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A bounty of baskets

Four ideas for a group of locally procured presents on a given theme

by Melissa Dempsey

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON is shaping up to be unlike any that we've experienced. Though there may be difficulties aplenty, try not to let them dim our festive spirits. Instead, let's view our challenges as an opportunity to support and uplift our neighbors and communities.

We're lucky to live in a region of makers, doers, and growers, where artisans of nearly every craft exist among purveyors of some of the freshest and finest foods you've ever set fork to. By supporting these local businesses and craftspeople, you're investing in the pulse of the greater Hudson Valley community.

If your holiday gift list includes friends and relatives who'd love to explore the region but can't due to restricted travel — or if you simply want to encourage and support local businesses — creating a gift basket chock-full of regionally procured food, drinks, and novelties is a wonderful way to shop local while adding a little joy to someone's day.

Although there are more noteworthy shops and makers than we have the space to highlight here, these four gift basket ideas provide a starting point to fit various interests of those you know.

Vintner's wish

We all know a wine-lover, and this is the perfect basket for living-room picnics or chilly fireside nights. From the popular wineries along the Shawangunk Wine Trail, to the boutique wine and spirits shops along bustling Main Streets, to the hidden vineyards peppered across our fertile region, there is no shortage of places to find top-quality Hudson Valley wine.

Start with a dry, fruity, easy-drinking red like the Hudson River Valley Red from Hudson-Chatham Winery, perfect for picnics or everyday meals. Add a sweet-smoked meat — the Venison Summer Sausage by Highland Farms is perfect for snacking — and a gift card to a specialty cheese shop like Cheese Louise in



Clockwise from top left: Lucky's Best Truffles from Lucky Chocolates; a Blackline Wooden Serving Board by Black Creek Mercantile & Trading Co.; Venison Summer Sausage from Highland Farms; Hudson River Valley Red from Hudson-Chatham Winery.

Kingston. An artisan board, such as the Blackline Wooden Serving Board by Black Creek Mercantile & Trading Co., makes an aesthetically pleasing display.

And don't forget dessert. Try mouthwatering, handmade truffles by Lucky Chocolates or bars from Krause's Chocolates.

Where to buy: *Hudson River Valley Red* – Hudson Chatham Winery, Ghent, hudsonchathamwinery.com; *Venison Summer Sausage* – Highland Farms, Germantown, eat-better-meat.com; *Cheese gift card* – Cheese Louise, Kingston, 853-8207; *Blackline Wooden Serving Board* – Black Creek Mercantile & Trad-

ing Co., Kingston, blackcreekmt.com; Chocolate – Lucky Chocolates or Krause's Chocolates, Saugerties. luckychocolates.com; krauseschocolates.com

Beer around the Valley

In the past decade, our region has seen an undeniable craft brewing boom. And though so many new breweries have popped up, each has its own unique beers and distinct vibes. You could go big and try to fill a crate (or two, or three) with brews hailing from Westchester to the Catskills. Here's a suggested sampler based on a few proven crowd-pleasing flavors. Since



Clockwise from top left: Palatine Pils from Suarez Family Brewery; Fresh Coat Stout from West Kill Brewing; Juice Bomb IPA from Sloop Brewing Co.; Cream Ale from Newburgh Brewing Co.; Old Capital from Keegan Ales.

many tasting rooms around the Valley have had to change business models due to the pandemic, be sure to check first with individual breweries to ensure that pickup is available.

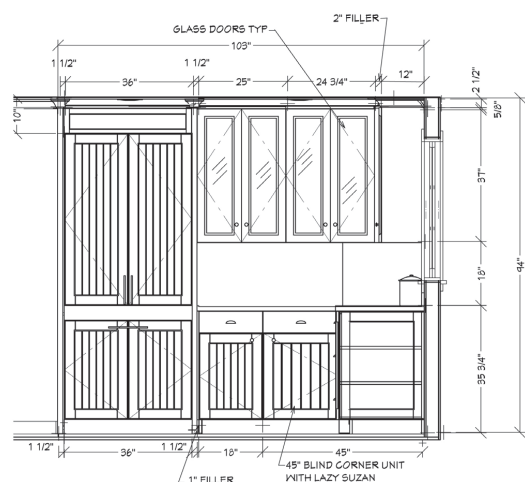
Fans of New England IPAs love Sloop Brewing Co.'s Juice Bomb IPA, a citrusy hazy brew. For a hoppy beer with a crisp mouth-feel, you can't go wrong with Suarez Family Brewing's Palatine Pils. Keegan Ales' Old Capital is a classic blonde ale with notes of citrus and pine, while Newburgh Brewing Co.'s Cream Ale is malty and refreshing. And for the stout lover, be sure to grab some of West Kill Brewing's seasonal Fresh Coat Stout, a smooth, dark oatmeal stout.

Where to buy: Juice Bomb IPA – Sloop Brewing Co., East Fishkill, sloopbrewing.com; Old Capital – Keegan Ales, Kingston, keeganales.com; Cream Ale – Newburgh Brewing Co., Newburgh, newburghbrewing.com; Palatine Pils – Suarez Family Brewery, Hudson, suarezfamilybrewery.com; Fresh Coat Stout – West Kill Brewing, West Kill, westkillbrewing.com.

Brew basket

Coffee lovers rejoice. For those who prefer their early morning pick-me-up to be locally roasted, or who prefer to unwind each night with a comforting mug of tea, there are numerous ways to ensure your loved ones' cups are always filled — and accompanied by sweet and treats.

Kingston-based Monkey Joe Roasting Co. offers a wide variety of freshly roasted beans. Choose from popular blends like the Ethiopian Yrgacheffe, Guatemala Antigua, or maple-infused Jazzy Joe. Include fresh almond biscotti from Hudson Valley



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Clockwise from top left: biscotti from Hudson Valley Dessert Co.; Harney & Sons tea from The Tea Shop of Woodstock; coffee beans from Monkey Joe Roasting Company; macarons from Sweet Maresa's; Russell Farms honey.

Dessert Co. in Saugerties for dunking.

For tea lovers, there are a handful of local shops that carry distinctive blends: Pick up a Harney & Sons Paris tea from The Tea Shop of Woodstock or try a fruity blend from Verdigris Tea and Chocolate in Hudson. Of course, what goes better with tea than fresh, local honey? Russell Farms' popular brand can be found at farm stands and grocers like Adams Fairacre Farms. Treat your recipient to a sampling of decadent macarons from Kingston-based Sweet Maresa's.

Where to buy: Various coffees – Monkey Joe Roasting Co., Kingston, monkeyjoe.com; Almond Biscotti – Hudson Valley

Dessert Co., Saugerties, hudsonvalleydessertcompany.com; Various teas – The Tea Shop of Woodstock, Woodstock, woodstockteashop.com; Verdigris Tea and Chocolate, Hudson, verdigristeacoffee.com; Honey – Russell Farms, Rhinebeck, russellmaplefarm.com; Macarons – Sweet Maresa's Bakery, Kingston, sweetmaresa.com.

