday or winter activity? Do it again this year.

OHIO PROUD BEST-EVER MASHED POTATOES:

Ingredients

- 6 pounds Russet potatoes, peeled
- 1 1/2 cups salted butter
- 3/4 cup crème fraîche (or substitute sour cream or Greek yogurt)
- 3/4 cup roasted garlic, chopped
- 3/4 cup milk
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Instructions

Peel potatoes and bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add potatoes and cook until done. Remove from heat and drain. Place potatoes in mixing bowl and beat until mixture is fine, add crème fraîche, milk, butter, and roasted garlic. Mix until just incorporated. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Keep warm until serving time.

OHIO PROUD CRAN-APPLE CRISP:

Ingredients

- 4 medium tart apples, peeled and chopped
- 2 cups fresh cranberries, cleaned
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 1/2 cups quick oats
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar
- Vanilla ice cream (optional)

Instructions

Combine apples and cranberries in greased 11x7x2-inch baking dish. Sprinkle with sugar and lemon juice. Toss together oats, walnuts, butter, and sugar. Sprinkle over fruit. Bake at 325 F for 1 hour or until golden brown. Serve warm with ice cream.

UPCYCLED NEW YEAR’S CRACKERS

Save empty toilet paper and paper towel rolls to transform into “crackers” filled with treats.

- Fill an empty toilet paper roll or paper towel roll with small trinkets, such as:

Confetti	Candy
Balloons	Noisemakers
Small toys	Notes

- Wrap with tissue paper or gift wrap.
- Close the ends with ribbon or tape.
- Pop them and enjoy the fun and surprises inside!

Safe Gathering

This year, as you plan your holiday activities and gatherings, remember there are several ways to enjoy your favorite traditions while protecting your health and the health of your loved ones and your communities.

This holiday season, COVID-19 still poses risks. Community transmission rates remain high in many areas, and the highly contagious Delta variant is still spreading. In addition, other respiratory illnesses, including influenza and RSV, can easily spread from person to person at gatherings.

SAFER CELEBRATIONS:

If you choose to gather and celebrate with people outside of your household this holiday season, here are ways to help you and your loved ones stay safe and healthy.

- **Choose to get vaccinated.** The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones is to get vaccinated. A group of fully vaccinated individuals gathering for the holidays is the safest choice. If you are not fully vaccinated, indoor gatherings pose risks.
 - Children ages 5-11 are now eligible to receive the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine pediatric formulation, a lower dose tested and proven safe and effective for younger children. Youth ages 12-17 remain eligible for the adolescent/adult dosage.
 - Young children under age 5 are not eligible for vaccination. It's important to take steps to keep the children in your families safe.
 - Remember, it can take up to five or six weeks to receive full protection, so now is the time to get your vaccine. If you are not fully vaccinated, schedule an appointment now at gettheshot.coronavirus.ohio.gov.
- If you're age 18 or older, **get your COVID-19 booster dose** to strengthen your ongoing protection.
- **Outdoors is safer than indoors.**
 - Depending on the weather and the setting, consider dining outdoors on a patio.
 - Plan fun activities outdoors. If it's chilly, bundle up in layers and protect your head, hands, and feet.
 - Plan your own Thanksgiving Day turkey trot around the neighborhood to work off those extra calories.
 - Instead of a traditional indoor holiday gathering, plan an outdoor excursion like ice skating, snowshoeing, skiing, or snow tubing.
 - If it snows, have a snowball fight, go sledding, build a snowman, or make snow angels.
- **When indoors, ensure proper ventilation.** Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated spaces, and open windows and/or use window fans to keep air circulating if possible.
- **Space your dining areas.** Consider several small dining tables spaced out restaurant-style. Members of different households could sit at different tables.
- **Maintain safe distancing.** Spread apart and maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between people when possible.

Beloved holiday traditions bring families together and keep them close no matter where they live.



Safe Gathering



Who is eligible for a booster shot?

Any fully vaccinated adult 18 or older.

When to get a booster:

- If you received the Pfizer/Comirnaty or Moderna vaccine — at least six months after your second shot.
- If you received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine — at least two months after your original shot.

Which booster should you get?

Any of the COVID-19 vaccines authorized in the United States (Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson).

SAFER CELEBRATIONS CONTINUED:

- **Consider wearing masks indoors.**
 - If you are not fully vaccinated and are *at least 2 years old*, wear a well-fitting mask over your nose and mouth if you are indoors.
 - Consider wearing a mask, particularly if gathering with people outside of your normal household and if the gathering includes a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated people.
- **Stay home and do not host a gathering** if you have any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
- **Get tested before attending any gathering** if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have a close contact with someone who has COVID-19.
 - Consider getting tested if there is any chance you may have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19, even if you are asymptomatic.
- **Make sure everyone washes their hands frequently and uses hand sanitizer.** If you're hosting, make sure hand sanitizer is easily accessible for your guests.
- **Regularly disinfect frequently touched surfaces.**
- **Connect virtually with family who do not attend in-person gatherings.** Don't forget some of the fun new traditions you created last holiday season. Plan a video call, virtual activity, or virtual gift exchange with any relatives who can't gather in person.



