

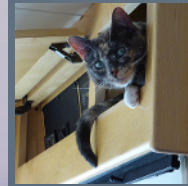
HIS & HERS ROGUE

**Holiday
Traveling**

December 2019



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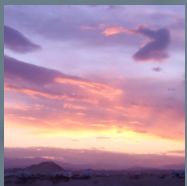
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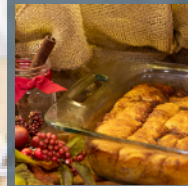
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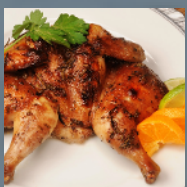
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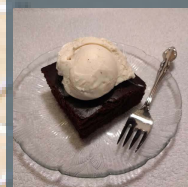
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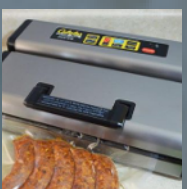
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HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

FROM BEN & REBECCA PAZDERNIK

We started out intending to write a short article highlighting some unique gifts you could give to travelers - or hint at for yourselves.

We couldn't stop! In fact, it ended up being so big that we decided to create a separate Holiday Gift Guide that you can download - or browse directly on our Amazon idea list and His & Hers Cache store.

Feel free to share our 2019 Holiday Gift Guide with family, friends, other RVers or Overlanders.

Happy Holidays!

Ben & Rebecca



SHELBY

A big thank you to each of you who responded with your love and support during the extremely rough days and weeks since we lost Shelby, The Wonder Dog. We cannot thank you enough for your kindness.

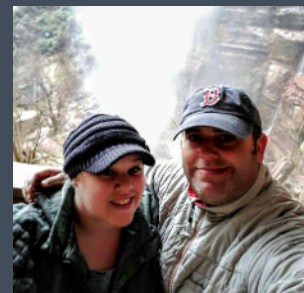


HOLIDAY JOY ON THE ROAD

Being away for the holidays can feel lonely. You are going to miss Grandma's pumpkin pie, Uncle Jim's eggnog, or Mom's baked ham. When you are on the road, you really have three options for celebrating. You can hightail it to a relative's to bask in traditional familial bliss, Bah-humbug yourself alone in your RV/hotel room, or you can embrace the holidays with the locals.

No matter the season or upcoming holiday, there are always festivals. Whether it be crab and spaghetti dinner with the local volunteer fire department to raise money in the spring, cider pressing with the 4-H kids to celebrate the harvest, or yachts decorated with Christmas lights, a quick Google search can have you planning an adventure that will get everyone in the spirit.

If you have the opportunity, not to mention the organization, to plan a holiday-specific trip, the world is your oyster. If you are tired of the cold, think of heading south. Lake Havasu's English Village gets decked out in lights, so you can experience some Old-World charm while getting your shopping down. December is one of the best times to visit the Florida Keys, and it's nice to swap snow angels for sandcastles.



by Elle Hausner

Elle has spent most of her adult life working on ambulances, from the East Coast to the West. Her passion is traveling like a local, getting to know the place and the people like she was born there. She lived in a truck camper, traveling the Olympic Peninsula, and knows the logging roads like the back of her hand. Even though she lives in a stick-and-brick with her partner, Miguel, and their cheeky little dog, Gryffin, they all dream of the day they get back on the road.

Maybe you are dreaming of a White Christmas. Utah and Colorado are known for their exceptional skiing, sprawling lodges, and easy mountain lifestyle. Or who wouldn't want to sip cider by the fire in a New England cottage? Find a small, snowy town to live out your most Dickens-esque fantasies.



Need something in-between? Look to the coasts of Northern California, Oregon, or Washington. The weather may be chilly, but you are only a short drive from the beach to snow-covered pines.

I recommend making a list. Decide what you want, factoring in everything that's important to you.

When you know exactly where you want to be, you can plan months in advance. If you are RVing, reserve the most festive RV park you can find. If you are road-tripping and need a hotel, think about Airbnb or bed and breakfasts. Even a hotel with a kitchenette will allow you to have your morning coffee in comfort and add a homey feeling you may miss. Plot a route, hitting some of the highlights along the way. Plan how you want to spend your time. Are there festivals or shows you want to see? Experiences you can't get anywhere else, or any other time? Planning and researching a holiday-specific trip allows you to factor in every aspect and really get the most of it.

GET LOCAL

Sometimes, you just happen to be somewhere during the right time of the year. This is when you are really at risk for the holiday blues. With a little effort and courage, it can also be one of the funnest experiences. When we first moved to Washington state, we had no family around us. So,

we asked how local people celebrated. We were inundated with suggestions like The Christmas Farmer's Market, where local craftsmen sold unique gifts, the Caroling Boats, where people sang from the deck while traveling around the Puget Sound, or the Christmas window displays downtown.

This isn't just something that happens in the Pacific Northwest. This happens in every town or city across our country. Reach out to the locals through social media, join local Facebook groups to get the skinny on the smaller events or festivals. Talk to your waitress, ask the attendant at the gas station. Look on bulletin boards in coffee shops, ask the barista. What are their traditions? Who has



the best hot chocolate? Which neighborhood has the brightest light displays? Who is open for Christmas dinner?

If you are a member of a certain faith and enjoy going to services, contact the local church. They probably have a ton of things going on during the season, and you have a ready-made friend group waiting to embrace you.

One of the best perks of traveling is getting to live like a local. When you skip past the touristy stuff, and enmesh yourself in the culture, you become a part of the community. You are never alone when

you are a member of the community. You may not be with your family, but you can surround yourself with new friends at every stop you make, no matter how long your stay is. Isn't that why we travel? To learn about others? To experience things outside of our norm? Cities and towns work to put out the very best of themselves during the holidays, and this is your chance to really get to know them.

VOLUNTEER



While I encourage you to fill your agenda with activities and events, leave some time to volunteer. Wherever you go, there will always be people who need a little help.

Not only does this make you feel entrenched in the community, but it also adds to the overall spirit of the holiday. It gives you a chance to give back selflessly because you don't have a personal connection with anyone you are serving. You can do a good deed anonymously. There are so many ways to give back, whether you pick a random name from an Angel Tree, spend time at a soup kitchen, or clean kennels at the local animal shelter. If you plan on attending a church service, see what they are doing for their congregations.

Be aware that this is a very popular time to volunteer. Be willing to take less glamorous roles like dishwashing, sorting through donations, or

doing laundry at the shelter. Be grateful if your first choice has enough hands and find somewhere else you are needed.

Volunteering is an important part of travel, no matter the time of year. We shouldn't expect to reap all the good, without trying to put something back. Other people will benefit from your service, and you will too. It will forge a personal bond with the area, in a way that just enjoying the sights never can. It can be as simple as picking up trash on the beach, donating money or groceries to the food bank, or taking a bag of kibble to an animal rescue. Find the needs in the area and do what you can to help.

It can be so hard to change the way we think of holidays, but if we stay open to new things and new experiences, the world becomes smaller. When we raise a glass with strangers in a pub, or join hands with them in prayer, or join them in one of their traditions, we are fully embracing the season of giving and camaraderie. Isn't that the whole point of holidays? And traveling, for that matter?

Here's wishing you a joyous holiday, and a new year filled with adventure. May every bumpy road lead to a scenic overlook, and every chance encounter lead to friendships that last a lifetime.





