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A DRIVER'S GUIDE TO SAFE HOLIDAY TRAVELS

On Sept. 24, 2019, more than 2.5 million people passed through TSA checkpoints at airports across America. On the same date this year, those terminals saw just 826,316 travelers — a nearly 70% drop. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Americans have been thinking twice about air travel, and this holiday, millions of would-be flyers will set out on road trips instead.

Road tripping is a great way to avoid contact with a lot of people, but it can also be dangerous, especially in winter weather. Fortunately, you can take several steps to keep your family safe. Getting your car checked before you go, for example, can save you a lot of hassle on the road, as can investing in a set of snow tires. It's also smart to take precautions such as letting a friend or

family member know your route, predicted arrival time, and where you plan to stop for gas along the way.

Apart from that, one of the best things you can do is pack an emergency kit. AAA sells premade kits through outlets like Amazon, and you can find a basic kit with things like jumper cables, ponchos, rope, batteries, pliers, zip ties, and a first-aid kit at pretty much any Walmart or sporting goods store. You could even save a life by adding a few more essentials to your kit, like a blanket, snacks, and an extra cellphone charger.

At this point, you're almost a safety black belt. But to take your kit to the next level for winter driving, there are three more little-known items you should



stash in your trunk: a shovel, a bag of sand or cat litter, and an extra bottle of windshield wiper fluid. If you get stuck in a snowbank, the shovel will help you dig your way out without risking frostbitten fingers. The sand or cat litter will boost your traction if you sprinkle it around your wheels in an icy spot, and the extra wiper fluid will make all the difference if you run out during a snowstorm.

Once you're prepared, crank up the Christmas carols and get driving!



THE TALE OF THE \$696 BLAZER

WHY I'M SHOPPING LOCAL FOR THE HOLIDAYS

When I was a young lawyer back in the '90s, I wandered into a beautiful clothing store here in Richmond called Franco's Fine Clothier. I'd been in Franco's before, but I'd never purchased anything — the clothes there are high-quality and expensive, and I was just getting my feet under me in law. But that day in the Lakeside Avenue store, something was different. A particular blazer caught my eye, and I went over to give it a closer look.

I peered at the jacket's price tag, which was hanging under the arm. It was \$696. Could I afford it? I was on a fixed budget, and \$696 was more than I'd ever spent on an item of clothing in my life. But when I picked up the blazer, I knew that I had to have it. I went up to the counter and handed it to the salesman proudly. My grin lasted right up until I saw the price on the scanner.

After tax, the blazer rang up at more than \$1000! I just about croaked. I would never be able to afford that!

"There's got to be a mistake, the coat was only \$696" I told the salesman.

Kindly, he showed me that apparently, I'd read the blazer's price tag upside down. What I'd thought was \$696 was actually \$969. I got pretty embarrassed, and I was about to duck out of the store when the salesman told me, "Wait just a minute," and disappeared into the back. A moment later, he reappeared with Franco Ambrogi, a first-generation Italian immigrant and the owner of the store.

After hearing my story Franco laughed loudly, waved his hand, and said, "Well, we'll give it to him for \$696!" Right then and there, he marked off the price of the blazer by 30% — and I've been a loyal customer ever since.

Looking back, that moment is pure Franco. He's kind, generous, and a real master of his craft. His attention to detail is what has kept me coming back to Franco's year after year, first just for a special piece here and there and later for nearly all of my clothes and tailoring. For a period of time, the only person I trusted to mark up a garment for me was Franco himself, but then I met Derrick Richardson, one of Franco's salesmen at the Short Pump Town Center store. Now, I've been buying clothes exclusively from Derrick for a decade. He has a fantastic eye for color and pattern, and he's



Derrick Richardson and Kevin at Franco's

as big of a Franco fan as I am. When I decided to share this story in my newsletter, I sat down to talk with Derrick about his work.

"Franco started the business in 1972, and he is hands-on. He's 80 years old, and you'd think you were working with a 40-year-old man. He's on six days a week, eight hours a day, and he's the type of owner who won't tell you what to do. Instead, he'll ask you to help him do it," Derrick says.

Derrick has worked at Franco's since 2000, and he has more than 30 years of experience in men's fashion, including working at high-end retailers like AK Rikk's and Britches of Georgetown. He's also a Navy veteran and holds a fine arts degree from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, where he grew up.

"I was always interested in men's clothing, even as a young child," Derrick tells me. "I was interested in dressing and putting fabrics and

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5 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR HOLIDAY EXTRA ECO-FRIENDLY THIS YEAR



Sustainability is the gift that keeps on giving, so if you'd like to give a gift to the environment this December, make your holidays anti-plastic! Here are five ways that you can use the latest eco-friendly technology to make sure your Christmas is just as convenient as ever.

SET UP RECYCLING BINS.

Nobody wants to sort through trash on their holiday, especially if you're hosting all the parties! To avoid dealing with the waste, set up recycling and composting bins before any home holiday festivities. It'll make your next trip to a local recycling center so much faster because everything will be organized and easier to manage.

USE PAPER CONTAINERS FOR LEFTOVERS.

Give your celebration a restaurant-from-home feel by storing and giving away leftovers in paper containers rather than plastic. Paper will dissolve and leave behind much less chemical residue than plastic. Want to make it look extra posh? Stamp the exterior with the family initials!

