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DECEMBER 2025

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and Natasha Mach

2025 Holiday  
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In the Kitchen With  
Joy Abbott

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

## Christmas dinner at Nana's ...

The main thing I remember about Christmas dinner at Nana's was the Christmas tablecloth. It was red, and it had tassels with jingle bells on them that rang when the big people pulled their chairs up to the table. How I loved the few times I got to sit at that table! Most of the time, I was at the "kids table" like the one you probably sat at, too, a card table. All the food was on the big table, and we had to fix our plate and then go sit "over there."

One year Papa (a railroad engineer) was bringing a train in from Hearn. Just as we were pulling in the driveway at Nana's house across from the tracks, the train whistle blew, and it was Papa. He stepped off the train (while it was still moving) and had the fireman take the train on into the roundhouse. I later learned that there was something called "demerits" for doing that.

Demerits do not begin to describe what Papa got from Nana that day. She told Papa he was too old to jump from a moving

train. I don't remember Papa ever doing anything but agreeing with her. I think she threatened to have him sit at the kids' table, but she must have forgiven him because he sat with the other big people.

*Merry Christmas memories!*

*P.S. The publisher and staff of NOW Magazines would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of holiday seasons!*

December 2025  
Volume 22, Issue 12

## ON THE COVER



*Don't miss the Mach Christmas Display!*

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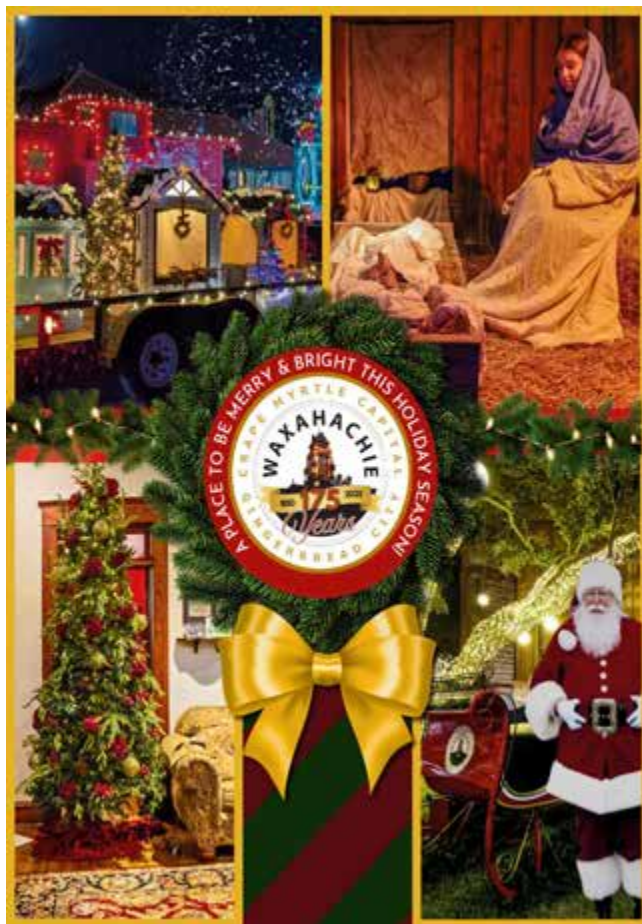
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~ Luke 2:11

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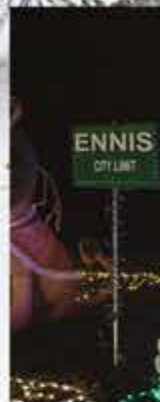
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# A Christmas Love Story

— By Bill Smith



**At Home With  
Patrick and  
Natasha Mach**

*Patrick and Natasha Mach love Christmas, and for several years, they have expressed their love for the holiday with their seasonal light exhibition. Fans come from far and wide to see the beautiful display of lights. Last year, they were featured in ABC's The Great Christmas Light Fight. Though they did not win the televised competition, they are looking forward to greeting even more visitors this year.*

The Machs met during the COVID-19 pandemic, but they had so much in common, it's amazing their paths had not crossed sooner. Christmas is just one of four "C's" that they say drew them together. "A friend dared me to 'put myself out there' on a dating app," Natasha recalled. "I really did not want to do it, but did it to appease her, and I planned on taking it down pretty quickly. I accidentally 'hearted' Patrick's post with a Christmas picture of himself. He responded with a comment about how I must like Christmas. That was the first 'C.' The other three are cars, being Czech and believing in Christ."