BY KRIS KING

Kris King has lived her entire life in Southern California. Since retiring, Kris and her husband enjoy traveling as much as possible in their motor home. They hope to continue their travels, and expect to visit Alaska, Canada, and spend as much time as possible exploring the California beaches, mountains, and deserts. Kris can be contacted at kriskingrv@gmail.com.

CELEBRATING NEW YEAR'S IN THE CALIFORNIA DESERT

The leaves are turning color and you can feel the fall season is in the air, which means it's time to start thinking about the holidays. Christmas is just a few weeks away, and like most people, it is the busiest time of the year for us. It is a time filled with family and cherished traditions, including shopping, baking, decorating, wrapping, parties, and magical events bursting with fun and memories. But like so many people, we are exhausted and ready for a change by the time Christmas is over. Unlike most of the country, the winters are a great time in Southern California for getting outdoors and camping in our RV. Our deserts usually have warm, sunny days and cool evenings this time of year, so we leave Christmas behind and head to the desert to celebrate New Year's Eve.

For the last several New Year's Eves, we have made it our tradition to meet family and friends at Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreation Area in San Diego County, CA. The Ocotillo Wells area is over 85,000 acres and is open to off road vehicles. The area is known for its large desert where there are countless miles of dirt trails to explore. This is a great family location that offers free dry camping in many areas. It is close to Anza Borrego State Park, the town of Borrego Springs, and the Salton Sea.



We usually plan our trip with several other families and camp in a big circle. There is no limit as to how big or small a group can be since a large portion of Ocotillo Wells is flat open terrain. We spend the days roaming the desert in off road vehicles, watching the kids ride quads around camp, or just staying in camp. The weather is great this time of the year, and we enjoy the casual atmosphere of wearing jeans and t-shirts during the day, then adding a jacket or sweatshirt to sit by the fire in the evenings.



Many people think there isn't much to see in the desert – that it just is empty land with rocks, sand, and tumbleweeds; but there is a lot to see in the Ocotillo Wells area. This desert region is an ancient seabed and was once completely under water, so it is unique and has many geological wonders. In one area, Shell Reef, you can see archaic seashells embedded in the side of a hill. Another area called the Pumpkin Patch has sandstone and clay formations that look exactly like a pumpkin patch. The Gas Domes area has volcanic muddy pots of cool bubbling liquid. There are numerous slot canyons and many other interesting areas, all of which are fun to explore. For avid off roaders, an area called Truckhaven has been developed that has a fun and challenging obstacle course. These are just a few places we love to visit each year, but we always find new points of interest with interesting geographical features. The ranger station is

happy to give out maps and information about the distinctive areas. These areas mostly require an off-road vehicle, but there is also much to see that doesn't require an off road vehicle.

Anza Borrego State Park is just a few miles away with an informative Visitors Center. This is a great area to visit in the spring to see the desert wildflowers and bighorn sheep. The towns of Borrego Springs and Salton City are also close by and supply gas, groceries, restaurants, vehicle repair, etc. It is worth a trip to Borrego Springs just to see the metal sculptures throughout the town. And Indio, Brawley, and Palm Springs are less than an hour away if you are looking for more city experiences and amenities.



Besides so many places to visit and explore, we also enjoy time at our campsite. We camp with several people that we only get to see once or twice a year, so it is fun to catch up with friends. Evenings in camp are always a wonderful time and we often have a beautiful sunset. One of the highlights of this trip is our tradition of having a big potluck on New Year's Eve. We have a great time and eat lots of delicious food. We make a large bonfire in the center of our campsite and gather around the fire to enjoy our dinner. Like any campfire, it wouldn't be complete without a delicious dessert such as s'mores or peach cobbler made in the Dutch oven.

We reminisce about the year that is about to end, which always includes a lot of laughter, and most importantly highlights the good events that have happened such as the birth of a new grandchild, marriage of a child, or a much anticipated retirement or vacation. One of my favorite parts of the evening is viewing the night sky from the desert. The desert has very little light pollution, so it is a perfect place for star gazing. We spend time looking for satellites and shooting stars, and it is always a treat to see so many constellations and the Milky Way. We welcome in the New Year sitting in the middle of the desert, around our campfire with family and friends, with toasts, resolutions, and more laughter and music.

Camping is always a treat for us, no matter where we go, but the desert in the winter is a special place. It is too hot to camp out here in the summers, so we love the opportunity to enjoy it during New Year's Eve week, which is peak season for this area. I know many of you live in cold areas where you can't camp this time of year, and we feel fortunate to live in a place that we can use our RV year around. This may be quite different than the way many of you spend New Year's Eve, but this is our wonderful tradition of ringing in the New Year. If you ever are in Southern California during the winter, I encourage you to explore this unique area. Happy New Year!

For more information you can visit their website at: http://ohv.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1217



SMALL KITCHEN HOLIDAY COOKING

OR, WHY YOU SHOULD COOK DURING THE (UGH!) HOLIDAYS IN YOUR SMALL KITCHEN

...While it may not bring joy to the world, it just may bring some peace to you!

Fa-la-la-la-la ...la-la-la LAAAA!!! Right? I mean who are we kidding thinking that the holidays evoke nothing but endless joy with happy trips to Target, tons of sparkles and united loved ones around a fire sipping cocoa while singing carols. If that *is* your family, I truly am glad for you; but it is my experience that the holidays are stressful for a LOT of people and can be downright rotten for more of us than some might think. Why is this? And what do we do?? And I am suggesting you COOK? Really???

I will begin by submitting to you the idea that many of us may have chosen life in an RV, traveling the country to where the wind or whim takes us, *precisely to BE* more carefree, less burdened by the 'trappings' of regular life in a sticks-and-bricks.

To STRESS. LESS. Yes?? So how does that work during the holidays? Are you new to this RV life and NOT doing what you used to do is bringing its own new stress? Are you not new to it, but looking to do something different?

I think that we have to acknowledge that even if we love RVing and would make this choice all over again, it can be hard; there are adjustments and it does change us. So how does that fit into the holidays? What do you do now with no house to have a party in, no spare rooms to host your kids or family or friends? These are the details of our choice to live this lifestyle and, while we may embrace them mostly; it's okay to admit it's tough sometimes and especially this time of year. It can also be fun and exciting and adventure filled. Right? Balance!

Grief During the Holidays

Now, for a moment, we will go deeper. I also want, or need, to address that for a lot of us 'the struggle' is so very real. That to even *think* about the holidays through our *grief-colored glasses* - through the glasses that show us someone isn't there that *should* be, that *needs* to be there in order for us to even have the holiday – is unbearable.

Right? The holidays can be one of the hardest times for grievers. If you are in this group, I see you and am in this space with you. I feel for you and want to offer hope. It may not ever feel better or be 'easier'; but you can get stronger, and you can find 'new normals'. Perhaps, like me, the choice to RV was one of those things. Take baby steps and be easy on yourself. Honor ALL your emotions and give yourself plenty of room to flex as needed. I encourage you to honor both sadness *and* happiness. They can exist beside each other or together. And know there is no right way to grieve. I am so sorry for your loss; and if you have not felt one yourself, I am sure you have someone in your life that does. I encourage you to give them a hug (virtual or real - both help!)



