

Holiday traditions & holiday happenings in and around Atlantic City with Meet AC's Karina Anthony & Jessica Kasunich

Transcript

J: Hello and welcome to Meet AC's newest podcast series, Atlantic City Voices. I'm Jessica Kasunich Communications Manager with Meet AC.

K: And I'm Karina Anthony, Marketing Director with Meet AC. And we are your official podcast hosts for Atlantic City Voices.

J: Throughout our monthly series of Atlantic City Voices. We will be interviewing various voices of Atlantic City who are important leaders in our community and destination.

K: The topics we discussed will vary but will mainly focus on important conversations around regenerative tourism and redevelopment and investment throughout Atlantic City.

J: For the month of December, we will be your special guests discussing our favorite holiday traditions and holiday happenings in and around Atlantic City for the Soul Traveler, couple or family.

K: The holidays are my favorite time of year because there's just so much light and happiness around and you really start to build upon your traditions with your family. Something I really love to do is on Black Friday, which is a traditional big shopping day. We go cut down our Christmas tree that day and we go to a Christmas tree farm and you can actually chop the tree down yourself. And we like to find a really, really big tree, chop it down, load it up in my husband's truck, bring it home, and then try to figure out how to get it in the house. Something I really love to do is on Black Friday, which is a traditional big shopping day. We go cut down our Christmas tree that day and we go to a Christmas tree farm and you can actually chop the tree down yourself. And we like to find a really, really big tree, chop it down, load it up in my husband's truck, bring it home, and then try to figure out how to get it in the house.

J: Yeah, I love that one. That's actually one of our favorite holiday traditions as well. Believe it or not, since my husband and I met, we have been cutting down our tree. We like to go to the same farm year after year. However, we had to switch a few years ago due to the lack of trees at our beloved farm. But now I will not tell you where we go because is starting to be a lack of trees there. And believe it or not, they start their tree tagging on Labor Day. We do not go on Labor Day. However, we do go at the end of September because we have a very special place that our tree needs to go in our house, a very small niche spot. So we do go at the end of September and tag our tree. This year we found a good one. I think hopefully we've learned over the years to prepare and set up our house before we come home with the tree, because it's turned into several arguments, as I'm sure many of you have had over the years. And now we have a down to earth system. We also like Karina. We would love to cut down our tree on Black Friday, and I do all the decorating in the house. My husband does the exterior with the lights on Black Friday and get it all done in one shot. However, we have a little monkey wrench this year, a little girl on the way expected on Black Friday. So we'll see what we can get done at our house.

K: You know, I definitely appreciate you keeping your tree spot to yourself because that's kind of how I feel, too, because we had a traditional tree spot that we went to and we went one year and all the trees were gone. They only had really tiny trees. So the place we go to now, it's pretty big, but I'm going to keep that to myself too. Yeah, and I know what you mean about having, you know, trying to be prepared when you have a little one on the way. Gavin's birthday's around the same time as your baby girls. And this is why maybe I know you already have a few trees in your house. You have a foe tree, right?

J: Yeah. So I actually grew up having a foe tree because my mom was allergic, so I was so excited when I met my husband. We cut down a real tree every year, but then we also very fake tree that we put in our dining room. It's very skinny and small and very chic with decor. And then I don't care what other ornaments pull on our fake one. So yeah, we do have two trees.

K: That's what I did for my son, Gavin. And you gave me this idea, actually, because you always wanted to decorate the big tree. And I clearly have a vision for my big tree. And, you know, that's, you know, that was a tradition passed down to me from my mom. She always had a different theme each year for the Christmas tree. So Gavin now has a small artificial tree that he can decorate with little crafts and tinsel and whatever as little heart desires.

J: I love that. That is so sweet. I might have to go and get a third when she gets a little bit bigger because I don't know. She'll be touching my beloved dining room tree with my white and gold chic decor, but will say.

K: I just love holiday decorating, and every year I, you know, I really gravitate towards the really modern, you know, pretty stylish esthetic. But I cannot get away from the red and green just, you know, the classic Christmas style. It just, you know, I just keep using the same things, even though I see, like, pretty new modern decor that goes with my house. But I just love the red and green like the traditional.