"I was born and reared in Ennis. Most of those years were out in the country like we are now, but I did live in the city for about five years," Patrick recalled. "Growing up, we just had indoor decor. Later, I was putting up a Christmas display at my home on Christian Road. It started with a small manger scene my father and I had built out of wood with blow-mold characters. It was just something that got the display started, and I added to it every year. People actually suggested that I enter the Christmas Light Fight years ago, but I always declined, knowing there was more that needed to be added. Little did I know, the missing touch was my wife!"

"Growing up, Christmas was all about my grandma," Natasha said. "She made Christmas magical and beautiful."





Her house would become a menagerie of holiday figurines and decor. I aspired to recreate some of those memories and have my children enjoy them, too. Grandma made everything so happy.”

In addition to the display outside, the interior of Patrick and Natasha’s home is Christmas from wall to wall and floor to ceiling, including a priceless Annalee sleigh with eight reindeer flying across the top of the den. The back door is guarded by two huge nutcracker figures, a drummer and a bugler, that are taller than the door by at least a foot. The gingerbread family is composed of collectibles from Annalee, and the Christmas bears are rare collectibles from Dan Dee. The miniature Santas from around the world represent years of collecting. There are over 30 vintage animatronic pieces of the Mach collection that don’t get displayed some years, because there just isn’t time.

The Machs’ courtship was unique because it started during the pandemic, and a lot of typical dating scenes like restaurants and movies were closed. That was OK with them, as they wound up cooking for each other for their dates. The couple laughed, admitting their engagement and wedding night





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sounds like a Hallmark movie. “I was still living in the house on Christian Road when I proposed in the tunnel of lights,” Patrick recalled.

Natasha smiled as she added, “He had invited friends and family and hired a photographer and videographer. Pictures of our dating journey were in the walk through, things like our first date, the first time our kids met, a trip we took together, diamond hunting in Arkansas — a lot of great memories. Now, every year, we have couples come out and get engaged in the same ‘engagement tunnel’ we got engaged under.

“We had a Christmas wedding in 2021 and moved into this house. The wedding was at the Magness Party Barn. There were live reindeer. The bridesmaids wore dark green dresses, and the men wore red vests. We invited The Grinch. Then Santa and Mrs. Claus crashed the wedding! A lot of people thought it was staged, but it really wasn’t! I had met them the day before the wedding. We did not know them at all before then. We searched for them after the wedding

but did not know how to locate them. We finally located them after Channel 8 did a story about it for *Inside Edition*. Turns out they were living in Ft. Worth, and he is a veteran Santa with the VA. They are just the sweetest people! We stay in touch, and it is like they adopted us.” The couple also had a Christmas honeymoon trip to Leavenworth, Washington. “It is an old German town that goes all-out for Christmas with their decorations and the beautiful snow. We were even extras in a Christmas movie filmed at the lodge!”

The outdoor display has over 50 real Texas City limit signs with fun themes in each section. The Mach Christmas display has over half a million lights and they continue to expand their decorations and special theme nights. They accept physical donations for Helping Hands, the SPCA, Ennis Homeless Coalition and Toys for Tots. The response has been amazing. Last year, visitors donated over 800 pounds of food. There are special nights for Disney, super heroes and first responders. The Alma

Police Department had a special Christmas-themed uniform patch made commemorating the event.

