



GIFT IDEA — Teresa Vinson, who organizes Baptist Memorial Hospital-Union City's annual Christmas luncheons, showed

a quick and easy gift basket to make for the coffee lovers in the family during one of the presentations.



LEADING THE WAY — Hornbeak Christmas parade grand marshals Mike and Pat Hill waved to spectators as they led the holiday procession through the town's

downtown area on a recent Friday night. A huge crowd lined Main Street to enjoy the event, which was followed by refreshments and awards at Black Oak School.



GRAND MARSHALS — Bobby and Evonne Stewart of Troy were selected as this year's Troy Christmas parade grand marshals. They got out of their escort vehicle to walk around the square to greet those who attended the annual event.



RECOGNIZED — Obion Mayor Rodney Underwood (right) presented Alan Jordan a plaque for being the grand marshal in Obion's Christmas parade this year. The presentation was made at the Obion Community Center following the parade. Everyone who attended was treated to cookies and hot chocolate, as well as a visit from Santa.



Crowd-pleasing holiday potluck ideas

(StatePoint) — Indulging in delicious food is one of the best parts of the holidays, and you'll likely be in constant need of something tasty to take along to all those holiday potlucks.

To be ready for any invitation, keep ingredients for your favorite recipes on-hand and use multipurpose kitchen tools, like a high-performance blender, to expedite prep time, quickly chop veggies or cheese and blend everything from dips and batters to dressings and sauces.

Not sure what to make for your next potluck? Here are some simple, crowd-pleasing recipes.

Appetizers
Small-bite hors d'oeuvres are perfect potluck fare. Dips or spreads served with veggies and chips are quick to make and travel easily. Try a cashew French onion dip for a non-dairy version of the traditional favorite. Be sure to soak the cashews ahead of time to achieve a super-smooth texture. If you're able to keep food warm, a hearty spinach artichoke dip with pita bread will satisfy guests' cravings for comfort foods. Or, take a new twist on a conventional recipe with a cauliflower hummus. It's extra creamy and has an added boost of veggies from the addition of roasted cauliflower.

Side dishes
Casseroles will feed a crowd and most can be

served at room temperature. Made with russet potatoes and onions, a cheesy potato casserole with cornflake topping won't last long at any gathering. It's a satisfying substitute for traditional hash browns at brunch, and is great for all ages. Alternately, a vegetarian butternut squash casserole is a light, sweet complement to heavier potluck fare. Or, if you're short on ingredients or inspiration, a frittata filled with cheese, veggies and protein (whatever you have on hand) will work. Bake or slow cook the frittata the night before and add a quick sprinkle of herbs or chives before packing it to go.

Desserts
If you have a sweet tooth, it only makes sense to volunteer to bring your favorite dessert. Save time by using a high-performance blender like the Vitamix A2300 Ascent Series blender to mix batter in advance for a big batch of almond cookies

or snickerdoodles. If baking for a cookie exchange or large gathering, start early and freeze the cookies until party day. Cakes, pumpkin and apple pies are also easy to make ahead and freeze. Simply wrap a freshly baked, cooled cake or pie in plastic wrap and place in a freezer bag. Before an event, defrost in the bag at room temperature.

If your dish has multiple components, separate warm and cold items during transport and use insulated carriers to maintain optimal temperatures. Make something that doesn't require a ton of prep time and equipment once you arrive, unless you've asked the host in advance. Bring trivets or serving utensils, if needed, and don't assume the host will have extras.

Don't get caught unprepared this holiday party season. The right ingredients and tools will make you a hit at any potluck, even at a moment's notice.



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