

# Cheers to Christmas Spirit

*Classic holiday films inspire creative cocktails*

For most of us, it's not really Christmas until our favorite festive flick comes on. From "A Christmas Carol" (Muppet or otherwise) and "A Christmas Story" to "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" and "Die Hard" (don't listen to Bruce Willis — it qualifies), beloved films are a key part of many holiday celebrations.

This year, take the cheer up a notch and enjoy a cocktail that pays homage to a Christmas movie. Gather with family or friends and watch Will Ferrell discover (the hard way) that the yellow ones don't stop in "Elf" while sipping a St. Nick Special that captures Buddy's adventures in the mail room.

Feeling a little more old school? How about a Christmas old-fashioned, a nod to Frank Capra's 1946 classic "It's a Wonderful Life."

For some quality it's-so-bad-it's-good viewing, dust off the "Star Wars Holiday Special" and enjoy the Darth & Stormy in a kitschy Darth Vader tiki mug. (Find out where to get one on page 14. You're welcome.)

'Tis the time for schnapps, whipped cream and whiskey, and the drinks mentioned above and found on the following pages embrace those seasonal ingredients — and more — in unique and playful ways.

## "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"

— The Red Rudolph, with orange curaçao, cinnamon schnapps and whipped cream, is on the sweet side, making it the perfect night cap when dinner is done, the dishes are put away, and it's time to settle in for this seasonal favorite. Just warm up some cranberry juice and start the yearly Herbie/Herme debate.



## < The Red Rudolph

courtesy mixthatdrink.com

- 1/2 ounce orange curaçao
- 3/4 ounce cinnamon schnapps
- 1/2 ounce vodka
- 6 ounces cranberry juice
- Whipped cream
- Sugar pearls for garnish

Heat the cranberry juice until it's nice and hot. Pour all the ingredients except the cranberry juice into an Irish coffee mug. Slowly add the hot cranberry juice. Top it with whipped cream and garnish with sugar sprinkles or pearls.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIXTHATDRINK.COM



BY BILL BURKE

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**“Elf”** — Buddy the Elf (Will Ferrell) is raised as an elf at the North Pole, until Santa reveals the truth of his progeny. Buddy travels through the Candy Cane Forest, the Lincoln Tunnel (among other places) to reach his father in New York City. There, he's relegated to the mail room (smells like mushrooms) where he befriends a surly co-worker and shares “syrup and coffee” with him. The perfect pairing then — a holiday-themed cocktail with whiskey (syrup) and coffee. Consider serving it in a Santa mug (\$40 for a set of four at Pottery Barn: potterybarn.com/products/figural-santa-mugs).

### The St. Nick Special

courtesy howsweeteats.com

- 6 ounces freshly brewed hot coffee
- ½ ounce whiskey
- 1-2 ounces Irish cream liqueur
- Whipped cream
- Marshmallows
- Flaked salt

### Homemade hot fudge

- 1 ½ cups powdered sugar
- 1 14-ounce can full-fat coconut milk
- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup high-quality dark chocolate

### For the cocktail:

Stir together the hot coffee, whiskey, Irish cream and a drop of hot fudge in a mug until the hot fudge starts to melt. Rim the mug with more hot fudge and top with whipped cream, marshmallows and crushed peppermints. Sprinkle on some flaked salt and enjoy.

### For the hot fudge:

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan over medium heat and stir. Cook, stirring often, until the mixture comes to a boil. Let it boil and bubble for 8-10 minutes, stirring the entire time. Once the chocolate is melted, set the pan aside and let the chocolate cool completely and thicken. Use while warm, or microwave for 10 seconds to reheat.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HOWSWEETEATS.COM

“The Year Without a Santa Claus” — Santa’s a little down in the dumps and opts to sit this one out. Mrs. Claus, Jingle and Jangle head out to Southtown to try to get the big man to turn up. This cocktail probably would’ve helped expedite the process. It’s anchored by Maker’s Mark 46, which benefits from an innovative finishing process that amplifies the bolder, more complex flavors without the bitterness that can be typical of longer-aged whiskies.

### Santa's Turn Up

courtesy townandcountrymag.com

- 1 ½ ounces Maker’s Mark 46
- ¼ ounce Oloroso sherry
- ¼ ounce benedictine
- Orange peel for garnish

Stir all ingredients together over ice. Strain into a coupe glass and garnish with an orange peel.



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Spirits

**“It’s a Wonderful Life”** — For many, it’s just not Christmas until George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) discovers Zuzu’s petals in his pocket. This 1946 Frank Capra film is a holiday classic, which means any cocktail paired with it should be equally classic. The cranberry simple syrup provides an added touch of holiday flavor, while maintaining the classic character of an old-fashioned.

### Christmas Old-Fashioned

*courtesy gastronomiblog.com*

- 2 ounces rye whiskey
- 2 dashes Angostura bitters
- 1 ounce cranberry simple syrup (see recipe, below)
- 3 cranberries
- Orange wedge
- Ice

#### For the cocktail:

If desired, rim glass with sugar. Crush (don’t muddle) the cranberries in a glass. Add rye and simple syrup. Top with bitters and stir. Add ice, garnish with orange slice and more cranberries.

#### For the cranberry simple syrup:

- 2 cups fresh cranberries
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup sugar, divided
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups granulated sugar



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GASTRONOMBLOG.COM

Combine 2 cups of granulated sugar and water in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring mixture until the sugar dissolves. Bring to a simmer; remove from heat. Don’t boil or the cranberries may pop when you add them. Stir in the cranberries, pour mixture into a bowl. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Drain cranberries in a colander over a bowl, reserving steeping liquid — this is your cranberry simple syrup. Store in an airtight jar or container in the fridge for up to a week.

**“Star Wars Holiday Special”** — This one’s just weird. Chewbacca’s family is preparing to celebrate Life Day on the Wookiee home planet of Kashyyyk, only he’s delayed after being hunted by the Empire. There are wookiees in aprons, odd song choices, long stretches where the only dialogue is Chewy’s family grunting, and Jefferson Starship. Suggestion: The Darth & Stormy will act as a palate cleanser.

### Darth & Stormy

*courtesy bgreynolds.com*

- $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce cinnamon syrup
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces Demerara rum
- $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce lime juice
- 3 ounces ginger beer

Pour all ingredients and ice into a mug (bonus points if you’ve got a Darth Vader tiki mug, \$19.99 at BG Reynolds.com). Stir gently and garnish with a cinnamon stick.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BGREYNOLDS.COM

**“Dr. Seuss’s How the Grinch Stole Christmas”** — This classic needs no explanation. Too bad the Grinch didn’t have one of these!

### The Grinch

*courtesy skrewballwhiskey.com*

- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  ounces Skrewball Peanut Butter Whiskey
- $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce white crème de cacao
- $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce green crème de menthe
- $\frac{3}{4}$  ounce half and half

Chocolate shavings for garnish

Shake all ingredients together vigorously and strain into a coupe glass. Garnish with chocolate shavings.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SKREWBALLWHISKEY.COM