CHANGE UP YOUR GIFT WRAP.

Why use wrapping paper every year when you can make your packaging extra interesting, colorful, and creative? Use newspapers, magazines, comics, posters, maps, or even art by your kids to conceal your gifts this year.

RENT, BORROW, OR RETHINK YOUR TABLEWARE.

If you're missing proper tableware for your holiday celebration, don't despair — some companies will actually let you rent out their dishes for your special evening! You can also borrow tableware from friends and family. But you don't have to use metal tableware. Try following another culture's customs and serve your food on local ingredients, like palm leaves, coconuts, or wood.

LOCALIZE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

If you can buy ingredients like fresh meat or vegetables from local farms, you won't use as much plastic packaging and you'll support small businesses at the same time!

Never buy one-use plastics if you don't have to. For every holiday tradition, ask yourself: Can I reduce, reuse, or recycle any components to this? We hope you have a happy, eco-friendly holiday!



... continued from Cover

colors together ... My main focus at school was color theory. I learned how to place colors and designs together."

I'm always impressed by Derrick's ability to put different textures and patterns side by side and make everything work. He's well-known for that skill at Franco's, and it has made him the consultant of choice for all kinds of people.

"The clientele I have is just about everyone, from your local delivery guy to the CEOs of a lot of companies in Richmond. I've also had the presidents of universities come in, as well as doctors, lawyers — everyone who wants to be helped," he says.

Derrick and the other sales people at Franco's even make house calls.

"As far as that's concerned, there are several different reasons for it," Derrick explains. "No. 1 is to revamp the closet. I go in, purge things, and decide what needs to be replaced. I'll also go over for a fitting or to talk to a client about what they need before they come into the store."

That level of personal service isn't something you see every day, and I know I'd never get it at most other chain stores. There's no way they'd mark a blazer down by 30% for a kid lawyer off the street. Franco's is something special. Franco, Derrick, and the rest of the team really care about their customers, and you only find that kind of passion and attention to detail in local, family-run shops.

This Christmas, I'm going to do as much of my shopping as possible at places like Franco's, and I hope you will too. 2020 has been a really tough year for Richmond's small businesses, and I know they're counting on us to come through for the holiday season. As Derrick put it, "You can take away Halloween, you can take away Thanksgiving, but for some reason, you're just not going to take away Christmas."

From my family to yours, happy holidays and happy shopping!

Kevin Mottley

THESE RICHMOND CHARITIES NEED YOU

WILL YOU HELP THEM OUT FOR THE HOLIDAYS?

Christmas is the season of giving, and if you have funds or time to spare this holiday season, there are dozens of worthy charities here in Richmond that could use your help. Here are just three fantastic causes seeking donations and volunteers.

CARITAS

The staff at CARITAS are fighting two crises: homelessness and addiction. They run the largest adult emergency center in the Richmond area and work with other organizations like Homeward, Housing Families First, HomeAgain, Virginia Supportive Housing, and The Salvation Army to offer shelter, financial housing support, and invaluable resources to those in need.

Their Furniture Bank provides things like tables, chairs, and welcome home kits to people entering housing, and they also serve 600 daily meals to men recovering from substance use disorders through The Healing Place. CARITAS volunteers can make hygiene kits, share their computer skills, host household item drives, and take dozens of other steps to help others. To learn about volunteering or donating during this tricky time, visit CARITASVA.org.

RENEW RICHMOND

Since 2009, Renew Richmond has fought to make sure every child and adult has access to fresh produce and nutrition information.



They work with local schools in low-income areas to promote food access and educate kids about sustainability and the environment. On top of those programs, Renew Richmond's team is also creating a farm and education center to share their knowledge and resources with the community. To learn more about Renew Richmond and how you can help with their mission, visit Facebook.com/RenewRichmond.

ACCESS NOW

In the middle of a pandemic, medical care is a more vital resource than ever. Access Now understands that, which is why they're working to make sure everyone can access specialty medical care for free, even if they don't have health insurance. Last year, they helped 2,147 patients access care worth over \$4.6 million. Access Now matches patients with clinics who are willing to help, but you don't have to be a medical worker to volunteer! If you're bilingual, they could use your help as a volunteer, and anyone can donate to the organization. Head to AccessNowRVA.org to get started.

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3	1	9	5	4	7	6	8	2
2	4	7	9	8	6	1	3	5
8	9	6	1	3	2	4	5	7



FESTIVE APPLE CIDER

If you're cutting back on calories, skip the eggnog and buttered rum this year and fill up your mug with this delicious mulled cider!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lemon
- 1 gallon pure apple cider
- 1 large orange, thinly sliced crosswise
- 2 tsp whole cloves
- 2 tsp allspice berries
- 1 inch fresh ginger, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp honey
- 3 cinnamon sticks

DIRECTIONS

1. Using a paring knife, shave the lemon peel off in curls. Reserve the curls and save the lemon for use in a different recipe.
2. In a large slow cooker, combine the lemon peel with all other ingredients. Cook on low for 3-4 hours.
3. If desired, use a sieve to strain the spices. Serve and enjoy!

Inspired by BoulderLocavore.com