BY MELISSA BOTORROF-AREY
CHEF / OWNER, CULTIVATED JOURNEY

Cooking as Therapy

SO back to it. I say you should COOK??? Isn't that *adding* stress?? I say NO. Not always. Choices here. I believe in cooking as therapy - as a healing ritual. *Cooking gives a sense of accomplishment and pride. Cooking nurtures and nourishes us both literally and spiritually. Cooking (and dining) brings us together and unites us as people. It is both basic and elevating.* If you are purposeful and have already made all of the other 'hard (aka self-honoring and intentional) choices' on how, where, and with whom you are spending time this season, and if you *are* among the majority of us that find the holidays to be hard in one or more ways, *I want you to TRY something for me.*

Plan to make THIS menu for just you or you two+ (the people that LIVE in your RV.) If you will be without guests or a destination on a holiday (pick one), then this can certainly *be* your holiday meal. If not, I challenge you to just make it together, for fun, to have your own *new* tradition, sometime during this season. **Try it.** I have built this to be an RV friendly, stress-LESS meal that also evokes the smells and feels of all that is 'good and right and intended' for the holidays. I think you might agree.

Yes! I think you should follow your own rules. Do what you want. CHASE YOUR JOY! Find your zen or happiness or place on this planet. I also know, at the end of the day, at some point in the next few weeks or months, the holiday 'feels' might just creep (or seep) in a bit and I believe that getting into the kitchen, creating, accomplishing and nurturing your body and even your SOUL will be just what you need. Really!

The following pages contain a menu that I think covers it all for whatever holiday you wish. It's fun to make, very RV friendly, and elevated enough to make you feel 'festive and special.' I think in an overall way it ticks most of the boxes for holiday flavors (especially if you try the bonuses!)

Have fun and enjoy!! LOVE, PEACE and JOY to you and yours.





SMALL KITCHEN HOLIDAY MENU

(For 2; you can quantify for more people if you wish)

GRILLED SPATCHCOCK CORNISH HENS WITH HONEY-CRANBERRY BALSAMIC GLAZE

CRISPY BRUSSEL SPROUTS WITH APPLEWOOD SMOKED BACON

ASIAGO HASSELBACK POTATOES (WITH OPTIONAL ADD-ON)

BONUS - 2 EASY DESSERT SUGGESTIONS

MY THOUGHTS AHEAD OF 'COOKING DAY'

Read all the way through the recipes. This is not labor or ingredient intensive and is designed to FEEL social without (most) of the fancy food hassles, but consider what you can do the day before to make life easier the day of. For me, this does two things - prolongs the process and makes it a little more special, and serves to help keep my *mise en place* firmly in check (aka you will be organized.)

NOW, THE RECIPES...

Spatchcocked Cornish Hens on the GRILL

(Yes, you can use the oven if that's your only option, but they are so good on the grill that it's worth a try if you can.)



- 2 Cornish Hens (size of your choice)
- Mild Oil (Like Olive or Canola)
- Dry Rub: I often use Spicy Old Bay or my own herb blend, but pick your favorite dry rub
- GLAZE:
 - 1/3 c honey (good honey is better)
 - 1/4 c balsamic vinegar
 - 1/3 c real cranberry juice*
 - Zest of 1 orange or 2 small tangerines
 - 2-3 T cornstarch (dissolve before adding to pot in the cool juice*)
 - 1/2 tsp cayenne (more if you prefer)
 - Pinch of salt

Directions

1. FIRST, take hens out of the refrigerator while you prepare the glaze.
2. To make glaze, combine all ingredients in a saucepan (use cool liquids) & whisk until bubbly. Reduce just to thicken a bit. Turn off heat & set aside. You will use this twice - in a bit.
3. Next, wash off the Cornish hens under cool to tepid tap water & be sure to pat DRY.
4. To butterfly (spatchcock) place the bird breast side down and, using sturdy kitchen scissors, cut all the way along each side of the spine (about an inch on each side) through the ribs and remove the spine completely. Once you've removed the backbone, flip the Cornish hen and use the palm of your hand to press down firmly on the breast to lay the Cornish hen flat. If you need to, this technique is easily searched on YouTube. It's not difficult, you can do it!
5. Use a prepared rub as suggested (or mix your own if you wish.) With the skin side of the Cornish hen facing up, drizzle with a small amount of mild oil & rub to just barely coat. Then, generously and evenly distribute the dry rub over every part of the chicken on the **skin side** only.
6. Preheat the grill to medium-low. If you're using a wood-fired grill, make a fire made from dry wood. I like fruitwood, like cherry, for hens. You can use charcoal or a combination. Let it die down to a 1-inch bed of hot embers, moving the embers to one side so that there is a cooler zone and a hotter zone.
7. Now that the coals are ready, put the Cornish hen skin side up on the cooler zone of the grill and leave it alone until it reaches an internal temperature of 130F. **NOTE: (START THE BRUSSELS SPROUTS HERE!!)**

8. NOW GET THAT GLAZE that you made earlier (you won't need it all - save about half for later.) Liberally brush it on the skin, then carefully flip the bird over to crisp the skin on the hotter part of the grill. Be sure to monitor how fast the skin is cooking so it doesn't burn. Do not flip the Cornish hen back again once it is on its skin side. If you need to, move it over to the cooler side of the grill or turn the heat down. This is good for another glaze application now if you want. The skin should quickly crisp in about 5 to 10 minutes and the meat should reach an internal temperature of about 160 but no higher than 165F when you insert a meat thermometer into the deepest part of the breast meat. Remove it as soon as the temperature is reached and let the Cornish hen rest for 10 minutes before serving. You WILL get about 10 degrees more of 'carryover cooking temp' as they rest!!) FINAL internal temp must be 165F! TRUST me if you don't want DRY birds.

TO SERVE ---> drizzle birds AND Brussels (trust me on the yum factor here) with remaining glaze!! Add potatoes and wine (or your favorite beverage) and **ENJOY!**

Asiago Hasselback Potatoes

You can do this the day before and reheat if you want. You can also substitute sweet potatoes but reduce the cooking time by about 25%; **otherwise, start in the oven an hour prior to having the hens done** (like put them in when you are seasoning the birds!)



- > 2-4 Baker Potatoes (depending on whether you want leftovers) - scrubbed
- > 4-6 T melted butter WITH 1 tsp poultry seasoning added (a-ha!! The smells!!) You will use some halfway through cooking so keep what you don't use initially.
- > 2-4 oz shredded Asiago Cheese (grate your own if you can)
- > S & P to season
- > (OPTIONAL, but highly suggested!! :) Prepare a box of Pepperidge Farm (or your preferred brand) stuffing ahead of time, like the day before or that morning. OR, if you are like me, make our family-recipe cornbread stuffing - or a smaller batch of it anyway.)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450F.
2. Lay cleaned (patted dry) potatoes on your cutting board. With a sharp knife, make slices (on the short side of the potato about every ½ inch BUT do not slice through - stop ½ inch before that! IF you don't trust yourself not to slice down too far here is a **TIP**. Place a potato in a large

- or wooden spoon & slice (the edges of the spoon will keep you from slicing through.) Two chopsticks placed snugly on each side of the potato as you slice will work the same way.
3. Brush each potato with the seasoned butter, season with S & P, then sprinkle with cheese (and Stuffing IF you are doing that part.)
 4. Place potatoes in a baking dish & put in oven (I loosely cover with foil for half of the baking time.)
 5. Halfway through (rotate if your RV oven is like mine!!) and uncover. You may wish to drizzle or brush with a little more butter at this time.
 6. **Finish baking & keep warm in oven until serving!**

Air-'Fried' Crispy Brussel Sprouts with Applewood Bacon



These are something you will repeat all year - you can add carrots or other vegetables too! If you do not have an air fryer - you should absolutely consider one as you will be amazed (and more health forward); but if you don't, and don't intend to, these can go in your oven alongside your potatoes or on the grill in a veggie basket. Any of it works!