“We set aside one night each year for special needs children,” Natasha continued. “It is a night just for them. All of the music is turned off, and the lights are static. There are no huge crowds, and EHS cheerleaders and Lionettes come out to help. We’ve seen kids meet Santa here for the first time, as parents tell us they would never approach him before. Our Santa is a dear friend, volunteer and wonderful person, and you can see that with how kids respond to him.”

Don’t miss the Mach Family Christmas. Together with their children, Patrick and Natasha celebrate Christmas, their Czech heritage, their love of cars and Christ, the reason for the season. It is indescribable. It is a love story. **NOW**

*Editor’s Note:*  
See the Inside Edition feature: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j7\\_mjFlkrY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j7_mjFlkrY).



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Please help us give a warm welcome to **Tammy Head, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, FAAMFM**, who will be joining our team and will see patients ages 10 and up starting **Monday, December 8th!**

## Meet Tammy:

Tammy is a caring, experienced, and passionate provider who truly believes that great health care starts with *listening* and *empowering patients*.

Her journey in health care began in 2016, after earning her Nursing degree from Gulf Coast State College. Over the next several years, she worked in **Emergency Medicine, Wound Care, and Long-Term Acute Care**, gaining a wealth of hands-on experience caring for patients in critical moments.

In 2022, Tammy earned her Master of Science in Nursing from The University of Texas at Arlington and later completed a fellowship with A&M, where she began her exciting journey into **Functional and**

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Tammy's heart for medicine began in high school, inspired by her family members who worked as ER nurses. That early spark grew into a true calling — helping people understand their health; take charge of their wellness; and live vibrant, fulfilling lives.

When she's not caring for patients, Tammy loves spending time with her wonderful husband and four amazing kids. She brings the same warmth, compassion, and dedication to her patients that she does to her family.

We couldn't be more thrilled to have Tammy on our team — and we know you'll love her too!

***Tammy begins seeing patients December 8th!***

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# DECK-OUPAGE THE HALLS

— By Emma McKay

*As the Christmas season draws near, people start dusting off their yuletide decorations — and adding new ones to their collection. While the knickknacks on store shelves can be cute, nothing feels more in-line with the holiday season than homemade trinkets. Decoupage ornaments or candles puts a personal touch on otherwise plain objects, and the memory of making them can be created without spending much money. To create these beautiful statement pieces, you can upcycle items you already have on hand or easily find most of the supplies at a thrift or dollar store.*

## DECOUPAGE ORNAMENTS

Decorative napkins

Scissors

Glass Christmas ball ornaments (Depending on your napkin/tissue paper pattern, white or clear balls may work best.)

Flat paintbrush or painting sponge

Mod Podge

Ribbon


1. Carefully separate the layers of your napkins, discarding the blank layer.
2. Cut the napkins into 1-inch strips, long enough to wrap around the circumference of your ornament but not more. If your napkin has large images on it that you do not want broken up, you can use the creases in the napkin to help guide you into cutting it into fourths.
3. Remove the hangers from your ornaments.
4. Brush a thin layer of Mod Podge on the ornaments.
5. *For napkin strips:* Place one end of a napkin strip at the top of the ornament, then wrap it around the length of the ornament, making sure it adheres to the curve of the ball.
6. Rotate the ornament 90 degrees, then repeat Step 5. When looking at the bottom of the ornament, the napkins should make an X.
7. For the remaining blank space, either repeat Step 5 until the whole ornament is covered, or cut the strips of napkins to the size of those spaces and adhere them.
8. *For napkin fourths:* Place one corner at the top of the ornament, then carefully wrap the napkin around the rest of the ornament, making small folds to cover the whole thing.
9. Now that the whole ornament is covered, brush a layer of Mod Podge over the napkins. You may need to adjust the material or add a little bit of Mod Podge under any folds to make it lie flat against the ornament's surface.
10. Let the ornament dry for a few hours.
11. Once the Mod Podge has completely dried, trim any excess material around the top of the ornament, so that the hanger will fit as you place it back on the ornament.
12. Tie a piece of ribbon into a bow on the loop of the hanger.



