

Winter is in full swing!

We hope you're staying safe and warm and enjoying these colder months! In this month's newsletter check out: how to prepare your car's winter survival kit for extreme weather, Valentine's Day trivia, a story about a winter miracle, and a delicious chocolate dessert recipe!





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Winter Safety in Your Car - Packing a Survival Kit for Extreme Weather



Getting caught driving in a winter storm is no one's idea of fun, but the outcome could be far more serious than a simple inconvenience. If you get stuck in bad weather through an accident, car breakdown, or just gridlocked traffic, then the risks to your safety are very real indeed if you're not properly prepared.

Whether you live in an area which regularly sees snowstorms, or you just want to protect yourself against an unusual event, packing a winter survival kit for your car is a prudent idea. What should this pack contain?

- Food and water: non-perishable, high-energy snacks such as candy and cookies are ideal, while even in cold weather a comfortable supply of water is an essential. Pack enough for a minimum 24 hours consumption, more if possible.
- Warm clothing including extra hats, scarves, and gloves.
- Blankets and sleeping bags for if you're stranded for several hours or even overnight.

- Battery-powered portable radio, so you can keep up to date with weather reports and emergency advice without draining your car battery.
- A flashlight, useful not only for lighting but for attracting attention.
- Spare batteries for the radio, flashlight, and other items.
- Cellphone with a spare charged battery or a charging lead for your car.
- First aid kit including basic supplies, in addition to extra stocks of any medications you regularly take.
- Shovel or spade for digging out snow around your wheels, and for making sure your exhaust is clear so that fumes don't back up into your vehicle.
- Road salt, sand, or even cat litter to provide extra grip for spinning wheels.
- Tow chain or rope, for if you get stuck or for helping someone else.
- Fluorescent warning signs, plus high-visibility clothing for if you need to leave your vehicle.

Where possible, keep your survival kit inside your vehicle's passenger compartment so that you can stay safely inside as much as possible. If for space reasons you need to keep the kit in your trunk, then make sure it's carefully packed so you can transfer all the items easily in as few trips as possible, should you need them.

However, even with a comprehensive survival kit, the best option is to not get stuck in the first place. Before winter sets in - or at any time, if you've left it late - book your car in for a full maintenance service to make sure it's in the best possible condition and reduce the risk of breakdown.

Packing a survival kit into your auto may seem like a dramatic gesture, but

the risks of being caught out in severe winter weather make it a worthwhile effort. Without any exaggeration, being properly prepared for a winter car emergency could be a lifesaver.



The History of Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is celebrated with a gift of chocolate, or an exchanging of romantic cards. Sweethearts are taken to dinner; weddings and engagements are planned around this day.

The history of Valentine's Day and the patron saint, St Valentine, is cloaked in mystery. One legend has it that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. It's said that Valentine felt this law unjust and defied the

Emperor by continuing to secretly perform marriages for young lovers. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered him put to death.

Another story has Valentine sending the first actual 'Valentine' greeting himself. While in prison, it's believed that Valentine fell in love with a young girl who may have been his jailor's daughter. Before his death, the story says that he wrote her a letter which he signed "From your Valentine".

The actual fate of Valentine is still not totally clear. Some say he was beheaded. Others contend that he became sick in prison and died. A black and gold casket said to contain the remains of St Valentine can still be viewed every Valentine's Day at the Whitefriar Street Church in Dublin Ireland.

Of course, there are always the less romantic fables and while many believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial, others claim that the Christian church may have taken this time in an effort to "Christianize" celebrations of the pagan Lupercalia festival.

The ancient Roman feast of Lupercalia was a spring fertility festival celebrated on February 15. On the eve of the festival, the names of the young Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young unmarried man drew a slip with a name on it. This girl was chosen was to be his sweetheart for the year. Many of the young couples were later married.

This festival was outlawed because the annual pairings were considered "un-Christian." It is believed that the Christian church decided to celebrate Valentine's Day on February 14th in an attempt to disassociate with the pagan Lupercalia festival.

During the Middle Ages, it was commonly believed in France and England that February 14 was the beginning of birds' mating season, which added to the idea that the middle of February -- Valentine's Day -- should be a day for romance.

St. Valentine became the patron saint of lovers and St. Valentine's Day a time to exchange gifts and cards expressing love. The first commercially produced Valentine's Day card was sold in the 1840's in Massachusetts. The United States, Canada, Mexico, France, Australia and the United Kingdom all celebrate Valentine's Day.

