EDITION 002

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2026

MIND CLUB

Life

Intelligence

ELSEWHERE · PDMC.LIFE

THE EDITION IN FOUR SQUARES

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How wood ash made a 1796 cookie rise

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Greenland's duel songs, a crossing button in Australia's sound archive, a clothesline the palace turned down, and the 1796 cookies that rose on wood ash.

THIS EDITION

The cookie that ran on wood ash

FROM THE EDITOR

An oil lamp is a small piece of engineering: a vessel, a wick, some fuel and a flame. Yet something that simple can carry an extraordinary amount of meaning.

This Sunday is Diwali. Across many Hindu communities, families celebrate with lamps, prayer, food and visits, although traditions differ from place to place. Sikh communities also mark Bandi Chhor Divas, remembering Guru Hargobind's release from captivity along with 52 princes. The same date, but distinct histories.

In recent weeks, many married women observed Karwa Chauth, fasting from sunrise until the moon comes up. These days, some husbands fast alongside them. Others, like me, take the less heroic route and sneak our meals out of sight, so we're not the bad guy at the table.

In the days ahead, Chhath Puja will bring worshippers to the water's edge with offerings to the setting and rising sun.

These aren't different versions of the same celebration. They're reminders of how communities carry stories forward, often through the simplest actions.

That idea turns up in a few unexpected places in this edition.

An Abenaki musician brings archival voices into new music. In Dakar, an art biennale asks what can be repaired and reinvented. A South African textile keeps its patterns alive through craft, machinery and generations of makers. And in a cookbook from 1796, someone figured out how to make cookies rise with refined wood ash.

Not everything in these pages is quite so philosophical. An Australian clothesline once made its way into royal correspondence. The Palace was unconvinced.

That's LIFE: a little history, a little discovery, and the occasional reminder that even the ordinary things around us have rather extraordinary backstories.

Enjoy the detours.

Happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas.

Punit Dhillon

EDITOR, MIND CLUB

SEVEN DOORS, A COOKIE AND A COMMITTEE

Greenland's duel songs, a crossing button in Australia's sound archive, a clothesline the palace turned down, and the 1796 cookies that rose on wood ash.

Season lens: November 8 brings Diwali and the distinct Sikh observance of Bandi Chhor Divas. Chhath Puja follows November 13 to 16, with prayers to the setting and rising sun. On November 11, children carry lanterns for Martinstag in parts of Europe. U.S. Thanksgiving falls November 26. Different traditions, different meanings, and quite a few reasons to gather. The north heads into winter; the south, into summer.

40	7	1 in 5.7	6 of 7	53
SCOUT CARDS THIS ROUND	DOORS IN THIS EDITION	SCOUT CARDS THAT MADE THE CUT	DOORS FROM OUTSIDE THE LOOP	SOURCES CHECKED BEFORE PRINT

THIS EDITION, BRIEFLY

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02.2	Australia put a pedestrian crossing button in its national sound archive.	SOUND
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05	Try: a free room in London, a lantern walk, a 1796 cookbook.	CITY · FAM · EDIT
06	Squared Away: a clothesline at the palace gates.	PIXEL · WIT
07	Play: five questions from this edition.	GAME
08 to 11	Where this brief could be wrong, the Public Calls Ledger (SPIEL Essen scored), Ask and corrections, and Sources.	EDIT · RED TEAM

How to read this brief. VERIFIED we opened the primary source and read the fact there. CLAIM someone with a stake, or a single secondary source, says it. ANALYSIS our reading of the facts. FORECAST a call we can be scored on. TASTE a pick or a judgment, never evidence, always with its basis. EVIDENCE INSUFFICIENT we looked and couldn't settle it. Every Door says how we found it. Cut ratio: scout cards printed as Doors, against cards scouted this round (7 of 40). Red boxes: the strongest case against us.

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SIGNAL

KNOW IT VERIFIED ANALYSIS

Why beef costs more this year

The price on the label starts with a cattle count.