- 1 lb Brussels Sprouts (you will probably have leftovers)
- A scant amount of EVOO (or Garlic or Citrus EVOO) AND 1-2 T of cranberry juice
- ¼ to ½ lb Applewood Smoked Bacon (thick cut) - cut into small pieces
- A little orange zest (because we are building flavor here)
- S & P to taste

Directions

1. Prepare brussels sprouts by cutting the end off (not just the tip, but the end - about ¼ to ⅓ of sprout), then cut in half. Allow the outer (dirtier looking) leaves to fall off & discard. Keep any young, tender ones to toss in (these get crispy & yummy!)
2. Toss all ingredients in a bowl & let sit until happy (up to an hour or marinate like this overnight in the refrigerator the day before.)
3. Preheat (5 minutes) air fryer at 400F.
4. Turn off & add Brussels sprouts & bacon to the air fryer.
5. Turn on to air-fry (400F) for 10 minutes.
6. Open fryer (pause cooking if still going) 5 minutes in & stir well.
7. Your air fryer may cook a bit different so some of this will take checking & may take a minute or two more/less. Just watch them! I love the crisp (almost burnt) outer leaves. Don't be afraid of crispness with the surface of the sprouts.

TO SERVE ---> drizzle Brussels and bird with remaining glaze!! Trust me on the yum factor here!



Vote “YES” to Dessert!!! Easy (and Yummy) Dessert Suggestions

[Affogato Whip](#) (Because it's GOOD, easy, and decadent.) This is from Jamie Oliver's 5 Ingredient Cookbook that my (online) super fun Cookbook Club is cooking from this term (Sept-Dec.) It bears noting that I would substitute pecans as walnuts are not my thing, but you get the idea!

OR

[Chocolate Pots de Creme](#) (with raspberries or strawberries if you wish.) Recipe (follow link) on my website Cultivated Journey.

I truly wish a HAPPY (and stress-LESS) Holiday Season to you ALL!! . . . Chef Melissa



TECHNOLOGY: VACUUM SEALERS

DO YOU NEED ONE TOO?

Like all other full-time RVers, we have limited space. We love to cook and try the new foods and recipes of the locales in which we are staying. Needless to say, the limited space puts a real crimp on the kitchen small appliances, tools, and gadgets that we can have on board. So, what is the one small appliance everyone seems surprised I made room for? A vacuum sealer!

SO WHY USE YOUR LIMITED AND PRECIOUS SPACE ON A VACUUM SEALER?

1. **Better food storage.** Air is the biggest enemy of maintaining food quality over time. Vacuum sealing most foods will extend the “shelf life” of the product in the freezer, refrigerator, or shelf. Products that can be vacuum-sealed include (but not limited to) meat, cheese, rice, flour, sugar, brown sugar, nuts/seeds, dried fruit, coffee, herbs, yeast, and spices.

2. **Save ingredients for later.** Most fresh herbs, fruits, and vegetables can be preserved for weeks in the refrigerator or months in the freezer.

3. **Batch cooking and leftovers.** Make a big batch of your favorite food, seal them into individual servings. Reheat in 200F water (just under boiling).

4. **Minimizes the chance of cross-contamination.** The vacuum sealer bags offer an added layer of separation, especially for raw chicken and seafood.

5. **Reseal bags of chips and other snacks.** These are notorious for going stale quickly once you open the bag. Simply seal the chip bag after opening and enjoying your portion. Do NOT vacuum the bag of chips unless you want crumbs.

6. **Preserve non-food stuff from oxygen, moisture, or insects.** Protect items such as vital documents, medications, matches, tape, fan belts, air filters, oil filters, etc. Just be sure to get bags large enough for the item you wish to preserve.

TYPES OF VACUUM SEALERS

1. Chamber vacuum sealers – These do an excellent job of quickly sealing food in airtight packaging. They have powerful vacuum pumps and large chambers that give them the ability to quickly seal multiple bags of food at a time. These are great for hunters and/or fishermen who process large batches of meat at once. However, they are pricey and consume large amounts of space.



by *Michelle Berns*

· Hobbies include cooking, knitting and quilting

· While traveling loves

- to experiment with local recipes and foods

- to search out yarn, material and patterns from local fiber artist to create her own works



2. External vacuum sealers – These usually are smaller and less expensive. To use them, you place the open end of your vacuum bag inside the machine and shut it. Then the machine will draw out all the air from the bag directly from the open end and seal it. These are a bit tricky to seal liquids or other wet/soft foods, but there are workarounds.

We like to hunt and fish; we love to cook in large batches; and we have very limited space. Ideally, we would have a chamber vacuum sealer; however, space is limited in our RV, so we have an external vacuum sealer.

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE BUYING A VACUUM SEALER

There are many available brands and choices out there. Understanding how you plan to use the vacuum sealer before you go to buy one will save you from feeling overwhelmed when choosing the right one for you.

Ask yourself these few basic questions:

1. What will I seal in the bags?

Consider whether you plan on using the sealer for mostly meats, which stay sealed better with a thicker seal strip or if you are going to use it just to preserve fresh vegetables and dried goods, in which case a thinner seal strip will be fine.

Since I use my sealer for a large variety of food and non-food items, I opted for one that can do a single or double 3 mm seal strip. Also, our sealer has

a bag cutter and roll storage. This allows us to use either pre-made vacuum bags or those bags that are made from a roll.

2. How often will I use this in a year?

If you seal large batches only a couple of times a year (like from a deer hunt), you may need/want a heavy-duty sealer unit. Lighter usage would be a dozen or so bags sealed at a time to package up a large batch of food (like breakfast burritos or making smaller packages of the five pounds of hamburger you just bought on sale.) Look for a safety system that will not allow your vacuum sealer to run overheated. You can burn your machine out with heavy usage in a short period of time.

As stated earlier, we have limited space; so we opted to purchase a unit that is a bit too small for the times we process large batches of game or fish, but just perfect for the big batch of breakfast burritos. So, this means that on the “game” days, I spend time letting the sealer cool between packages. Yes, it takes more time; but it keeps my sealer in good working order and saves me space.

3. How often will the average package sit in the freezer?

If you expect the food to sit in the freezer for a year or more (like we do for game and fish), you will need a sealer that has a wide sealing strip (or double strip) which helps to keep the bag sealed. Moisture will prevent a solid seal from forming. If you are planning to keep food for over a year at a time, look for a unit that will handle the thicker bags (i.e. 4 mm thickness.)

We usually consume our sealed food within a few weeks, with the exception of the wild game and fish. As stated earlier, we have a sealer that allows for a thin single seal or a double seal. Just for better results we always use 4 mm pre-made bags – less opportunity for failure.

4. Will I need to use the sealer mainly with AC (120-volt) current or DC (12-volt) power source?

There are sealers that are designed to be taken into the field and used to preserve your food. They usually have an extra-long cord and come with a 12-volt DC adapter (i.e. fits into cigarette lighter). Oftentimes, they come with a handle with a locking mechanism that keeps the unit closed in transit.

While we do a lot of off-grid living and have a

large battery bank, we opted for a sealer that is AC electric only. It was less expensive and smaller. However, ours does have a locking handle to keep it closed while in storage in our RV.