DECOUPAGE CANDLES

- Decorative napkins
- Scissors
- Electric or real cylinder candle
- Flat paintbrush or painting sponge
- Mod Podge
- Craft glue (optional)
- Ribbon, rhinestones or other decorative things (optional)


1. Carefully separate the layers of your napkins, discarding the blank layer.
2. Cut the napkins to the height and circumference (plus 1/4 inch) of your candle, or just cut out any large images that you want from the napkins to stick them on individually.
3. *For full coverage:* Brush a thin layer of Mod Podge over the candle.
4. Line up the edge of the napkin with the bottom of the candle, then carefully wrap it around the rest of the candle. Have the 1/4 inch extra length of napkin overlap the start of your napkin, so the candle is completely covered.
5. *For just the images:* Brush Mod Podge on the candle where you wish to place the image, then apply it to the candle. You can even treat this as a collage, using images from different napkins and overlapping images to create your own unique scene. When overlapping the napkins, be sure to give the first one that's Mod Podged down time to dry. Otherwise, the excess glue could tear the napkins.
6. Brush a layer of Mod Podge over the napkins, smoothing out the wrinkles as you go.
7. Let the candle dry for a few hours.
8. Once dried, you can glue ribbons, rhinestones or whatever crafting supplies you'd like to fill in any gaps or cover the rough edges of your napkins.
9. If you don't want to use Mod Podge on the candle, you can also apply the napkins using an iron or another handheld heat source. Just place the napkins where you want them, wrap the candle tightly in parchment paper, then on low heat, slowly work your iron around the candle. This melts the wax enough to bind to the napkin. Once the candle has cooled, you can remove the parchment paper and enjoy your new decoration! **NOW**



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# 2025 Holiday Shopping Guide

A quick look at the gift items and discounts available locally.

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# 2025 Holiday Shopping Guide

A quick look at the gift items and discounts available locally.



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**DEC 4**

5 PM - 9 PM

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By Bill Smith

## Zoomed In: Gene Lantrip

Gene Lantrip likes books, and he likes crafts, so working as an aid at the Ennis Public Library is the perfect part-time job since his retirement. “I enjoy all kinds of crafts. During November, our adults made a string-art Christmas tree, and the teens made a beaded plant,” he mentioned.

“I came to Ennis with the railroad in 1984 and retired after 37 years of service,” he reflected. “My wife and I have been married for almost 49 years, and we have three grown children and two grandchildren. Although Ennis has grown a lot since we have been here, we still love it because it has the same small-town feel.”



*Julia Wyatt enjoys the big slide with Amanda and Tate Droste.*



*Becky and Kelly Herrera prepare the Wednesday meal at Baylor Baptist Church.*



*Ennis Jr. High Tennis celebrates a win over Waxahachie.*



*Ivan Garza has his face painted by Joyce Edgell at Trunk or Treat.*





Lillian Taylor is Cheerleader of the Week.



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Dr. David Lott checks Raymond Caldwell's balance at the Lions Club.

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Joshua 18:8 Deuteronomy 19:14

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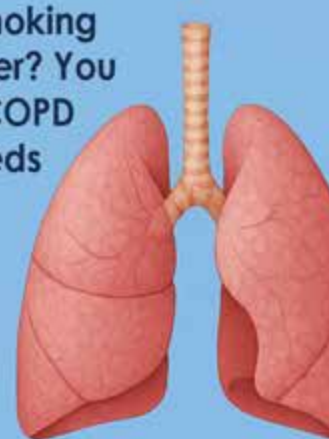
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# CookingNOW

## IN THE KITCHEN WITH JOY ABBOTT

— By Bill Smith



With two boys aged 3 and 1, Joy Abbott admits she keeps her meals pretty simple for them and her husband. “It is a bonus if my 3-year-old can help with the preparation,” she added. “I enjoy the time with him, but it is probably more stressful than helpful!”

