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# The BIGGEST & BEST Christmas EVER



Make this holiday season a joyful celebration of the abundance of everything the season brings.

BY Jennifer Dorozio, Jennifer Hamilton, Kätthe Lemon AND Jaelyn Molyneux



## Make Sure Too Much Is Just Enough

Whether or not your celebration is overtly religious, Christmas is a holiday that lends itself to lavishness. It's a holiday that has expanded in every conceivable way — growing in length of time, money spent, decorations deployed and food consumed year over year — and all of this can add up to actually taking away from the joy of it all.

Abundance becomes over-abundance and “just enough” tips easily into “too much.” And then it can seem that there's just too much of everything — over-consumption of food and drink and overspending on everything from gifts to decor,

along with over-partying and certainly just being over having all your family hanging around. So how do you go big at Christmas without becoming overwhelmed?

The answer is to do it in a focused way. In other words, pick and choose. Decide which parts of the celebration are most meaningful to you and do those in a way that is significant. For example, skip the gift giving and focus on a delicious Christmas feast. Or make the gift ritual, rather than the gifts themselves, the focus with over-the-top gift-wrapping. Maybe your family has an elaborate advent calendar or maybe you host a big ol' tree-trimming party. Whatever it is, do one

thing (or maybe a couple if your reserves of time, money and sanity allow) and do it well.

While the concepts of mindfulness and big holiday celebrations may seem anathema, engaging all of your senses and taking note of each part of the season — from the twinkle of the lights to the crunch of your favourite cookie to the scent of the tree — will make your celebration big even if you don't lift a finger. Because the most important part is to have big joy this season, and the best way to recapture the feeling of excitement about Christmas that children have is taking it all in through fresh eyes.





# ALL THE HOLIDAY Gingerbread

Run, run to catch these gingerbread men (and women) at local bakeries and cafés throughout the city just in time for the holidays.

- Heritage Park**  
Plain Gingerbread Men, \$1.50 or \$3.75 with a decorating kit  
403-268-8500, heritagepark.ca
- Rosso Coffee Roasters**  
Large gingerbread people, \$3 multiple locations,  
rossocoffeeroasters.com
- Crave**  
Gingerbread Man Sandwich Cookies, \$8 each  
four Calgary locations,  
cravecupcakes.ca

- Entrees Etc.**  
Multicultural multi-gendered vegan gingerbread people, \$3 to \$4  
403-926-3265, facebook.com/entreesetcalgary
- Decadent Brulee**  
\$2.25 each or \$24/dozen  
722 11 Ave. S.W., 403-245-5535,  
decadentbrulee.ca
- Glamorgan Bakery**  
Large cookies, \$5.70 or \$3.35 for medium and \$2.35 for small  
19, 3919 Richmond Rd. S.W., 403-242-2800, glamorganbakery.com

- Pretty Sweet Bakeshop**  
Baby G Boys, \$6/bag (approximately 30 in a bag),  
536 42 Ave. S.E. (open Friday and Saturday only), 587-356-1225, prettysweetco.com
- Good Earth Coffeehouse**  
Gingerbread family members, \$7.25/family of three (\$1 from each purchase goes to the Calgary Food Bank)  
multiple locations,  
goodearthcoffeehouse.com

Photography by Jared Sych

- Pie Junkie and Bakery**  
Home style gingerbread cookies, \$2 each  
8 Spruce Centre S.W., 403-452-3960 and 1081 2 Ave N.W., 403-287-8544, piejunkie.ca
- Yum Bakery**  
Package of four cookies for \$8.50  
Calgary Farmers' Market,  
yum-bakery.com

- Sweet Relief**  
Gingerbread Cookies, \$1.75, large packaged cookies \$3.50, decorated cookie platters \$12/dozen,  
120 13 Ave. S.W., 587-894-0822 and Granary Road Market, 226034 112 St. W., MD of Foothills,  
sweetreliefpastries.com
- Calgary Co-op**  
Brad (shown) and Ginger Cookies, \$2.95 each ("naked" gingerbread also available, \$3.99/half dozen),  
multiple locations, calgarycoop.com

