

THE *Calmful*
HOLIDAYS
BOOK



CELEBRATE MORE. STRESS LESS.

THE *Calmful* HOLIDAYS BOOK

Ready to change up your holidays? Perhaps a twist that goes beyond tweaking Grandma's stuffing recipe or using recycled wrapping paper? How about calmful holidays? *Calmful* means a positive approach to life and living that includes clarity, focus, personal energy management—and fun. It's about engaging life and its stresses on your terms.

Approaching the holidays with a calmful perspective means experiencing all the joy, energy and celebration but with an underlying gentle, calm current.

At Natural Vitality we're big on promoting calmful living, which is why we've created this eBook to help you experience your holidays anew. You'll discover yoga, recipes, music picks, decorating inspiration and more, all geared to your enjoying the holidays from a calm vantage point.

So, whatever you celebrate this year, we hope this eBook helps you do it up.

Calmfully,



Anna Soref

Anna Soref
Editor in Chief
Organic Connections
Natural Vitality's Journal of Calmful Living

Check out these calmful picks I'll be doing at my house over the holidays:

Making Dairy-Free Creamy, Roasted Cauliflower Soup
Downloading the Calm Holidays Music Playlist
Tree-Free Holiday Decorating

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A MINERAL FOR
PROMOTING CALM?

Yes!

By Ashley Koff, RD, *Organic Connections*
Nutrition Editor

The holidays, they happen every year and are usually a mixed bag of fun celebration and stress. There's no way I would tell you "Try not to stress; it's bad for you." Stress is actually not bad for you; it's the not recovering from stress—not relaxing to return things to balance—that is the issue. And telling someone not to stress is, well, just mean. So I want to share my holiday goal with you: Stress Less; Recover More.



When we stress, the whole body tightens. That means headaches and body aches, cramps, constipation, anxiety, and often shortness of breath as well as increased blood pressure. Guess what? There's a mineral that plays a key role in regulating the body's response to stress—magnesium. Its relationship with its sister mineral, calcium, is a key to a healthy stress response.

The role of magnesium and calcium for muscle and bone health is well known, but they have another relationship and that is with your body's stress response. At a cellular level, the body's resting state has magnesium inside cells and calcium outside. When the body feels "stress" (good or bad), calcium enters the cells and magnesium exits; this is how we get a "stressed" (i.e., fight-or-flight) action response triggered in the cells. With enough magnesium in your body, the magnesium recognizes what is going on and pushes the calcium back out to turn down the stress response and restore calm. This is very much like breathing in (calcium) and breathing out (magnesium). So if there is not enough magnesium compared to calcium, then the cells continue to be stressed.

Think of magnesium as a superhero—the Calm Enabler—as its presence in the cells pushes that calcium back where it belongs and begins a cascade of reactions that relax the body.

Magnesium re-engages digestion to start the digestive tract moving again. Magnesium ends muscle tension and ushers in muscle relaxation.

So, how can you stress *less* and relax *more* before and during the holidays? Magnesium! Since more than half the population don't get the recommended daily amount of magnesium, consider taking a supplement and eating foods rich in magnesium. Here are some tips:

- Consider taking a quality magnesium supplement. Know that all types of supplemental magnesium aren't created equal. I take **Natural Calm** nightly because the powdered form is easy, delicious and well absorbed. Remember, digestion loses priority when the body is stressing; so a tablet, which is a less easily absorbed form, is likely not your best choice.
- If you take a calcium supplement, you almost always need magnesium. Many supplements have a ratio of 2, 4, or 6:1 of calcium to magnesium; thus additional magnesium is needed to balance them for a proper stress response.
- I always pack magnesium when I travel. I drink Natural Calm in water or tea on planes, trains, and especially on family car rides.
- Eat cacao—yup, we are talking real chocolate. I like to add cacao nibs to my oatmeal or pancakes.
- Top organic berries or poached pear with hemp hearts and cacao.
- Choose whole grains versus flour more often. A lot of our food is highly processed, but even minimal processing—turning grains into flour—reduces magnesium.

Opt for buckwheat groats; make dishes with quinoa or wild rice, especially if you have any gluten-free guests.

Before the holiday season begins, assess how much magnesium you get each day and amend it if necessary. You just might find yourself enjoying the joys, and stresses, of the season a bit more.