J: Yeah, the red and green is just such a classic. I love incorporating a little bit of rustic into ours, the whites and the golds as well. And about two years ago, I revamped our holiday decor. You know, as you get older, you're like, Oh, this is a little outdated. It's time. But yeah, decorating is for sure my favorite time of year

K: Something I've invested in which might not. Which might be like a fashion. No now. But it's all shatterproof ornaments.

J: I will not buy anything with glitter because glitter travels around the entire house and you're seeing it for the remainder of the year and it drives me insane. So when I pick up something at the store, I make sure the glitter does not come off. If it has glitter or you're not coming home with me

K: No you are so right, the glitter because the glitter will be there until way past New Year's, past, you know, past Valentine's Day. You'll be fine. And glitter on the 4th of July. Yeah, that's right. So, you know, we don't bring anything with glitter in our house, but we did, you know, do some, like you said, some revamping to our holiday decor. And, you know, you're at holiday shopping for decor and then you're thinking, oh, do I need to get this person a gift? And that person? Well, I have to say, my holiday shopping is stress free because I shop all year round and I have a gift closet. What about you, Jess?

J: Oh, I love that. That is so smart. I love, love, love giving gifts. But sometimes the people in my life are just so hard to buy for. If I do see something, I absolutely pick it up along the year, but I just love that I

really need to get into that. But it's really hard for me to buy for some people in my family, so sometimes they are just, you know, last minute thought or I love to do customized things off of Etsy and or any, you know, small local business shops.

K: You hit the nail on the head there about the local businesses because there is businesses that we've done work with here, Meet AC, that have beautiful, beautiful gifts, like MudGirls Studios. I always try to get some of their unique pieces each year for family members, for Gavin's school teachers. It's such a it's such a nice, little, thoughtful touch. And I love thoughtful gifts the most.

J: Me, too. I really put a lot of thought into the gifts that I give. And I don't like to just give something that people don't want or don't need. And I agree, MudGirls Studios here in Atlantic City, they really create one of a kind pieces and so many other local shops, whether it's Little Water distillery, pop in and purchase a bottle of liquor for someone or a gift certificate or a tour and tasting. You have made chocolate customized one of their bars for someone. There's just so many different options. Even if it's supporting a restaurant by buying a gift card or certificate for a night out.

K: That's so true. And with our offices here at the Convention Center, we can easily pop into Tanger Outlets for some last minute gifts if we need to.

J: Yeah. Tanger Outlets is a great option as well. I know they're always having some wonderful sales throughout the month of December.

K: Yeah, and I'm sure they'll be having lots of different events coming up too.

J: Also, to talk about shopping and it's also kind of one of my family traditions. We have Smithville Village, which is located about 25 minutes outside of Atlantic City. It's a quaint little village with shops and restaurants. And there another great avenue for shop small shop local. You can dine at the Smithville Inn, grab a hot chocolate, hot cider, or if you're feeling a little frisky, a nice holiday cocktail walk around the cobblestone village. I've got some really, really nice gifts there every year and I look forward to all their events and their holiday light show on the lake. It's really nice, family friendly area to bring the kids. They have a train ride with Santa Karina. I know I think from Gavin there over the years and really nice spot.

K: You know you hit the nail on the head on one of my favorite traditions at shopping, but it's doing the whole shopping experience and you know, like, you know, making a day out of it and going with your family and having lunch and walking around and supporting local businesses. We have so many areas around southern New Jersey to do this type of activity, whether garners Smithville or Atlantic City or the neighboring islands of Margate and Ventnor, even down to Cape May, there's there's really a holiday shopping avenue for anyone, even if you don't like shopping, you can you can make it fun. You can go with your family, you can have lunch. You can, you know, just support your local businesses.

J: Absolutely. Up and down the Garden State Parkway, there is just something for everyone. And like Karina said, an experience not just shopping, but an experience for all.

