The WORST-CASE SCENARIO Survival Handbook:

HOLIDAYS

HOW TO:

- Fend Off a Charging Reindeer
- Evade a Stampede of Shoppers
- Survive a Runaway Sled

By Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht
Authors of *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook*

The WORST-CASE SCENARIO Survival Handbook: Holidays

By Joshua Piven and David Borgenicht
Illustrations by Brenda Brown

CHRONICLE BOOKS
SAN FRANCISCO

WARNING

When a life is imperiled or a dire situation is at hand, safe alternatives may not exist—and elves are not always around to help out. To deal with the holiday worst-case scenarios presented in this book, we highly recommend—insist, actually—that the best course of action is to consult a professionally trained expert. But because highly trained professionals may not always be available when the safety or sanity of individuals is at risk, we have asked experts on various subjects to describe the technique they might employ in these seasonal emergency situations. The publisher, authors, and experts disclaim any liability from any injury that may result from the use, proper or improper, of the information contained in this book. All the information in this book comes directly from experts, but we do not guarantee that the information contained herein is complete, safe, or accurate, nor should i be considered a substitute for your good judgment, your common sense, or your sense of peace on earth and goodwill toward men. And finally, nothing in this book should be construed or interpreted t infringe on the rights or presents of other persons or to violate criminal statutes; we urge you to obey all laws and respect all rights, including property rights, of others.

—The Autho

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You better watch out…
—”Santa Claus Is Coming to Town”

INTRODUCTION

The world thinks of the Holidays as a time of peace and joy—a time when all is harmonious, and we all join together eating, drinking, and generally being merry. We give gifts, we donate to charities, w spend time with our friends and loved ones—what could possibly go wrong?

Consider this: More suicides, car accidents, family arguments, and food and alcohol poisonings take place during the months of November and December than any other time of the year. Add travel mishaps, kitchen disasters, snow- and ice-related injuries, electrocutions, tree-trimming catastrophes and gift-related traumas—there's no such thing as a silent night when it comes to the holidays.

You may not be able to control Mother Nature, acts of God, mischievous elves, or bad cooks. But you can plan ahead to make sure that you're ready to act when your holiday plans take an unscheduled dive.

We sincerely hope that the worst that awaits you this holiday season is merely a minor mishap—a slightly overcooked turkey, a precariously balanced Christmas tree, or an unwanted gift. But in case tidings somewhat less comforting and joyful come your way, we want you to be prepared.

And so, as we did with our other *Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbooks*, we've consulted dozens highly trained professionals to come up with clear, step-by-step instructions for how to survive the perils of cooking and entertaining, friends and family, shopping, and assorted emergencies indoors and in the great outdoors. We spoke with chimney sweeps, physics professors, wilderness survival instructors, travel journalists, neurologists, craftmakers, professional carolers, gift consultants, motivational speakers, veterinarians, dentists, etiquette instructors, and dozens of others to obtain the responses to the worst worst-case scenarios we could imagine.

From how to extinguish a grease fire to how to fend off a charging reindeer, from how to deal with a run-away parade balloon to how to safely fall from a ladder, and from how to repurpose a fruitcake to how to make an emergency menorah, this handy guide should keep you safe and sound—at least between the end of November and New Year's Day. In a useful appendix, we've also included a New Year's Resolution-O-Matic and a sample "There is no Santa Claus" speech.

Being prepared is the best present you can give others—or yourself. (This book will fit in every stocking and under every tree.) With this guide in hand, you will be all set. So relax and enjoy the holidays. We hope that all your wishes come true and that your scenarios are best-case scenarios. But don't count on it.