Staying-home supplies

They've done all the crossword puzzles, they've watched all the Netflix shows. Keep your self-isolating friends and relatives entertained at home with a variety of goods encouraging socially distant

activities. From at-home spa days to knitting, and of course, the ever-popular bread-baking trend, there are plenty of ways to make staying home fun.

Nothing says "cozy" like candlelight; start with a few pillar or taper candles from Candlestock in Woodstock.

Handmade soaps with fun scents like chai or margarita can be found at Merriweather's in Rhinebeck; they've got an array of spa-like offerings, to boot.

For those who enjoy knitting, or always wanted to learn, throw in a few colorful skeins of yarn from The Perfect Blend in Saugerties, a yarn and tea shop.

Add a bread pan from a kitchen shop like bluecashew in Kingston or Gilded Carriage in Woodstock to encourage this rediscovered art.

And last, because reading never goes out of style, throw in a gift certificate to your favorite regional indie bookstore: Oblong Books and Music in Rhinebeck, the Golden Notebook in Woodstock, the Barking Goose in Newburgh, Rough Draft or Half Moon Books in Kingston, are all great choices.

Where to buy: Candles – Candlestock, Woodstock, candlestock.com; Merriweather's soap – Merriweather's, Rhinebeck, merriweathers.com; Yarn – The Perfect Blend, Saugerties, yarnandteashop.com; Breadpan – bluecashew, Kingston, bluecashew.com; Gilded Carriage, Woodstock, gildedcarriage.com; Indie Bookstore Gift Card – Find a local shop via the Hudson Valley Book Trail, hvbooktrail.com.



DION OGUST

Golden Notebook in Woodstock.



Handmade soaps from Merriweather's.

Point, counterpoint

Key leaders, including me, gather for a county Covid-19 update

by John Burdick

“YOU KNOW YOU’RE rusty,” said Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan at the beginning of an emergency call-in press conference on a sunny November Saturday at 1:30 p.m., “when you forget the code for unmute.” It was Ryan’s first and subtlest suggestion that a well-managed, appeased, and dormant big problem had awakened and gone wild again.

The arrows of crisis are all pointed up at precipitous angles, as officials and front-line workers scramble back into response mode, and a fatigued, near-broken populace moans “not that again,” as if it were another pointless Kardashian/Jenner news cycle. Some of the most embittered and suspicious among us arguing that is precisely what it is.

The whole teleconference, all 13 or so minutes of it, had a rustic, autumnal, local feel. It began with the barking of a large dog. We call-in attendees were automatically muted after an initial verbal sign-in, so it is both charming and tenable to assume that the dog was Ryan’s own, an inadvertent unmuted glimpse into the domesticity of a county politician on a pristine fall Saturday with some gold left in the trees for the locals after the all the reds and greens had been drunk in by

the eyes of tourists.

Maybe it wasn’t his dog, but enquiring minds don’t give a hoot. Let’s proceed as though it were.

“Thanks to everybody for making time on a Saturday afternoon,” Ryan continued, dog curled at his feet, working on a knotted rope. “We weren’t planning to do this, but we felt it was very important that we get this group of key leaders from across the county [me? Key leader? sic] together to update you all on what we’re seeing and where we think we’re going.”

Any guesses? Yes, you with the face?

“Looking back over the last seven or eight months,” said Ryan, “obviously it’s been a hell of a year, and we’re not through it yet, but the only reason we’ve been able to respond as well as we have, and to be effective, is because of every single person on this line: supervisors, mayors, legislators, other community leaders, leaders in our healthcare system, etcetera.”

Again, no mention of essential music critics, but I am used to the thanklessness of this work.

“I’m really proud of how we rallied through the year,” said Ryan. “and I think we’re going to have to do that again.”

AND THERE IT WAS. I WILL SPARE YOU the portentous data and the swelling digits, the precautions and prescriptions

that followed, because a) you already know, and b) today, a mere week out from Executive Ryan’s phone-side chat w/dog, they are already vastly inaccurate and obsolete. The prophesied second wave of Covid-19 crashes down upon us with frozen, serrated teeth. Meanwhile, the says-you binary culture of contention, denial, and obstruction has gone electric, muddying all waters and breeding despair in the hearts of anyone who thinks synchronized collective action is the only language that this particular problem understands.

If you are feeling whiplash in your soul, this is no doubt because Ryan’s announcement of a second wave, and a couple thousand like it across the country, coincides with not one but two pharmaceutical giants, Pfizer and Moderna, announcing that their experimental vaccines were proving to be over 90 percent effective in trials. The popular flu vaccine — considered a bit of an industry boondoggle in some quarters — typically reduces risk of flu by about 40 to 60 percent, and that’s the CDC talking. Who in their right mind would have dared to dream that a first formula Covid-19 vaccine could potentially be twice as effective as that?

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cine with an efficacy beyond that which anyone would have sensibly entertained only a month ago promises closure and the resumption of life, work, intimacy, and the business

of civilization. At the same time, winter is closing in, and outdoor life closing down. Indoor at-home gatherings top the list of the discouraged if not *verboden* as we head toward the most

ritualized part of the year, rituals that are, for many, the sole light on the shortest and coldest days.

And lest we forget, all the other maladies and diseases and causes of death in human history are still there. There's just one more now. The soul sees the light, while the body is ordered back in the hole.

But, for some of us, weaving through the chorale of hope and despair is a third melody, so faint you can't be sure if you're hearing it or making it up. It's the terror not of the new normal but of the old one, the feeling that perhaps we are going to miss some things about this unprecedented time of isolation and estrangement from everything we used to call life.

Indeed, I have the solitary temperament of a writer, if only half the talent, and honestly, I have never been much for human industry and the business of civilization. But even after correcting for my own aversion to work, expectations, and anything widely considered "necessary," I conclude that many among us share a strain of this feeling: that old normal — in which you are either the shark or the krill, the hammer or the nail -- is coming back with all of its hard bargains and cruel facts and rank stupidities. Ready or not.



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The gift of the outdoors

Ideas for the outward-bound on your shopping list



DION OGUST

By Erin Quinn

THERE IS NO pricetag on the outdoors, no substitute for the fresh air or the invigorating smell of snow on pine branches or the way the warmth of the sun heats

one from the inside out. There is no Instagram pic or Facebook post of a waterfall or forested trail or sunset sliding down the back of a mountain that can transport the viewer. There is no 3-D printer for life. You have to go out and get it.

To that end, what better gift to give to a

loved one than some of the basic tools they need to enjoy the outdoors this winter?

