

Holiday market magic

Deck the halls – and more – with help from these holiday markets

by **Doug Wallace**



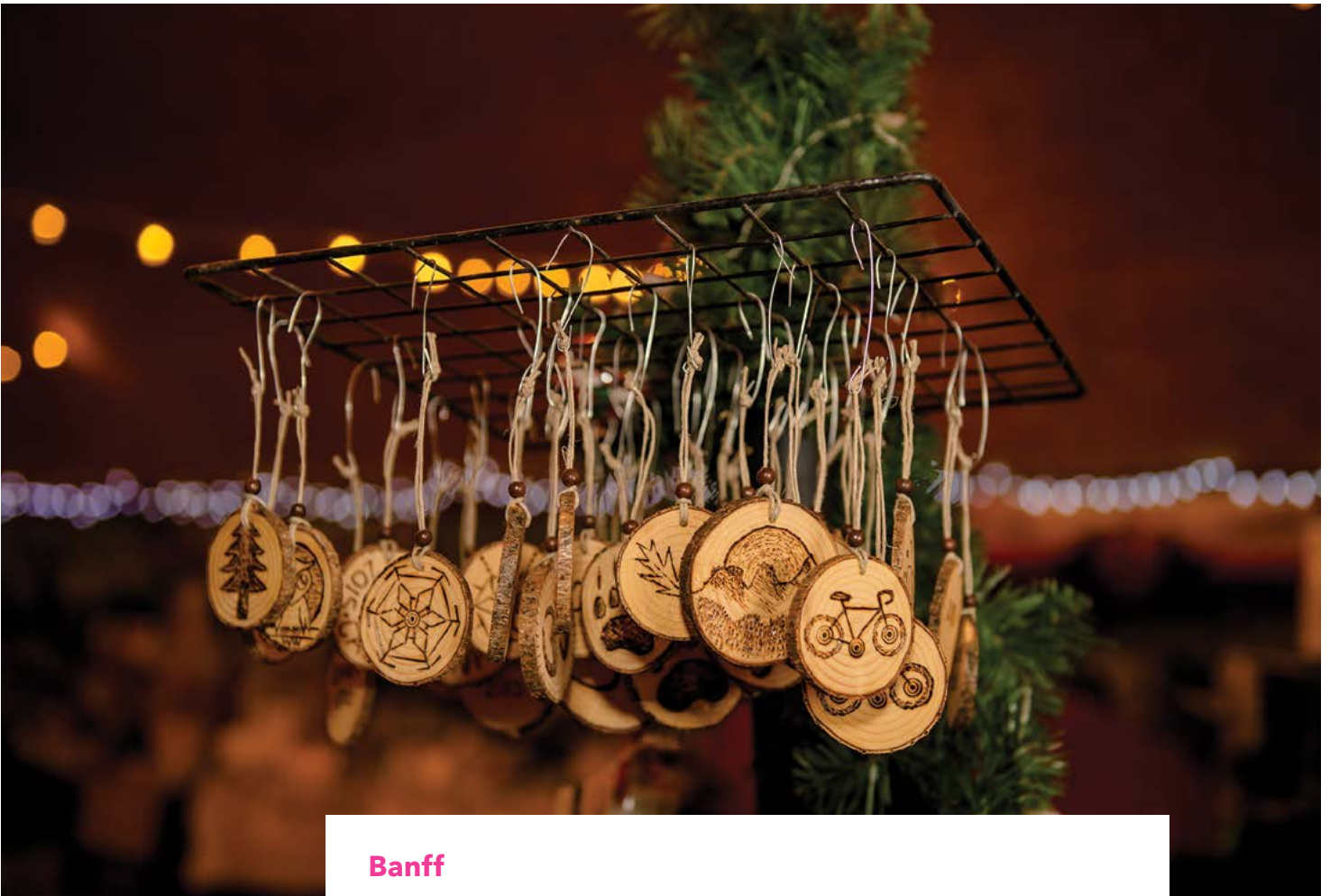
Can you hear the sleigh bells? Annual holiday spirit comes alive at Canada's best European-style holiday markets – so great for bundled-up family fun. Shopping lists are checked off at lightning speed and holiday cheer is spread happily around. The old bearded fellow himself may well find his way there, too.