—The Autho

CHAPTER 1
COOKING AND ENTERTAINING

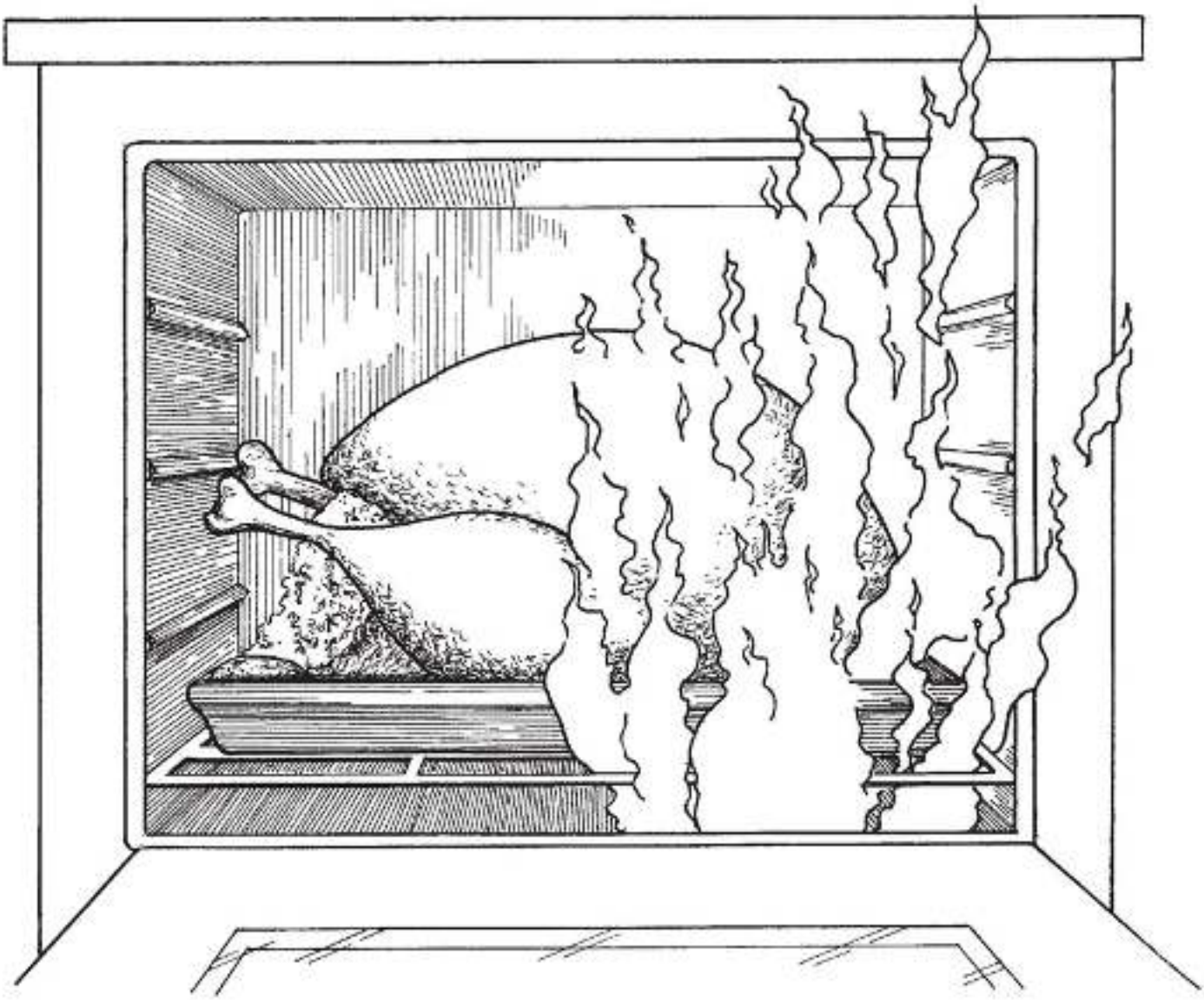
HOW TO EXTINGUISH A BURNING TURKEY

1. Close the oven and broiler doors.

Turn the oven off.