Safe Travel



If you are considering traveling for a holiday or event, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Travel](#) page to help you decide what is best for you and your family. CDC recommends delaying travel until you are [fully vaccinated](#).

- If you are not fully vaccinated and must [travel](#), follow CDC's [domestic travel](#) or [international travel](#) recommendations for unvaccinated people.
- If you will be traveling as a group or family with unvaccinated people, choose [safer travel options](#).
- Everyone, even people who are fully vaccinated, is [required to wear a mask](#) on public transportation and follow [international travel requirements](#).



Safe Eating/ Food Safety

Along with ODH, the U.S. Department of Agriculture offers great [tips](#) to prevent foodborne illness for a wholesome and safe holiday season.

TIPS:

- Wash hands the right way for 20 seconds — with soap and running water before, during, and after preparing food.
- Wash surfaces and utensils after each use, and wash fruits and vegetables — but do not wash the turkey or other meat, poultry, or eggs. USDA research found that one in four people who wash or rinse poultry cross-contaminate other food items being prepared with germs from the poultry.
- Use separate cutting boards and plates for produce, meats, and other foods.
- Do not use the same spoon for stirring and tasting; it can spread bacteria and viruses.
- Never thaw or marinate foods on the counter — thaw a turkey in the refrigerator, completely submerged in running cool water, or in the microwave.
- To avoid harmful bacteria growth and food poisoning, prepare the wet and dry ingredients for stuffing the night before and refrigerate separately; never stuff a turkey the night before cooking.
- No matter how good it looks, you can only tell if a whole turkey is safely cooked when the internal temperature reaches 165 F. Always use a food thermometer.
- As tempting as it is to leave out for all to admire, your pumpkin pie contains milk and eggs, so first bake it to the safe minimum internal temperature of 160 F, then refrigerate.
- Keep food hot after cooking (at least 140 F) and microwave food thoroughly (to 165 F).
- Refrigerate leftovers in shallow containers within two hours of cooking, and eat them within three to four days, or freeze the leftovers.

[The CDC has more information on food safety.](#)

During the holidays, many people prepare the biggest meals they will prepare all year. Cooking a large turkey or other meat along with multiple side dishes and desserts can present food safety challenges.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) wants to ensure that all Ohioans and their families and guests have safe and healthy holidays. Following four simple steps — clean, separate, cook, and chill — can help keep your family safe from food poisoning at home.

If You are Sick After a Gathering



RESOURCES

For more information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call the COVID-19 CareLine at 1-800-720-9616.

Attending a large gathering or event increases your chance of being in **close contact** with people outside your household and being exposed to COVID-19.

IF YOU GET SICK:

If you become ill after attending a gathering, you should first know **when to get tested for COVID-19**:

- If you have **symptoms** of COVID-19, regardless of your vaccination status or if you have previously had COVID-19. Symptoms can be mild or severe and vary from one person to the next. Some common symptoms include, but are not limited to:

Fever or chills
Cough
Shortness of breath
Difficulty breathing
Fatigue
Muscle or body aches

Headache
New loss of taste or smell
Sore throat
Congestion or runny nose
Nausea or vomiting
Diarrhea

IF YOU HAVE COME INTO **CLOSE CONTACT** WITH SOMEONE WITH COVID-19:

- Fully vaccinated people **should be tested** five to seven days after their last exposure.
- People who are not fully vaccinated **should get tested** immediately when finding out they are a close contact. If the test result is negative, they should get tested again five to seven days after their last exposure, or immediately if symptoms develop.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, or are awaiting test results, you should **quarantine**.
- Find a **testing** location, or a free rapid testing kit, near you.

Calendar Dates



TIHAR: Tuesday, Nov. 2-Saturday, Nov. 6

During this Nepali festival, homes are decorated with lights and garlands, and people celebrate with singing and dancing and lighting oil lamps called diyas. The festival honors Yama, the god of death, and worships Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, as well as crows, dogs, cows, and oxen.

DIWALI: Thursday, Nov. 4

Diwali, often referred to as the “festival of lights,” is a major five-day holiday for those of Indian heritage, celebrated by Hindus as well as members of the Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist religions. The festival marks a new year and reminds us of good triumphing over evil by celebrating specific gods and goddesses. Traditions include lighting oil lamps called diyas, designing sand or powder “rangoli” patterns, playing cards, displaying fireworks, and savoring lavish meals.