Yoga

FOR YOUR
HOLIDAY CALM

Yoga teachers understand a thing or two about calm. So we asked one of our favorites, internationally known yoga teacher and founder of Aim True Yoga, Kathryn Budig, for calmful holiday advice. Guess what? She didn't say you have to awake with the sun and do an hour of yoga each day! Read on. . . .





For Budig, getting her calm on during the holidays means taking some time for herself—even if it's quick. "It's important to find personal space to recharge during the holiday season, since there is so much festivity going on," she says. "I always make sure to slip away for at least a few minutes to practice a few poses, do a short meditation, or even step outside for a short walk. These small 'me' moments recharge me and make me fully present amongst all of the holiday craziness!"

A great thing about yoga: you can benefit from doing one simple pose, anytime.

Here, Budig shares three poses perfect for boosts in key areas that often require extra attention during the holidays: Energy, Digestion and Calm. See if you can take a few minutes before festivities—or after—to choose a pose that best suits your body's need in that moment.



Energy

Camel Pose: Begin on your shinbones with your knees and feet hip width apart. Place your hands onto your hips as you lift your heart and roll your shoulders back to open your chest. Keep your hips stacking over your knees with the chest lifting as you gently release your head back and reach your hands down to grab your heels. Hold for 8 breaths. Roll up one vertebra at a time, chin stacking last. Repeat 2 more times.



Healthy Digestion

Simple Reclined Spinal Twist: Lie on your back and draw both of your knees into your chest. Give yourself a big squeeze for a few deep breaths. Drop both of your knees over to the right, keeping them stacked. Release your opposite shoulder toward the ground. Hold for 8 breaths and switch sides.



Calm

Legs up the Wall: Start seated with your side against a wall. Swing onto your back as you pivot and bring your legs up the wall. Wiggle in so that your legs are flush with the wall and touching. Relax your arms next to your sides or on your belly. Cover your eyes with a towel or lavender pillow.

Feeling inspired to do more yoga? Check out [Yoga Glo](#). This website offers online classes for every type of yoga from some of the world's best instructors, including Kathryn Budig; so you can get your yoga on anytime, anywhere.



UNEXPECTED
HOLIDAY
Tunes

Whether it's background music while you work or tunes for dancing or enjoying company, music can help set a calm mood with the push of a button. Here's some expert advice on what makes a tune relaxing, and a truly out-of-the-box holiday playlist for special occasions.



If you're looking for calming music, you'll want to pay attention to two factors, says Lyz Cooper, founder of the British Academy of Sound Therapy: tempo, the speed at which music is played; and pitch, which refers to the tone of the notes being played.

