



TO MARKET, TO MARKET
Italian and Caribbean goodies
for the foodies on your list
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LIFE AT HOME

DECOR • DOMESTIC ARTS • RENOVATIONS • RENTALS • RESALE

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Photo illustration:
Kathryn Molcak, Calgary Herald

Touched by an angel & other tales

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CALGARY HERALD

When we asked Calgary Herald readers for stories about their most cherished Christmas ornaments, we expected to be charmed. What we didn't expect was to be laughing out loud one moment, and moved to tears the next (try explaining that to your co-workers). A huge thank-you goes out to all who sent in pictures and stories of their most cherished ornaments — it was difficult to choose just four winners, but we think you'll enjoy the results. Just put the coffee out of spill reach and make sure that you have the tissues handy.

Sparkling Sputnik

Sonya and Joe Piaskoski were married Oct. 5, 1957 — one day after the Russians launched Sputnik I (the world's first artificial satellite). By Dec. 20, Sonya recalls, they were having their first spat over something that she's sure was completely trivial but mattered a great deal at the time. The result? A refusal to shop for their first Christmas tree ornaments until Dec. 20, when the selection was, at best, a little sparse. "We thought we'd get something really beautiful, but there weren't any great choices to make," she recalls. One shining ornament did appeal to the

From the touching to the truly kitschy, Herald readers tell us about their treasured ornaments — and the stories behind them

couple, however: a large, plastic, spiky orb. "We thought we were so modern," she says.

They nicknamed their purchase "Sputnik" and placed it on the top of the tree that year and for several years afterwards — until they began to suspect that perhaps their "modern" choice wasn't quite as tasteful as they'd thought. They couldn't, however, bring themselves to get rid of it.

"Through the years, Sputnik has been camouflaged in every way I could think of — demoted to the back branches, nestled in lower branches, tucked in behind gift boxes at the base of the tree, festooned with tinsel, bedecked with balls or ribbons, but never retired," she says. "It lights up, so

it always has a little glow, no matter where it is." Tongue firmly in cheek, she adds that visitors were likely awestruck by its magnificence at the time, along with that of their equally avant-garde Arborite furniture. "I'm sure they had a lot to talk about on their way home," she says.

The good news is that Sonya and Joe had a "glorious 'do'" for their 50th wedding anniversary in October. And Sonya admits to giving Sputnik an affectionate pat as she extricates it from the innards of their Christmas tree, for evoking "50 years of sweet memories of youth and love."

A Legacy of Love

A small pasta angel that Melanie Cattanchi received for Christmas 1999 is her most cherished ornament, but this one wasn't made by a child's tiny, glue-daubed fingers. "We all knew it was going to be my father's last Christmas, as he was nearing the end of a 21-month-long battle with brain cancer," she says. "It was just before Thanksgiving that year when we found out the tumour was no longer responding to treatments. My dad's wish was to die at home with his family at his side."

The family hired a private nurse to help with her father's care. "Linda turned out to be

not only a nurse but an angel sent to us to help us prepare for our loss," she says. "Before my father became too ill, she embarked on a plan to create a Christmas gift from my father for every family member. Secretly, she helped Dad glue and paint the pasta to craft these little angels."

The secret was almost revealed when Linda realized how hard it would be to get all the evidence of paint and glue off Dad's hands. (But) she managed to get his hands clean and the gifts were lovingly placed under the tree with the tag stating "to my angels."

Cattanchi says that every family member received a macaroni angel — and a card into which Linda had transcribed Cattanchi's father's words, explaining how he felt about them and what they meant to him. The gift turned out to be particularly poignant; by Christmas, her father was in and out of a coma, and he passed away on New Year's Eve.

"Time heals," she says. "Every year, when I get the angel out, I just feel closer to my dad. It's a reminder of what my dad meant to me and what I meant to him. You can never replace that person — (but) they're always there, and just a little more there when the angel is displayed at this time of year."

Touched by an Angel

Darlene Clarke has been collecting angels for more than 25 years, but says there's one in particular — an antique porcelain version at least 60 years old, her full skirt hiding a little bell — that touches her heart in a special way. The story goes back to Christmas 2001, when she was hosting an open house to share her angel collection.