- Sunterra Market**  
Gingerbread Cookies, \$1.99 each or \$6.89/four,  
multiple locations,  
sunterramarket.com
- Rustic Sourdough Bakery and Community Natural Foods**  
Gingerbread men, \$2.25,  
1305 7 Ave. S.W., 403-245-2113,  
rusticsourdoughbakery.com; also available at Community Natural Foods, \$2.29, three locations,  
communitynaturalfoods.com

- Edelweiss Village**  
Gingerbread people decorated with marzipan clothing, \$4.95 each, (heart-shaped gingerbread cookies also available, \$2.95 each),  
1921 20 Ave. N.W., 403-282-6600, edelweissimports.com
- Delissitude**  
Nut- and gluten-free vegan gingerbread people, \$2.75 each for small, \$3.25 for large, Calgary Farmers' Market, 403-803-0913

# The GREAT BIG Holiday ACTIVITY LIST

Hark! The Christmas season is upon us. Cram more of the spirit of the season into your month with these 25 iconic Calgary activities, one for each day of the countdown to Christmas.

**HANDEL'S MESSIAH** Listen to the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra's production of Handel's *Messiah* or sing-along with the choir and orchestra at the final performance.

**Dec. 1 and 2, Sing-along Messiah Dec. 3 | \$25 to \$85**  
Jack Singer Concert Hall, Arts Commons, 403-571-0849, calgaryphil.com



## A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

Enjoy *A Charlie Brown Christmas* two ways: hear the music performed live by a jazz trio led by the original soundtrack's drummer Jerry Granelli and watch Storybook Theatre's performance of the stage version as part of a double feature with *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

### Musical performance:

**Dec. 2 | \$30 to 35 general admission, \$15 to \$18 kids**  
Central United Church, 131 7 Ave. S.W., 403-233-0904, calgaryfolkfest.com  
**Theatre double feature runs until Dec. 17**  
**\$28 general, \$23 kids**  
Vertigo Theatre Studio, 115 9 Ave. S.E., 403-216-0808, storybooktheatre.org



## INTERNATIONAL CHRISTMAS MARKET

Get the feeling of strolling through a holiday market in Europe at this annual holiday market (you may even spot some reindeer).

**Dec. 1 to 3 | \$10**  
Spruce Meadows, 403-974-4200, sprucemeadows.com

## YULE LOVE IT LUNCH BUFFET

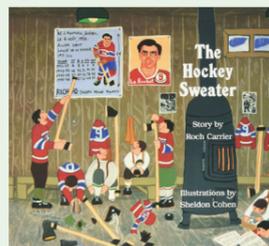
Enjoy both savoury and sweet holiday dishes at the Fairmont Palliser's famous spread.  
**Daily, Dec. 4 to 22**  
**\$44 adults; \$22 kids; \$35 senior**  
133 9 Ave. S.W., 403-262-1234, fairmont.com

## FIRESIDE MEAL

Wander through wintry Prince's Island Park then reward yourself with a fireside meal at River Café.  
**Restaurant closed Dec. 24 and 25**  
25 Prince's Island Park S.W., 403-261-7670, river-cafe.com

## ICETIME WITH THE CALGARY CIVIC SYMPHONY

Wear your favourite hockey jersey or holiday sweater to the Calgary Civic Symphony's *IceTime* show, featuring Roch Carrier's recorded reading of his book *The Hockey Sweater* and winter classics performed by the symphony.  
**Dec. 10 | \$24 to \$30**  
Jack Singer Concert Hall, Arts Commons, 403-294-9494, artscommons.ca



## COCOCO CHOCOLATE CHERRIES

Cococo Chocolatiers' five-month kirsch-soaked, hand-dipped, limited-run chocolate cherries are the ultimate holiday indulgence.  
**Available during December while supplies last | \$33 small box; \$66 large box**  
11 Calgary locations including Bankers Hall shopping centre and Calgary International Airport, 403-265-5777, cococochocolatiers.com



**CP HOLIDAY TRAIN** Catch this music and lights show aboard a real working train, featuring performances by Alan Doyle and the Beautiful Band, with Colin James.