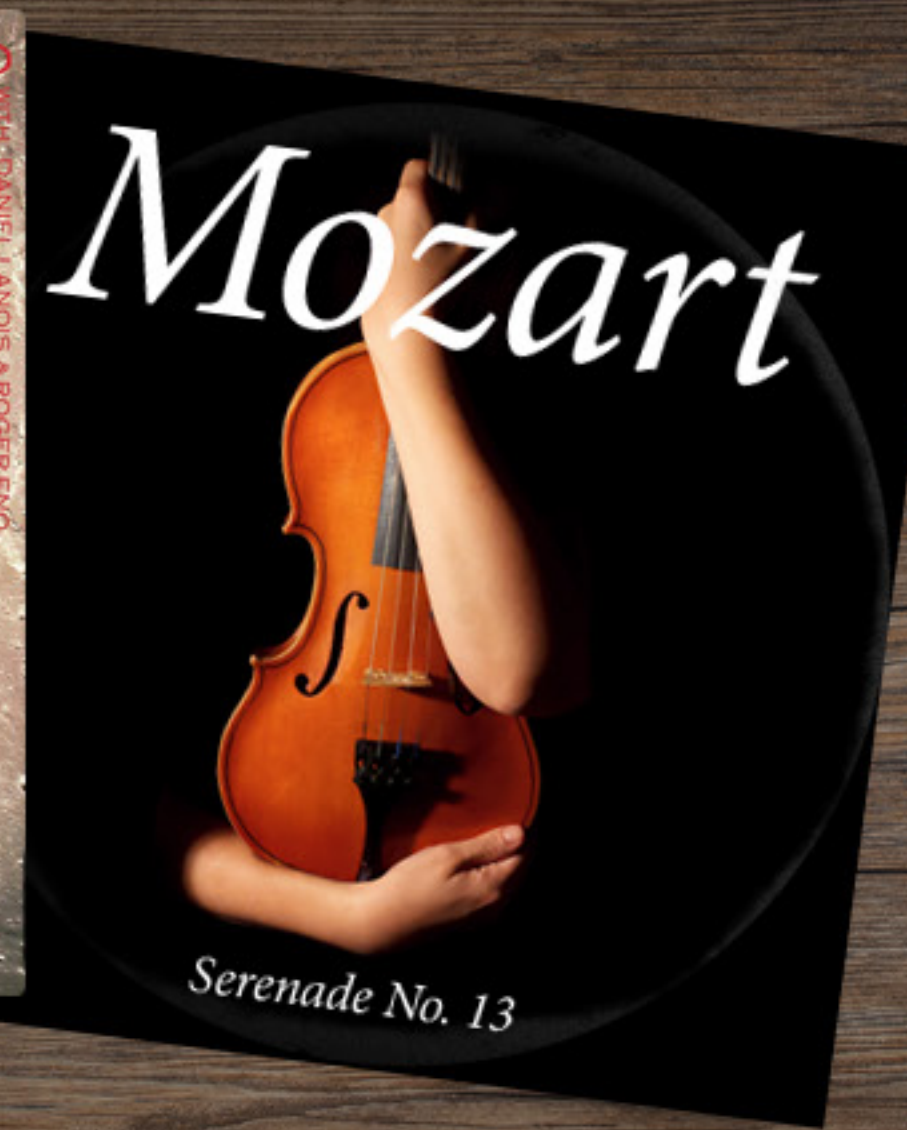
"When we want to relax, we will naturally tend to choose music that has a slower tempo; and when we are getting ready to go out for the evening, we will choose upbeat music to get us in the mood to party. Pitch is also important; low pitches tend to relax, and higher pitches stimulate. However, too many low pitches can seem a bit depressing, so you need balance," she says.

How sound is processed in the brain is what makes it relaxing or energizing.

"Slow rhythms have an effect on the brain, which relaxes us and lowers the heart rate, respiration and blood pressure," Cooper explains.

Whether you want to create a serene holiday scene for yourself, liven up a party, or have the right music when that difficult relative comes to dinner, this playlist handpicked by Cooper sets a calm tone—and pitch.

- "Stars," 2005 remix: Brian Eno
- Serenade No. 13 in G major: Mozart
- "Porcelain": Moby
- "Shine On You Crazy Diamond": Pink Floyd
- "Weightless": Marconi Union with Lyz Cooper
- "Airstream": Electra
- "Watermark": Enya



A New Take ON HOLIDAY DECORATING



Before you break out the tinsel, elves or maybe that menorah, spend a few minutes reflecting on what would be a calm environment for you and your family this holiday season. It might be more than you think—or it could be a lot less.

What Is Feng Shui?

Often referred to as the Chinese art of placement, feng shui is a system for the positioning of objects in a living or work environment to promote energy flow to affect how you feel, your health and success.

We turned to feng shui expert Kathryn Weber, publisher of the *Red Lotus Letter* feng shui e-zine and author of *Living Space*, a nationally syndicated newspaper DIY column, for insights into decorating, or not, for calmful holidays.

