

# GASTON ALIVE

MAGAZINE

HOME | GARDEN | STYLE | FUN | FOOD | HAPPENINGS

## A Train To Christmas Town

p6

**Making Gingerbread Memories**

p10

**Four Ways To Focus on What's  
Important During The Holidays**

p12

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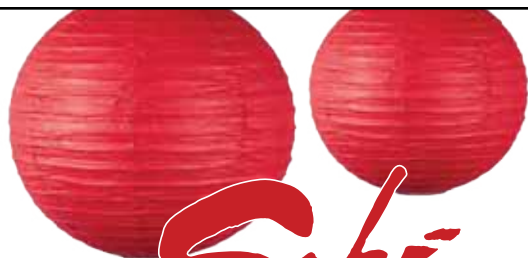
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## FROM THE PUBLISHER

As Christmas approaches, I am reminded of how important family is. Of course, families differ-some families only have one parent , sometimes kids may live with an aunt or uncle or grandparent, and sometimes families aren't related at all- they are just the people that we love. Occasionally distance or hurt feelings may separate you from your loved ones, but my prayer for you this holiday season is that you will have peace in your heart, and love those close to you.

There is enough heartache and strife in the world...in the words of the song written by Jill Jackson Miller and Sy Miller in 1955: "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me".

Merry Christmas,  
David

featured this month

06

A TRAIN TO CHRISTMAS TOWN-  
LEAVING FROM BELMONT!

10

MAKING GINGERBREAD  
MEMORIES WITH GLENN

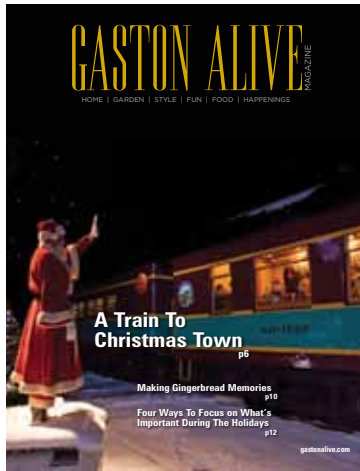
12

FOURS WAYS TO FOCUS  
ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT  
DURING THE HOLIDAYS



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on the **cover**



Pictured on this month's cover is A Train To Christmas Town, a new Christmas attraction leaving from North Belmont for an hour long Christmas excursion. See related article page 6. Cover graphic design by David James.

## our **staff**

### **PUBLISHER**

DAVID HAMRICK

### **CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS**

RICK HAITHCOX

### **SALES**

BEN DUNGAN  
DAVID HAMRICK

### **DESIGN**

DAVID JAMES

### **CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

DAVID HAMRICK  
GLENN SAWYER



To be part of our team, or to submit art, photo or story ideas, please email us at: [info@gastonalive.com](mailto:info@gastonalive.com)