2. Open nearby windows.

Smoke will pour out of the oven vent. Turn the vent-fan in the hood above the stove to its highes setting and open windows to help clear smoke. If possible, close the doors to the kitchen to contain the smoke. If you cannot close off the kitchen, open as many other windows in the building as possible to establish cross-ventilation.



Close the oven door immediately if the turkey is on fire.

3. Wait five minutes.

Ovens are designed for high heat, so it should contain the fire without a problem. Keep the oven

door closed to avoid adding oxygen to the fire.

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4. Open the oven door slightly.

Keep your face well back from the oven when you open the door. After five minutes, the turkey fire should have burned itself out. If it is still burning, close the door immediately and wait several minutes before opening it again. If the fire continues to burn for more than 10 minutes, call the fire department.

5. Remove the burned bird.

Use caution: It will be extremely hot. Place the bird on a cutting board or platter. Wait at least 1 minutes before touching the turkey or attempting to rescue the meat. Often only the skin and fat will be burned. (See “How to Serve Burnt Turkey”).

Be Aware

- Oven fires can usually be extinguished without help from the fire department. However, oven seals may fail in a high-heat fir causing the fire to spread to surrounding areas. Have someone standing by the phone to call for help if needed.
- Do not attempt to pull a flaming turkey out of the oven: You risk grease burns on your arms and face.
- Do not attempt to smother a flaming turkey while it is in the oven. The high temperatures and flaming grease may ignite the material.
- Do not attempt to douse the fire by throwing flour, baking soda, gravy, or any other products on a flaming turkey. These may be combustible and may cause grease to spatter. Using a fire extinguisher will render the bird inedible.

HOW TO SERVE BURNT TURKEY

1. Remove the skin and charred sections.
Discard these burned parts.

2. Slice the turkey.

3. Pick out the scorched pieces.
Usually the burned portion will be white (breast) meat, which has less fat. Discard it.

4. Check the dark meat.
Some dark meat may also be severely overcooked. Pick out the moist sections and put them on a platter that has been warmed in the oven. Cover and set aside.

5. Moisten dry dark meat.
Layer the salvaged but dry dark meat in a roasting pan. Soak it with several cups of chicken brot and melted butter. Cover it with a cloth and put it in a warm oven (make sure the oven is turned off). Let the meat rest for a few minutes. Drain and remove meat from pan and place on serving tray. Do not use a microwave to warm the meat or the meat will toughen.

6. Fatten the gravy.
Add one stick of butter to a boiling pot of gravy, let the butter melt, and allow the gravy to cool to serving temperature. Pour the mixture over the turkey after it has been carved.

7. Make turkey hash.
If all else fails, chop the meat, toss with potatoes and bacon, and offer your guests turkey hash. Tell them it’s an old family tradition. Serve with large glasses of water.

HOW TO PREVENT A TURKEY FROM EXPLODING

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1. Use a maximum of four beaten eggs in the stuffing.

Eggs expand as they cook and can force stuffing to explode out of the turkey's abdomen.

2. Stuff the bird loosely.

Leave several inches of space for the stuffing to expand as it roasts.

3. Keep a close watch on the bird as it cooks.

Check the turkey every 20 minutes or so. If the stuffing begins to leak out of the abdominal cavity, remove several spoonfuls.