The first one is easy. A map set. If you want to inspire, encourage, even join a friend or family member with some hiking, walking, cycling adventures, the best place to start is with a set of maps. Two that

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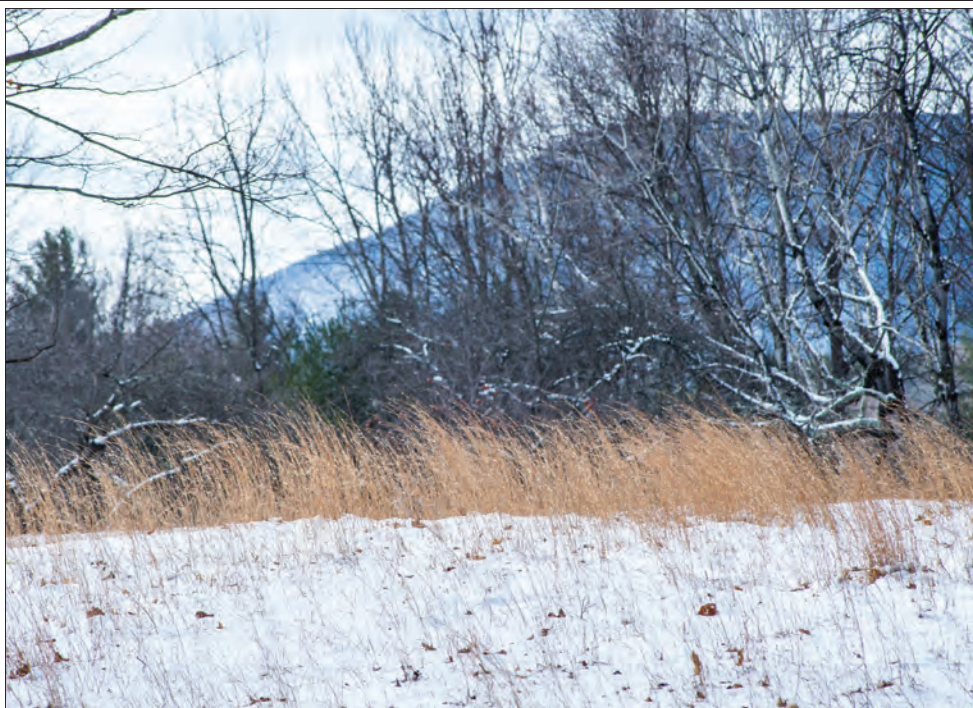
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come to mind for this region are the Shawangunk Mountain Ridge map set that includes Minnewaska State Park, Sam's Point and the Mohonk Preserve as well as the Catskill Forest Preserve mapset—both published by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference include trail descriptions, elevation markers, and a list of easy-to-interpret symbols for beginners. They even come in waterproof and tear resistant packaging to tuck into any rucksack or fanny pack or inside jacket liner.

What good is a map if you can't gain access to the mountain or trailhead? Consider a membership to either the Mohonk Preserve and/or the Empire Trail Pass, which gets you and your carload into almost any New York State Park.) For less than \$100 each, both these passes offer unlimited access throughout the year, encouraging recreation and land preservation while curbing the day-visit costs.

Now it's time to start outfitting your outward-bound gift recipient. Consider a pair of wool socks, a first aid kit, a neck gator, gloves and the almighty, often-forgotten headlamp, great for those hikes that stretch beyond sunset, for safety when



DION OGUST

walking along the side of the road, or for searching for a lost item. When it comes to staying warm, many think a coat is the most important article of clothing. But nothing can take the joy out of a trek like a pair of wet, icy-cold feet that could easily be assuaged by a pair of Darn Tough or Smart Wool socks.

Even if you're wearing a pair of warm woolen socks, after a long hike, run, bike climb, ice-climb, even the toughest sock can succumb to the elements, so it's great to have a second, fresh and dry pair to put on once you get back to base camp.

Other great gifts for the winter hiker include micro-spikes or crampons or yak-tracks. These make even routine walks safer as they grip the ground, providing traction where patches of unforeseen ice may lurk. They also allow that more

experienced and enthusiastic hiker, runner, trekker to get out further without the fear of falling in the snow and ice on the endless combinations of historic carriage roads and trails that zigzag throughout the Hudson Valley. Walking with good micro-spikes that slide over whatever shoe you're wearing can turn a dangerous, ice-walk into a cake-walk. It can help one explore those crystalized palaces hanging like hidden chandeliers in the recesses of the mountains.

Neck gaiters are another simple yet effective gift that can serve a myriad of purposes. There are many styles of warm and colorful gaiters made by Buff that include lightweight merino wool. They keep the neck and face warm when biking or hiking, or slide up around that head, doubling as a hat or liner beneath a bike or climbing helmet. Heat is often lost through the head, neck, feet and hands. Any outdoor lover will tell you that having an extra one of these items can be a godsend.

There also more experiential gifts, like rental packages for cross-country skis or snowshoes. These are great for someone who has expressed some interest in these activities but hasn't tried them yet. Getting them nice gear could be cost-prohibitive and ultimately a waste if they don't take to the sport, so rentals are a great option. Local parks and rail-trails also great options to groomed trails.

Here are some resources for finding these gifts. The Mohonk Preserve has a new trail map that members and visitors can purchase as well as climbing, hiking, geology, birding books. Gift memberships can be found here: <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/how-to-help/join/gift-membership.html>. The Empire State Pass can be found here: <https://parks.ny.gov/admission/empire-passport/>

Many of the items mentioned can be found Rock and Snow in New Paltz or their new children's store in Rosendale or at Kenco in Kingston. Rentals can researched at <https://www.rockandsnow.com/177/Rentals/>.

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FLICKR/NICK HEPLER

The West Kill along the Diamond Notch Trail at Hunter-West Kill Wilderness; West Kill, Greene County.

It's different here

Our winter requires us to live in balance and harmony

by Elisabeth Henry

WE'RE ABOUT TO go into a dark winter," said a certain eager national political candidate.

"I don't think we're going to have a dark winter at all," said the other eager political candidate.

Signing onto either of these two prognostications means one feeds off the zero-nutritional value of obvious statements, or thinks Pollyanna is a dream date.

So you relocated to the Hudson Valley, or the Catskill Mountains. You probably made that decision with an emphatic "yes!" as the songbirds warbled, the perfume of wild roses and pine floated in the air, and as you sun-bathed naked on that warm flat rock in a creek that runs

through your remote acres.

It's gonna be different now.

Oh, yes, Autumn is always gorgeous here, and this year was epic. One hopes you gathered those fallen leaves for compost. What a beautiful sound they make as you wade through them, ankle-deep, and what a perfume!

That's over now. Be sure they are cleared off pathways or expect a thick, slick layer that you describe to your orthopedic surgeon as the reason you need bolts in your femur.

October gave us a little goose about what winter brings, but that was followed by 70-degree days with a slight, buoyant

breeze that made us feel as if Mother Nature's side hustle is to give facial massage followed by a slight bronzing treatment. People from Brooklyn, like my children, sat contentedly on south-facing porches,

thinking to themselves, with little self-affirming nods, that yes, the move was so smart.

But now it's really cold. And yes, it's dark. Dark before dinner. Dark at morning rise.

If you hail from Arizona, as does one equestrienne friend of mine,

you have a hard time believing this isn't the worst of it. If you are the tenth generation of mountain dweller, you are still cuttin' wood in your t-shirt.

Trust yourself, or
promise to learn
how. You're going
to need to know.

Should we stay or should we go? How much wood should a woodchuck cut? All of us want to know what's coming, so we know what moves to make.