**Dec. 9 | 6:45 pm | Food bank donations accepted**  
Anderson C-Train Station, South C-Train parking lot, cpr.ca

## LIONS' FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Stroll through the section of Confederation Park that borders 14 Street N.W. to take in the largest free light display of its kind in the city.  
**Nightly until Jan. 7**  
**Free**  
2490 14 St. N.W., 403-282-3299, lionsfestivaloflights.ca



## DASHING THROUGH THE GLOW

Jog off the holiday 'nug beneath row upon row of twinkling lights at this five-kilometre fun run out at Spruce Meadows.  
**Dec. 8 | \$50 to \$70**  
Spruce Meadows, 403-974-4200, sprucemeadows.com

**FESTIVAL OF CRAFTS** Find crafty stocking stuffers and gifts by more than 250 Canadian makers at this popular holiday market.

**Dec. 7 to 10 | \$7 adults, ages 17 and under free**  
BMO Centre, Stampede Park, 613-241-5777, festivalofcrafts.ca

Christmas Market and Dashing Through the Glow photography courtesy of Spruce Meadows Media; CP Holiday Train photograph by Kristopher Grunert



## DOWNTOWN TOUR

Do a self-guided downtown walking-skating tour. Begin with a skate at Olympic Plaza, then enjoy the light displays as you walk up Stephen Avenue, stop into The Core Shopping Centre to marvel at the 45-foot tree, then walk through the light display at McDougall Centre before finishing with another skate at Prince's Island Lagoon.  
**Throughout December, weather dependent**  
**Free**  
Olympic Plaza, 228 8 Ave. S.E. McDougall Centre, 455 6 St. S.W.



**THE NUTCRACKER** Be dazzled by Alberta Ballet's performance of *The Nutcracker*, choreographed by artist-in-residence Edmund Stripe.

**Dec. 15 to 17 and 21 to 24 | \$35 to \$144**  
Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, 1415 14 Ave. N.W., 403-245-4222, albertaballet.com

Core tree photograph by Kristy Reimer; Christmas Tree Hunt photograph by Sandra Jiggins courtesy of AJFWA; Nutcracker photograph by Paul McGrath, courtesy of Alberta Ballet; skating photograph courtesy of the City of Calgary

## MARKET COLLECTIVE

Find locally made gifts such as unique artworks and jewellery pieces and hand-made mittens, while enjoying live music.  
**Dec. 1 to 3, 8 to 10 and 15 to 17**  
**\$5 weekend admission; kids free**  
Inglewood Warehouse, 1390 17th Ave. S.E., marketcollective.ca

## LEGACY LIGHT PARADE

Visit the south-east community of Legacy to see the Legacy Light Parade, which includes more than 100,000 lights and Christmas displays in the parks and on the houses. Take a drive through the neighbourhood, or park and explore on foot. There's also an outdoor rink.  
**Until Jan. 8 | Free**  
legacylife.ca

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL** Pre-order your beverage at Theatre Calgary's *A Christmas Carol* so it's waiting for you at intermission.

**Until Dec. 24 | tickets \$35 to \$120**  
Max Bell Theatre, Arts Commons, 403-294-7447, theatrecalgary.com

**VOLUNTEER** Do good and give back by serving food at the Calgary Drop-In Centre.  
**Call ahead to reserve a time.**  
1 Dermot Baldwin Way S.E., 403-266-3600, calgarydropin.ca

**ZOOLIGHTS** Make a wish on the wish tree after a stroll through the light displays.  
**Nightly in December (except Dec. 25)**  
**\$15 adult; \$12 child; \$23 senior**  
Calgary Zoo, 210 St. George's Drive N.E., 403-232-9300, calgaryzoo.com



## EUROPEAN HOLIDAY TREATS

Savour authentic European holiday treats such as imported German *lebkuchen* (a soft gingerbread-like cookie) and marzipan pigs and sheep from Edelweiss Village; imported or house-made panettone from the Italian Centre Shop and *bûche de Noël* from local Belgian baker Manuel Latruwe. Edelweiss Imports, 1921 20 Ave. N.W., 403-282-6600, edelweissimports.com  
Italian Centre Shop, 9919 Fairmount Dr. S.E., 403-238-4869, italiancentre.ca  
Manuel Latruwe, 1333 1 St. S.E., 403-261-1092, manuellastruwe.ca