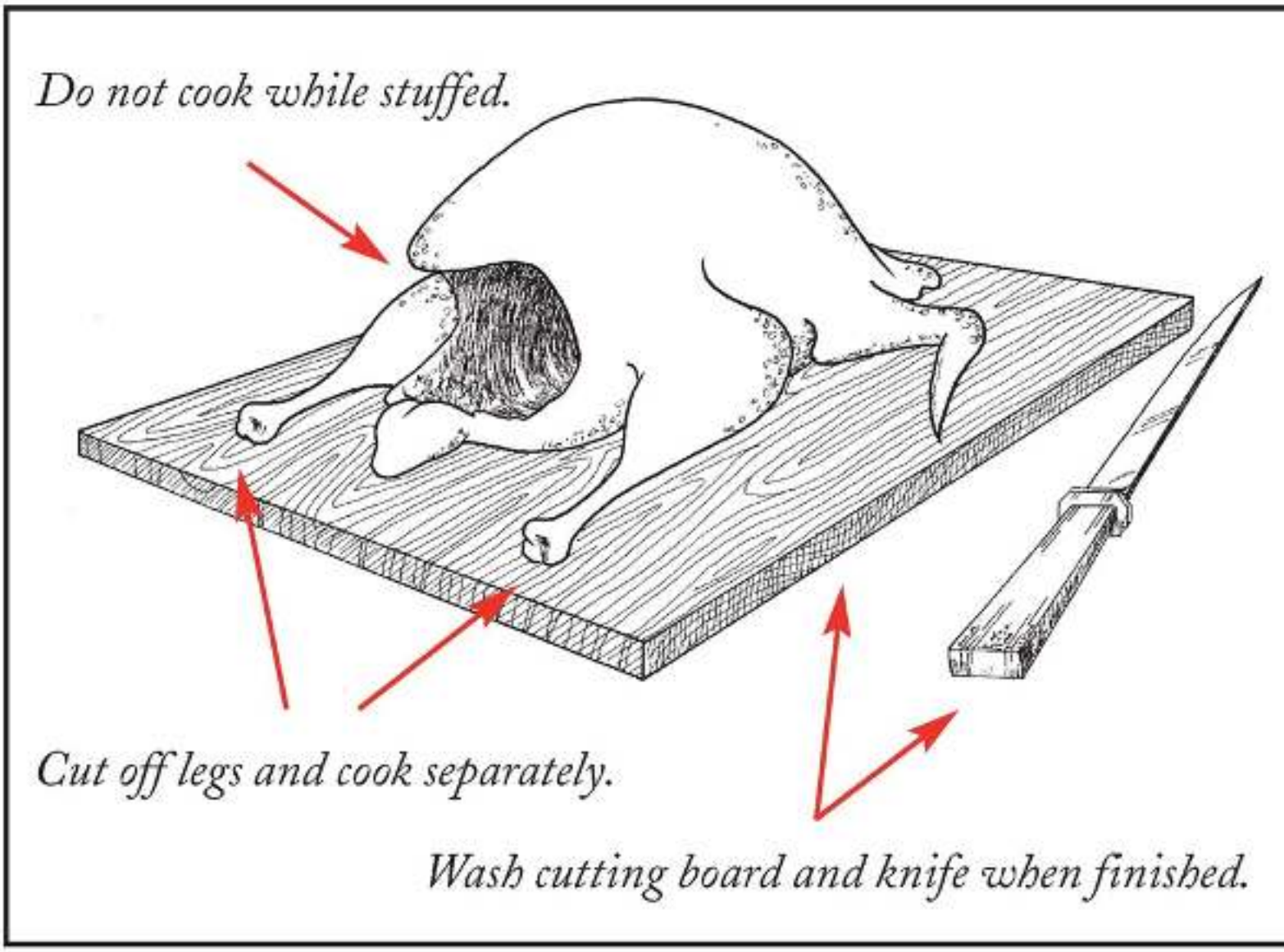
Be Aware

Cooking the stuffing separately avoids potential bacterial contamination of the stuffing from the turkey and will also avoid any possibility of explosion.

HOW TO KEEP A TURKEY MOIST DURING COOKING

Soak the bird overnight in brine.
To make brine, dissolve one pound of salt per gallon of water; it should be as salty as seawater. Put the mixture in a large bucket (use plastic to avoid any metallic taste). Cover and leave the bird outside to keep it cool. If the temperature is above 50° F or well below 32° F, keep it refrigerated instead.

Remove the legs of the turkey before cooking it.
Dark meat takes longer to cook than white meat, so cook the legs separately from the body. If yo want to leave them on, cut the skin between the breast and the legs and spread them out, away from the abdomen, to expose more of the leg to heat.