CHHATH: Wednesday, Nov. 10

Chhath is a Hindu festival primarily observed by the people of Bihar, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and the Madhesh region of Nepal to honor Lord Surya (sun god). The festival is designed to thank the sun for providing the bounties of life on earth and fulfilling wishes. The sun god is worshipped to promote well-being, development, and the prosperity of human beings. People perform important rituals, share music, and hold large public gatherings, including a holy dip in public bodies of water.

THANKSGIVING: Thursday, Nov. 25

Thanksgiving is an American holiday that celebrates gratitude. Traditions include feasts headlined by turkey, parades, football games, and expressions of thanks.

Calendar Dates

HANUKKAH: Sunday, Nov. 28-Monday, Dec. 6

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of a temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees, who rebelled to overcome the oppressors who had desecrated the temple. While they only had enough oil to keep the menorah candelabrum lit for one day, the candles miraculously continued burning for eight days. Traditions include menorah lightings, special foods fried in oil, including potato pancakes called latkes, spinning four-sided tops called dreidels, and gift-giving.

BODHI DAY: Wednesday, Dec. 8

Bodhi, a Buddhist holiday, commemorates the day that the historic Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, attained enlightenment through meditation. It is believed that he achieved enlightenment while sitting under the Bodhi tree, still a site of pilgrimage in India. Traditions include meditation, prayer and study, the lighting of candles, bringing a ficus or fig tree into the home, decorating with fig leaves arranged in the shape of a heart, and eating a morning meal of milk and rice.

WINTER SOLSTICE: Tuesday, Dec. 21

The winter solstice is the official beginning of the winter season, which brings cold weather, snow, and hot cocoa.

LAS POSADAS: Thursday, Dec. 16-Friday, Dec. 24

The Mexican holiday of Las Posadas (the inns) commemorates the journey of Joseph and the pregnant Mary, mother of Jesus, from Nazareth to Bethlehem. They were unable to secure lodging and found shelter in a stable, where Jesus was born. A main tradition involves daily processions featuring visits to participating homes representing inns, with a celebration at the last stop. The event incorporates scripture readings and Christmas carols, star-shaped piñatas, and fireworks.

NOCHEBUENA: Friday, Dec. 24

Nochebuena, which means “the good night,” tends to be the biggest feast of the Christmas season for Latinos. Traditions include singing villancicos (Christmas carols), smashing a piñata, making a lechón (roasted pork) dish, setting off fireworks, and playing dominoes.

CHRISTMAS: Saturday, Dec. 25

Christians celebrate this holiday to commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Traditions include decorating evergreen Christmas trees in the home, decorating homes with lights, receiving an overnight delivery of gifts for children from Santa Claus, and singing classic holiday songs like “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”

KWANZAA: Sunday, Dec. 26-Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022

Kwanzaa is an African American holiday celebrating life. It was established in 1966 to embrace African culture and is based on various African harvest festivals. Traditions include music, storytelling and poetry, an African feast, the lighting of a kinara candleholder, and reflection on the seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AND DAY: Friday, Dec. 31-Saturday, Jan. 1, 2022

New Year's Eve and Day are marked by reflection over the previous year and hope for the coming year. Traditions include parties that culminate in a midnight celebration with noise makers and champagne, making resolutions to improve upon oneself in the coming year, and special New Year's Day meals.

EPIPHANY: Thursday, Jan. 6, 2022

Epiphany, also called Three Kings' Day, celebrates the visit to the newborn Jesus by the three magi, or three kings, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. It is the final of the Twelve Days of Christmas and immediately preceded by Twelfth Night. Traditions include a kings' cake with tiny baby figurine baked inside, special songs, and small gifts hidden in children's shoes to represent gifts given to Jesus by the Magi.

ORTHODOX CHRISTMAS: Friday, Jan. 7, 2022

Orthodox Christian religions from Eastern Europe and the Middle East celebrate Christmas according to the Julian Calendar used by Julius Caesar. Traditions include fasting before the holiday, enjoying music, and churches lighting a small fire of blessed palms and burning frankincense to commemorate the three wise men's gifts to baby Jesus. Additional traditions are associated with specific Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries.

ORTHODOX NEW YEAR: Friday, Jan. 14, 2022

Also referred to as the Old New Year's Day, the Orthodox New Year is celebrated by many members of Orthodox religions according to the Julian Calendar. Traditions include dinner dances and buffets and special New Year's Day liturgies.

TU BISHVAT: Sunday, Jan. 16-Monday, Jan. 17, 2022

Tu B'Shvat, or “New Year of the Trees” is often referred to as the Jewish Arbor Day or Earth Day. It is believed to have started as an agricultural festival that welcomes spring. Traditions include holding a ritual seder meal, planting trees, and tracing family roots.

ORTHODOX EPIPHANY: Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022

Orthodox Epiphany celebrates Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River. Traditions include diving after a cross tossed into a river or body of water and the blessing of houses with holy water.