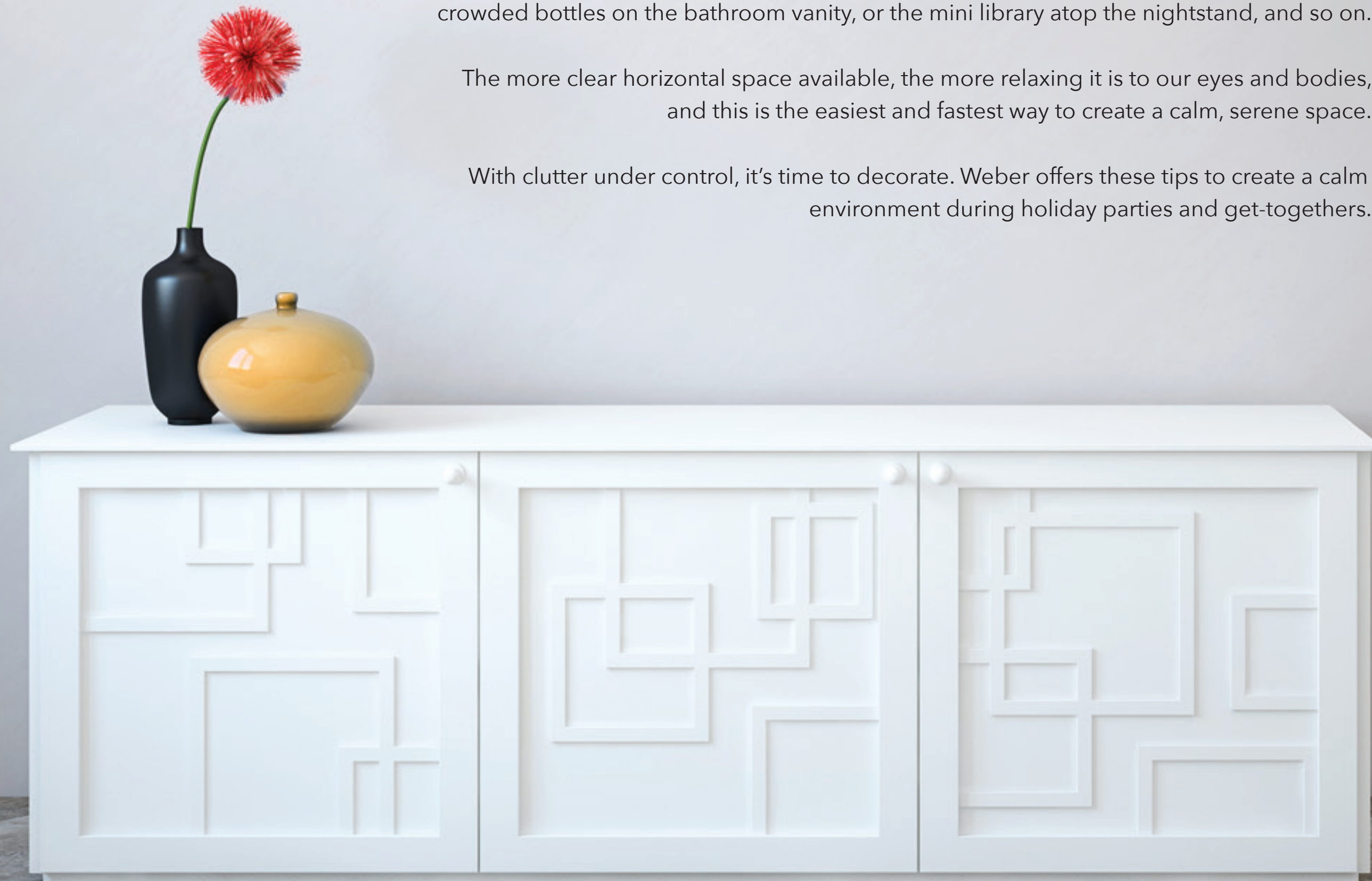
Decorating for a calm holiday home environment is a two-step process, Weber says. Step one: create a calm retreat for the occupants of the home. Here's how:

Equate your house to a hotel room by creating a clean, uncluttered space.

The first thing to do is remove visual clutter—small appliances on the kitchen counter, crowded bottles on the bathroom vanity, or the mini library atop the nightstand, and so on.

The more clear horizontal space available, the more relaxing it is to our eyes and bodies, and this is the easiest and fastest way to create a calm, serene space.

With clutter under control, it's time to decorate. Weber offers these tips to create a calm environment during holiday parties and get-togethers.





Go red and gold

Red and gold are the two colors in feng shui that create relationship harmony. These two colors can help soothe friction that can sometimes come up when lots of family members are in one space. Forgo the hot pink Christmas tree and go with a natural tree with gold and red colors. Carry this color scheme to your other decorations as well.

Add light

Light is an essential element of feng shui, and it helps to lift energy and create a calming effect at the same time. That means lots of pretty white candles scattered around the house to create a soothing mood. Even if you only decorate with candles, just having that beautiful candlelight will bring about a festive yet calm holiday feeling.