Joy’s favorite recipes are comfort food, but she also enjoys Tex-Mex. “One of my greatest triumphs in the kitchen was making brown sugar bacon green beans for a family gathering. My two nephews were 7 and 8 at the time, and they loved them — even going back for seconds. That was great because they did not usually eat vegetables at all.” **NOW**

### Everyone’s Favorite Brown Sugar Green Beans

- 12-16 oz. green beans
- 6 slices bacon
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 tsp. garlic salt

1. Steam the green beans.
2. As the beans steam, fry the bacon.
3. Remove the bacon from the pan; pat with paper towels to remove extra grease. Remove most of the grease from the pan.
4. Crumble the bacon into pieces; return it to the pan. Add the butter and sugar.
5. Heat the pan just enough to combine the ingredients (until the butter is melted and the sugar is dissolved).
6. Drain the green beans; add them to the pan. Sprinkle with garlic salt.

7. Eat and enjoy. *Note: These taste best on day 2 after reheating in the oven.*

### Swedish Meatballs

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1/4 cup Panko breadcrumbs
- 1 Tbsp. parsley, chopped
- 1/4 tsp. allspice
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/8 tsp. pepper, plus more to taste (divided use)
- 1/2 tsp. salt, plus more to taste (divided use)
- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 5 Tbsp. butter (divided use)
- 3 Tbsp. flour
- 2 cups beef broth

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard

1. Combine the first 7 ingredients with 1/8 tsp. pepper, 1/2 tsp. salt and the egg. Mix until combined.
2. Roll into 12 large or 20 small meatballs.
3. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil and 1 Tbsp. butter. Add the meatballs and cook, turning continuously, until brown on each side and cooked throughout. Transfer to a plate; cover with foil.
4. Add 4 Tbsp. butter and the flour to the skillet; whisk until it turns brown. Slowly stir in the beef broth and heavy cream.
5. Add the Worcestershire sauce and Dijon mustard; bring to a simmer until the sauce starts to thicken. Add salt and pepper to taste.
6. Add the meatballs back to the skillet; simmer for another 1-2 minutes.
7. Serve over egg noodles, rice or mashed potatoes.

### Chicken Bacon Gnocchi

- 6 slices bacon, cut into small pieces
- 2 medium chicken breasts, cut in bite-size pieces
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/4 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1 lb. uncooked potato gnocchi
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste

1. In a deep skillet, over medium-high heat, fry the bacon until crispy (approximately 10 minutes).
2. Remove the bacon from the pan; leave approximately 1 Tbsp. of fat.
3. Add the chicken to the pan; cook 2-3 minutes, stirring often, until the chicken turns white.
4. Add the garlic to the pan; stir.
5. Reduce the heat to medium; add the chicken broth, cream, Italian seasoning, gnocchi and bacon. Cover; cook for 4 minutes.
6. Continue cooking, uncovered, for a few minutes until the sauce reduces/thickens.
7. Stir in the Parmesan cheese; season with salt and pepper as desired.





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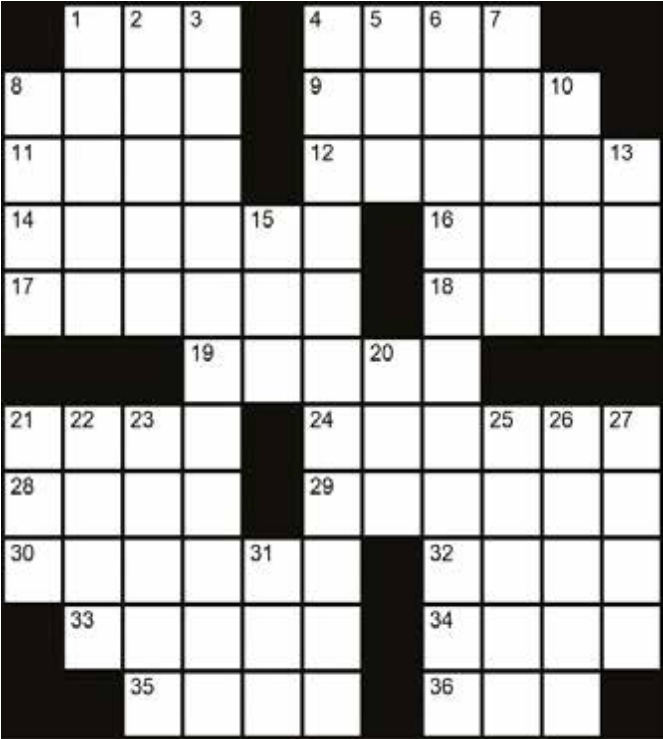
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# Crossword Puzzle



