



FINN GOMEZ/USA TODAY NETWORK

PHOTOS OF THE YEAR

See 2025's collection of images covering celebrities, sports, weather and news

In Weekend Extra

THEO WARGO/
GETTY IMAGES



Chalamet makes ping-pong cool

Star opens up about self-doubt and surprising prep work for "Marty Supreme" drama. **In Life**

Behind the scenes of cruise performer

Actor aboard Royal Caribbean describes daily schedule and travel adventures. **In Money**

Debate: Are timed tests too stressful?

Question part of 'math wars' raging for decades

N'dea Yancey-Bragg
USA TODAY

Latrenda Knighten has always liked math.

As a child, she remembers breezing through timed tests – high speed, low stakes assignments that challenge students to complete a number of simple problems in a short amount of time. Knighten couldn't understand why the drills, sometimes called mad minutes, sparked "extreme anxiety" in some of her siblings and fellow students.

So when she became a teacher herself, Knighten gave her students timed tests multiple times per week. The response shocked her.

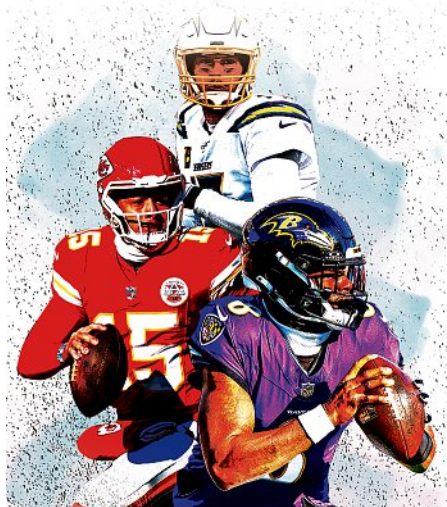
"My students had a breakdown. They were crying because they couldn't do it that quickly. ... This was part of the curriculum, but because of how it affected my students, I stopped using them because we weren't getting any productive results," said Knighten.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, of which Knighten is now president, would eventually issue a statement saying that "timed tests do not assess fluency and can negatively affect students, and thus should be avoided."

See **MATH WARS**, Page 5A

IN SPORTS

Best 25 QBs since 2000



Clockwise from top: Philip Rivers, Lamar Jackson and Patrick Mahomes. PHOTOS BY IMAGN IMAGES; ILLUSTRATION BY IAN YOUNG/USA TODAY NETWORK

Quarterback Philip Rivers' surprise return to the NFL is one of the most wild turns this season. Where does the Indianapolis passer rank in the bigger picture? See our list of the top 25 field generals from the past 25 years. **1C**



Donnie Dodson, creator of "Eats History," prepares "George Washington Hoecakes," an 18th-century recipe enjoyed by the first U.S. president. He attributes his success to telling the stories behind the meals. STRONZ VANDERPLOEG/USA TODAY

Meet the Americans eating like it's 1776

Influencers cooking up recipes from long-forgotten history

Karissa Waddick USA TODAY

A year and a half ago, Donnie Dodson set out to cook, and then rate, every U.S. president's favorite meal – just for fun. Like any recent college graduate, he opted to chronicle the venture on TikTok, under the moniker "Eats History." • His first video, a re-creation of former President George Washington's beloved hoecakes, essentially a dry cornmeal pancake "slathered in honey and butter," garnered 1.6 million views within 24 hours.

Today, with more than 200 videos and counting, Dodson is among a small cohort of social media influencers who've managed to attract millions of followers by recreating recipes from the past.

The secret to success, Dodson says, isn't about the dishes he chooses to cook; it's about the stories behind the meals.

He draws inspiration from Anthony Bourdain. Beyond their pure entertainment value, the bite-size videos he creates ask viewers to explore the cultural significance and historical trends behind the weird, wacky, and sometimes

downright gross foods our ancestors ate.

"There are a few constants in our lives that as the generations pass by, never change. One of those is food," Dodson said.

Somewhere between sautéing bacon for Andrew Jackson's "Leather Britches" and stirring together chocolate and milk for Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Million Dollar Fudge," Dodson said he realized he could shed light on forgotten histories in a way people could connect with.

See **RECIPES**, Page 4A

USA250

About this series

USA 250 is our nationwide initiative to celebrate America's 250th anniversary – the nation's history, its meaningful places and its people.

Historical dishes

A look at some seasonal food from colonial times. **4A**

If recycling's your bag, try it for Christmas



Trees, wrapping paper and ornaments get a second life at a recycling center. PROVIDED BY CLARKANDCOMPANY/GETTY IMAGES

Greta Cross
USA TODAY

Christmas is over, but the remnants – stacks of cardboard boxes, bags of sparkly wrapping paper and maybe one or two broken ornaments – remain.

Though it's easy to toss these items into the garbage, most Christmas gift wrapping, decorations and old technology can be recycled, whether it be at a local cycling center, through a sustainability nonprofit or at several big-name retailers like Lowe's, The Home Depot and Staples.

Gift-wrapping products, like cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, gift tissue and bows, can be recycled the easiest: They can simply be broken down, folded

up and taken to a local recycling center.

But what about the bigger, bulkier items? Here's how to properly dispose of and recycle Christmas trees, decorations and other old technology you may want to get rid of before the new year.

Real tree or fake?

Still buy a real Christmas tree? The National Christmas Tree Association recommends learning what resources your local recycling center offers for proper disposal. Many provide free Christmas tree drop-offs, and others may offer curbside pickup. Ensure all lights and ornaments are removed

See **RECYCLING**, Page 5A



52
©COPYRIGHT 2025
USA TODAY,
A division of
USA TODAY Co., Inc.

HOME DELIVERY
1-800-872-0001, USATODAYSERVICE.COM