Rearrange seating

If you have a fireplace or TV that's prominent, avoid arranging a sofa to face it directly. Instead, pull furniture out into the room and place it conversationally, such as putting a sofa opposite the loveseat or chairs with a cocktail table in between. Many times seating is placed in an L-shape, and this literally puts people at odds with each other by placing them 45 degrees apart. The conversational arrangement also allows energy to move through the room in a more relaxed and enjoyable way, and is more calming than furniture placed up against the walls.

Create views

See if you can make the corner of the room opposite the entry door into a view. This is a decorator's trick that makes the room feel bigger and more appealing. Place your Christmas tree, a tall plant, or even a chair and lamp in this corner to create a view that draws you in and feels relaxing. In feng shui this is called the lucky corner, and in addition to lifting the energy of your room, it's also a way to lift your personal energy.

Unplug

One of the ways you can bring instant calm and relaxation to your home is merely to turn off the television. This is especially helpful with holiday gatherings that can go from sounding festive to creating an outright din from the television. Consider moving the TV out of the living room—to take it from a watching room and turn it truly into a *living* room.

Add red colors

Whether you use red candles, a red tablecloth or red flowers, red acts as a way to reduce family tempers that can sometimes flare at holiday time. Families are represented by wood, and excess wood in feng shui (like too many family members in one room) is associated with anger and bickering. The red colors can help to "burn up" the excess wood so that family members are more cordial and less likely to squabble. Candles are also helpful on the table where testiness can occur.

Practice restraint

During the holidays, less truly is more—more time to yourself, less time spent trying to make the house look like something out of a magazine, and more calm. Work to cut your holiday preparations by 50 percent: try to cut in half by buying fewer presents, fewer wrapping papers, fewer decorations, and by baking fewer cookies. The great part? Like items you put into storage, you'll never miss the other 50 percent you didn't do. More importantly, you won't miss the holidays because you were so busy.



Five

NOT-SO-TYPICAL HOLIDAY RECIPES

The wonderful thing about modern holiday cooking is that anything goes. Time-honored family recipes are tweaked to be dairy-free; Dad's amazing stuffing goes gluten-free; or maybe the roast turkey is now a roasted butternut squash casserole. Here, you'll find a nod to new holiday cooking with five unique recipes that are healthy, delish and good for any time of year.





Winter Citrus Salad

with Marinated Onions and Toasted Coconut

This salad is a simple side dish that's colorful and fabulous for adding a little variety to any meal. The toasted coconut is a great way to add flavor and texture to a salad, particularly for those who exclude dairy from their diets.

Note that the onions require some time to marinate in the fridge, but you'll have plenty left over after making this salad to use for future salads or other recipes. If you don't have balsamic vinegar reduction, feel free to substitute a dressing of your choice or a simple mix of olive oil and vinegar.

Serves: 4

Prep time: 8 hours + 20 mins

Cook time: 5 mins

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 red onion, sliced | 1 blood orange |
| 1 cup apple cider vinegar | 8 cups mixed greens |
| 1 cup water | ¼ cup pomegranate seeds |
| ¼ cup raw unsweetened coconut flakes | ¼ cup balsamic vinegar reduction |
| 1 orange | Freshly ground black pepper |
| 1 grapefruit | |

The night before:

Add red onion slices to a jar. Top with apple cider vinegar and water and store in the refrigerator for at least 8 hours (and up to 1 week).

To prepare the salad:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Spread coconut flakes on a baking sheet and toast for 3-5 minutes, until lightly browned, but not burned.

Segment the citrus by cutting off the tops and bottoms of the fruit, then cutting away the peel and the pith. Slice in between segments to remove any of the white skin in the middle of the fruit.

Divide greens among four plates. Top with the citrus segments, marinated onions, pomegranate seeds and toasted coconut flakes. Add a drizzle of balsamic vinegar reduction and freshly ground black pepper to taste.



Lemon and Ginger

Calming Tonic

During the holiday season if you find yourself battling a sore throat, nothing is better than a hot, soothing tonic. This lemon and ginger healing tonic contains vitamin C for an immunity boost, ginger to open up the sinuses, and magnesium to calm and relax the body. This drink is sugar-free and naturally sweetened with stevia from the Natural Calm, but you can also add raw honey for an antimicrobial boost if extra sweetness is desired.