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### Across

- 1 Chucklehead
- 4 Rover's reward
- 8 --- Battlefield Historic State Park
- 9 Blue ribbon, for example
- 11 --- Bradley, five-star General
- 12 "Pride and Prejudice" heroine Elizabeth ---
- 14 Acquire
- 16 Hi or 'bye in Italy
- 17 Where Dorothy was blown away
- 18 Quick sharp bark
- 19 Monica Lewinsky's former friend Linda ---
- 21 Former Russian ruler
- 24 Seismic event
- 28 "Before I forget ..."
- 29 "I Want ---" (1958 Susan Hayward movie)
- 30 How trains run if they're on schedule
- 32 "Oily Oily --- free"
- 33 It has a World Series, like baseball
- 34 Kind of wave
- 35 Torn clothing
- 36 "--- a Heartache" (Bonnie Tyler song)

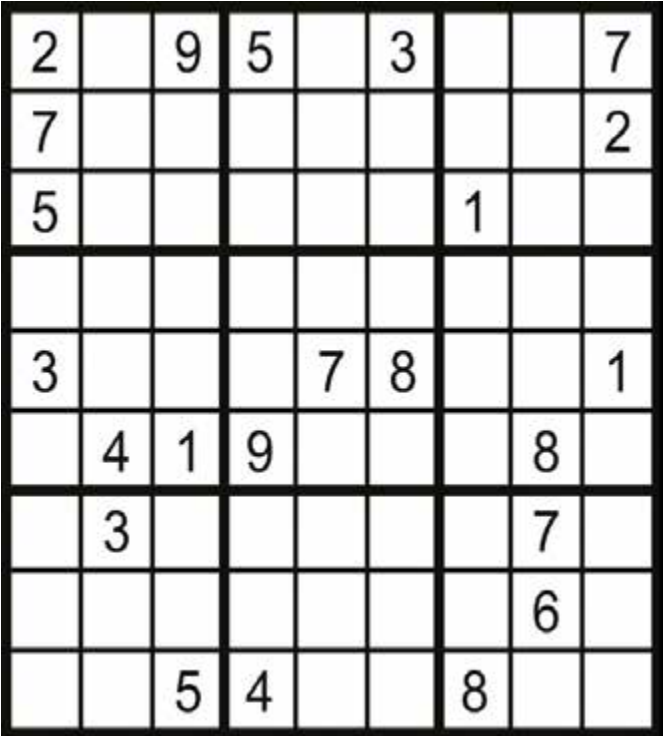
### Down

- 1 Girl Scout cookie
- 2 "He's --- fool!"
- 3 1980s Soviet policy of reconstruction
- 4 Distributing tasty bribes gets home helps
- 5 "You --- it to yourself"
- 6 Nosy pelican flapped about in the House
- 7 Orange Sesame Street room-mate
- 8 Charging station
- 10 Distribute cards
- 13 Beat
- 15 Ingot
- 20 Sports money-maker
- 21 Make lace
- 22 Farm fare
- 23 Mary --- of "The Maltese Falcon"
- 25 Start fighting
- 26 They take the cake
- 27 "Pandora's Box" painter --- Magritte
- 31 Eldest of the "Little Women"

