Loafing Around



You may have discovered that baking homemade bread isn't always simple. Instead of getting a loaf of light, airy, chewy bread with a crispy crust, you end up with a dense, heavy loaf that is more like a brick. On November 17, Homemade Bread Day, follow these tips for baking the perfect loaf.

Yeast may be the most important ingredient in bread because it creates the bubbles that make bread rise. It also develops flavor. There are two common types of yeast: instant and active dry. The two can be used interchangeably, but active dry needs to be proofed (dissolved in warm water) and given more time to work. Yeast is a living thing that thrives between 70° and 100°F, but cooler conditions are best for a slow rise that builds flavor. Water should not be too cold or too hot because it will also affect the environment for the yeast. All-purpose flour works fine, but bread flour has more protein, which better develops gluten.

Kneading is important to develop the gluten that makes the dough elastic and silky smooth. It also helps the dough keep its shape while the yeast develops gas and inflates the dough like a balloon. After kneading, you must wait. How long depends on humidity, altitude, and temperature. Your dough should roughly double in size. A good test of doneness is to press your finger into the dough. It should leave an impression.

The best ovens need to stay very hot. Some people use baking stones or Dutch ovens because, when preheated, they retain heat for baking. A spray bottle will also help you create steam inside your oven. Place your dough onto your preheated surface, spray it with water, and score or slice the top of your dough with a knife. Let it bake for about 15 minutes, and then open the oven and spray the inside to create more steam. The steam encourages a crispy crust. Sit back and allow your bread to finish baking. Before long, you will have a beautiful, golden-brown loaf.

November Birthdays

Those born between November 1–21 are Scorpios. Scorpios are passionate and assertive leaders who value honesty and fairness above all. Betray a Scorpio and suffer the scorpion sting, but befriend a Scorpio, and you will have a friend for life. Those born between November 22–30 are Archers of Sagittarius. Confident and lucky, Archers often find success. Their infectious enthusiasm attracts friends to help them achieve their ambitious and lofty goals.

Marie Antoinette (queen) – Nov. 2, 1755
Art Carney (actor) – Nov. 4, 1918
John Philip Sousa (conductor) – Nov. 6, 1854
Carl Sagan (astronomer) – Nov. 9, 1934
Jonathan Winters (actor) – Nov. 11, 1925
Petula Clark (singer) – Nov. 15, 1932
Mickey Mouse (cartoon) – Nov. 18, 1928
Boris Karloff (actor) – Nov. 23, 1887
Tina Turner (singer) – Nov. 26, 1939
Jimi Hendrix (musician) – Nov. 27, 1942
Mandy Patinkin (actor) – Nov. 30, 1952

All in Your Head



November 17 may be a day to make your own bread, but November 28 is a day to Make Your Own Head. Paint a self-portrait, or use clay or papier-mâché or even mashed potatoes—the only rule on this crafty day is that the head you make must be your own. Because selfies are ubiquitous these days, scientists have good reason to explore why we are so obsessed with ourselves. Psychologist Judy Weiser believes that self-portraiture can be a powerful act of healing. True self-portraiture allows us to filter out all the input we get from others and be honest with ourselves. The person creating their own head sees themselves anew with their own eyes, building self-acceptance, self-esteem, and self-knowledge. The finished project doesn't have to be perfect; the fun lies in seeing yourself in a whole new way.

November 2026

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Celebrating November

Memoir Writing Month

Diabetes Month

Inspirational Role Models Month

Fill Our Staplers Day
November 2

Use Your Common Sense Day
November 4

Dear Santa Letter Week
November 8–14

Go to an Art Museum Day
November 9

Veterans Day (U.S.) / Remembrance Day (Canada)
November 11

Apple Cider Day
November 18

Gingerbread Cookie Day
November 21

Thanksgiving Day (U.S.)
November 26

Small Business Saturday
November 28

From Kitty Hawk to the Stars

November is the perfect time to celebrate aviation. National STEM/STEAM Day on November 8 highlights the science and engineering behind flight; Veterans Day on November 11 honors those who have served in the U.S. armed forces; and National Aviation History Month recognizes the remarkable advances that have transformed the way we live.

The story begins on December 17, 1903, near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. On that windy day, Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved the first sustained, controlled, powered flight of a heavier-than-air aircraft. Orville's first flight lasted just 12 seconds and covered only 120 feet, but it proved that powered flight was possible. Before long, the brothers were making longer, more controlled flights, laying the foundation for modern aviation.

Their achievement was much more than a mechanical breakthrough. It combined science, engineering, mathematics, and careful experimentation—exactly the skills celebrated during National STEM/STEAM Day. The Wright brothers tested hundreds of wing designs in a homemade wind tunnel and solved problems that had frustrated inventors for decades. Their success showed how persistence and innovation can turn an ambitious idea into reality.

Aviation advanced rapidly during the 20th century. Airplanes became increasingly important during World Wars I and II, serving in reconnaissance, transportation, rescue missions, and combat. Veterans Day is an opportunity to recognize the pilots, crews, mechanics, and support personnel whose service helped shape aviation history.

After the wars, commercial aviation expanded dramatically. Air travel connected distant places, boosted trade, delivered emergency supplies, and made international travel routine. The spirit of flight also paved the way for space exploration. Today's astronauts and aerospace engineers continue building on more than a century of aviation advances. National Aviation History Month reminds us that one 12-second flight at Kitty Hawk changed transportation, military history, and exploration forever.

November 2026

Destination Mars



Mars is the fourth planet from the sun and our planetary neighbor. Named after the Roman god of war, it is also called the “Red Planet” because of its rusty, iron-rich surface. Many scientists believe Mars could someday become humanity’s next destination beyond the moon, and space agencies and private companies continue developing technologies to make that goal possible. Take some time on November 28, Red Planet Day, to learn about humankind’s Martian aspirations.