It's going to be a La Niña winter. For the Northeast, that means colder and snowier than usual. Usually, La Niña is a phenomenon in which the surface waters near the equator of the Pacific Ocean are cooler than normal, the opposite of El Niño when the water in the equatorial Pacific is in a warm phase. Except that The Farmer's Almanac and The old Farmer's Almanac say si si to the snow, but nyet to the cold.

I'm getting that same feeling I get when Siri tells me to take a left at The Arena Stage ... when I'm in Gilboa. So, let's turn to nature for some clues. After all, when one lives in Brooklyn or Hoboken, one needs to know only: is it hot, cold, wet or dry, so I know what coat or shoes to wear. Network news is a reliable source.

Existential questions

Here, if one is to be prepared, one needs to know: where should I park my car, do I have enough toilet paper, what's the price of fuel oil now, who plows snow, what do I do when the power goes off for days maybe, weeks. Is it safe to store my frozen food outside in a power outage and what are those teeth marks in it?

Is it true that if it snows enough to be higher than the height of the windows, will I suffocate? What happens when there are so many mice or squirrels nesting in my house that I cannot sleep? What is creosote, and what does it mean if the handyman said "Your chimney is loaded with it. Oh, well. Too late now." To whom do we turn? Don Lemmon cannot save us now.

Let's examine Mother Nature's signs for help. The colors of the woolly bear are said to be an accurate predictor.



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Woolly-bear caterpillars are the larval form of the Isabella Tiger moth, which is a beautiful creature, with yellowish-orange and cream-colored wings spotted with black. The reason we see so many in the fall is because they are hunting a warm place to take shelter – a thick leaf pile or a log – where they'll be safe until spring. It is typical that they have three bands of color. Two bands of black with a band of orange-brown inserted in between. If that orange-brown band is thick and wide, don't pull out more than one feather quilt per bed. If that orange brown band is narrow, and the woolly bear is mostly black, "Katie, bar the door!"

**"Mushrooms galore,
much snow in store.
No mushrooms at all,
no snow will fall."**

Signs of winter

The habits of spiders, bees, wasps and hornets also tell many a tale. Expect a hard winter if in the fall:

Spiders come in the house sooner, in greater numbers, and make more webs than usual.

Bees, wasps and hornets make their hives higher in the trees and put themselves to bed earlier in the season. As the old saying goes: "See how high the hornet's nest, 'twill tell how high the snow will rest."

Raccoon tails grow extra thick with bright bands, and mice begin chewing furiously to get in. Muskrats burrow holes high on the river bank and woodpeckers share a tree.

Crickets arrive early on the hearth, and ants are seen marching in straight lines.

Pigs are seen to gather sticks and extra hair grows on the nape of cows' necks.

Animals grow thicker coats. Horsemen and women watch for this, because certain breeds need blanketing, and certain breeds do not.

Watch for squirrels with heavy fur and fat, fluffy tails – they are dressing for a cold winter.

Groundhogs lumber slowly because of fat.

Evergreen trees make more and bigger pine cones and holly bushes hang heavy with berries. Oak trees scatter heaps of acorns.

Then there's the breastbone of a goose. You'll need one recently deceased goose

for this prediction. The length of the breastbone is said to foretell the length, and its color the severity of the coming winter. The more mottled the breastbone, the colder and snowier the winter will be.

Everyone knows that around these parts, each foggy morning in August counts toward a snowfall in winter – and by my count we're looking at quite a few.

And then there's the maxim about the first snowfall – the number of days from Christmas the first snowflakes fall tells how many times it will snow this winter.

There's an old adage about fall mushrooms. "Mushrooms galore, much snow in store. No mushrooms at all, no snow will fall."

And pay close attention to apple skins and the onions taken from a late garden – those with thicker skins than usual indicate a tough winter.

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Similarly, tight cornhusks which are denser than usual and acorns with thicker shells indicate a hard winter to come.

The taller the weeds in summer, the deeper the snows that winter.

Native Americans observed beaver lodges for winter predictions – the larger and stronger, the rougher the winter.

If autumn leaves fall while still green, and if peak fall color is early, the winter

will be mild. The later the peak, the colder the winter. Spectacular fall foliage that takes longer than usual to leave the trees is another indicator of a mean winter, bearing heavy snows.

Early bird and monarch butterfly migration, ducks and geese flying south earlier than usual, squirrels frantically darting about looking for nuts? You, too, may want to get ready to tuck in early.

All tucked in?

Now, see, you have to understand that phrase “tuck in.” It’s what we do here. It’s warm and cozy and lazy and good, ’til roundabout March. That’s cabin-fever season, and a tale for another time.

Until then, get out and about with your notepad and pen and make observations. Interview the local lumberjacks, the hunters, the foresters, the farmers. When all this is done, make your own predictions

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It begins: "Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as people. Now our minds are one."

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Keep it small, keep it safe

The holidays take a new shape this year

by Cloey Callahan

BY NOW, MOST of us would be deciding whose house will hold Thanksgiving and whose will hold Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza or Ramadan. Flights would be booked, schedules would be cleared and delegation of who is bringing which dish would commence.

But with the second wave of Covid-19 still building steam, upcoming holiday celebrations, which generally involve intergenerational, indoor gatherings lasting several hours or more, are coming under scrutiny. Public health officials are urging Americans to celebrate only with those in their household; in essence, to skip seeing extended family this year so that everyone will be around to see next year.

We checked in with a number of local residents to find out how the pandemic was affecting their holiday plans. Overall, most described their plans in one word: small.

**‘It’s temporary.
You have to
sacrifice.’**

Mel Avallone from Saugerties said, “this will be the first time in over a decade that I won’t be hosting a huge gathering.”

With her mother-in-law turning 90 this year, her family is "taking no chances."

Others, like Pepper Conklin, also from Saugerties, are getting creative and swapping Thanksgiving dinners and eating over video chat, as the CDC recommends (see sidebar).

Susan Tratner, of New Paltz, said she might travel to a family member's house for an outdoor gathering and will bring



Public health officials are recommending small gatherings, one household only.



The Catskill Christmas Express will take passengers on a wonderful trip through the Catskill Forest to Santa's Workshop at the North Pole. (Polar Express postponed to November 2021). See website for exact dates at times. <https://catskillmountainrailroad.com/event/2020-holiday-train/>

her outdoor heater with her.

Some are doing a traditional gathering, but with masks.

Lijah Friedman has spent the last 20 years traveling to Schenectady to be with family each holiday season. This year is different. She's known numerous friends and coworkers who have contracted the virus, and one of her daughters is an EMT. She's had a close look at its effects and has been living cautiously since March. For the holidays, she said she will be asking her daughter who doesn't live with her to get tested beforehand. Then Friedman and her two daughters will order from Main Course in New Paltz, watch a movie and hangout.

"Even with our birthdays – it's temporary," said Friedman. "You have to sacrifice."

She suspects December's usual celebrations will be "mellow."

Town of Lloyd resident Kristin Cordazzo Jimenez works at a local hospital and will be working on Thanksgiving.

