

Special! **HOLIDAY COOKIE BLOWOUT!** PAGE 120

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dress them up!)

22 EASY WEEKNIGHT DINNERS



Eat, shop and be merry

Some of the liveliest holiday markets (with some of the tastiest treats) happen stateside, but they retain so much old-country flavor, each one feels more like a getaway than a shopping trip. BY KATARINA ALAUPOVIC



SOLVANG, CA | DEC. 5–JAN. 9 COPENHAGEN IN CALIFORNIA

Julefest—which goes beyond a Christmas bazaar to include a parade, a winery walk and more—happens 33 miles northwest of Santa Barbara, in a traditional, timber-framed slice of Scandinavia. Solvang, first settled by the Danes more than a century ago, gets crazy decked-out for the holidays (think Viking-inspired iron ornaments on live firs and jingle-belling, horse-drawn Danish passenger trolleys). And the center of town, on and around Copenhagen Drive, becomes a full-on Danish Christmas market, complete with amazing almond pastries, among other motherland goodies.

New and must-do this year: In a nod to the surrounding grape-rich Santa Ynez Valley, Julefest's once-modest Holiday Wine Walk (December 13 and 14) now includes tastings from 15 area vintners. solvangusa.com



CHICAGO | NOV. 21–DEC. 24 MIDWESTERN MITTELEUROPE

Among the dazzling decorations at Chicago's Christkindlmarket lies something completely different: pickle ornaments! These tributes to the Teutonic tradition of hiding glass gherkins in Christmas trees are a must-buy, as are the fruity *stollen* cakes.

New and must-do this year: Eat a Germknödel—a fluffy dumpling accessorized with poppy seeds and spicy plum jam—from German Grill. christkindlmarket.com

BALTIMORE | NOV. 27–DEC. 24 DEUTSCHLAND MEETS MARYLAND

At Baltimore's Christmas Village, modeled after the centuries-old Christkindlesmarkt in Nuremberg, Germany, you'll find fab ornamental nutcrackers, gingerbread-like *lebkuchen* and *glühwein* (hot mulled wine).

New and must-do this year: Let the kiddos take in the sights from the seat of a vintage train (\$5 for a quick ride around the Village). baltimore-christmas.com





The Texas Christkindl Market is the largest of its kind in the South (because, yes, everything is bigger in Texas). Based on Rothenburg, Germany's iconic Reiterlesmarkt, the Lone

Star version offers up tons of traditional trinkets (hand-blown glass ornaments from Lauscha are a crowd fave) and treats (brats and sauerkraut are a good start). And the kinder will love the Bavarian-themed petting zoo, complete with alpine horned goats.

New and must-do this year: At the popular Marionette Theater, kids can make their own puppets. texaschristkindl.com



Hear ye, hear ye! Hitting the Great Dickens Christmas Fair & Victorian Holiday Party is like being in London at Christmastime—two centuries ago. In this 120,000-square-foot complex, the lanes are lamp-lit, the shops

sell old-timey roasted sugar almonds, and the pubs and dance hall are filled with such characters as Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim and the big man himself, one Charles John Huffam Dickens, who does daily readings in the Dickens Family Parlour.

New and must-do this year: Try the sweet and boozy Christmas pudding from London's Finest Cakes & Puddings. dickensfair.com

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