Cook the turkey breast-side down.
Cooking breast-side down will cause the juices to run down the sides and baste the breasts. Flip over just before removing from the oven to crisp the skin.

HOW TO REMOVE A GRAVY STAIN

Try the following techniques until one succeeds in removing the stain.

1. Remove excess food as soon as possible.
Use a spoon or a blunt knife to scrape the stain. The longer a stain sets, the more difficult it is to remove.

2. Make a detergent solution.
Mix one teaspoon of clear, mild liquid dishwashing detergent with one cup of lukewarm water. Do not use detergent that contains bleach.

3. Apply the detergent solution to the stain.
Do not rub the stain. Work from the edge of the stain in, gently blotting.

4. Rinse the stain with cold water and blot dry.
If the stain comes out, go to step 14.

5. Make an ammonia solution.
If the detergent solution does not work, mix one tablespoon of household ammonia with ½ cup of warm water.

6. Apply the ammonia solution to the stain.
Blot the stain. Do not rub.

7. Rinse with cold water and blot dry.
If the stain now comes out, go to step 14.

8. Make a vinegar solution.
Mix $^{1}/_{3}$ cup white vinegar with $^{2}/_{3}$ cup cold water.

9. Blot the stain with the vinegar solution.

10. Rinse with cold water and blot dry.
If the stain has disappeared, go to step 14.

11. Apply commercial enzyme detergent.
Enzyme detergent is available in grocery, drug, and hardware stores. Blot the stain.

12. Rinse the area with cold water.

13. Blot dry.
Place a ½-inch-thick pad of white paper towels over the stained area and weigh it down with a flat, heavy object—a thick book works well. Change the absorbent pad until the transfer of the stain is no longer visible on the pad.