"Covid numbers are still on the rise, so we're staying away from everyone," said Jimenez. "We will probably video chat with family though."

Jimenez contracted Covid-19 back in the beginning of the pandemic and between that experience and one of her family members being immunocompromised, she said it simply isn't worth it. She has been ordering Christmas presents online to be shipped directly to her nieces and nephews so they can still have gifts to open from her.

She mostly only goes out to buy grocer-

ies and only participated in a handful of outdoor gatherings over the summer.

"I get it," said Jimenez about those who might still decide to celebrate Thanksgiv-

ing with extended family. "We're humans. We are social beings. But you sort of just want to scream."

Katya Stanislavskaya, a professor at SUNY New Paltz, said she'd like to celebrate Christmas as she usually does (going to her husband's parents in Michigan), but she doesn't want to expose them to her son who has been visiting his dad in Manhattan, especially because his dad has been traveling for work. While her son's father gets tested frequently, she has already decided that both her and her son will stay home in New York for Christmas.

"The big thing is not being aware or in control of what happens on the other side of the family," Stanislavskaya. "We're just trying to be cautious."

While she doesn't want to keep her son from seeing his father or grandparents, the pandemic has put her in a confusing situation where she said "it's kind of a damned if you do, damned if you don't."

"I myself feel sometimes like I'm judging people who I hear are traveling to see family," said Stanislavskaya. "On the other hand, I realize that like me, they probably don't have a choice. I guess we should be both super careful and tolerant."

Guidance from the CDC

THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION HAS ISSUED GUIDANCE FOR holidays throughout the entire pandemic.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has been stressful and isolating for many people," read the CDC's website. "Gatherings during the upcoming holidays can be an opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. This holiday season, consider how your holiday plans can be modified to reduce the spread of Covid-19 to keep your friends, families, and communities healthy and safe."

The guidance applies to both Covid-19 and the flu. It states that the safest way to celebrate this year is with people in your household. For those who do travel, there are a number of suggestions. Most of them are similar to what we've all been hearing since March – wear a mask, stay at least six feet away from others who don't live with you and wash your hands.

To make Thanksgiving and other holidays even safer, they recommend bringing your own food, drinks, plates, cups and utensils, avoid going near areas of food preparation and to use single-use and disposable items.

They do also suggest outdoor gatherings, despite the weather getting colder. If you're inside, it's best to have the windows open. Additionally, the CDC states that you should have a conversation with guests ahead of time to set expectations for celebrating together.

"Unfortunately, the Covid-19 epidemic is worsening, and small household gatherings are an important contributor to the rise in Covid-19 cases."

Alternatives to the traditional Thanksgiving celebration that the CDC included are hosting a virtual meal online, preparing dishes and delivering them to family and participating in a gratitude activity.

Ulster County Executive Pat Ryan said during his briefing on Covid-19 on November 10 that although tough, families should not be holding large gatherings for Thanksgiving.

"As we head into Thanksgiving and the holidays, it's even more important than ever that you factor that into your plans," said Ryan. "That probably means your Thanksgiving needs to look a little bit different than it normally would."

What's old is new again

Celebrating the wisdom of the twilight years

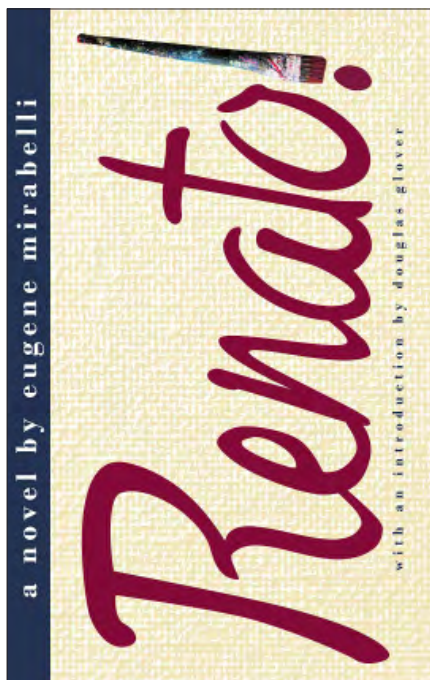
by Paul Smart

FOR ME, READING'S been better than ever this year. It's helped me and many others find a means of accepting, even understanding, the anxieties caused by pandemic. It's been an alternative to the battles over truth that have forced their ways into our political souls via journalism and the social media.

Much of what's been best has come from our elders, or those exploring new ways to plumb the depths of ancient literary art forms. These past years have seen a rise in the profile of older folks, those in their late seventies or deep into their eighties. Authors who have found new ways to sum up their journeys, they've provided us new works perfect for the gift-giving season. Their wisdom is appreciated in these difficult times. And their efforts have been more than supported by younger pioneers exploring new ways of capturing the moment in fresh literary forms.

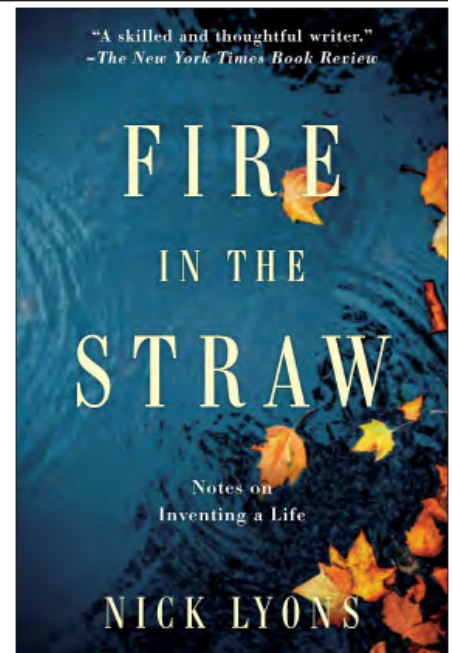
RENATO!, by EUGENE MIRABELLI (FROM Kingston's literary stalwart, McPherson & Co.), pulls together three previous works narrated by the same fictional character, the Boston-based painter of Sicilian background Renato Stillamare. The first part charts the background of the Cavallu clan into which the protagonist gets adopted. The writing displays a penchant for the sorts of magical realism that gives its first-person storytelling verisimilitude and added punch later on.

The second part captures Stillamare in his early seventies, bedded down in his painter's studio across the Charles River from his wife (and love of his life) Alba, giving his all to one last stab to land a gallery show that will make his life's dedication to art meaningful. On the side, he takes in a stray woman and her child,



beds the woman (with guilt), and tries to make sense of his life's twists and turns.

The final section provides a stunning evocation of a creative man's efforts to re-instill direction to his life in its twilight years. Mirabelli has pulled together this sprawl using subtle interludes from Renato, his protagonist and narrator, now several years older, and wiser in his resignations and embrace of all that the oft-misused idea of "family" entails. This adds several deeper tones to Renato's tale.



The result is operatic in a classic Verdian way, far beyond the pop elements of a Puccini, or the buffa comedy overtones so many lump the form with. Themes rollick, take their time, deepen, recur.