K: Yeah, I think that's what I like about the holidays. You can make anything is a little more special, don't you think? Like you add a little bit of, you know, like gingerbread and, you know, and, and twinkle lights and everything just feels just instantly nicer.

J: Feels magical.

K: Yeah. So who doesn't want all the sparkle?

J: That's right. Yeah. And no glitter in the house.

K: No, we'll have sparkle but not glitter. Yeah. There's a way to do that. I think one of my other favorite traditions is holiday baking. You know, we do all the cooking for Thanksgiving, but around the holidays, I love to make all kinds of cookies. And each year I like to make gingerbread cookies and decorate them. And last year I started letting Gavin decorate as a two year old, and now he'll be three. And I feel like he'll really get into it this year.

J: Yeah, and Karina is a wonderful baker. I've been a part of her taste testing over the years, and I'm sure it's going to be so much fun with Gavin this year decorating the cookies as whole. Well, for you, a bit of little less of a mess from last year.

K: It was it was pretty messy last year because we had a lot of different sprinkles and different ornaments to put edible ornaments to put on the gingerbread cookies. And a lot of them end up on the floor. So our dog Layla got in on the action.

J: I also I like to bake as well. I also bake our doggies in the family doggy treats with peanut butter and sweet potato. And I have a little cut out doggy bone. So that's one of my favorite things I like to do with baking, and I give them to the family dogs on Christmas, so they love them. Also, another favorite of mine know you might have to get into this next year for Gavin but elf on the shelf we do I don't have a grown child yet, but we do a family elf on the shelf. We have four families and we each have one week in the month of December leading up to Christmas. And our elf can do naughty things or mischievous things or silly things. And the week we have our elf, we have to send a photo of what the elf has done that evening to the family group chat. And it's just a fun way of like getting into the holiday spirit and just being creative now. I thought the Elf was every day of December. It is okay. However, since we have we each have our own elf, we split it up to four weeks. So each there's four families and each family has their week leading up to Christmas in the month of December.

K: Okay. Okay. You'll have to teach me how to make it manageable, but because I don't know if I can do every day.

J: It's a lot I see all the God bless all you parents out there because I see every year, oh man, I forgot to move the elf this morning and they're rushing to find figure out what to do with the elf. And because you have to get very creative and sometimes people stick to like a theme or not, are they just you know, Pinterest is a really great way to get some ideas.

K: I'll consider it. Well, you know, we'll see what we'll do this year. Yeah.

K: Now, so you said Tom does the decorating outside, right?

J: Oh, yes. I do not touch the exterior at minus our our porch. I do the wreath and the little porch, but he does the entire house, exterior of light, very narrow.

K: We talk in like full Clark Griswald here. Well, because that's my husband.

J: Yeah. I believe it was like the first or second year we moved into our home. He is a tech guru, so he programed a whole magnificent light show. Had it set to a certain AM station that you can tune into with music, and he was so proud of it. But he is a perfectionist and will not do the same show every

year, so he has not had the time to do it program a whole different show, but he still does the lights and it's very nice. It's up to my standard because sometimes I don't like blow up. Sorry for no, no like blow up. I do not like blow up. And he would have probably 100 if I allowed them on our yard. I'm glad you're real on the mat. Yeah, I have to.

K: Yeah, we have all white lights around our property except for and Mike started this when Gavin was born around our chimney is multi-colored lights. So love that Santa can find the chimney.

J: Yeah. Very good. Yeah, we should probably start that because we also do all white lights around the exterior.

K: Yeah, it's a cute little tradition, and, you know, we like it. And Mike, you know, every year he's buying more lights.

J: Oh, yeah. I'm like, what happened to the lights that were in the attic that you put away last year?

K: Oh, who knows what happened to that? But do you do any hosting around the holidays?

J: We we try our house is a bit smaller than I like. We have such a big family on both of our sides of our family and so like small little cocktail gatherings and things like that. But for the majority, my mother in law and my mom, they they host a lot of you know, whether it's dinners or we go to a family members for Christmas Eve and Christmas. So I would like to host more I just need a bit of a bigger space. And I know you're so excited with your new renovation of your kitchen.