5. Do I want/need a hose adapter on the sealer?

Some, but not all, sealers have an adapter where you can attach a hose and use it to seal other containers such as canning jars, wine bottles, or vacuum seal containers specifically made to be sealed and frozen. If you have the room in your rig, this may be a great option for you. Because of space issues, we opted not to have hoses and special containers.

6. What types of food will I be vacuum sealing?

Some units have features for a “wet sealing mode” and “pulse mode.” The wet mode allows you to pour sauces or gravies into the bag before sealing. If you are looking for this feature, be sure the unit has a drip guard to catch any extra liquid, and it should be removable for easier clean-up. Pulse mode removes air from the bag in short bursts; this is ideal for sealing foods that can break or rip easily (i.e.: biscuits or leafy vegetables).



RECOMMENDED VACUUM SEALERS

We own [Cabela's Pro Elite Vacuum Sealer](#) and love it! It has a heavy-duty double-piston pump, deep vacuum chamber and lock-down handle; all work together to ensure a good seal. The drip pad is not removable, so clean up can be a bit tricky. There are touchpad controls, three sealing levels, two vacuum options, and a countdown for sealing progress on a LED display. It has a vacuum canister port and hose. The footprint is 6"x16"x9.5". At the time of the writing of this article, this unit is \$250 from

Cabelas.com and comes with a one-year warranty. We buy 4mm bags and replaceable seals from Cabela's. This unit is compatible with FoodSaver brand bags and accessories.

If you are unsure how much you will use a vacuum sealer, we suggest the [FoodSaver V2244 Vacuum Sealing System with a Starter Kit](#). It is a good basic unit. Its footprint is 6" x 11" x 18". It has an extra-wide sealing strip and removable drip tray. It has a lock latch and an accessory hose port. FoodSaver bags are readily available. The starter kit comes with a variety of seal rolls and bags. At the time of the writing of this article, the Amazon price was \$80. It comes with a five-year warranty.

TIPS FOR BEST RESULTS USING YOUR VACUUM SEALER

1. For powdery items (i.e. flour or sugar) leave them inside the paper or plastic storage bag that they came in and place the bag inside a vacuum bag.

2. Pre-freeze food with liquid

o When sealing soft, juicy, or wet items, it is best to slightly freeze the items for a few hours then seal the item

o Such as soup. Freeze in a plastic bowl. When solid pop out the food and slip it into a bag and vacuum seal.

o Such as enchilada with sauce. Put individual servings in a sandwich bag. When frozen, pop out the food and slip multiple single servings into a bag and vacuum seal.

o Pouring liquids and purees into ice cube trays is another option. Fill the trays and freeze, then pop the cubes out and vacuum seal. You can use as little or a lot. Reseal if needed.

3. Freeze produce on a sheet pan and then pack into meal/recipe-sized bags and seal. This way berries or peas are not bunched together in one big frozen chunk. When you are ready to use, you can pour as little or much as you want/need.

4. To protect knives or other cutlery from corrosion, be sure to wrap them in a protective cloth before sealing, so that fork tines or sharp knife edges won't puncture the vacuum bag.



FOLLOW YOUR HEART FOR THE HOLIDAYS

by Julie Gant

Julie is an aspiring writer and content co-creator for The Wandering Gants. She and her husband, Brian, travel the country with their three Wandering Cats, exploring, learning, and sharing their experiences. You can find them on:

[The Wandering Gants Blog](#)

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Every year, you start seeing the articles pop up all over the Internet. This is the best place to spend the holidays. No this is the best! Wait, wait. I know the most amazing spot to spend the holidays. California. Florida. Texas. Mexico. Arizona. Hawaii. I could name dozens of other places people claim are the best spots to spend the holidays.

Over the years, before and after becoming full-time RVers, my husband and I have spent the holidays in our Seattle-area hometown with local family and friends; we've had a beautiful white Christmas in Indiana, and warm, sunny ones in San Diego, Palm Springs, and Borrego Springs. We've shared Thanksgiving with cousins in Portland or San Luis Obispo and partied with friends for New Years in Quartzsite.



So, what's our favorite? I couldn't really say. Each of these experiences was wonderful and most included family or friends. All the locations were awesome in their own way. So where *is* the absolute best place to be for the holiday season?

Home.

Yep. Home – and it truly is where the heart is.

For us, home is now our motorhome. We feel so lucky that we're able to follow our hearts and drive our home wherever we want to be for the holidays. I love this part of nomadic life. I love being able to see family and friends we rarely see otherwise. I love exploring a new place every holiday, and that there's no hotel, flight, or long drive home.

Another fun part? Every town has their own holiday traditions. I thought I'd miss the wintery weather for the holidays, but even towns with 80-degree weather have that holiday spirit. San Diego's downtown and waterfront was all lit up for the holidays. We caught a holiday boat parade on our way back from Coronado Island, which made me think of Seattle and all the years we took part in the Christmas parade there. Borrego Springs was mildly decorated, but the real surprise was having an amazing, fine-dining experience at a local hotel. Just as family and friends in Seattle were getting ready for a gray Thanksgiving, the San Luis Obispo area was treating us well with gorgeous sunsets and dinner with cousins I hadn't seen for many, many years.

And, though they're *technically* not holidays, our birthdays this year were spectacular! We were in Denver for my husband's, visiting close friends and some family. It was the first time he and his

sisters had all been together for a birthday since the mid-80s! I got to spend my birthday at a bucket list location – Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Time with good friends and getting to see wild horses and bison was a fantastic birthday gift!



This year for Halloween, we experienced Día De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) in Las Cruces, New Mexico. We were excited to learn more about a different culture's celebrations around Halloween/Samhain! We'll likely spend Thanksgiving with friends in the Saguaro National Park, my husband's mother and daughter are flying to join us in Tucson for Christmas while we relax at a resort, and we'll be by ourselves at a state park stargazing on the New Year. What could be better?



So, get out there – even if you're not a nomad. Explore the different towns across America and around the world, visit people you haven't seen in years, and discover other traditions. If you bring your heart along with you, you'll always be in the best place for the holidays.

Holiday Pet Safety

Whether you are traveling to a destination or hosting at your home, holidays can be a stressful time for both two and four legged souls. Pets thrive on a regular routine and when that changes it can cause both physical, think upset tummy and what may come out the back end, and behavioral problems. As pet parents, it is our job to make sure that those furry souls in our care feel safe and that we provide a safe environment for them.

Let's begin with hosting guests in your home. It is important that your guests understand any rules that you have in your household concerning your pets and agree to follow them. This is your pet's home too, feel confident in your decision to ask someone to leave if they don't follow the rules because in the long term, they won't be paying the vet bills or dealing with the loss of a pet. Such rules may include that your pets aren't allowed outside without a leash or they are not allowed any table food. Explain to your guests why you have these rules in place. Once they understand that your dog is a runner and could get hit by a car or has pancreatitis and that anything other than their dog food will make them extremely sick, they will understand that these rules are in place to keep them safe and out of the emergency vet on Thanksgiving night.

When hosting guests, it's also a good idea to think about what types of things your guests will bring into your dog's environment that you don't normally need to worry about. Do they have children who don't have experience being around pets? Not all children understand how to safely interact with animals, especially older pets that are used to a quieter environment and don't enjoy rough play. And let's remember with children come toys and all their little accessories which are prime candidates for a blockage if ingested. Are your parents or grandparents coming to visit? Are they on medications that if accidentally dropped and consumed by your pet could make them deathly ill? Does Grandma still carry your favorite gum in her purse? Something as small as a piece of sugar free gum containing Xylitol can poison your pet in less than 30 minutes. Poinsettias are also extremely dangerous to pets so make sure to keep them out of pet's reach, especially those that like to chew on plants. And we all know about the dangers of our pets ingesting chocolate and grapes, right?