Mirabelli is a great fan of the Roman philosopher Lucretius, and takes many of his ideas from the author's *On The Nature of Things*. "Lucretius is more than a physicist; he's a moral philosopher who wants us to know we're free from such things as fate or destiny," writes Mirabelli through the voice of Renato. "And he announces early on that he's writing this book about the nature of things to liberate us readers from fear of the gods, fear of death and the afterlife, for as people are shown that the gods have no part in the creation or management of things, and once they see that all creation, including their own living body, is composed of atoms and nothing more, they'll understand that there is no life after death, no afterlife in which to suffer and fear. You, your body and your soul are that collection of atoms and when they disperse there's no you — it's as simple as that."

The early Cavallu history rushes with the emotional impact of a great Russian novel, or the first chapters of D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. We get hooked,

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learn to understand what makes our narrator who he is, and identify with him, even in his inconsistencies.

Everyone meets at coffee shops for conversation and sustenance; friendships, and love affairs, linger for decades. Family gathers and disperses, inherently knows how to be there for each other at the right moments, to share grand meals that always allow others at the long tables, usually placed outdoors under high New England skies.

FIRE IN THE STRAW, BY LONGTIME Woodstocker Nick Lyons (Arcade), is a memoir of a busy life filled with literature, publishing, love, art and family. He's had a long journey from a lonely, pit-in-the-stomach childhood to calm acceptance and gratitude for what life can toss one's way ... as well as the pleasures that fishing and books bring. It's the summation of this writer and editor's life with artistic ambition, with the struggles of a life buoyed by the constant need for money.

It's one of the most beautifully conjured and rendered pieces of writing I've read. A true summation.

Before being adopted by the cold man whose last name he took and passed on, Nicki, as Lyons was known as a boy, gets thrust out of a large Jewish family into a parochial boarding school, endures a high school and college education that leaves him feeling unworthy of any ambition. He discovers books during a stint with the Army during our war-less 1950s, and embarks on a new life in literature that takes him back to college (at Bard, no less) in his mid-20s, an eventual doctorate in English from the University of Michigan, and a long-held teaching gig at Hunter College. He marries his college



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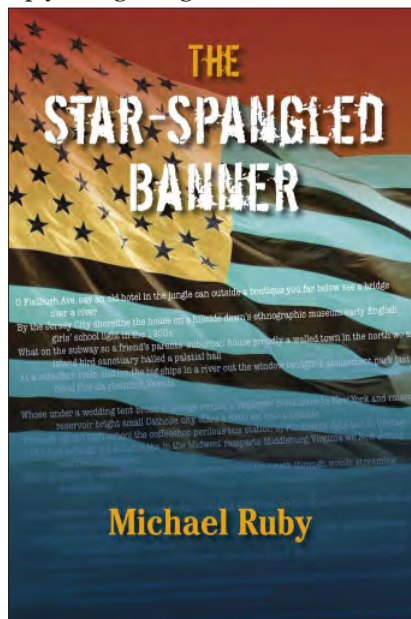
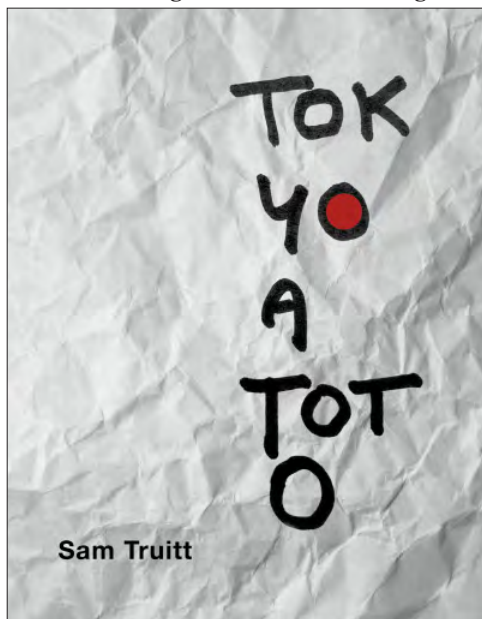
sweetheart, the painter Mari Lyons, has four kids, and takes on added jobs in publishing (as an executive editor) and ghost-writing. Becoming known for his own writing about fly fishing, he handles the worries of life.

He understands early that nothing comes to him easily. He struggles to find his own voice. He learns to love art, but takes a life to understand the market-less beauty of his wife's dedication to painting. He realizes not only the various metaphors that his love for fishing implies, but also the simple lessons in simply doing things over and over. *Fire*

in the Straw is an evocative summation, with lessons for all of us.

"I read and remember less, perhaps understand a bit more. Mostly these past years I have tried to cobble together bits of my fractured days, looking for hints of the pattern, the arc of it all," Nick Lyons writes towards the end of his work.

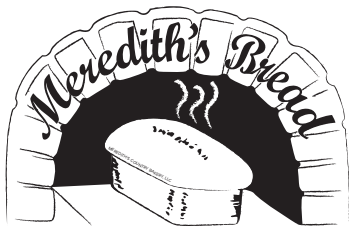
I THINK OF THESE WELL-EARNED AND written evocations of older men's understanding as I also read two new works I highly recommend this holiday season from Station Hill Press, in Barrytown: Sam Truitt's *Tokyoatoto* and Michael Ruby's *The Star-Spangled Banner*, books of ostentatiously pioneering lyric forms that remind me of such heroes of poetry past as John Berryman and Delmore Schwartz, Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. *As well as the serious art the two octogenarians, Mirabelli and Lyons, have heralded in their writing.* Art that pushes boundaries and inner glimpses into the artist's soul while also fully embracing a life exemplified in giant rowdy meals and long friendships. *Tokyoatoto*, which juxtaposes the pages of a full notebook filled during a trip to China and Japan over a week last Thanksgiving with a typed version of those pages broken into more pronounced poetic form, balances a Beat stream-of-conscious truth-telling, of the moment, with more personal themes. It's mesmerizing, a capturing



of several worlds all at once, while also emotionally fruitful. It pioneers a new way to engage the complexities of our ever-complex world in new poetics beyond what we get taught, or read, from the past these days.

The same is true for Ruby's *The Star-Spangled Banner*, which breaks any easy read into a slurry of patterns while repeating its conceit – the hidden words of our national anthem – into bits and pieces of heard conversations, road signage, and what feel like diary entries into a potent simulacrum of the ways in which our very thought patterns, as Americans and literate persons, have been broken in recent years by both a savage politics and a shattered attention span ruled by phones and advertising.

Truitt and Ruby publish new works in new styles every year or two. I imagine them as younger versions of Nick Lyons, made new by all he read and experienced, or Stillamare's Renato, driven forward by ego and a wish to capture all he can on a canvas and recognizing the deepest beauty of what he's created only when he becomes weakened by age.



