

Holiday Traditions, from Then Till Now

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The trend Marconi has seen coming is now in full force. "It's not so over the top anymore," she said. "People don't have lights all over the place. They are keeping it simple." She sees the trend this year as downsizing. "People are more frugal," she said. She believes the farm-to-table movement has influenced the holidays enormously, making people think of sustainable approaches to the holidays, from the food on their tables to the natural decorations in their homes.

"It should be about spending time with people you want to spend time with," Marconi said. Some items she has seen selling a lot fits that theme, including recyclable table runners made of printed butcher paper that you can rip off, lay down on the middle of the table, get it all messed up during a fun dinner, then stick it in the recycle bin. Or she also likes placemats that you can write on and recycle, or write in chalk and wipe it off. "You can write guests' names on the mats, or put a message to your children. I like the idea of making a theme over dinner, like 'Write down what you're thankful for, and we'll talk about it,'" she said. "People can get really creative."

"It's really all about the holiday spirit, no matter what you celebrate," she said. And that includes magic. Sometimes the best parts of the holidays have nothing at all do to with trees or lights or decorations or food.

So if you are 9 or 10 years old or younger, living in certain parts of Lamorinda, and you are still reading this article, stop now. Because we all know that you have heard rumors that certain members of your neighborhood might go out on a Christmas Eve night, say around bed-time, and point out a red blinking light traveling across the sky, or secretly jangle certain bells that could sound as if they might hang around a reindeer's neck. There might even be a sound of clatter on the roof, caused by a tossed rock.

But don't believe those rumors about the neighbors doing it. It's really the result of the red light blinking across the sky, reindeer harnesses decorated with bells, and the sound of hooves clattering to a stop on the roof. Honest.



Even a drive-by of the Potter home in Moraga lends itself to a secular, simple, holiday feel. Photos Chris Lavin



Besides the relatives even the neighbors get in on the action in a cul-de-sac in Moraga to put in the Potters' single candles in the upper story windows for the holidays, including, from left, Bridget Kelly, Sydney Reed, twins Brody and Maya Reed, Crosby Kelly, Colin Kelly, and Skyler Reed. They remember seeing the candles appear magically in the Potters' windows their whole lives.