Making sure your pets have a safe and quiet environment to retreat to is the best way to help them handle all the holiday hoopla in their home. Don't be alarmed if they decide to spend their time there and not socialize, they will do what they are comfortable with depending on the situation.

Traveling to a destination with your pet introduces a whole

new set of challenges in addition to the same challenges when bringing guests into your home. While still setting and managing rules for your pet's environment and safety is important, now you'll have the added task of implementing those rules in a new environment. Where will your pet eat and sleep? Will you need to bring a gate or crate to contain your pet in a certain area? Are there other pets there and how well will your pets interact with them? Not all pets are social and there isn't anything wrong with that. Let's face it, we don't like every person we meet, why should we expect the same from them?

Feeding your pets while traveling can sometimes be a challenge. If your pets eat a brand of food that is commonly found in a retail store, then no problems however if your pet is on a special diet or eats a raw based diet then you may run into some obstacles. Make sure to pack plenty of extra food, usually enough for an extra week of meals in case you are delayed by weather, sickness or mechanical issues. Your pet's medications follow the same rules, make sure to have plenty on hand and extra for just in case. If your pets are on any special medications such as insulin or pain meds such as Tramadol, you may not be able to get these refilled at a local pharmacy so planning ahead is essential.





Are you traveling from a cold climate to a warm or hot climate? What about vice versa? If you are heading to a warmer climate, make sure to keep an eye on your pet and that they don't overheat, especially geriatric or smoochy face dogs (think pugs and bulldogs) that can't maintain their body temperatures as well. It's the same for dogs going to a colder environment, bring a sweater or fleece blanket for them cuddle up in and if there is snow, watch for snow packed into the pads which can cause irritation and possible skin damage.

Changing locations can also mean that your pets may be exposed to different illnesses so making sure your pets are properly vaccinated for where you are heading. In addition to regular vaccines such as rabies, distemper, parvo and Bordetella, additional vaccines for diseases such as canine flu and leptospirosis should be considered. Canine flu is now found in almost all of the continental 48 states however there are several different strains. To be protected, your pet must have two doses three weeks apart, so this is a vaccine that needs to be planned in advance. Leptospirosis mainly occurs in subtropical, tropical, and wet environments and can be a concern because it is a zoonotic disease meaning it can be transmitted to humans easily. Symptoms strongly resemble the flu and that is something none of us what to deal with over the holidays, two or four legged!

When traveling with your pet, make sure they are secured in the vehicle using either a crate or a harness and clip in seat belt. These options will help keep your pet contained if you are in an accident or simply keep them from jumping out of the vehicle when stopping at a rest area or store. Also, make sure your pet has a collar with updated tags and that they are also microchipped in case they do get lost. And please, please register that microchip, if it's not registered with a working number then its not any good.

When you reach your destination, search for a list of emergency vets and map out where they are from your location. If you are staying at home, do the same. But my vet is just down the street you say? Always remember, emergencies never happen during regular business hours.

Why have several options? Because before you leave in a panic you will call the closest clinic and make sure they can even see your pet. We once called with an emergency and the clinic had a wait time of five hours. We called the next closest one and they were able to see us in an hour which was about how long the drive was.

Setting up your pet's environment correctly, especially through the holidays, will make it more enjoyable and relaxing for everyone but we all know, accidents do happen. Take a Pet First Aid and CPR course to learn how to handle a variety of pet emergencies because there is no doggie 911. It will be up to you to stabilize your pet and get them to the vet as soon and safely as possible. Always remember, you are your pet's advocate and they trust you to provide them with a safe environment and home.

Additional important information:

Poison hotline numbers (there is a fee associated with using the number):

ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center - 1-888-426-4435

Animal Poison Hotline - 1-888-232-8870

Pet Poison Helpline - 1-800-213-6680

Pet First Aid & CPR Classes

Info on Leptospirosis

Info on Canine Flu

Center for Pet Safety



HOLIDAY IN PARADISE!

BY DONNA MARIE AND DUDE

Donna Marie and Dude are East Coast empty nesters who live with their thirteen-year-old yellow Labrador, Yumi, and five-year-old black Labrador, Icarus - which makes choosing their daily wardrobes nearly impossible! They live to hear the GPS lady say, "Head West on Interstate 90 for over 1,000 miles", and they can't wait to be back on the road again soon! Find them at www.HeadWestOn90.com, and at [@HeadWestOn90](https://www.facebook.com/HeadWestOn90) on Facebook and Instagram.

It's getting to be that time of year again when the days grow shorter, the nights grow colder, and pumpkin spice everything starts popping up everywhere! That can only mean one thing - another season of holiday madness is about to descend upon you! Why not trade some of the craziness for a relaxing, couples-only getaway someplace a little warmer and a little less frantic, instead?

That's exactly what we did one Thanksgiving when we flew to Hawaii and spent the week exploring the islands, rejuvenating ourselves, and focusing on just the two of us. You can do an awful lot in a week if you want to or do nothing more than soak up the sun with a little umbrella drink in your hand! No matter which you choose, you won't regret it, and the memories will last a lifetime! Come with me and let me share some of the best from our trip!

Our first stop was on the island of Maui, where the mood was set as we were warmly welcomed with enchanting flower leis. Getting there from the east coast involved nearly 24 hours of travel time, so we were prepared to rest when we finally arrived with low key activities planned for the first night. But after that, the sky was literally the limit! We soon found ourselves soaring high, taking in the breathtaking scenery while parasailing above the endless and stunningly blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. It was more than a little thrilling, with the jaw-droppingly beautiful sights of Maui laid out before us in every direction. And from here we never stopped, with one exciting excursion after another the entire week.

How better to improve upon parasailing than with a helicopter tour, we thought! So, we gamely booked our tickets, and were thrilled to be taken to see graceful ribbon waterfalls; volcano

vents; lush, towering verdant cliffs; and all the other once in a lifetime sights one could possibly hope to see from high above Maui. It was like nothing we'd ever experienced, and the flight was made all the more fun by sharing it with the other happy passengers that day. Until. It. Wasn't.

The poor young woman strapped into the seat next to me must have had a very large lunch and was suddenly and unceasingly sick. All over me. From head to toe. Multiple times. Until the pilot had no other choice but to show us both infinite mercy and land our flight early - with no refunds. I never knew her name, but I shall never, ever possibly forget her and our journey! I have never again traveled without packing a garbage bag or two for whoever might need one, since those tiny white courtesy bags are useless as we so vividly discovered!

Speaking of lunch... Our most exotic meal of the week was served right on the beach, at a traditional sunset luau. There, a whole pig was wrapped, buried in hot coals in a hole deep in the sand, then covered by palm tree fronds which were then covered by more sand in order to insulate the whole package. It would roast for several hours as the luau unfolded before us. We were treated to spectacular fire dances, traditional grass skirt hula dances, and relaxing tropical music which was complemented by the soothing sounds of the waves hitting the shoreline beneath a brilliant crimson sunset. When the roast pig was eventually served, it was succulent and delicious, putting the perfect finishing touch on a memorable night.