According to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated one billion valentine cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year. (An estimated 2.6 billion cards are sent for Christmas.) 85 percent of all Valentines are purchased by women.

No matter what the real origins of St Valentine's Day, it's unquestionably the most romantic of all the holidays enjoyed throughout the year.

What's Making Us Happy

**Good Samaritans Pay for Hotel Rooms to House 70
Homeless People During Polar Vortex**

By

[McKinley Corbley](#)

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Amidst record-breaking polar temperatures in the Midwest, a compassionate stranger paid for 70 homeless people to stay in a hotel.

Though Chicago city officials have urged their homeless residents to stay in proper shelters and warming centers, a group of rough sleepers in the South Side chose to stay in their tented encampment.

Firefighters were called to the campsite on Wednesday – the second coldest day in Chicago’s history – when a propane tank exploded. No one was injured, but law enforcement officials discovered over 100 propane tanks in the encampment— a Level 1 Hazmat risk.

“There was a significant amount of propane there,” Fire Chief Walter Schroeder told [The Chicago Tribune](#). “And with that many cylinders, that’s like a bomb going off.”

The responders were forced to confiscate the propane, which left the homeless citizens without heating in -20°F (-22°C) temperatures. City officials contacted staffers at the local Salvation Army warming center in order to accommodate the at-risk residents, but then a woman named Candice Payne stepped up, and took out her credit card.

Shortly after reaching out to the Salvation Army, city workers notified the staffers that she had paid for a large block of hotel rooms to house 70 homeless people until the end of the week.

Not only that, after she tweeted about it, and several other Good Samaritans stepped forward to donate more money for more rooms. Together, they were able to buy shelter for 80 people for 3 nights. Candice and her new crew also bought food to distribute to the rooms.

(WATCH the video [here](#))

Chocolate-Peanut Butter Swiss Rolls

Fudgy cake, fluffy peanut butter filling and a chocolate ganache coating combine to form the [perfect sweet indulgence](#) (see photo and source) from pastry chef Tiffany MacIsaac of DC's Buttercream Bakeshop.

Ingredients

CAKE

- Baking spray
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour

- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon ground instant espresso

PEANUT BUTTER FILLING

- 1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1/3 cup confectioners sugar, sifted
- 1/2 cup smooth peanut butter
- 1/8 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon whole milk

- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

GANACHE

- 9 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 3 tablespoons light corn syrup
- Pinch of kosher salt
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- Flaky sea salt or chopped peanuts, for garnish

How to Make It

Step 1 Make the cake

Preheat the oven to 325°. Liberally grease a large rimmed baking sheet with baking spray. Line the sheet with parchment paper and liberally grease the paper.

Step 2

In a large bowl, sift the granulated sugar, flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk the eggs with the milk.

Step 3

In a small saucepan, combine the butter, vanilla and espresso powder with 1/2 cup of water and bring to a simmer, stirring to dissolve the espresso. Drizzle the hot mixture over the dry ingredients. Add the egg mixture and whisk until smooth. Scrape the batter onto the prepared sheet and spread in an even layer. Bake for about 20 minutes, until set and a cake tester inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean (the cake will look wet). Transfer the sheet to a rack and let cool.

Step 4 Meanwhile, make the peanut butter filling

In a medium bowl, using a hand mixer, beat the butter with the confectioners' sugar at medium speed until light, about 2 minutes. Beat in the peanut butter and salt, scraping down the side of the bowl as necessary. Beat in the milk and vanilla.

Step 5

Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper and generously grease it with baking spray. Invert the cooled cake onto the prepared sheet. Peel the parchment paper off the cake; it will be sticky. Cut the cake in half lengthwise, then crosswise. Spread the filling all over the cake pieces, leaving a 1/4-inch border all around the sides. Roll up the cakes lengthwise (the parchment will come off easily) to form 4 logs. Refrigerate for 1 hour.

Step 6 Make the ganache

In a bowl, combine the chocolate, butter, corn syrup and salt. In a small saucepan, bring the cream to a simmer. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate mixture and whisk until smooth. Let cool.

Step 7

Line another large baking sheet with parchment paper. Cut each cake log into 3 equal pieces. Working with 1 piece at a time and using a fork or skewer, dip the logs into the ganache to coat all over, letting the excess drip off. Transfer the cakes to the prepared sheet and sprinkle with flaky salt or peanuts. Freeze until firm, about 1 hour, before serving.

The cakes can be frozen for up to 2 weeks. Serve cold.

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