

December 2023

# Allouez Parkside Village One

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## Celebrating December

**Universal Human  
Rights Month**

**Safe Toys and Gifts  
Month**

**Clerc-Gallaudet Week**  
*December 3–9*

**Dice Day**  
*December 4*

**Bathtub Party Day**  
*December 5*

**Salesperson Day**  
*December 8*

**Gingerbread House Day**  
*December 12*

**Humbug Day**  
*December 21*

**Christmas**  
*December 25*

**Thank-You Note Day**  
*December 26*

**New Year's Eve**  
*December 31*

## A Perfect NYC Christmas

There are hundreds of things to do in New York City any day of the year, but the city takes on a sparkle during the Christmas season that makes it feel like you've stepped into a Hallmark movie. The bustle and constant activity can be overwhelming, but they also add to the festive atmosphere.

There's nothing like staring up at the magical tree at Rockefeller Center, which towers 80 feet above the crowd and twinkles with more than five miles of lights! After admiring the tree, many people don some ice skates for a few laps around the famed Rink at Rockefeller Center. Others swear that Wollman Rink at Central Park, featured in movies such as *Home Alone 2*, is a superior choice.

Strolling along Fifth Avenue to take in the window displays is another iconic holiday activity. Stores like Bergdorf Goodman, Tiffany & Co., Barney's, and Macy's create extravagant themed windows that attract tourists and other holiday-fun seekers. The windows showcase fairytale wonderlands, glittery winter landscapes, and magical scenes of Santa and his elves hard at work.

In a town known for its shows, going to see a Christmas performance should be on every list. The Rockettes' *Christmas Spectacular* is filled with the expected high kicks and beloved Christmas tunes. An outing to see Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* is a holiday tradition for families all over the country, but the Lincoln Center's production is one of the most admired performances of this 1892 classic.

The Christmas season isn't complete without picking up some presents for family and friends. Shopping options in the Big Apple are always plentiful, but the European-style Christmas markets have some truly unique gift items. The atmosphere is festive—chilly air, twinkling lights, bustling stalls, and the scent of baked goods create the perfect backdrop for discovering local and handmade goods. For native New Yorkers and visitors alike, nothing beats Christmas in New York. Additionally, indulging in some seasonal treats like sipping on hot cocoa or munching on roasted chestnuts from street vendors can add a delicious layer to your New York City Christmas experience. The combination of delightful flavors and festive sights truly makes the holiday season in the Big Apple a cherished memory.

## Almost Time to Time Travel



The idea of a time machine has long captured the imagination of storytellers. Hindu mythology speaks of a king who ventures to heaven and upon his return to Earth finds that thousands of years have passed.

A Japanese tale from the year 720 tells of a man who is transported 300 years into the future. In Charles Dickens' famous novel *A Christmas Carol*, the despicable Ebenezer Scrooge visits Christmases past, present, and future.

Time travel is not just a fascination for artists. Stephen Hawking, the noted scientist, believed that time travel is possible. It has to do with speed—not just any speed, but the speed of light, the fastest speed in the universe. When things travel at or near this speed, they travel more slowly through time. If you boarded a train traveling at the speed of light for one week, the rest of the world would have traveled 100 years. In this sense, you would step off the train having traveled 100 years into the future. Amazingly, experiments of this kind are being conducted at a giant underground laboratory in Switzerland known as CERN. Scientists shoot tiny atomic particles so fast that they continue living long after they should have disintegrated. They are traveling into the future.

Hawking himself admitted that he would prefer the past to the future, visiting Marilyn Monroe or Galileo. On December 8, Pretend to Be a Time Traveler Day, you too can imagine where (or when) you'd like to visit. Do you want to visit the age of the dinosaurs or watch the pyramids be built? Would you rather see the future? It is interesting to think about how your ancestors may remember you. It is even more interesting to think about a time when we could perhaps visit aliens in outer space. According to Stephen Hawking, we may not have to pretend much longer. Someday, December 8 may just be called Be a Time Traveler Day.

## Soup du Jour

It's a dish that earned the name "the soup that won the war." General Washington's Continental Army was starving and frozen one winter at Valley Forge. On December 29, 1777, Washington urged his army chef, Christopher Ludwick, to cook a meal he had once encountered visiting his brother in Barbados. It was a soup that warmed both his troops' bellies and hearts. Ludwick gathered what ingredients he could—tripe, meat, and peppercorns—and mixed up a version of pepper pot soup. Not only did the revolutionaries win the war, but December 29 came to be known as Pepper Pot Soup Day.

You could celebrate the day by recreating Ludwick's hot and spicy dish. Or you could honor Ludwick by rummaging around in your kitchen to concoct a soup made from leftovers and scraps.

## Fiddlin' Around



December 13 is Violin Day. On this day in 2010, rock violinist Ben Lee broke the Guinness world record for fastest violin player by playing Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumble Bee" in just 58.515 seconds. After breaking the previously unbreakable magic-minute mark, Lee reportedly insured his fingers for over four million dollars.

Violins were once used only in classical music, but they have since become popular in jazz, rock, and pop music. Folk musicians have long played the fiddle, and violin-like stringed instruments have been used in India and the Arab world for hundreds of years. Violin makers, called luthiers, enjoy great renown. Italian luthier Antonio Stradivari's violins are so precious that one 1716 instrument, "The Messiah," is part of a museum collection in England.

## Home Sweet Home



Gingerbread House Day, December 12, brings a touch of magic to the holiday season. It's the perfect occasion to indulge in a time-honored tradition: building and decorating gingerbread houses.