**CHRISTMAS TREE HUNT** Cut down your own Christmas tree using one of the following three methods (in order of adventurousness): take a road trip to Raven Ridge Tree Farm near Rocky Mountain House, Alta., which also sells wreaths and lights; visit the Junior Forest Wardens Association tree lot just off Highway 68 on the Powderface Trail; or get a permit from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, then grab your saw and venture out on approved crown lands.  
RR#3 Rocky Mountain House, 403-722-3207, ravenridgetrees.com, ajfwa.ca

**POST HOTEL & SPA** Spend a relaxing night at the Post in Lake Louise — named one of the world's top 10 most beautiful ski lodges by *CNN Travel News*.  
200 Pipestone Rd., Lake Louise, 403-522-3989, posthotel.com



**ICE SKATE** Go for a glide on the Bowness Park Lagoon followed by hot cider or cocoa by the fire pits — you can bring your own in a thermos or grab some from the Seasons of Bowness Park café.

**All winter (weather permitting)**  
**Free to skate, gear rentals available**  
8900 48 Ave. N.W., 403-268-2489v

**ONCE UPON A CHRISTMAS** Ride a sleigh, catch a Christmas play and purchase (and decorate) gingerbread cookies — all part of the holiday festivities at Heritage Park.

**Saturdays and Sundays until Dec. 23**  
**Regular park admission rates apply**  
1900 Heritage Dr. S.W., 403-268-8500, heritagepark.ca

## THE SANTALAND DIARIES

Laugh (and cringe) at the misadventures of a department-store elf in this one-man stage show based on the story by David Sedaris.  
**Mondays through Saturdays until Dec. 23**  
**\$26 adults, \$21 students and seniors**  
Lunchbox Theatre, 160 9 Ave. S.E., 403-265-4292, lunchboxtheatre.com



## TREAT YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Spread Christmas cheer by shovelling your neighbours' sidewalks or baking and delivering your favourite holiday treat.  
**Anytime | Free**  
Your community

# Big Holiday Drinks for Big Holiday CELEBRATIONS

Batch drinks make entertaining a crowd easy. Here are a few to try courtesy of the cocktail masters at Cannibale, Native Tongues and Raw Bar.



Midwinter punch.

## MIDWINTER PUNCH

Dylan Macleod of Native Tongues brings apple brandy, pear cider and fig syrup together in a giant bowl.

**SERVES** 16  
**24 oz. Pere Magloire Calvados**  
**12 oz. Quinta Do Portal fine ruby Port**  
**12 oz. fig and honey syrup (recipe at right)**  
**8 oz. lemon juice**  
**32 oz. dry pear cider**  
**Freshly grated nutmeg**  
**Ice**

Add all ingredients to a punch bowl and stir until chilled. Serve in punch glasses or teacups and garnish with freshly grated nutmeg.  
 —Recipes courtesy of Dylan Macleod, Native Tongues

### FIG AND HONEY SYRUP

**250 grams store-bought 100-per cent fig jam**  
**500 grams liquid golden honey**  
**375 mL water**  
**4 grams salt**  
 Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and stir over medium heat until the honey and jam are completely dissolved (there will be small bits of fig leftover). Cool to room temperature and strain through a tea strainer. Bottle and store in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

### CHINESE FIVE-SPICE SIMPLE SYRUP

**2 cups sugar**  
**1 cup water**  
**1 tbsp of Chinese five-spice powder**  
 Bring sugar and water to boil to dissolve sugar. While it is simmering add the Chinese five-spice.

### H.K. CAFÉ NOG

Raw Bar's Franz Swinton uses a blender to give this easy eggnog a frothy texture without having to emulsify yolks and beat egg whites. And, he adds an Asian twist with Chinese five-spice syrup.