14. Launder according to manufacturer's label.

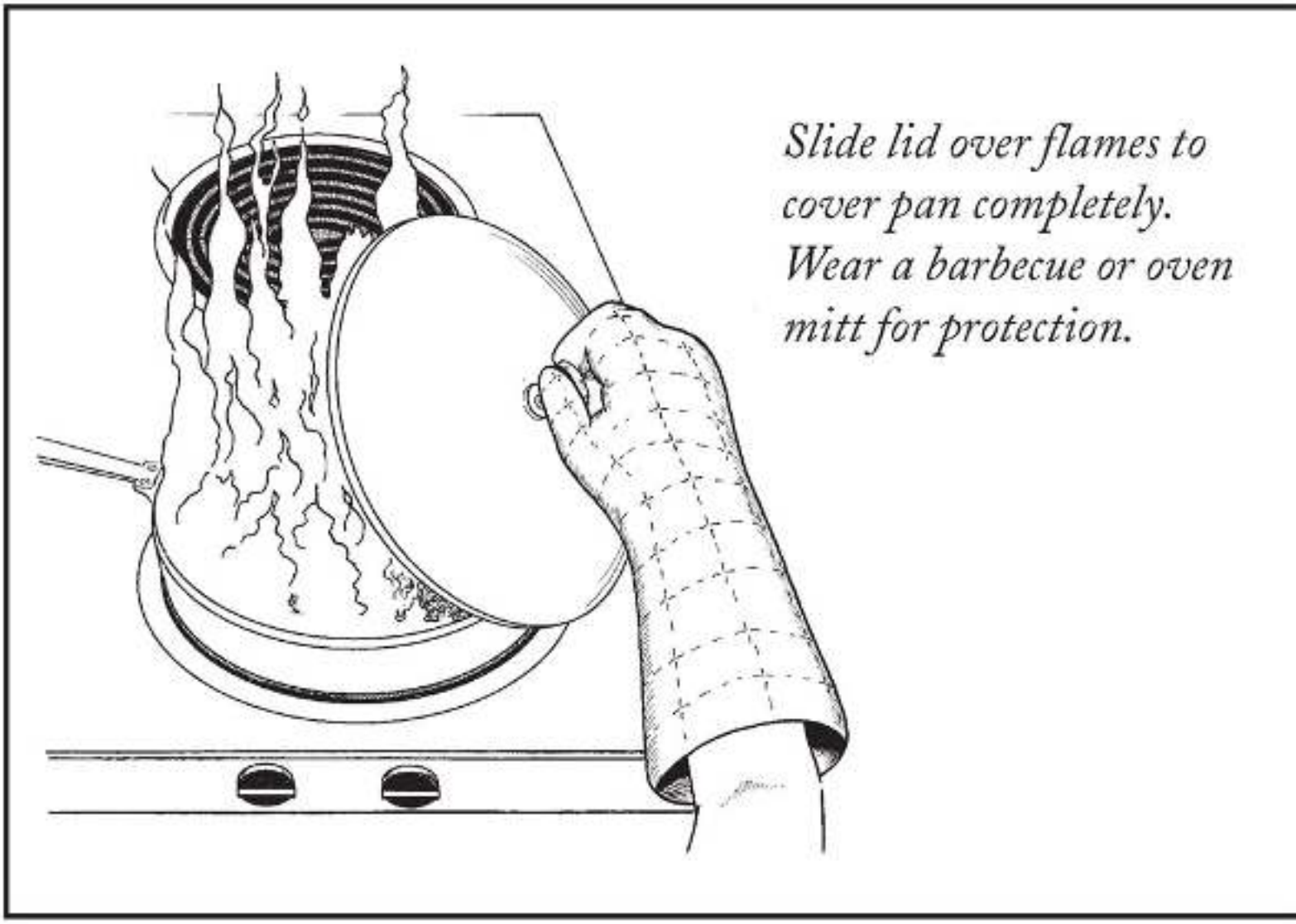
HOW TO PUT OUT A GREASE FIRE

1. Do not douse with water.
Oil and water do not mix: Water will cause the burning oil to spatter and spread the fire. Do not move the burning pan to the sink.

2. Turn off the stove.

3. Put on an oven mitt.
Large mitts are the safest option. If barbecue mitts—those that cover the forearm—are available use for added protection.

4. Find a lid that fits the pan.
A lid that is slightly larger than the pan will also work.



5. Hold the lid at an angle toward the fire.
Do not try to lower the lid directly onto the pan or you risk burning your arms. Keep your face and chest as far from the flames as possible.

6. Slide the lid onto the pan and hold it in place until the pan cools.
The pressure from the heat and flame can force a lid off the pan. Hold it securely in place.

7. Do not lift the lid.

~~Lifting the lid will add oxygen and feed the fire. Take the lid off only when the pan has become~~ noticeably cooler.

8. If no lid is available, use baking soda.

Dump a large amount of baking soda on the grease fire to extinguish it quickly. Avoid using baking powder, which can cause the fire to flare.

Be Aware

- Do not use a dry chemical extinguisher to try to put out a grease fire. It is not effective, and the force of the compressed chemical agent can splatter burning material and spread flames.
- Never leave cooking oil to heat unattended: Flames may develop quickly.

HOW TO TREAT A GREASE BURN

1. Cool the burned area.

Immediately run cold water over the burned area for several minutes or until the injury site is cool.

2. Dry the burned area gently.

Blot the injury site using a clean, dry towel or sheet.

3. Check for blistering.

If the blisters are small, pop them with a sterilized pin and remove dead skin using scissors. (Wiping the tip of a pin in alcohol or heating it in the flame from a match will adequately sterilize the pin.) If there are no blisters and the burn is less than one inch across, apply burn cream and a sterile dressing.

4. Cover severe burns.

If the burn is larger than one inch across or is very blistered, cover it with a clean, dry sheet or towel and seek medical attention promptly.

