

# LIVING

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**JOSETTE PLANK**

## Yes, Virginia, there is a real elf on the shelf

Last week, I received the following text message. I take great pleasure in responding to the communication, and thank the author for not just Googling the answer.

*Dear Ms. Plank, I am 8 years old. Some of the kids on my bus say the Elf on the Shelf isn't real. My Uncle Tony says, "If you see it on the Internet, it must be true." Uncle Tony is living with us because he emailed his bank account number to a Nigerian prince. My dad says Uncle Tony is a numbskull who was swindled out of his retirement savings. Please tell me the truth, is the Elf on the Shelf a fraud? Also, what is a numbskull?*  
— Virginia2014 via iPhone

Virginia2014, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the cynicism of a cynical age. Your friends think all knowledge of the world can be cataloged between a hashtag and Wikipedia article. "Pics, or it didn't happen" is the cry of the modern skeptic. But even when you take a really cool photograph — perhaps of a colorful sunset or a flickering will-o'-the-wisp — your friends will ask which Photoshop filter you used. First of all, Virginia2014, your little friends are precocious twerps.

Please see **ELF** on Back Page

### SHOW US THE ELF

Share photos of your Elf on the Shelf in action by emailing submissions@pennlive.com or tweeting them @PennLive.



### FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

» Tonight, Jews will light their menorahs for the first night of Hanukkah, celebrating with gifts and food. Find a recipe for a twist on the traditional latke. **PAGE B2**

# EAT drink & BE MERRY

## Get in the spirit with these holiday party ideas

• BY SUE GLEITER | sgleiter@pennlive.com •

**H**oliday party time has arrived. If you're not invited to a party, you're probably hosting a get-together, whether it's a family affair, cocktail party or intimate gathering. We checked in with two local caterers — Premier Caterers and the The JDK Group, both in Camp Hill — for some prime party tips. We've got you covered from decorations to desserts.

### Decorations

A rustic, outdoor theme is big this holiday for decorating, and it's an easy theme to pull off for parties, said David Everett, senior event specialist and lead designer for The JDK Group. Many of the big box stores such as Target are selling woody table decorations and ornaments, but it can be as easy as picking up pine cones outside, he said. Everett suggests tying birch-printed ribbon onto vases or Mason jars filled with votive candles and adding a sprig of greenery. Or mix tea lights, votive and pillar candles and place them down the center of the table with sprigs of greenery, he said. Fill vases with cranberries, water and floating candles, or cranberries can be layered with rock salt in vases and topped with candles. For a rustic look, use cut logs as chargers — those full-sized plates placed underneath regular dinners plate for decoration. Everett also likes to tape vintage Christmas

Please see **MERRY** on Page B2

**INSIDE**

Find 10 ideas for holiday snacks including honeyed goat cheese, avocado shrimp cocktail and more.

**ALSO ON PAGE B2**

Find recipes for holiday cocktails and tips on what serve at your get-together.

## 2015 PENNSYLVANIA FARM SHOW

# What's new this year? Fried pickles, grilled cheeseburgers

It's a given when the doors of the 2015 Pennsylvania Farm Show open, there will be milkshakes, a sheep-to-shear contest and tractor square dancing.

Every year, the food court is the exhibition's biggest draw, and last year's introduction of the bacon bundle was a huge hit.

This year, the food court will dish out new foods including fried pickles from the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, grilled cheeseburgers from the Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association and soft pretzels and pork nachos from PennAg Industries Association.

Some vendors will use high oleic soybean oil, a healthier oil designed to improve kitchen performance and reduce build-up of polymers on food service



**SUE GLEITER**  
WORD OF MOUTH

equipment.

The well-known chocolate and vanilla milkshakes will make a return at the Pennsylvania Dairymen's booth. This year, the dairymen are asking for donations for "Fill a Glass" to help provide milk for the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank's Milk Distribution Program.

Here's what other food-related items will be new at the

show, which runs Jan. 10-17 at the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center in Harrisburg:

- The Food Court Annex in the Main Hall will be expanded to accommodate more visitors, hopefully alleviating long lines for popular items such as milkshakes.
- A first-ever cheese competition will pit Pennsylvania cheesemakers against each other. Each cheesemaker is eligible to submit three varieties of cheeses from cow, goat and sheep milk, as well as all-milks and mixed-milks categories. Judging will be in mid-December, and the winning cheeses will be displayed during the show in Exhibition Hall C near the Maclay Street lobby.

• Every year, the PA Preferred Culinary Connection brings in a well-known chef. This year, Aaron McCargo Jr., winner of "The Next Food Network Star" and star of "Big Daddy's House," will appear on the stage at noon and 2 p.m. Jan. 11. His specialties include comfort foods, barbecue favorites and breakfast delights.

• Young grill masters can enter 4-H projects in the Beyond the Grill contest.

### Restaurant for sale

Asalah Moroccan Cuisine in midtown Harrisburg is for sale. Owner Brahim Gamal said the restaurant at 1014 N. Third St. remains open seven days a week. He has listed the business for

sale or rent on Craigslist with an asking price of \$25,000.

Asalah opened in March in the former Soup Spot space and serves a menu of authentic Moroccan dishes such as roasted lamb and tanginess. It also includes a Hookah Lounge.

"I have tried to put it for sale, but if I can't find anyone, I'm still open," Gamal said.

He said business has been slow at the restaurant, and the addition of parking meters in the midtown area in July killed business.

"Customers, they stopped coming," said Gamal, who has operated restaurants in Lancaster. "I would like to stay."

The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner.

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