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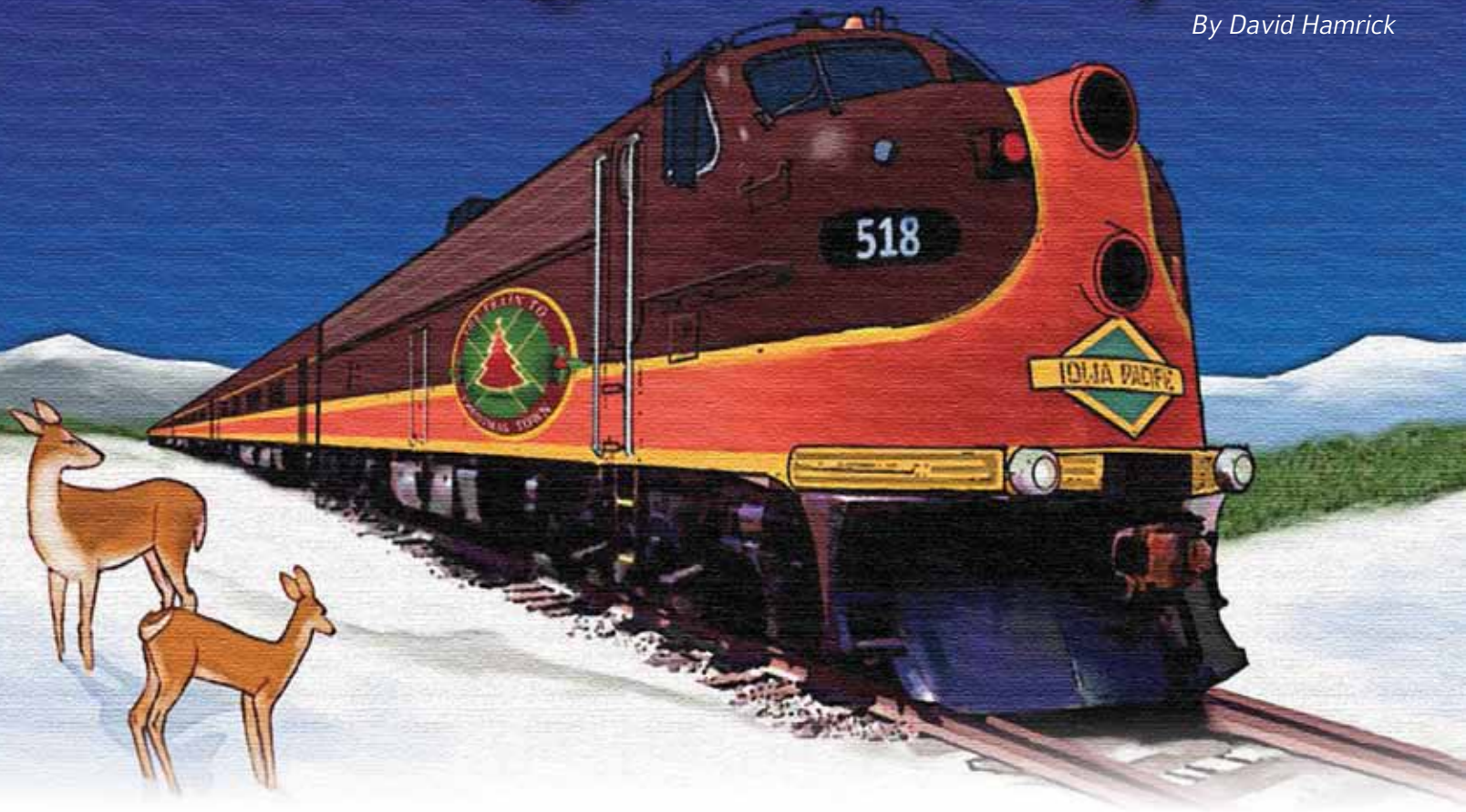
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# THE TRAIN TO CHRISTMAS TOWN

*By David Hamrick*



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Guests are welcomed by the conductor and invited to board festively-dressed train cars, where they sip hot cocoa and nibble on gingerbread cookies while listening as The Train To Christmas Town is read

aloud by the voice of author, Peggy Ellis . This magical journey is a mix of old-fashioned carols and humorous originals that are perfect for singalongs. While the music plays, Janice, the little girl who is the story's main character, along with her friends Bumblebee the Polar Bear, Wabash the Squirrel, and Zephyr the Cat dance in the aisles and visits with families at each table.

After a 30-minute train ride passengers arrive at our very own Christmas Town, where Santa climbs on board and greets every child with holiday cheer, presenting each with a special Christmas gift. The return trip is filled with carols, photos with Santa, dancing elves and unforgettable memories.

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*The Train to Christmas Town is an independent holiday rail experience and does not include a visit to and is not affiliated with Christmastown, or McAdenville USA.*



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| <input type="checkbox"/> Powerwash deck          | <input type="checkbox"/> Install backsplash                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repair kitchen drywall  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hang mirror in hallway                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fix cabinet hinge       | <input type="checkbox"/> Change ceiling light bulbs                            |
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# COOKING WITH GLENN

## JOYS OF GINGERBREAD

I'm going to take a moment on a soap box, well since it is a cooking column maybe it's a cereal box, or since it's fast approaching Christmas it most likely all the boxes arriving in a steady stream from my online shopping.

On a recent trip I stopped to visit with friends who have been to Chez Glenn, they had prepared dinner and spent the whole time apologizing for the food. They said they almost made reservations rather than prepare the meal at home because it was intimidating to cook for me. Honestly, I have heard this before from folks and each time I have the same answer.

Food is about sharing time and space with people. The food itself, be it a disaster or the best thing you have ever put in your mouth, will be long forgotten but the company and the memories formed around the table last forever.

Oh sure, the stories about the meals, the epic failures, the undercooked Turkey, the burnt bread or the gorgeous presentation of a sumptuous plate will live on and become part of the lore shared around tables for generations. These stories shared with others and handed down through the generations become what binds us to one another.

Never make an excuse for the food you prepare, do your best fearlessly and if it doesn't work out you can 'just throw it across the yard' as is famously quoted around our house. I have dishes which fail all the time because I experiment, I learn, I push the envelope.