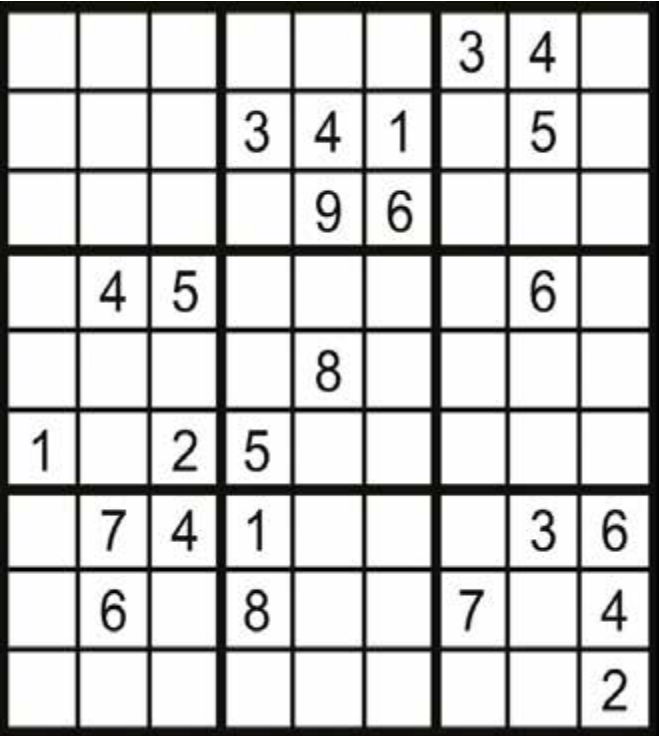
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# Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



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# Merry CHRISTMAS

## DECEMBER

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

12/4

### Greater Ennis Chamber of Commerce Annual Lights of Ennis Parade:

Each year, the Chamber gathers member companies and the community at large for one of the its largest attended community driven events. This event, along with partnerships with the city of Ennis, local law enforcement, local fire departments and Downtown Main Street creates a glorious parade of holiday lights and family fun while featuring the Historic Downtown Ennis Area. Free! 6:30-8:00 p.m., Downtown Ennis. For more information contact [jennifer@ennis-chamber.com](mailto:jennifer@ennis-chamber.com).

12/6

### Christmas Concert:

"O Come, All Ye Faithful," and enjoy Yumiko Endo-Schlaffer, harpist; Andrew Schast, violinist and Candance Bawcombe, organist. Free, but please make a reservation. 4:00 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 210 N. McKinney St. For reservations, call (214) 460-3249.

### Howdy Christmas-Pictures With Santa at Sunshine Brews:

Join us for a Howdy Christmas morning full of cheer! Santa's saddling up and stopping by for free photos-western style, of course. Donations for Toys for Tots will be collected, so bring a toy to help make a child's Christmas brighter.

Special Christmas drink menu. 108 S. McKinney St. For more information call (972) 903-7887

12/9

### Ennis High School Winter Choir Concert:

Come hear your holiday favorites and support the choirs. Free. 7:00-9:00 p.m., Ennis High School Auditorium, 2301 Ensign Rd.

12/13-12/14

### Ice Skating:

Downtown Ennis is always magical during the holiday season, and this year there will be something all new. Enjoy synthetic ice skating for a magical winter moment under the

stars and mega trees. 5:00-9:00 p.m., downtown.

12/14

### The Wonders of Christmas:

Come sing familiar Christmas songs as part of the choir! See the Baylor Baptist Church Facebook page to sign up to be on the stage to sing. There will be two practices on Wednesday evenings before the event if you want to participate. The performance will be open to the public. Free. 6:00-7:00 p.m., 210 N. Preston St. For more information, call the church office at (972) 875-2521.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [bill.smith@nowmagazines.com](mailto:bill.smith@nowmagazines.com).*



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