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A sampler of holiday events

Dec 12th, 11am to 4pm. **Pet Photos With Santa.** It's the Ulster County SPCA's Pet Photos With Santa! Have your pet's photo taken with Santa Claus by a professional photographer for a \$5 donation to the Ulster County SPCA. Please go to the link below to select a slot for your 15 minute photo session. Select one slot per pet, if you have multiple pets. A slot is required to get your pet's photo taken. Donations can be made in person on the day of the photo shoot. The photo shoot will be located at the Ulster County SPCA, at 20 Wiedy Road in Kingston, NY. Please come on time for your slot. Dogs must be on leashes, cats must come in individual carriers. All guests must wear masks and adhere to social distancing guidelines. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040E48AEAD2BA7FF2-petphotos>

Dec 12, 11 am – Dec 13, 5 pm. **Holiday Shopping Craft Fair/ Flea Market Extravaganza** (2 day event) Mix and mingle. Shop til you drop 50+ vendors. Each day there will be different vendors from all over the Hudson Valley. Find that special unique gift you been searching for, or just spoil yourself. Our 4th annual event. Bring the kids to see Santa Claus, take free pictures with him between 1:00pm-3:00pm on both days. Try your luck at our mega gift basket raffles. You must wear a mask while attending the event and continue social distancing. Homewood Suites by Hilton at Newburgh-Stewart Airport.

Nov. 27, 28, 29, Dec. 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20. **A Frosty Festival.** A family-fun holiday light spectacular featuring

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Dec. 12, 11 am-6 pm. **Frozendale.** An annual Community-generated festival. Come join the shops, theater and restaurants on Main Street in Rosendale. Surprise visits from music groups and Santa!

December 5 and 19, 10am-2 pm plus on-line. **Made in Kingston Pop-Up Market** at the Kingston's Farmers Market. Support local artisans by shopping local either safely in person or on-line at www.madeinkingstonny.com

December 6, **Holiday in the Village: Parade of Lights.** 4:30 pm starting at the corner of Post Street near Washington Ave. Step off at 5 pm. Line up is first come, first serve. Decorate your float or car. Open to all fire companies/department. No need to sign up. Hosted by the Saugerties Fire Department

November 27, 10:30 am **Socially Distanced Holiday Fair.** An outdoor & online fair featuring local artists, artisans and producers. Opus 40, 50 Fite Road, Saugerties.



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Gift ideas for a Covid-19 holiday season

By Cloey Callahan

IT'S BEEN AN emotionally charged year, but we made it to the holiday season. Normally, as soon as November rolls around, the holiday cheer kicks into full gear. This year doesn't have to be any different. In fact, it's the ideal opportunity to give a loved one something that they'd never get themselves but you know they'd enjoy (and need, for that matter).

We've compiled a list with all locally sourced products from around the Hudson Valley. Purchase your loved one a wonderful gift, whether it's a puzzle to provide some needed distraction, special soap and lotion to stay clean or a fun new face mask — all while supporting local businesses this season.

1 Bundle and self-care packages

Cocoon in New Paltz has a number of self-care boxes that would make the perfect gift for anyone who is in need of a little relaxation. The sanity box – which is well named – includes a Denik journal to write down your thoughts, a sea salt soy candle, a New Yorker bicycle themed puzzle, on top of French hand soap and a beeswax lotion bar to help you stay safe (and moisturized!) as we get through this winter. It costs \$98 for the bundle. For an even more personalized and Covid aware package, consider the first responder's box. This one consists of two bath bombs, two bars of soap, the same lotion as the last box, liquid



1



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hand soap, sea salt body butter, a journal and a porcelain tag that reads, "everything is going to be ok." This box is \$128. If you're looking for a bundle package that doesn't remind the gift recipient of the pandemic, consider the Hudson Valley box. It's \$98

and included a Hudson Valley design on a stainless steel insulated water bottle, a book with 50 hikes right in the Valley, a camping themed New Paltz mug and a dish towel with locally inspired illustrations.

2 A new hobby or game

Being confined indoors has left some wondering how to pass the time. Kingston's Exit Nineteen has a wide collection of interesting puzzles and games that can be ordered right from their site. Think trivia – we're talking not just general knowledge trivia, but food and drink trivia, road trip trivia, TV show trivia and eighties pop culture trivia. Challenge a friend or family member and really test

how much they remember about Super Mario, Madonna and Ghostbusters. Each pack is \$15. Trivia aside, they have a chess and checkers set, poker set and a number of different puzzles. Order their 1,000-piece meta puzzle for someone in your life who wants to up their puzzle game. This one has uniquely designed pieces that will be sure to take up some time.

3 For those who need extra light – literally

Heady Teddy's in New Paltz has a Himalayan salt night light that would be a great gift for anyone wanting to explore the benefits of this type of salt, which is said to cleanse and purify the air, alleviate coughing and symptoms of the common cold, raise energy levels and enhance the mood. Or, if you know someone who needs a simple night light, Maglyn's Dream has a \$36 porcelain garden colored night light. Choose a design of either dolphins, catch a falling star, secret path, still reflections, lotus, morning run or sweet nectar.

4 Some light, and a scent

When in doubt, a candle is always a great gift, and the Hudson Valley has several impressive candlemakers. Rosendale Waxworks has a number of handmade candles to bring warmth and comfort into our homes, especially when we all need it a bit more than usual. For \$20 you can order a candle from Wilda's "Hudson Valley Highs" collection. The collection consists of four scents: sweet meadow, campfire, misty garden and jasminer. Woodstock's Candlestock is another one-stop-shop for any type of candle you can imagine. The \$40 Pure Relaxation Candle Set has two all natural, long lasting and hand poured beeswax pillar candles and a six pack of beeswax and soy wax blended essential oil fragrance lavender tea light candles.

If you are interested in a candle subscription service, Beacon Mercantile might have just what you need. They have three different options that will all be sure to light up a loved one's life.

5 In the kitchen

Woodstock's Gilded Carriage is a



3



4



5

Hudson Valley kitchen destination for the best appliances. Whether you're shopping for someone who has called the kitchen their favorite room in the house their whole life, or started cooking back in March during quarantine, the Gilded Carriage has what you need. Consider ordering the Cuisinart smartest stainless steel 11 piece set that comes with sauce pans, skillets and even a lid organizer rack. Or try Chemex's pour over coffee maker that is able to make three cups at a time. Ordering a gift for a tea drinker? The Gilded Carriage carries Le Creuset's classic whistling kettle in a variety of different colors that will be sure to match any kitchen.

6 Show the skin some love

It's the winter – our skin is cold and cracking and could use some extra love. Lovefield Vintage in Kingston has an all natural Klei lavender and coconut body scrub that gently exfoliates the skin, leaving it soft and smooth. It is made with coconut oil and lavender, ho wood and cedarwood essential oils. They also carry Klei's lavender and coconut foaming bath soak, which is made up of the same ingredients as the scrub, except you can soak and relax in a hot bubble bath. The bath soak is said to reduce inflammation, relax the muscles and soothe aches and pains. Consider adding their \$34 clear quartz facial roller to the gift package. Facial



tion and balance, the clove essential oil for protection, banishing and justice, the eucalyptus essential oil for healing and wellness or the french lavender essential oil for relaxation and peaceful sleep. Some say they even use a drop or spritz of essential oil under their face masks. The Awareness Shop also sells incense wands, cones and burners. If you know someone who is ready to manifest something in their life, then the Manifesting Abundance Ritual Kit from Little Blueberry in Saugerties is just what they need. The Kit comes with three manifesting affirmation cards, sage to cleanse and protect your environment, palo santo to create a positive vibe, and stones citrine, tigers eye, quartz, green aventurine and pyrite.

