

Celebrate our nation's birthday!

Mark the 250th anniversary of the founding of America with these fun ideas for enjoying this historic holiday, including making a commemorative craft and patriotic recipes.

On July 4 we celebrate Independence Day, the federal holiday that commemorates the approval of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. (See page 12 to read about this historic document.) This year, the Fourth of July is particularly special nationwide, since it marks the semiquincentennial—250th anniversary—of the founding of the United States. Here's how you can get ready to celebrate America's big birthday!

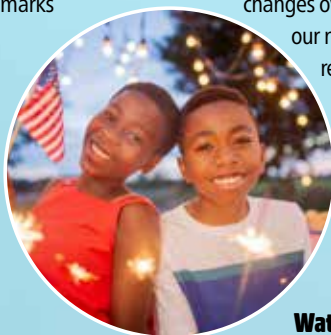
Get in the spirit

You can prepare for Independence Day by hanging an American flag and planning to wear something red, white, and blue on the holiday. You can also create a 2026 time capsule (see the opposite page) as a fun personal keepsake of this special year.

Find out about local history

Historical landmarks near you provide a great way to learn about America's roots. With an adult's help, search online for a national historic park, district, or monument in your area. You can also check to see if any local

museums are hosting special events or exhibits in honor of America's 250th anniversary. A visit may reveal interesting insights about the people and places who built our nation and how your own town or city has experienced changes over the past 250 years. Another way to explore the history of our nation is by reading more about it. (See our nonfiction book recommendations starting on page 22.)



Plan a Fourth of July celebration

Talk to your family about how you'll observe the Fourth of July. Together, you could plan a cookout and prepare the patriotic recipes on these pages. You can also arrange fun games, like three-legged races, Hula-Hoop contests, and water-bucket relay races.

Watch the fireworks

Look into attending a local professional fireworks display with your family. Bring a blanket or lawn chairs, bug spray, and earplugs in case you want to use them. Have fun watching the spectacle in the sky and predicting which color will appear next. Happy Fourth of July!

Stars and stripes snack board

What you'll need

- Baking sheet with rimmed sides
- Star-shaped cookie cutters (optional)

RED

- One 16-ounce container of strawberries
- Two 6-ounce containers of raspberries
- A few slices of watermelon

WHITE

- Round rice crackers
- Vanilla meringue cookies
- Yogurt-covered pretzels
- Mini marshmallows
- White cheddar cheese

BLUE

- One 6-ounce container of blackberries
- 1 dry pint of blueberries

Instructions

1. Wash and thoroughly dry any fruit, patting it dry with a paper towel if needed.
2. If you'd like to make star shapes out of watermelon or cheese, first cut foods into thin slices (½ inch thick or less), then use cookie cutters to cut out stars. Save these for the final step.
3. Line a baking tray with a layer of paper towels to absorb extra moisture.
4. Arrange blue section in upper left corner of the tray.
5. Build the first few stripes around the blue section to help hold it in place. Start with the largest foods first, like strawberries or meringue cookies.
6. Add the first few inches of the remaining stripes below, adjusting the width of each stripe as needed so everything fits evenly.
7. Fill in the rest of the stripes. Stack flatter items, like crackers or yogurt-covered pretzels, on their sides.



8. Fill empty spots with small foods like raspberries or mini marshmallows. Finish with star foods on top.

TIP: If you plan to make the board in advance, do so no more than a few hours to 1 day ahead to avoid sogginess. Store it covered in the refrigerator. Add dry items, like crackers and cookies, right before serving.

ON DISPLAY

The flag that inspired "The Star-Spangled Banner" is kept at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

How to...



Time capsule keepsake

What you'll need

- A wood box from a craft store or a shoebox
- Paint and paintbrush (optional)
- Letter stickers or a paint pen (optional)
- Decorative stickers (optional)
- A photo with your family
- A magazine or newspaper
- A note to your future self
- Current currency, like a dollar bill or coin
- Your artwork, writing, or classwork you're proud of
- A friendship bracelet
- A small toy
- Awards or medals
- A movie ticket
- A theater program

Instructions

1. Paint your box. Let it dry completely.
2. Label your box with the year 2026 and any other information you wish to add. You can use letter stickers or a paint pen.
3. Fill your box with mementoes. See the list at left and the photo above for ideas.
4. Choose an "open" date. It could be five, 10, or 20 years from now! Keep a reminder note somewhere safe and easy to find with the open date and the location of your capsule.
5. Store your time capsule indoors in a spot that stays dry and does not get extremely hot or freezing cold. For example, you can put it on a high shelf, or behind boxes in a closet or storage room.

Red, white, and blue smoothie

What you'll need

RED LAYER

- 1½ cups frozen strawberries (or a mix of frozen strawberries and raspberries)
- ½ cup red or clear juice (like cranberry or white grape)
- 1 tablespoon honey (optional)

WHITE LAYER

- 2 small frozen bananas (or 1½ large frozen bananas)
- 1 cup vanilla yogurt
- ½ cup milk (dairy or plant-based)

BLUE LAYER

- Reserved white layer mixture
- Blue food coloring

Instructions

1. Clear space in the freezer to fit glasses upright.
2. Blend red layer ingredients until smooth. Pour into glasses until about one-third full. Freeze 15 minutes. Rinse blender.
3. Blend white layer ingredients until smooth. Remove the glasses from freezer and pour in white layer gently over back of a spoon (this helps to slow the pour and keep layers separate). Fill until glasses are about two-thirds full. Return glasses to freezer for 15 minutes.
4. Add a few drops of blue food coloring to the remaining white layer mixture and blend. (Add more coloring for a deeper shade of blue if you prefer.) Chill the pitcher in the freezer for a few minutes.
5. Remove glasses from freezer and pour in the blue layer over the back of a spoon. Enjoy immediately. Makes 2 large pint-glass drinks or up to 4 small juice-glass drinks.

WARNING!

Ask an adult's permission before using the blender.