Water activities abound on the islands - no matter your interest or skill level, there is something for everyone! We tried several, including snorkeling on the hotel beach, SNUBA diving, and a sunset cruise. Snorkeling was a very easy, peaceful experience, requiring only a snorkel mask and fins. It was sublime to melt into the rhythm and sound of your own breathing while entering into a state of deep, whole-body relaxation, gently

floating here and there, surrendering your mind to this otherworldly place, and becoming one with the brightly colored creatures sharing the crystal waters with you. The only challenge was remembering to not stand up in the shallows, being careful to float over and completely clear the coral barrier while going into and out of the snorkeling area lest you damage the coral and yourself!



Next, we ventured on to SNUBA. We'd never heard of this before, so we were very excited to try it! Our tour group was taken to beautiful Molokini, which is a partially submerged volcanic crater. No air tanks are worn on the body while enjoying SNUBA - only a regulator and face mask are worn. These are connected to a hose, which is

attached to an air tank resting approximately 20 feet above on a raft floating on the surface. Fins and weight belts are provided, and your guide stays close, just in case. It turned out to be a great deal of fun (until your partner tries to drown you, but I digress!) As they say, if you can breathe and kick your feet, you can SNUBA! We were so captivated by this magical experience in this beautiful underwater cove that we never even thought to ask about the possibility of sharks while we were there! (There are sharks at Molokini, but not the type that will eat you!) Umm, forget I mentioned sharks... just go and enjoy!!

The last of our water adventures involved taking a glass-bottomed boat tour and a sunset view cruise to see, well... all the stunning views! Whether we looked through the glass bottom panels, or into the distance from on deck, there was always some creature, fish, scenic view, or sunset by which to be awed and inspired. Incomparable beauty was everywhere, and we had to remember to put our cameras away at times and just soak it in, letting it work its magic on our very souls!

With our time winding down, we had to choose between two famous drives - The Road to Hana or The Mount

Haleakala Crater Road. We made our choice and carved out most of a day to experience one of Maui's biggest attractions of all... Mount Haleakala! Most folks hope to experience sunrise at the summit, but that doesn't work very well for us night owls, so a sunset drive it was, and was it ever magnificent! We braved the hours-long ride each way, and some pretty chilly temperatures at altitude, but we were rewarded in spectacular fashion with a drive up and through big, white, puffy clouds we could almost reach out and touch, until we were suddenly above them, looking down on the sunset behind them in the distance - it was like driving straight into Heaven! We will never forget it!

Our next stop was on the Big Island of Hawaii, courtesy of an island hopper flight on the now-defunct Aloha Airlines. The thing we distinctly remember most about this flight was that no sooner had we reached altitude but one of the pilots burst from the cockpit, grabbed a cardboard box from the galley, and quite literally ran up and down the aisle plopping a little foil topped, plastic juice cup down on each passenger's tray which was to constitute our in-flight, beverage only service. As soon as he had finished flinging the juice cups at all of us politely serving everyone, he quickly returned to the cockpit and landed the plane within what seemed mere minutes. We turned and stared at each other in amazement, giggling, not sure if we had actually just witnessed what we knew we had! We still get a great laugh about it to this day!

We did a lot of driving while on the Big Island. We packed a selection of pastry from the hotel buffet for breakfast on the go, and drove the entire perimeter road in one long, scenic day. We made sure to find the famous black sand beach to stick our toes in, and Volcanoes National Park, where the ground visibly steams with geothermal activity and you can stand on the edge of the caldera. The weather on the Big Island was warmer and more humid, with the winds gustier and somewhat less refreshing than they had been on Maui.

Other interesting things to do on the Big Island included taking both the Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut Factory tour

and the Hilo Coffee Mill tour. If you go, be sure to snag a few bags each of macadamia nuts and Kona coffee to ease your eventual return to reality and tame winter's cold back home. Your future self will thank you!



As happy as my memories may so far appear, not every trip goes as planned, and ours was no exception. But there's usually a silver lining, and sometimes you don't have to look that hard to find it! Our original Big Island hotel was not as advertised in their glossy brochure, and a quick call to our travel agent found us promptly relocated to the Hilton Waikoloa Village. I cannot ever recall seeing a more inviting sight than when we first entered this amazing property and saw the sun glittering on infinite shades of blue ocean water, framed by the promenade. It was a stop-you-in-your-tracks-and-gasp kind of gorgeous.

The Waikoloa held a few other surprises. Particularly intriguing was their Dolphin Quest - the opportunity to learn about and swim with dolphins in the hotel lagoon. We didn't, but the idea was fascinating. Instead, I contented myself with luxuriating in the shower with the hotel spa products, which were generously provided in each room for sampling (instantly becoming highly addicted to them!) For years after our trip, I happily found Kohala Spa Coco Mango Shampoo and Conditioner amongst my special occasion gifts, along with the odd bag of Kona coffee or Macadamia nuts (the provenance of which I am sometimes in doubt after seeing the same macadamia brand at our local Costco! Dude?!) Nevertheless, there's only one place to get this golden hair nectar, so I know it's the real deal! I cannot express how delicious it is, and how absolutely amazing it leaves my hair. The memories that come flooding back every time I crack open a bottle don't hurt either. Trust me. It's fabulous!

Speaking of the most special of memories, if I had to name just a single one from the entire trip that truly embodies our Holiday in Paradise, I would have no hesitation in saying that the one I treasure the most and can still feel within my being if I close my eyes - the thing I wish we had done much more and would give

my left eye tooth to go back and do again - well, it would be the time we spent in the hammock together. Slowly, blissfully swaying in the warm breeze on the Waikoloa beach in each other's arms, rocking in that simple white rope hammock as the rest of the world simply melted into oblivion. Yes, it would definitely have to be our time in the white rope hammock.

On the final day of our trip, we hopped another short flight to Oahu, where we had just enough time left to visit the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor. It was surprisingly emotional to be there for us, not only because Dude is a disabled Navy veteran, but because you can see on the water the sheen of the oil which is yet, all these years later, still seeping to the surface from the depths of the sunken battleship. You immediately realize you are visiting not just a national memorial, but the sacred, watery gravesite of many of those lost in the attack, and they rest for eternity entombed not far below your feet. Their names etched into the memorial wall form a somber tribute befitting their sacrifice and final resting place. We're so glad we made the effort to pay our respects here before heading home.



Soon, we found ourselves at the airport, where I was treated to one last surprise - Dude had used his considerable charm to wrangle a complimentary first-class upgrade for part of our trip, a fact he somehow managed to keep a secret until we were boarding! The service was very attentive, and the food was much better, served on real plates, in seats that actually reclined and didn't strangle your legs up around your neck. We flew TWA. Did I mention they're defunct now, too?! It seems we have a way of putting all the best airlines out of business!

And with that, we wish you a very happy holiday season! May you find a white rope hammock of your very own this year!

* We gratefully acknowledge His and Hers Hub for this chance to share our holiday travel memories with you. Recalling our trip and searching through old photos brought up many wonderful memories that had fallen into the recesses of time, and really had the warm and cozy feelings flowing! I hope we've inspired you to consider making some memories along with your special someone this season. They'll truly last your lifetime and will only get sweeter as the years fly by!



APPLE PIE CASSEROLE



Fall is in the air! The leaves on the trees are changing and briskly falling to the ground, the weather is getting cooler, and the smell of pumpkin spice fills the air. I can remember as a child nothing was more exciting about the fall season than the realization that the holidays were right around the corner. I wasn't excited about the Christmas tree that would soon light up our house or the gifts that would magically appear on Christmas morning. It was Grandmother's house, the food - the dessert!