Montreal

There are a number of holiday bazaars in Montreal, but the Great Montreal Christmas Market at Quartier des Spectacles is the best all-round outing, thanks in part to its proximity to the extremely good Le Central gourmet food hall and the new Esplanade Tranquille public square, which features a skating rink. You can easily make an adventure out of your visit to the 30 chalets displaying the goods of local and regional artisans.

QUARTIERDESSPECTACLES.COM

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BOTTOM PHOTO, SUSAN MOSS TOURISME MONTREAL



Banff

More than 80 artisanal vendors from the Bow Valley and surrounding regions gather at Warner Stables in Banff National Park in the weeks leading up to the 25th. Old World traditions here include giftware, live music, hot pretzels and sweet treats. Expect cocktails and mulled wine in the outdoor fire lounge and, of course, the dazzling Santa's House. Make a note to buy your tickets in advance.

BANFFCHRISTMASMARKET.COM

Toronto

The recently rebranded Distillery Winter Village sees the pedestrian-only cobblestones of the old Gooderham & Worts Distillery District filled with twinkling lights, artisanal wares and seasonal treats. Anchored by a 50-foot-tall tree, this holiday paradise is woven into the permanent boutiques, galleries, restaurants and microbreweries, housed in what is the largest collection of Victorian industrial architecture in North America.

THEDISTILLERYWINTERVILLAGE.COM



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BOTTOM PHOTO, COURTESY OF DISTILLERY WINTER VILLAGE

Millarville, Alberta

For the first two weekends in November, day-trippers head to the hamlet of Millarville in Foothills County, just outside Calgary, for this market, which is held at the racetrack. One of the premier craft shows in Alberta, this event sports handcrafted wares in both indoor and outdoor venues, supported with food trucks, great music, live reindeer and a visit from You Know Who. Yes, there will also be elves.

MILLARVILLERACETRACK.COM/CHRISTMAS-MARKET



Winnipeg

As Canada's biggest champion of handmade Canadian crafts, Signatures Handmade Market knows how to do the holidays up right. About 150 vendors converge on Winnipeg's RBC Convention Centre for three days in late November to showcase their holiday wares: decorations, home decor items, jewellery, artwork and food. This is Winnipeg's premier holiday shopping event, with handmade gifts that last a lifetime.

SIGNATURES.CA/WINNIPEG

Charlottetown

The Charlottetown Christmas Festival does it up right, spreading holiday joy throughout various parts of town, with artisans and craftspeople coming together for old-fashioned good cheer. Prince Edward Island's premier holiday market lasts a whole month — plenty of time to get in on the light displays, outdoor Victorian market, a Whoville-esque village, Peake's Wharf Christmas Village, walking tours and wine tastings. Other fun fringe benefits include live music, horse and wagon rides, and entertainment for the kids.

DISCOVERCHARLOTTETOWN.COM



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Quebec City

Two words: German cakes! The German Christmas Market, the largest holiday shopping spree in Old Quebec, features gifts and handmade wares created by more than 90 exhibitors, plus German treats – bratwurst, mulled wine, gingerbread and more – terroir products and pop-up performances. The festive atmosphere, traditional wood kiosks and twinkly lights mirror the renowned markets of Europe. Go for the goods – and stay for the live performances, choirs and free activities.

QUEBEC-CITE.COM

Vancouver

Coal Harbour sets the scene for a European-inspired village of old, where you can shop for festive gifts by more than 80 local artisans. Sweet and savoury delicacies are paired with mulled wine, plus German and Austrian beers. Visitors can enjoy live entertainment on the “Flying Stage,” and there are scavenger hunts for the kids. The market is also great for a lunchtime visit or an after-work drink. Yuletide fun times ahead, including festive photo ops. Tag them @VanChristmas.

VANCOUVERCHRISTMASMARKET.COM



Kitchener

Kitchener is home to the largest German community in Canada, so they have the holiday traditions down pat. More than 100 vendors congregate in early December for Christkindl, which offers a large indoor component along with outdoor fun. City Hall, Carl Zehr Square and King Street host traditional kiosks filled with handmade gifts. Visitors can also enjoy delectable food, special German treats, mulled wine, and music and dance performances.

CHRISTKINDL.CA 🍷



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