#### SERVES 6

**4 whole eggs**  
**4 oz. heavy cream**  
**8 oz. Cognac or brandy such as Remy Martin VSOP**  
**2 oz. Chinese five-spice simple syrup (recipe below)**  
**12 dashes of Peychaud's bitters**  
**1 cup ice**

Combine all ingredients in a blender and blend for 20 seconds on medium or until smooth and frothy. Serve over ice and dust with Chinese five-spice powder.

**TIP** You can make this in advance and chill it in the fridge but it's at its frothy best fresh out of the blender.  
 —Recipe courtesy Franz Swinton, general manager, Raw Bar

### FIVE POINT PLANE

Cannibale's spin on the Old Pal is sour, pungent, sweet, bitter and spiced-up for the holidays.

#### SERVES 8

**8 oz. rye**  
**4 oz. Campari**  
**4 oz. sweet (red) vermouth**  
**4 oz. fresh-squeezed lemon juice**  
**2 oz. Chinese five-spice simple syrup (recipe below left)**

You can premix this drink and keep it chilled overnight in a pitcher or punch bowl. To serve, add ingredients to shaker with ice. Shake. Strain into chilled Old Fashioned glasses with large-format ice cubes. Garnish with a flamed orange slice (or just serve on the rocks for quick execution).  
 —Recipe courtesy of Cannibale

### ALCOHOL-FREE FIVE POINT PLANE

Because teetotallers deserve a tasty holiday drink, too.

#### SERVES 8

**12 oz. fresh orange juice**  
**4 oz. fresh lemon juice**  
**4 oz. five-spice syrup**  
**18 dashes Angostura bitters**

Combine all ingredients. Pour into glasses and top with soda water or Sprite and garnish with a five-spice-dusted orange wheel.  
 —Recipe courtesy of Cannibale

Midwinter Punch photograph courtesy of Native Tongues

# Big Holiday Decor

Creating big style for the holidays can seem daunting, with demands of budget, space, time and tradition. Whether you're starting from scratch or updating your seasonal collection, here are some tips from Golden Acre Home & Garden's seasoned holiday decor buyer Rowena Bell.

## CREATE CONSISTENCY

Create consistency of style and colour among the decorations, even from the front



## REPURPOSE EXISTING PIECES

Some of the things you already have can be used as seasonal decor by adding a Christmas element such as frosted branches, fresh evergreens or



## TIPS FOR TREES

When it comes to the artificial models are great from a decorating standpoint as they are often designed to be tall and slender. But real trees can be to make them decor-compatible.



Golden Acre even carries a topiary-style artificial tree with a small ball of branches at the top, making it a perfect fit in a bedroom, hallway, or small condo space.

## MAKE ROOM

If you want your decorations to be big but you don't have the floor space for a huge tree, just look up. Consider adding swags of greenery (real or artificial) along the ceiling line, interior doors, railings, mantelpieces or along the tops of bookshelves. Add



to your



or



to the backs of



## CLUSTER AND REPEAT

Clustering one particular element (such as a snowflake) or a colour will make the impact bigger. A cluster of four will have more impact than the same number spread throughout the



## FIND NEW WAYS TO HONOUR OLD TRADITIONS

Children's ornaments can be featured on their own smaller or on a wreath for more focus on them. Or try displaying grandma's special



all together in a



Ornaments will be better protected in a vase and it can make them even more special.



## Next-Level TURKEY

So, you want to host the most badass Christmas feast? Then you must shoot a wild turkey yourself. You'll need a special license issued through a lottery to shoot a bearded Merriam's turkey, a subspecies of wild turkey that runs

wild in southern Alberta. They're smaller, sweeter and juicier than their grocery-store cousins and far more striking, with bumpy blue heads, bright-red cowl necks and shimmery bronze feathers. They're damn good deep fried, but then you miss out on their rich gravy.

A serious dilemma, indeed. However you cook them, hunting season runs through May. To be entered for a license you must have applied the previous spring, so you're out of luck this Christmas. Fortunately Christmas comes every year. [albertaregulations.ca/huntingregs](http://albertaregulations.ca/huntingregs)