This charming holiday observance offers a sweet escape from the busyness of the season.

The history of gingerbread houses has roots in medieval Europe, where gingerbread was initially reserved for special occasions and celebrations. It was often used to create intricate works of edible art, including gingerbread houses. These delectable structures gained popularity in Germany during the 16th century when the Brothers Grimm published their fairy tales, including the famous story of Hansel and Gretel, who discover a house made of gingerbread and candy deep in the forest.

Notable gingerbread houses have become a source of fascination and wonder. The White House has a longstanding tradition of creating a gingerbread replica of the executive mansion during the holiday season. These intricate confections often include detailed icing decorations and miniature furnishings.

Another impressive example is the annual National Gingerbread House Competition in Asheville, North Carolina. This event attracts pastry chefs and artists from around the world who craft astonishing gingerbread creations, from charming cottages to elaborate castles.

In modern times, gingerbread houses have evolved from simple, rustic structures to intricate architectural marvels. They continue to be a beloved holiday tradition, a sign of the enduring appeal of this spicy-sweet treat. This year on Gingerbread House Day, unleash your creativity, and see what kind of edible masterpiece you can create with family and friends.

## Goodbye Gluten

Lately you may have heard the term *gluten-free*. Gluten is a protein commonly found in wheat, barley, rye, and triticale (a combination of barley and rye). For those with celiac disease, gluten causes inflammation of the small intestine. For this reason, they must avoid bread, cookies, and anything else made with wheat flour. Many others believe that a gluten-free diet can be healthful and help prevent milder food allergies.

Gluten-Free Baking Week, the week before Christmas, provides people with the opportunity to try many different gluten-free ingredients in place of traditional wheat flours for their holiday baking. Almond, coconut, hazelnut, potato, teff, and corn flour offer interesting and flavorful flour substitutes. Even if you don't have any gluten allergies, this is your chance to impress your friends and family by using ingredients you've never baked with before.

## Cold Hard Facts

On December 1, 1959, twelve countries signed the Antarctic Treaty, which proclaimed that all countries would use the land of Antarctica for peaceful purposes



only. All scientific discoveries must be shared and used in a spirit of cooperation. Since 1959, the number of countries to sign the treaty has grown to 56. Many significant discoveries have been made on Earth's coldest continent. Research has detected the rise of global carbon dioxide levels, which contributes to global warming. Scientists have discovered fossils of plants, animals, and dinosaurs, as well as four new species of fish. This treaty has helped warm the spirit of international cooperation. Over time, the treaty advanced science, embodying global commitment to preserve and steward this pristine environment.



## From Meek to Mighty



December 15 is a day to root for the little guy with the big heart, for it is Underdog Day. What makes underdogs so appealing? They must win against all odds. Whether it's strength, courage, heart, or a little bit of luck, these heroes prevail against the most overwhelming odds. Here's a list of some of the best underdogs, real and fictitious:

Sports is the most likely place to start searching for memorable underdogs, and no team may have pulled off a more surprising win than the 1980 men's Olympic hockey team. A team made up of amateurs and college stars defeated a tough Soviet team during the middle of the Cold War. Sportscaster Al Michaels famously asked, "Do you believe in miracles?" You bet we do.

No story about underdogs would be complete without a mention of racehorse Seabiscuit. Seabiscuit was short with crooked legs and, after first failing as a racehorse, was used as a workhorse. His jockey was a visually impaired former boxer. At Maryland's legendary Pimlico Race Course, Seabiscuit defeated the accomplished War Admiral in what many believe to be the greatest horse race in history.

Literature is filled with underdog stories, and J.R.R. Tolkien's hero Frodo Baggins from his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is practically the size of a dog. This tiny hobbit, best known for eating, drinking, and living in peace, crosses an entire continent full of beasts and demons to save the world from evil and destruction.

Harry Potter may well be another great literary underdog, but so is his creator, J.K. Rowling. This unknown writer and unemployed single mother created an international sensation and hooked thousands of children on reading.

## December Birthdays

If you were born from December 1–21, you are a Sagittarius, the Archer. Archers are not only confident but also lucky, so they often find success. Their enthusiasm is infectious, so people often help them achieve their ambitious goals. Those born from December 22–31 are Capricorns, the Goat. As sure-footed goats climb mountains, Capricorns pursue worthwhile, nonfrivolous goals by taking practical steps.

Andy Williams (singer) – Dec. 3, 1927

**Addie G. 12/05**

Buck Henry (writer/actor) – Dec. 9, 1930

Christopher Plummer (actor) – Dec. 13, 1929

Betty Grable (actress) – Dec. 18, 1916

Louis Chevrolet (engineer) – Dec. 25, 1878

Donna Summer (singer) – Dec. 31, 1948

**Bryan L. 12/28**

**Sylvia Z. 12/31**

## Spectacular Soda



With its hundreds of uses, bicarbonate of soda certainly deserves its own day on December 30. Baking soda, as it is commonly called, is used for far more than baking. Make homemade toothpaste by mixing

baking soda with hydrogen peroxide. Mix a 3-to-1 ratio of baking soda and water to create a gentle exfoliant for your skin or to relieve the itch of insect bites. Add a sprinkle of baking soda to your shampoo to add extra cleaning power. Out of deodorant? Just apply a thin dusting of baking soda under your arms.

Even the ancient Egyptians were wise to the uses of baking soda. They found natural deposits of bicarbonate of soda and used them to create soaps. It's time to put that box of baking soda front and center in the cupboard.