Be Aware

- Infection is the main risk. Signs of infection include fever or local warmth, increased redness around the burned area, increas soreness, red streaks, swelling, or drainage of pus.
- Do not apply oily or greasy substances such as petroleum jelly or butter to the wound. These popular but misguided burn remedies are detrimental to the healing process.

HOW TO REPURPOSE A FRUITCAKE

Turn the fruitcake into another dessert.
Do not serve the fruitcake as is. Slice it very thin, tear the pieces apart, and use them in an English trifle, a dessert made with alternating layers of cake (née fruitcake), custard, whipped cream, and, sometimes, fresh fruit. Serve in a deep glass bowl (often called a trifle bowl).

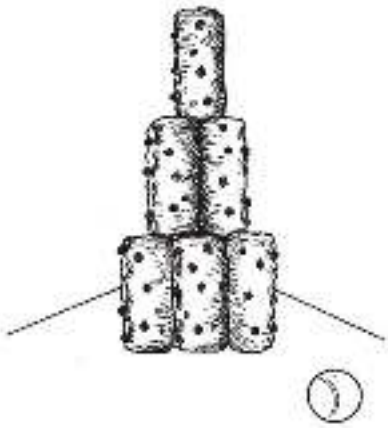
Use the fruitcake as a doorstop.
Fruitcakes are very hardy and will last for years. Use the fruitcake to prop open a door.

Use the fruitcake to prevent your car from rolling.
When parked on a hill, wedge the fruitcake under the downhill side of a rear tire. In your garage position the fruitcake on the floor as a tire stop to prevent the car from hitting the garage wall.

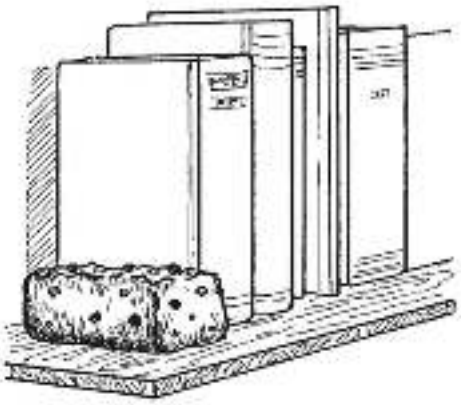
Use the fruitcake as a dumbbell.
A good-size fruitcake may weigh several pounds. Incorporate it into your exercise routine, holding it firmly for arm curls, or squeezing it between the feet for leg lifts.

Use the fruitcake in a carnival game.
Collect fruitcakes and stack them vertically in a pyramid. Using tennis balls, try to knock down the fruitcakes in five throws.

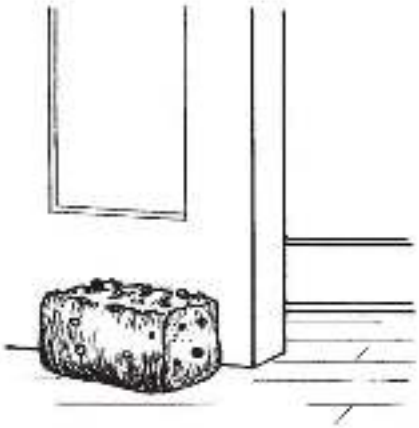
Fruitcakes are extremely hardy and can be used for a variety of purposes:



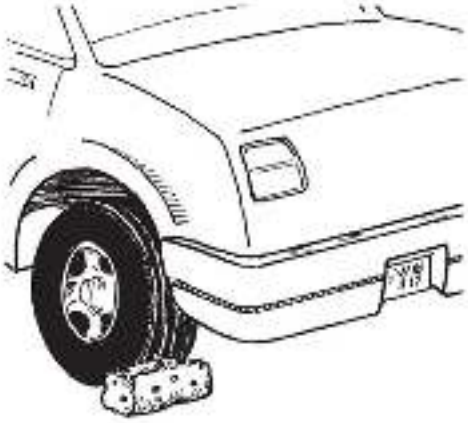
carnival game



bookend



doorstop



tire block

dumbbell

art

Use as bookends.
Set up two fruitcakes either horizontally or vertically, depending on the size of the books.