The holidays meant that we would go to Grandmother's, or as we called her, Maw Maw's, house to celebrate the season. Year after year on Christmas Eve, we would travel the three blocks to her house. Everyone would come - aunts, uncles,

and what seemed to be hundreds of cousins (we had quite a large family). The table would be set with the most glorious ham, casseroles, fresh greens from the garden, and biscuits straight from the oven. But, there - over there in the corner - was the table that I was most excited about. It had cakes, fudge, sweet pralines, and every pie you could imagine. My eyes would light up and my mouth would begin to water, but then I would hear her voice, "If you touch that before you eat, you'll get a sack full of coal in the morning!"

Out of all the desserts on that beautiful table, my favorite was always Grandmother's Apple Pie. She made everything from scratch! From handpicking the apples out of the tree that grew in her yard to meticulously kneading the dough for the pie shells until it was just right. She would spend hours in the kitchen preparing our holiday feast.



Like most full-time RVers, the kitchen in my home - a 38-foot fifth wheel - is quite small. My husband and I sometimes have to do a little dance just to maneuver around each other in our small space. I've had to adjust my cooking styles, as well, to accommodate for the lack of space, including using less ingredients without compromising taste, shortening cooking times while making sure everything is still cooked just right, and even learning how to use my InstantPot and convection microwave. To say the least, it sometimes can be challenging!

This will be the first holiday season my husband and I will be without family since we began our full-time RV journey. It has been one of the most amazing experiences, but now that the holidays are near, I find myself thinking of family, food, and my Grandmother's apple pie. How am I going to be able to make her apple pie in my small kitchen while still trying to cook the rest of the meal? If I did everything I was taught, everything she did, I would spend hours just making the pie and dessert would be the only thing on the menu.

Recently during our travels, we met friends and caravanned for about a month. Since I am from Louisiana and known to cook southern style meals, I frequently was the one elected to cook for the bunch. I didn't mind at all because it gave me a chance to practice some of the dishes that I had been making adjustments to - Crawfish Etouffee in the InstantPot, red beans and rice, and what I now like to call **Grandmother's Apple Pie Casserole!** (see recipe next page)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am Traci LeBlanc, and my story began in October 2008 when I married my best friend, Travis. We have a blended family of four children, Brittani (29), Lexi (23), Joseph (20), and Cloie (17). Together, we are Going With The Flow RV Adventures. Deciding to overcome our fears and take the first step toward our new life adventure was exciting, yet scary at the same time. In January 2019, we decided to sell our home and everything we owned to begin our journey of full-time RV travel. I've always thought myself to be an adventurer and a little nomadic at heart, never claiming to be from one place or another, but I've always had the security of having a place to call home. In the six months that we have been on the



road full-time, I've come to realize that home is where ever we are together. Our journey has been about discovery, finding faith in adventure, and having the courage to keep moving forward even though the end destination is unknown. By sharing our life, we hope to inspire you to follow your passion and take that step toward Discovering Life's Flow.

Feel free to follow our full-time RV adventures on YouTube at [Going With The Flow RV Adventures](#) or on our blog at www.goingwiththeflowrv.com. Check us out on [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) as we always enjoy meeting new people. We look forward to seeing you there!

(See Grandmother's Apple Pie Casserole recipe on the next page!)



APPLE PIE CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS NEEDED

- 4 Granny Smith Apples
- 3 Cans Pillsbury Crescent Rolls
- 1/2 Cup Sugar
- 1/4 Cup Cinnamon
- 1 Stick Butter (melted)
- 1 Can 8 oz. Sprite

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly grease a 13 x 9 baking dish and set aside.
2. Peel, core, and slice apples into equal slices. The smaller the slices; the softer the apples will be after baking.
3. Unwrap the crescent rolls and separate into triangles.
4. In a medium-size bowl, mix cinnamon and sugar. Cover each apple slice in the mixture.
5. Roll each apple slice in a separate crescent triangle (beginning with the wider side first) and tightly place in the baking dish.
6. Sprinkle the remaining cinnamon and sugar mixture over the rolled apple slices.
7. In a separate bowl, lightly melt the butter and pour over the top.
8. Lastly, pour the can of Sprite over the entire dish.
9. Bake in the oven for 30 - 45 minutes or until golden brown.
10. Serve immediately or after your Christmas meal!

I hope you find this recipe to be a quick and easy option for my most favorite holiday dessert!

ICE BOX PIE

by Donna Marie and Dude



It doesn't go in the freezer and it's not a pie but it's just what we've always called this traditional family favorite.

For as long as I can remember, this simple and inexpensive chocolate pudding creation has been a must-have on the table at major holiday gatherings.

It couldn't be easier to make, cleanup's a breeze, and it's as popular with the adults as it is with the children! It's ideal for tiny living kitchens - just four simple ingredients, one saucepan, and one small Pyrex baking dish are used in preparation, it can be made a day ahead, and doesn't take much room in a crowded holiday fridge.

It's like a s'more's chilly cousin!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 boxes (3.4 ounces each) Jell-O brand Cook and Serve Pudding (Chocolate Fudge, Chocolate, or one of each)
- 3.5 cups Whole Milk
- 1 box (14.4 ounces) Nabisco Honey Maid Graham Crackers, divided
- 1 can Reddi-Wip Original Whipped Topping

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Line bottom of Pyrex baking dish (approximately 8" x 6") with three graham crackers.
2. Cook pudding according to package directions for deep dish pie.
3. Use only 3.5 cups of whole milk.
4. Pudding thickens as it cools, so work quickly with hot pudding for best results.
5. Pour a layer of pudding over the graham crackers.
6. Repeat in alternating layers, ending with pudding.
7. Fully cover the final pudding layer with crushed graham crackers.
8. Chill thoroughly in the refrigerator.
9. To serve, top individual portions with a generous dollop of Reddi-Wip.

Enjoy!

GRANDMA MURRAY'S QUICK GINGERBREAD

by Donna Marie and Dude

When our little boy was very young, he would often mispronounce his paternal grandmother's name, sweetly calling her "Grandma Murray". As often happens, the name stuck!

This is a quick and easy family favorite, handed down through the generations - so comforting as it fills your home with the fragrance of the season, its gentle spicing warming you from within.

This is a terrific recipe for tiny home living because all the ingredients, especially the spices, can be purchased in small sizes for compact storage. One bowl prep, optional use of an electric hand mixer, and fast and easy clean up make this recipe a holiday winner!

Thank you, Grandma Murray!



INGREDIENTS

1 Egg	1 1/2 tsp Ground Ginger**
1/2 cup Oil	1 tsp Cinnamon
1/2 cup Plantation Blackstrap Molasses*	1 3/4 cups Flour (unsifted)
1 tsp Baking Powder	2/3 cup Boiling Water
1 tsp Salt	Vanilla Ice Cream
1/2 tsp Baking Soda	

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Grease and flour 9x9x2 Pyrex baking dish.
3. In a bowl, beat egg.
4. Add oil, then molasses. Mix well.
5. Add baking powder, salt, baking soda, ginger, and cinnamon. Mix well.
6. Add flour, alternately with boiling water - start and finish with flour.
7. Pour into prepared baking dish.
8. Bake for 40 minutes, or until knife comes out clean.
9. Serve warm, topped with vanilla ice cream.

Enjoy!

* For lighter color and more delicate flavor, use Grandma's Molasses.

** For a sharper bite, increase the ground ginger.

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