NASA has now been exploring Mars with robotic rovers for more than two decades. *Curiosity* continues studying the planet’s geology and ancient climate, while the newer *Perseverance* rover is collecting rock samples that scientists hope to return to Earth in the future. Researchers have found abundant evidence that liquid water once flowed across Mars, although today’s surface is too cold and dry for stable liquid water. Vast deposits of water ice remain frozen beneath the surface and at the polar ice caps.

Where there is water, there may once have been microbial life. Scientists continue searching for signs that Mars may have supported life billions of years ago. Meanwhile, space agencies around the world are studying how humans might one day live and work on the Red Planet. NASA, the European Space Agency, and others are testing new technologies, while Japan’s JAXA is researching robotic systems that could assist future explorers with construction, maintenance, and scientific work before astronauts arrive.

Elon Musk’s company, SpaceX, continues developing Starship, a massive spacecraft designed for missions to the moon and, eventually, Mars. Although the ambitious timelines once proposed have slipped, Musk still envisions establishing a self-sustaining settlement on the Red Planet. Mars remains one of the most exciting frontiers in space exploration.

Redheads Rule

According to the creators of Love Your Red Hair Day on November 5, red hair is more than a color—it’s a lifestyle. Why did red-headed sisters Stephanie and Adrienne Vendetti create this holiday? Because they were tired of redheads being the brunt of jokes.

Redheads possess a genetic mutation, a recessive gene known as MC1R. Making up only 2 percent of the population, they have the rarest hair color in the world. Perhaps their scarcity is why they were thought to be vampires by ancient Greeks and witches in medieval Europe. The facts about red hair are far less worrisome. Compared to brunettes and blonds, redheads actually have less hair (only about 90,000 strands compared to 140,000), though red hair is thicker. For some reason, redheads are also more likely to be left-handed. The world’s best-known redhead, Lucille Ball, was not left-handed or a natural redhead. According to her longtime hairdresser, her hair was “golden apricot.” Ball kept her red hair dye locked away in a safe.

Lights, Camera, *Casablanca*



One of the most famous movies of all time, *Casablanca* premiered in New York City on November 26, 1942. The World War II drama boasted many Hollywood stars, including Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. It was nominated for eight Academy Awards and won three, including Best Picture. But *Casablanca* was more than an award-winning movie. In November 1942, Allied forces staged “Operation Torch,” an invasion of Northern Africa that captured Casablanca, the very same setting as the film. Many consider *Casablanca* a propaganda film, with Bogart’s character, Rick, symbolizing American freedom, liberty, and equality.

Pixar’s Big Break



In 1995, few people had heard of Pixar or the acronym *CGI* (computer-generated imagery). But after the release of *Toy Story* on November 22, 1995, audiences around the world witnessed a groundbreaking achievement in filmmaking. For nearly 60 years, animated feature films had relied on vast teams of artists drawing every frame by hand, but *Toy Story* became the first feature-length movie created entirely with CGI. Pixar accomplished this feat with a team of 27 computer animators.

The story of toys coming to life was simple, delightful, and a box office smash. But long before Woody and Buzz, there was a little character named Luxo Jr., a living, hopping desk lamp. In 1986, Steve Jobs of Apple fame purchased the small computer graphics company that would become Pixar from none other than George Lucas, the creator of *Star Wars*. The budding company employed a young director named John Lasseter, who created the animated short *Luxo Jr.* The film was only two minutes long, but it was a landmark in 3D computer animation. It earned an Oscar nomination, and the little desk lamp went on to become Pixar’s famous logo and mascot.

While Pixar’s history includes well-known figures like Jobs, Lucas, and Lasseter, countless engineers, artists, and programmers helped pioneer breakthrough after breakthrough in computer animation. *Monsters, Inc.* (2001) introduced remarkably realistic digital fur, while *Finding Nemo* (2003) pushed the boundaries of underwater animation with lifelike currents, bubbles, and lighting. Later films such as *Cars*, *Ratatouille*, *WALL·E*, *Inside Out*, *Coco*, and *Elemental* continued raising the bar for visual storytelling. Today, Pixar remains one of the world’s most influential animation studios, and the techniques it helped develop have transformed not only animated films but also live-action movies, television, streaming productions, and video games.

A Line Through Time

November 1 is a holiday celebrating an invisible line. At the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England, that line, known as the prime meridian, was actually a strip of brass running down the sidewalk (now replaced by stainless steel due to wear and tear). Prime Meridian Day commemorates the International Meridian Conference, a meeting of 25 nations in 1884 to establish the line passing through Greenwich as the offfical 0° longitude marker and the baseline for the world’s time zones. Technically, standing with a foot on either side means that you are standing with one foot in the western hemisphere and one foot in the eastern.

Fridge Refresh



Poor refrigerators. They are one of the most important parts of the kitchen—they keep our food fresh, after all—but we pay little attention to them until something goes wrong. They suffer spills, odors, and endless overcrowding. With the Thanksgiving holiday just days away, it makes sense that November 15 is Clean Out Your Refrigerator Day.

It’s not too early to start making room for all those leftovers. According to homemaking guru Martha Stewart, the best way to clean the fridge is to turn off its power at the breaker. Throw away all spoiled or long-unused items, and put the remainder in a cooler. Let the interior of the fridge come to room temperature before removing shelves and drawers. A solution of two tablespoons of baking soda per quart of hot water will both clean and deodorize. Don’t use soap. It may leave behind odors that your food will absorb. When finished, turn the power back on, give the fridge a few hours to chill, and restock it. Does it still smell? Add an opened box of baking soda to improve the odor.