Serves: 2

Prep time: 10 mins

Cook time: 0 mins

1 teaspoon fresh ginger root, grated
1 tablespoon lemon flavor Natural Calm
1 fresh lemon, sliced
2 cups boiling water
Raw honey, to taste (optional)

Mix ginger and Natural Calm with boiling water and honey (if using), and add the lemon slices to the mugs. Serve warm.



Creamy Roasted Cauliflower Soup (Dairy-Free!)

Trying to get more cruciferous vegetables and fiber into your diet? Maybe you're looking for a creamy soup without dairy, gluten, soy or other common allergens. Or perhaps you're just in search of a delicious side dish for the cooler months. Regardless of your reasoning, this soup hits the spot. It's simple and quick to prepare—requiring just a little roasting and blending, with minimal ingredients. Serve along with an entrée of your choice.

Serves: 4

Prep time: 15 mins

Cook time: 30 mins

- 1 medium cauliflower, chopped into florets (about 6 cups)
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil
- 2 cups vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 3 tablespoons tahini
- Fresh parsley
- Red pepper flakes (if desired)
- Olive oil, for drizzling

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Toss cauliflower florets and garlic with coconut oil and lay flat on a sheet pan.

Roast, turning at least once, for 20–30 minutes or until cauliflower is browned. Add cauliflower to a blender along with the vegetable broth, sea salt and tahini. Carefully blend, holding the top down, until smooth, adding additional broth or water if necessary.

Divide soup among four bowls and top with fresh parsley, red pepper flakes (if using) and olive oil. Serve warm.

Antioxidant Cashew and Coconut Cheesecake

(Dairy-Free!)

The holidays are a great time to indulge, but wouldn't it be nice if there were a healthier way to treat yourself? We've got you covered! This dairy-free cashew and coconut cheesecake is full of protein, healthy fats and antioxidants from a variety of seasonal fruits. Enjoy with your favorite cup of tea or a warm cup of Natural Calm to finish off any holiday meal!

Serves: 4

Prep time: 30 mins

Cook time: 5 mins

Crust

¼ cup raw almonds

2 Medjool dates, pitted

1 tablespoon coconut oil

Cheesecake

¼ cup cashews

¼ teaspoon sea salt

3 tablespoons maple syrup

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ cup unsweetened shredded coconut

3 tablespoons full-fat coconut milk

1 tablespoon coconut oil

Topping

¼ cup dried or fresh cranberries

1 Medjool date, pitted and chopped

½ cup water

2 tablespoons pomegranate seeds

1 teaspoon orange zest

Add almonds and dates to a food processor and pulse until well incorporated and a paste has formed.

Melt the coconut oil and use to grease the inside of four molds in a muffin tin. Press the almond and date mixture into the four molds to create a crust/bottom layer.

Add the cashews, sea salt, maple syrup, vanilla, coconut, coconut milk and coconut oil to a food processor and process until smooth, scraping down the sides as necessary. Pour the mixture into the four molds and smooth the top with a spoon. Place in the freezer to firm up for 5-10 minutes while making the topping.

To make the topping, add the cranberries, date and water to a small pot. Bring to a boil and then simmer for 10 minutes, or until cranberries have softened and formed a paste. Let cool in the refrigerator briefly.

Remove the cheesecakes from their molds, using a knife to scrape around the edges, and top with the cranberry topping, pomegranate seeds and orange zest. Serve immediately or chill in the refrigerator until serving.





Citrus and Pomegranate

Calm Spritzer

Impress guests with this immune-boosting, calming and festive citrus and pomegranate calm spritzer to stay healthy during winter. To make this recipe on the go, add Natural Calm to a bottle of water along with the citrus slices and pomegranate seeds. Cheers!

Serves: 2

Prep time: 10 mins

Cook time: 0 mins

1 tablespoon and 1 teaspoon orange flavor Natural Calm

4 ounces hot water

12 ounces cold water

¼ orange, sliced

¼ grapefruit, sliced

¼ cup pomegranate seeds

Ice

Place Natural Calm powder in a glass or mug; add hot water. Let it fizz, then stir until dissolved. Fill with cold water, add orange slices, grapefruit slices, pomegranate seeds and ice, and enjoy.



