



## Sunshine, Warm Socks, and Penguin Walks How to Survive a Minnesota Winter

**M**innesota winters are cold. So cold that my kids sometimes have a snow-day equivalent where school is canceled due to dangerously low temperatures. Of course, it's always fun to have a spontaneous day off school, but it's far less fun for my kids when the cold isn't accompanied by snow. Playing in the snow is one sure-fire way to make winter feel a little warmer and brighter.

Snowy weather means we can get outside to do some of the most popular winter activities, like building snowmen, sledding — our current family favorite — and skiing. My youngest is just about at the age where he can get on skis for the first time, so hopefully, some downhill skiing outings are in my family's future! I'm no pro, but I have fun taking to the slopes. We'll see what happens with COVID-19 and my kids in terms of skiing this year.

My kids also love another popular wintertime activity: snowball fights. This

sometimes leads to actual fights among the three of them, though, because a few years back, we bought a snowball maker and they all want to use it. It makes perfect snowballs the size of tennis balls, but of course, only one person can use it at a time. This can be a point of contention, and I sometimes have to remind them that even though the maker is fun, there's always the old-fashioned way of making snowballs with their own hands.

Moving to Minnesota with kids has helped me really appreciate outdoor winter activities, but after years in Brooklyn, I became accustomed to heading indoors to read when the temperature dropped. I love having a fat book or two in the queue to work my way through each winter. This year I'm reading "The Overstory: A Novel" by Richard Powers and "Edison" by Edmund Morris. "Overstory" was the 2019 Pulitzer Prize winner for fiction, and it comes in at over 500 pages. "Edison" is a bestselling biography of Thomas Edison, America's most famous inventor. I'll just say that book weighs 2.5 pounds and let you imagine how long it is!

Aside from reading and playing in the snow, here are my top three winter tips:

- 1. Dress appropriately.** My middle son is renowned for running out in the snow wearing shorts, but don't do that! Layer up, wear boots that have a good tread and are warm, and definitely wear warm socks! This may seem simple, but a cold winter with the wrong clothing will quickly become a miserable one.
- 2. Get some sunshine.** The days are shorter and often drearier in the winter, so you've got to take advantage of sunny days. Even if you just get out for a quick walk around the neighborhood, it's important to make time to soak up the sun, and it can make a big difference in your mood.
- 3. Walk like a penguin.** This piece of advice cracks my kids up, and they love doing an exaggerated version of the penguin walk outside. But penguins are the kings of winter for a reason: Their careful steps help them stay upright, and mimicking that can help you stay safe on slippery surfaces, too.



Whether you enjoy yourself outside in the cold and snow or indoors with a good book, I hope you find ways to make the best of this season. The good news is, if you get snowed in, we can do a virtual appointment from the warmth of your home! I'll take snow over a COVID-19 shutdown any day as a reason to meet with clients virtually.

Stay warm,

*- Andrew M. Ayers*



# The Original Death by Chocolate

## 17TH CENTURY CHOCOHOLICS GET REVENGE

National Dark Chocolate Day and National Chocolate Fondue Day both fall this month (on Feb. 1 and Feb. 5, respectively), and in honor of those tasty holidays, we investigated the original “death by chocolate” — an act of legendary revenge.

Rumor has it that the controversy started in the 1600s in Chiapas, Mexico, when a group of chocoholic churchgoers started bringing their favorite sweet snack to services. This annoyed the bishop, who resorted to banning parishioners from eating chocolate during church. As an article in Indian Country Today tells it, the chocoholics got back at the bishop by poisoning his daily cup of chocolatl, an Aztec chocolate drink. Who knew the ancestor of hot cocoa could be so deadly?