9 Bundle up and grab a book

Saugerties' Light House has an elegant, soft lambswool throw to keep your loved one warm and snuggled up on the couch this winter. It comes in both light beige or mocha and is \$180. Stay even warmer



rolling “massages the skin and encourages lymphatic drainage away from the face.”

For the guys, Hamilton & Adams in Kingston has an entire grooming and skin care collection to check out. They carry a number of brands that will be sure to up any men's skin care routine. Order an exfoliating soap bar from Olivina or a peppermint body scrub from Malin + Goetz.

7 Cheers to the year coming to an end!

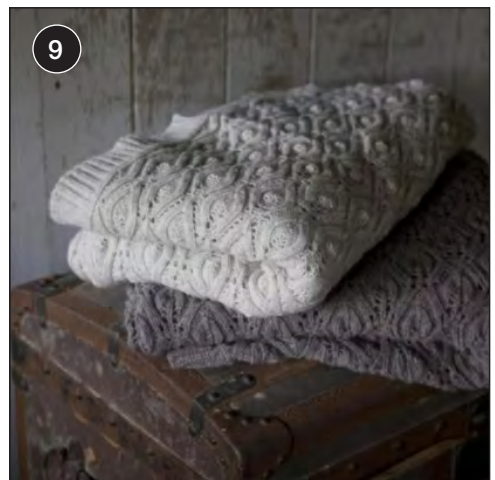
Zakka Joy in Beacon has a \$20 Mini Bar, a collection of 100 recipes for cocktail enthusiasts. It comes with eight small notebooks, organized by base ingredients. It is the perfect bar cart accessory. Zakka Joy also carries a line of Herb &



Lou's infused cubes so that when it's time to make a drink all you have to do is pop out a frozen cube and add your spirit of choice. If you're looking for a special drink dispenser, Maglyn's Dream has one made of stone. For \$158, you can give someone a cobbled granite dispenser that comes with a stainless steel valve, which allows you to *truly* serve your drinks on the rocks.

8 Oils, incense and more

New Paltz's Awareness Shop has a variety of essential oils that can serve a number of different purposes. Purchase the cedarwood essential oil for purifica-





with a fun pair of socks from Woodsock, located in Woodstock. Or, if you think slippers would be a better bet, head over to Phoenicia's The Nest Egg to purchase a pair of Minnetonka moccasins. All that's left is a good book to read. Clove and Creek, based out of Kingston, has a history of the Hudson Valley box set, written by Vernon Benjamin. Know someone who wants to know more about the Hudson Valley? This is for them.

10 Staying safe with protective masks

You can't go wrong this year with gifting someone a cute, stylish mask that is also effective and safe. At the same time, you can shop local and support local artists. The HVNY Marketplace has a number of handmade face masks. Melissa Liguori, from Dutchess County, is selling her 100 percent cotton masks that are machine washable. She has a number of different styles including Snoopy, polka dog and zig zag patterns. Liguori also makes a curved face mask in purple and paisley patterns. For kids, she has a variety of patterns as well including sharks, paw prints and unicorns. Woodsock also has a number of unique masks for both adults and kids. Want to add something else? Lovefield Vintage in Kingston has an all natural hand and surface sanitizer for



\$12. Throw in a hysterical "stay positive" or "wake me up when it's over" magnet from Zakka Joy for the lighthearted coronavirus bundle.

11 For the candy lover in your family

Kingston Candy Bar has everything you need to send someone a package of the best sweet treats. Order cookies by the dozen and candy by the pound. Or, order a gift basket from Krause's Chocolates, which has locations in both Kingston and New Paltz. The Krause's Chocolates gift basket costs \$50 for a ½ pound of mixed milk and dark hand dipped chocolates, homemade peanut brittle, almond bark and mint lentils, ¼ pound of yogurt pretzels, and a chocolate dipped oreo, s'more and pretzel. The final touch is a Krause's Chocolates chocolate bar.

12 Shining silver or gold

Saugerties Meraki Boutik is the place to find a beautiful piece of jewelry. The Gorjana Labradorite Power Gemstone Necklace centers the labradorite gemstone, which is said to "bring forth a higher awareness of yourself and those around you, adding a magical sense of balance to your life." The necklace is adjustable so it can be worn however the person wishes. Meraki Boutik has a number of other gemstone necklaces like the Gorjana Lapis Power Gemstone Necklace and the Gorjana Black Onyx Power Gemstone Necklace.

Or, considering purchasing this "F Coronavirus" handstamped bracelet, made by a nurse in the Hudson Valley. All proceeds from the bracelet are going back to support local nurses in the Hudson Valley.

Businesses mentioned in this article:

Cocoon, 67 Main Street, New Paltz, 845-255-6862, cocoonathome.com; Exit Nineteen, 309

Wall Street, Kingston, 845-514-2485, exitnineteen.com; Heady Teddy's Outfitters, 57 Main Street, New Paltz, 845-430-6368, headyteddys.com; Maglyn's Dream, 10 Main Street, Suite #307, New Paltz,

845-256-0522, maglynsdream.com; Rosendale Waxworks, 415 Main Street, Rosendale, 845-658-2448, rosendalewaxworks.com; Candlestock, 16 Mill Hill Rd, Woodstock, 845-679-8711, candlestock.com; Beacon Mercantile, 493 Main Street, Beacon, beaconmercantile.com; Gilded Carriage, 95 Tinker St, Woodstock, 845-679-2607, gildedcarriage.com; Lovefield Vintage, 37 North Front Street, Kingston, 845-514-2720, lovefieldvintage.com; Hamilton & Adams, 32 John Street, Kingston, 845-383-1039, hamiltonandadams.com; Zakka Joy, 177 Main Street Beacon, 845-632-3383, zakkajoy.com; The Awareness Shop, 180 Main Street New Paltz, aware-



nessshop.com; Little Blueberry, 99 Partition Street, Saugerties, 845-532-4304, littleblueberry.com; Light House, 102 Partition Street #1513, Saugerties, 845-246-1000, lighthousestyle.com; Woodsock, 97 Tinker Street, Woodstock, 845-684-5988, woodsockinc.com; The Nest Egg, 84 Main St, Phoenicia, 845-688-5851, nesteggshop.com; Clove & Creek, 73 Broadway, Kingston, cloveandcreek.com; HVNY Marketplace, hvny.info/marketplace; Kingston Candy Bar, 319 Wall Street #3819, Kingston, 845-901-3927, kingstonsandybar.com; Krause's Chocolates (several locations), krauseschocolates.com; Meraki Boutik, 86 S Partition Street, Saugerties, 845-247-3048, merakiboutiqueshoponline.com.



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