A Calm

APPROACH TO MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness doesn't have to mean an hour of meditation each day or awareness of every emotion. In this section, we take a calmful approach to finding your mindfulness during the holidays.

Each year the holidays arrive and it seems that—for a few weeks, at least—all the equanimity we've nurtured throughout the year goes right out the window, along with our diets, our workouts and our quiet time. But this is when we need calmfulness the most—when the kids are out of school, the guest room is full, the house is a mess, and our dreaded great-aunt (doesn't everyone have one?) is droning on about . . . well, truthfully, we quit listening hours ago.

One of the best ways to foster calmful living during these busy months is to ensure you are getting enough magnesium, nature's anti-stress mineral. Magnesium's presence in the cells pushes calcium (the action mineral) out of the cells and begins a cascade of reactions that relax the body. Magnesium ends muscle tension and ushers in muscle relaxation. Sipping [Natural Calm](#) daily can go a long way toward bringing you calmfulness—all the joy, energy and celebration but with an underlying gentle, calm current.

Mindfulness goes hand in hand with calmfulness.

Scientist and author Jon Kabat-Zinn, who developed mindfulness-based stress reduction to help patients cope with stress, anxiety and pain, has spent decades combining science with mindfulness practice. He defines *mindfulness* as "paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally, to the unfolding of experience moment to moment."

When we're mindful—that is, when we have enough spaciousness to see our own reactions and emotions, and enough calm to choose how we'll respond—*everything* is experienced as more manageable and less overwhelming.

And while meditation is a wonderful practice for nurturing this ability to notice your own thoughts and feelings without getting caught in them, mindfulness can be applied anywhere and at any time. In fact, if it only works when we're meditating, it won't do us much good.

The in-the-moment practices below can help us tune in to our deeper needs and begin to revise our habitual responses, so that we don't keep making the same mistakes and getting the same results. Give them a try this holiday season. Who knows? You may find yourself lacing up your running shoes instead of reaching for a seventh sugar cookie. You might even discover, when you slow down enough to listen, that your great-aunt tells some fascinating stories.





Simple Tips for Mindful Holidays

1. Breathe, Pause, Breathe

Have you ever noticed that when you're happy, your body feels open, calm and relaxed? The opposite is also true: when you're stressed, overwhelmed or in the grip of a difficult emotion, the body is tight, constricted and closed off. A few deep, even breaths can help make space inside—physically by opening our chests and oxygenating our blood, and emotionally by helping us see the gap between *us* and what we're feeling and thinking. If you take some deep breaths when you're driving or waiting in line, you'll be more likely to remember to breathe when things get tense.

2. Be a Friend to Your Feelings

If a close friend came over to talk about some life challenge, chances are you'd do your best to listen intently and offer your unconditional support. Yet how often do we extend this same kindness to ourselves? When a challenging situation occurs, see if you can bring that same loving, nonjudgmental acceptance to your own emotions. You might find that when you don't fight them or keep them going with the stories you tell yourself, your feelings have space to arise, and leave, more quickly.

3. Time for Yourself Is a Gift to Everyone

So often we are spread so thin that we feel we can't take time for ourselves. It's especially true at the holidays, when our busy social schedules keep us on constant fast forward. But when we honor our own needs and take the time—for yoga, meditation, a trip to the gym or just a silent walk in nature—we return refreshed, more resilient and more present to the needs of others. When we can be fully present with whatever is happening in our lives, we become like the eye of the hurricane—a calmful center regardless of what's whirling around us.



The Calmful Holidays Book

From the editors of *Organic Connections*
Natural Vitality Publishing

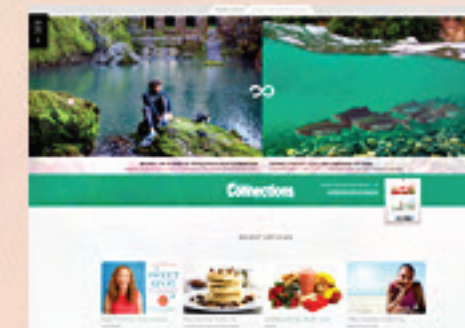
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