Surprisingly, this crazy story isn't the origin of the “death by chocolate” cake we love today. That dessert was created in 1993 by Chef Marcel Desaulniers, then-owner of The Trellis restaurant in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Here's the restaurant's mouthwatering description of the seven-layer confection, which takes three days to make:

“The decadence begins with layers of moist chocolate cake, dark chocolate ganache, crunchy chocolate meringue, and an airy chocolate mousse. The cake is then coated in a glaze of dark chocolate and served on a pool of chocolate sauce with house-made milk chocolate ice cream, topped with a hand-rolled white chocolate truffle, and finally dusted with white chocolate powder.”

Is your mouth watering yet? The original version of death by chocolate might be a bit complex for the average chef, but if you're craving a slice, you can find more accessible recipes at Delish.com and SugarGeekShow.com. Just remember that when you pull it out of the oven, we don't live in the 1600s, so you should probably restrain yourself from poisoning anyone who steals a bite!

How much do you love chocolate? Would you be willing to die for a taste of your favorite candy bar? Would you kill for one? You've probably never thought to ask yourself these questions, but if tall tales can be believed, arguments over chocolate have, in fact, turned deadly.

## FROM BOOKS TO ... PRESCRIPTION DRUGS?

### Amazon Launches Amazon Pharmacy

For years, Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has been vocal about his plan to disrupt the American health care system. In 2018, Bezos and his millionaire pals Warren Buffett (CEO of Berkshire Hathaway) and Jamie Dimon (CEO of JPMorgan Chase) formed a company called Haven Healthcare to “stem the rise of employer health care spending,” according to Bloomberg Businessweek.

That venture fell apart, but Bezos never took his eyes off the prize. That same year, Amazon bought a drug-delivery startup. In 2019, it started selling its own brand of over-the-counter medication. Then, in November of 2019, Amazon opened Amazon Pharmacy to sell prescription drugs online. The new program offers Prime members two-day delivery and massive discounts on generic and name-brand drugs. Given Amazon's history, this was no surprise.

Since starting in 1994 as a marketplace exclusively for books, Amazon has worked toward becoming a one-stop shop for everything, especially all things health and fitness. Health-conscious people have bought workout equipment, supplements, snacks, fitness books, and more on the website for years. Then, in 2017, Amazon bought the organic grocery store Whole Foods and offered shopping discounts to Prime members, further cornering the market of health-conscious consumers.

Both the Whole Foods purchase and the failed Haven Healthcare venture foreshadowed the arrival of Amazon Pharmacy. The latter showed how serious Bezos is about diving into the highly regulated realm of health care and insurance. The former revealed the growing importance of Prime membership in an increasingly Amazon-owned world.

According to Business Insider, Prime members have access to “discounts of up to 80% on generic drugs and 40% on brand-name medications when paying without insurance” through Amazon Pharmacy. Doctors can also send prescriptions directly to Amazon. If you have insurance, you can simply type your insurance and payment information directly into the website and have medication delivered to your door. To check out Amazon Pharmacy, head to Amazon.com and click on the menu in the top left corner of the home page. Then scroll down to “Programs and Features.”

All of that said, Amazon isn't the only — or even best — option for purchasing prescription drugs online. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration's BeSafeRx program offers tips and a comprehensive list of online pharmacies nationwide. Visit FDA.gov today to learn more.





# TAKE A BREAK



## ‘MY FURRY VALENTINE’ PUP SNACKS

Inspired by [SugarTheGoldenRetriever.com](http://SugarTheGoldenRetriever.com)

Who needs a Valentine’s Day date when you have a furry friend at home? This Feb. 14, show your pooch your love with these frosty strawberry dog treats. Use a heart-shaped silicone mold to make this snack extra festive.

### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup plain yogurt
- 1/4 cup frozen strawberries, puréed

### Directions

1. Fill each heart in the mold 3/4 full with yogurt.
2. Freeze the yogurt hearts for 1 hour.
3. When the yogurt is set, add the puréed strawberry on top of each heart to fill the rest of the mold.
4. Freeze for another hour, then share the tasty treats with your dog!