Use as art.
Bolt a fruitcake to a painted board, frame it and hang it on your wall, or simply place it on a pedestal. Position the fruitcake in a well-lit area.

Use the fruitcake as compost.
Fruitcakes are made of (mostly) organic material, and make good fertilizer. However, it may tak several years for the fruitcake to decompose.

HOW TO SAFELY EAT A FRUITCAKE

1. Slice it thin.

Cut the fruitcake into narrow slices—no more than $^{3}/_{8}$ inch—while the cake is cool. Place the slices on a serving platter, cover, and allow to come to room temperature.

2. Check the knife.

After cutting, the blade should be somewhat sticky and slightly colored. If the knife does not have to be wiped with a damp cloth after each cut, the cake is too dry, and a healthy dollop of whipped cream will be necessary. If the knife is heavily streaked with cake ingredients after cutting, the fruitcake has not been baked long enough and may need to be repurposed.

3. Disguise the taste.

Cover with lots of ice cream and whipped cream. Wash the fruitcake down with strong black coffee, Irish coffee, brandy, or a hot toddy.

4. Swallow without chewing.

Cut the slice into small pieces. Swallow each piece whole, as you would a vitamin. If chewing is necessary, use your molars, not your front teeth or incisors, and try not to touch the food with your tongue, which has all your taste buds.

Be Aware

- Do not be fooled by a gift of a “Yule cake,” “Christmas ring,” or “dried fruit bread”—these are just other names for a fruitcak
- If the fruitcake is very dark in color, it contains lots of molasses and corn syrup, making it exceedingly sticky, thick, and dense. The heavier the fruitcake, the more candied fruit and dark molasses it has. The darker or heavier the fruitcake, the mor difficult it will be to swallow.
- A light-colored fruitcake is a good sign; the cake has plenty of batter and light corn syrup.
- Fruitcake should be stored in a cool place, such as a refrigerator or cellar. If kept cool and in a tin, the cake will last for at lea a year, and you can give it as a present the following Christmas.

HOW TO OPEN A BOTTLE OF WINE WITH A BROKEN CORK

1. Examine the cork.

If the cork has broken due to improper corkscrew use, treat the broken cork as if it were whole. I the cork is pushed too far into the bottle, push it all the way in using any long thin implement an proceed to “With a Very Dry Cork,” step 5, below.

2. Reinsert the corkscrew.

Six half turns of the corkscrew will usually be enough to allow you to remove a full cork, but yo may need fewer for a partial cork. Turn the corkscrew slowly to prevent further cork breakage.

3. Pull the cork out.

Pull up steadily on the corkscrew, being careful not to jerk the cork out of the bottle. If the cork remains in the bottle, go to “With a Very Dry Cork,” step 2, below.

WITH A VERY DRY CORK

1. Check for crumbling.

If the cork is soft and powdery, it will not offer the corkscrew enough resistance. It may also be stuck to the sides of the bottle, making intact removal impossible.

2. Bore a hole through the center of the cork.

Use the corkscrew as a drill.

3. Widen the hole.

Wiggle the corkscrew from side to side to increase the diameter of the hole.

4. Try to pour.

If the wine will not pour, continue to enlarge the diameter of the hole as above, or force the remainder of the cork into the bottle (see “How to Open a Bottle of Wine Without a Corkscrew”

5. Make a filter.

Place a piece of clean, unwaxed, unbleached cheesecloth over the mouth of a decanter and secur it tightly with a rubber band. If no cheesecloth is available, use a coffee filter (preferably unbleached). Do not use a T-shirt or any article of clothing you have washed in detergent—the detergent can affect the taste of the wine.

6. Strain the wine.

Carefully pour the wine through the filter into the decanter. When the bottle is empty, remove th filter containing the pieces of cork from the mouth of the decanter and serve the wine.

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