### METHOD

To make the ginger simple syrup mix 50/50 water and white sugar bring to a boil, put shavings of fresh ginger into the mix and let simmer in the liquid, set aside to cool (strain out the ginger after cooled)

Mix the butter, brown and cane sugar until smooth and fluffy (creamed). In a separate bowl combine the simple syrup, baking soda and molasses. Finely mince crystallized ginger (I used a mortar and pestle and some of the flour to break it up very fine). Mix all dry ingredients then alternate adding them to the creamed butter with the syrup/baking soda/molasses mixture, ending with the flour mix.

Chill dough for 1 hour and roll out to cut into the shape you desire. Bake at 350 for 12-15 min.

With all the hatred and violence in our world today here is the most important recipe I can share during this season of joy, be kind to one another, take a moment from the bustle to slow down, breathe, enjoy the twinkle of the lights and prepare some food to share. For me, cooking a meal for someone is my language of love; it's less about the food than it is the people with whom I enjoy sharing time and space.

Till next time, make it your own!



Glenn

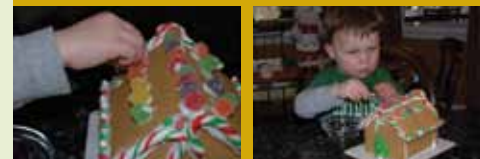
### INGREDIENTS

1 cup of butter softened	5 cups of flour
1/2 cup of brown sugar	1/4 tsp salt
1/2 cup of cane sugar	1 tbs ground ginger
(or sugar in the raw)	1/2 tbs crystallized ginger
1/4 cup of ginger simple syrup	1/2 teaspoon allspice
1 cup of molasses	1 teaspoon cinnamon
	1/2 teaspoon cardamom

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Across 14 translations of the Bible food is mentioned 1,207 times, bread 466 and meals 355 times. By comparison, love is mentioned 821 times, Heaven 722 and family 614 times. Many of the most significant events and teachings took place over a meal or around a celebration. Feeding others is always an act of kindness and love.



This year I spent some time decorating a ginger bread house with my grandson. His attention span was pretty short and with my every fiber I wanted to 'help' more to improve the end product. I realized I had to step back and let him roll with it because in the end it was his and the pride in his eyes and the huge smile on his face as he showed his masterpiece to mom and dad made it a memory to treasure and a story to share when he is a bit older.

Follow me on Twitter @CookwithGlenn to continue the culinary adventure.



twitter.com/cookwithglenn

# 4 WAYS TO FOCUS ON WHAT'S IMPORTANT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

In the midst of the busyness and bustle of the holiday season, it's easy to lose sight of the important things in life, like spending time with those you love and making a difference in the lives of others. This year, take a step back and consider these four suggestions from Thrivent Financial to help you celebrate and appreciate what really matters:



## BE GRATEFUL

The holiday season begins with Thanksgiving, so remember to carry your feelings of gratitude throughout the following weeks. It may not always be easy to practice being grateful in the midst of holiday stress, but doing so has seemingly endless benefits - from raising self-awareness to allowing people to truly feel fulfilled in their lives. Additionally, gratitude can help you balance gift demands by taking inventory on what you're thankful for - making you less likely to give in to the temptation to overspend. Carry that attitude of Thanksgiving through the rest of the holidays.



## BE GENEROUS

As you shop for gifts for your loved ones, consider other ways you can be generous this holiday season. That doesn't necessarily mean just giving financial gifts; volunteering your time, either on your own or together with family and friends, is a great way to help your faith community, local nonprofits, or families in need. Believe it or not, you may walk away from the event feeling like you received more than you gave! Generosity is a simple way to maintain focus on what's important.



## PRACTICE HEALTHY MONEY HABITS

During the holidays, you're bombarded by messages telling you that the latest and greatest consumer goods will bring you immense happiness. And while you might find enjoyment in the latest gadget, it may be overshadowed by disappointment if you make poor money choices to buy it. Spending money you don't have can create unnecessary stresses during a time of year that should be joyful. Thrivent suggests making gift purchases you can afford and avoiding unhealthy debt to buy things you don't need.



## GIVE THE GIFT OF TIME

This holiday season, take notice of how you spend your time and then reflect on it to help find out what truly makes you happy. If you find yourself only showing your affection through material gifts, consider giving the gift of quality time. You could even spend time making a difference in the lives of others by volunteering your time or talent. Living intentionally can repay in dividends in terms of fulfillment and contentment with life.

Making wise decisions with money this holiday season will help you minimize stress and keep what's important - people - at the top of your list. Take the time to reflect on your values, carry your gratitude through the season, be generous and spend time with those you love this holiday season.





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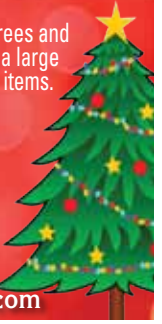
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