*Note: If you don’t have a heart-shaped mold, you can freehand your treats on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Freeze 1 tbsp dollops of yogurt for an hour, then top with 1/2 tbsp of strawberry purée and freeze another hour.*

## Lonely on Valentine’s Day?

### Try These 3 Tricks to Improve Your Mindset



If you feel like the “before” actor in a Match.com commercial right now, you’re not the only one. Valentine’s Day causes an epidemic of loneliness. But contrary to those cheesy commercials, the feeling isn’t exclusive to people struggling to find a date — and it won’t necessarily be solved by one.

### What is loneliness, really?

Psychology Today defines loneliness as “the state of distress or discomfort that results when one perceives a gap between one’s desires for social connection and actual experiences of it.” That means you can get lonely any time you crave a deeper connection to someone, even if you’re married and have 500 Facebook friends. If COVID-19 lockdowns and canceled holiday celebrations have left you frustrated and sad, you’ve caught the loneliness bug.

### How can you fight the feeling?

- **Work out your social muscles.** If you don’t push yourself to connect with others regularly, it’s easy to fall into the trap of loneliness and depression. You have to commit to your social life just like you would to an exercise routine. To do this, try blocking off time in your calendar to call your friends or loved ones, or join an online group with regular Zoom meetings you’re committed to showing up for.
- **Add more art into your social life.** Researcher Jeremy Nobel, the head of The UnLonely Project, says that getting creative with other people could help reverse loneliness. If you’re feeling disconnected, try collaborating with your sibling, roommate, friend, spouse, or child on something artistic. You can paint together, have a jam session, take photos, or write a poem. Whatever you choose, getting creative will bring you closer.
- **Find and fix your negative behaviors.** Does scrolling through social media make you feel like you’re missing out on all the fun or leave you feeling like a zombie? If so, it’s probably time for a hiatus. As you go about your day or week, keep a notebook with you and write down what you’re doing when you feel loneliness creep in. By identifying those negative behaviors and swapping them with positive ones, you can turn your thoughts around.

Loneliness is serious: It’s a predictor of premature death, and one leading researcher compared its health impacts to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. If you’re coping with loneliness, try the tips above, and if you continue to struggle, reach out to a counselor near you.



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## *The Battle of the Brads*

### HOW THE REAL BRAD PITT WON IN COURT AGAINST A WOMAN SCAMMED BY A FAKE BRAD

When actor/producer Brad Pitt makes headlines, it's usually to take credit for an award, talk about his new hairstyle, or fend off the latest gossip about his relationship with Jennifer Aniston. But last fall, the '90s heartthrob made the front page of Page Six for an entirely different reason: He won one of the craziest lawsuits of the year.

The saga started out strange and continued to escalate. It began in 2018 when businesswoman Kelli Christina fell for a Brad Pitt charity scheme. A man claiming to be Pitt approached Christina online and asked for her to organize fundraisers for his charity, the Make It Right Foundation. The charity is very real. Pitt founded it in 2007 to help rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, and as of 2019, it had funded more than 100 eco-friendly homes. However, the Make It Right Foundation has also been hit by scandal after scandal, including allegations of poorly built houses "rotting and collapsing." And, of course, the Pitt who'd contacted Christina wasn't the real deal.

None of this mattered to Christina, though. She was just excited that "Brad Pitt" had taken

an interest in her! According to Page Six, in addition to soliciting donations, the Pitt wannabe also wooed Christina romantically with what she later called, "discussions of marriage." Just when things were getting steamy, the fake Brad took off with the businesswoman's cash.

Page Six reports that "in court papers, [Christina] said that the fake Pitt asked her for \$40,000 to attend the events, but 'canceled' at the last minute each time — then disappeared with the money."

The scam isn't even the craziest part. When the truth came out, Christina sued the real Pitt for failing to protect her from his double! After a long time on the court's docket, a judge finally dismissed the \$100,000 lawsuit last November and Pitt reclaimed his dignity. Luckily, some good came out of the whole debacle. According to Page Six, Christina is now working on "a joint project between the government and the Hollywood establishment" to protect future victims from scammers like the Pitt impersonator who broke Christina's heart.