"My dear friend Lyla brought along an angel gift for me," she says. "The card said 'Here is a little antique angel to add to your collection! This was Aunt Gwen's. When I was a little girl, I saw this little angel with her two companions every Christmas. They were placed on their mantel with care. I'd like you to have this one. God Bless.'"

Clarke says Lyla's aunt Gwen had been a good friend — the two had met in the 1970s through a church that they both attended, and in fact taught Sunday School together.

"The fact that Lyla chose to split that angel trio to share one with me is the true measure of love and friendship," she says. "Instead of purchasing something, she brought that angel... she knew how much I appreciated her aunt."

Even better, the angel also reminds Clarke of a cardboard angel that was a gift card from her parents and that she's hung on the tree every year since she was a pre-teen. One day, she says, she'll pass on the antique angel — and the story — to her granddaughter.

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AROUND THE HOUSE

Swish 'n' squish

RECYCLING • The Alberta Dairy Council sent the environmentally tip-filled milk container recycling calendars to 1.2 million households in the province in early December to encourage every resident to "Waste-Less."

"There's an average of one (milk) container per household a week that's not getting recycled," says recycling program co-ordinator Roberta Windrum. "We're asking Albertans to give those containers back so they can be recycled into new products."

Serious eco-households can even sign a pledge and keep a record of the milk containers they recycle every month at wastelesschallenge.com. There's more info at milkcontainerrecycling.com.

Trim the tree and your bills

CONSERVATION • When you reduce your electricity consumption, you're not only doing good things for the environment and your monthly bills, but you'll be helping the provincial power grid, too.

Alberta hit a not-so-great record on Dec. 3, when we drew 9,701 megawatts of electricity — an all-time record. The Alberta Electric System Operator isn't suggesting we douse holiday lights, but try these measures to conserve power:

- Put indoor and outdoor Christmas lights on a timer.
- Use energy-conserving LED lights indoors and out for decorating and compact fluorescent for regular lighting.
- Put block heaters on timers. You only need one to two hours of warming before starting the car.
- Turn off unnecessary lights and entertainment appliances.
- Avoid peak load times by not operating major appliances until after 7 p.m.

Neff cabinets come to Calgary

RENOVATING • Custom cabinet maker Silver Bow Woodcraft is the new Western Canada dealer for Neff cabinets, a Toronto-based line of top-quality cabinetry.

The Neff line features contemporary, Louis Philippe and Victorian lines, high gloss exotic veneers, and metallic finishes in almost any colour.

Find Neff cabinetry in the Silver Bow showroom at 6915 32nd Ave. N.W., near the intersection of Sarcee Trail and the Trans-Canada Highway or check out silverbowwoodcraft.com and neffweb.com.

— Compiled by Yvonne Jeffery, Calgary Herald



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Spruce Cliff, \$435,000
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Westgate Park, with huge pool & gym. On future proposed LRT line, upgraded 914 sq suite, granite counters, 2 bedroom/2 bath, huge balcony, north & west views to mountains, 2 indoor parking spots.



Erlton, \$475,000
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One of the most upgraded suites in the Waterford! 1065 sq, 2 bedrooms/2 baths, extensive use of porcelain tiles, granite counters thru-out, fireplace, solid maple cabinets, stainless steel appliances.



Downtown, \$525,000
#608, 920 - 5 Avenue, SW
1004 sq condo with incredible 1600 sq. ft. terrace! Make this your oasis in the city, entertain in style! New construction, 2 bedroom/2 bath, south & west exposure, granite in kitchen, wood floors, concierge.



Montreux, \$629,000
191 St Moritz Drive, SW
New home with developed basement! almost 2000 sq ft + basement! Island kitchen, dark maple cabinets, hardwood floors, fireplace, 3+ 1 bedrooms & den, Family room, bedroom & bath dev'd down.



Christie Park, \$649,000
68 Christie Park Hill, SW
On the ridge, with sweeping city views! Pie lot, developed walkout basement! 1981 sq home, updated w/ extensive hardwood floors, skylights & granite counters in kitchen & bathrooms. 5 bedroom/4 bath.