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JOSETTE PLANK

Don't let stress turn you into a Scrooge

I'm dedicating today's column to my friend Tracey and her broken boiler.

It's the holidays, so, of course, Tracey's heating system isn't working.

I say "of course" because, of course, your furnace stops working the week before Thanksgiving. Yes, of course, you will spend a chunk of money to fix the problem. Of course, you now have to re-budget for holiday gifts. And that weekend away — the spa weekend where you planned to destress — will have to wait. Of course.

But you will not be deterred. No matter how many appliances implode, you will force yourself to have a happy holiday. No matter how loudly Aunt Carol complained during Thanksgiving dinner, you will stay cheery. Was Cousin Murray more sauced than the cranberries? You are determined to be joyful.

You will attack every Scrooge with a stake of holly. Good for you!

But from time to time, you will need sanctuary. Respite. A quiet place to re-energize and collect more holly.

Lucky for you, I'm a pro when it comes to hiding from crazy. And because I recently spent \$300 to repair my own furnace, I know all the really cheap places to hide.

Your bathroom is an isolation chamber.

Lock the door. Fill the bathtub. Light a scented candle. If your family insists on banging down the door, wear earplugs. Make splashing noises every so often so people don't try the old, "We thought you drowned," excuse to get at you.

If there is only one bathroom in your house, you can hide in a large closet or root cellar. I don't know why more modern homes aren't built with root cellars.

Hide out in your backyard.

Do you have a storage shed? Ours is filled with old outdoor furniture cushions, so it makes a comfy sensory deprivation hideout.

Staring into the flames of a backyard campfire also can be calming. If your kids are drawn to fires, do what my husband does and enjoy your campfire while smoking the most foul-smelling cigar that 50 cents will buy.

You don't even have to smoke it — just light the cigar and watch the crowds disperse.

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SHARE the WARMTH

8 interesting soups to fill you up this winter

BY ALISON SHERWOOD | MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

As the temperatures plunge, find warmth in the comforting slurp of a good soup. Emphasis on good. Here are some of our best soup recipes, to not only warm you up but give your taste buds a buzz on a bitter day.

SQUASH MAPLE BISQUE

Makes 10 to 12 servings

Ingredients

- 6 pounds winter squash (weighed whole)
- ¾ cup (1½ sticks) unsalted butter
- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
- ⅔ cup flour
- 3 cups milk
- 3 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 1½ cups heavy whipping cream or half-and-half
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves or nutmeg
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- ½ to ¾ cup maple syrup (depending on how sweet you would like the soup)
- Salt and white pepper to taste
- Toasted pecans or pepitas (pumpkin seeds) for garnish (optional)

Steps

To precook squash: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Coat a roasting pan that has 1-inch sides with vegetable oil spray. Halve the squash and remove seeds. Place squash, flesh side down, on the baking sheet. Bake in preheated oven until squash can be

pierced easily with a fork. This usually takes about 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on size of squash. Remove and cool. Scoop out squash flesh.

In a large stockpot, melt butter over low heat. Add onion and cook until translucent, about 10 to 12 minutes.

Sprinkle flour over onion-butter mixture. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, 2 to 3 minutes.

Add milk, broth, cream or half-and-half, cloves or nutmeg, cayenne pepper, maple syrup, salt, white pepper and squash. Simmer over low heat, stirring frequently, about 20 to 30 minutes.

Puree soup using either a food processor (you will need to do this in batches) or right in the pot with an immersion blender. Blend until smooth. Taste soup and adjust seasonings as needed.

Garnish soup with toasted pecans or pepitas, if desired.

Note: If you want to freeze this soup, use half-and-half instead of the milk. Soups that have milk in them can sometimes look curdled when thawed.

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Gyro Express food truck offers wallet-friendly ethnic dishes on the go

One of the newest food trucks to pull into Harrisburg is Gyro Express.

Owner Ali Saad parks the truck at Market and Second streets. Six days a week, he sells gyros, chicken over rice and falafel. The food is halal, meaning it is allowed to be eaten under Islamic dietary guidelines.

Business has been brisk, especially during lunch, Saad said.

"We're pretty popular around here. I guess the price and the food is pretty good," he said.

The truck's go-to dish is



SUE GLEITER
WORD OF MOUTH

chicken over rice, a dish commonly sold off food trucks in cities such as New York and Baltimore. Tender rice is mixed with chicken and spices, and the dish is elevated with a mayonnaise-like sauce and a hotter red sauce. It sells for \$5.

Gyro Express also serves lamb over rice and falafel over rice, as well as chicken and lamb gyros. Prices are \$4 to \$6.

Saad said so far, he has not encountered any resistance from neighboring businesses. He said he has all of his required permits and pays \$15,000 a year for parking, which is more than what food trucks in New York City pay for parking for a year.

In the future, Saad said, he possibly would like to expand his fleet of trucks into nearby cities such as York and Lancaster. In addition, he plans to extend the truck's hours in

the summer until 2 a.m.

Delivery is available for orders with a \$15 minimum.

The truck operates 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Mondays-Saturdays. Phone is 717-315-7774.

Irv's Pub to open in Hershey

Events, Etc. in Hershey, known for hosting special-occasion events such as retirement parties and wedding receptions, is changing gears. By spring, the facility at 814 E. Chocolate Ave. will morph into Irv's Pub.



SUE GLEITER, PennLive

Gyro Express operates Mondays through Saturdays at Market and Second streets in Harrisburg.

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