K: Yeah. So we just renovated our kitchen. It was quite the feat. It was a few years in the making, and we actually do host a lot of the holidays at our house. So we we decided, you know, it was time to renovate the kitchen, get a bigger space, and we couldn't be happier with it. And yeah, we normally host Christmas dinner at our house, so I think it'll be a really nice amount for the whole family this year.

J: That's so nice. And I hope us all make appearance and Gavin.

K: Yes, yeah. Yes. Each year Santa does make an appearance at our house we have a family member dress up and each year Gavin surprises us with how he reacts.

J: I love it. Well, actually, my nephew last year was obsessed with the Grinch and my husband bought a Grinch suit and did the whole Grinch visiting on Christmas to him. And he loved it. However, he did recognize that it was Uncle Tom Tom because he saw the hair on his arm. It's like because his arms are too long. So that was quite, quite a funny memory. But he loved it.

K: Yes, the kids get older.

J: You have to get a lot more creative. You do. So now that we've gotten into the traditions and our favorite part of the holidays, we would like to give you a little taste of what the happenings in and around Atlantic City, the sixth annual deck, the Hall Festival, the trees at Jim Whelan, Boardwalk Hall returns December 1st through the 31st, which is a season long charitable event intended to generate funds for court appointed special advocates CASA for Children of Atlantic Cape May in Camden counties, visitors are welcome to visit the Jim Whalen Boardwalk Hall atrium to browse the display of Christmas trees.

K: And following that we have the city winter wonderland parade on December 3rd and one of my favorites, the Tropicana Holiday Light show, the tree lighting and the daily snowfall. So no matter what the weather is here in Atlantic City, you can get your daily taste of snow at the Tropicana.

J: One my favorite holiday shows that seem very interesting and intriguing, the Cirque Dreams Holidays Will Transform Ovation Hall at Ocean Casino Resort for a Broadway style musical. This with this incorporates Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year's all in one with breathtaking costumes, acts, music and singers for an unforgettable night, along with the Beach Boys, who are making their way to Hard Rock, Hotel and Casino. On December 3rd for their Tis the season show featuring the Holiday Vibrations Orchestra. That seems like quite, quite the shows.

K: Yes, from All Star Entertainment here in Atlantic City, as usual.

J: And also one of my favorites, returning to Ocean Casino Resort. It's a holiday themed pop up bar, which some of our properties have been doing for different holidays throughout the year. The Jingle Bell Bar will return to 1927 Lounge at Ocean Casino Resort Feature, festive cocktails and nostalgic decor and themed entertainment. Something you don't want to miss out on getting back to Smithville Village, their holiday light show beginning on Thanksgiving, which runs through January six from 530 to 830 on the lake. Something not to miss. And then every week until Christmas, you have the magical talking trees, a Christmas train ride, bonfire and s'mores. And throughout December, on December 3rd, you have hospitality night, December 8th, Girls Night Out, my personal favorite, and December 10th and 17th Breakfast with Santa. That will be at Fred and Ethel's lantern light

K: and then a little ways from Atlantic City will be vintner Wonderland. At Reno Winery, they have ice skating, firepits, artisans, events and entertainment. And you can keep the winter holiday cheer going for a while longer because they will be opening from January to February as well, with limited hours. And we already mentioned the holiday shopping at Tanger Outlets, the walk and encouraging everyone to shop small and local. Make sure not to miss Atlantic City, Tinsel Town Holiday Experience. On Thursday, December 1st, a tree lighting and garland cutting ceremony will take place on the boardwalk at Bally's at 5 p.m. and then at O'Donnell Park at 6 p.m. Bring your holiday cheer to kick off the holiday season in Atlantic City.

J: We hope you enjoyed listening to some of our holiday traditions and we look forward to seeing you in Atlantic City very soon, to experience everything our seaside destination has to offer and making memories of your own.

K: We wish you and your families a joyous holiday season.

J: Thank you for listening. And stay tuned for next month podcast to find out who the next Planting City Voice will be.