USDA's Economic Research Service forecasts retail beef and veal prices up 8.7% in 2026 (interval 7.4% to 10.1%), against 2.3% for all food at home. VERIFIED

Underneath is the herd. On January 1, 2026, the U.S. had 86.2 million cattle and calves, slightly fewer than a year earlier. Beef cows fell 1% to 27.6 million, and the 2025 calf crop fell 2% to 32.9 million. Replacement heifers rose 1% to 4.71 million. VERIFIED A heifer kept to breed is one not sold for beef, so a rebuild may tighten supply before it eases it. ANALYSIS

SOURCES USDA ERS Food Price Outlook (10.23.2026) · USDA NASS Cattle (01.30.2026)

KNOW IT VERIFIED

Who gets leave, and who does the care

Two datasets, one on paper and one by the clock.

Across the OECD, paid leave earmarked for fathers averages 13.4 weeks, from 0 in Israel, New Zealand and the United States to 82 in Korea. Paid leave available to mothers averages 54.9 weeks. VERIFIED The table counts national entitlements as of April 2025, not who takes them; the OECD notes that 13 U.S. states and the District of Columbia had enacted mandatory paid family leave by February 2025. VERIFIED

In the U.S. in 2025, adults living with a child under 6 spent 2.3 hours a day on primary childcare: women 2.8, men 1.7. VERIFIED BLS halted interviews from October 1 to November 12, 2025, and says it can't quantify the effect. VERIFIED

SOURCES OECD Family Database PF2.1 (May 2026) · BLS American Time Use Survey (06.25.2026)

KNOW IT VERIFIED

Why there's no tested way to can pumpkin butter at home

Thickness and acidity vary too much for one safe process.

The National Center for Home Food Preservation says home canning isn't recommended for pumpkin butter or any mashed or pureed pumpkin or winter squash. VERIFIED Pumpkin is low-acid, above pH 4.6; a 1995 University of Missouri study found home-canned pumpkin butters as high as pH 5.4. University of Minnesota studies in the 1970s found thickness varied too much to calculate one process. VERIFIED USDA's guide covers cubes only: "Caution: Do not mash or puree." VERIFIED FoodSafety.gov lists improperly home-canned low-acid vegetables among the sources of botulism. VERIFIED

The safe route, per UC Master Food Preservers: keep pumpkin butter in the refrigerator or freezer and treat it like fresh pumpkin. VERIFIED

SOURCES National Center for Home Food Preservation (12.07.2012) · FoodSafety.gov (reviewed 08.14.2025) · UC Master Food Preservers (checked 10.30.2026). General information, not medical advice.

SCAN VERIFIED CLAIM TASTE

Sumatra's everyday process, near the top of the table

A wet-hulled lot scored 90.1 at Cup of Excellence Indonesia.

At Cup of Excellence Indonesia 2026, the No. 2 lot scored 90.1: 100% Ateng, wet hulled, from Aceh Tengah, Sumatra. The No. 1 lot, at 90.25, was an experimental washed and honey lot from Bandung Barat, half of it Ateng. VERIFIED

Wet hulling strips the parchment while the coffee is still wet, typically at 35% to 50% moisture against about 10% to 12% for most coffees. The importer Cafe Imports says it suits Sumatra's damp climate and helps smallholders sell sooner. CLAIM

Taste: a process built around weather and cash flow, 0.15 points off first, is the story. Prices wait for the auction, December 1 at 13:00 UTC. VERIFIED

SOURCES Alliance for Coffee Excellence (checked 10.30.2026) · Cafe Imports (checked 10.30.2026)

VERIFIED CLAIM TASTE

BRIGHT SPOT

Abenaki voices, back from the archive

Mali Obomsawin's Automatic turns archival tape into new music.

Mali Obomsawin's *Automatic* came out on October 16 on Out Of Your Head Records. VERIFIED The bassist and composer, a citizen of the Odanak First Nation of the Abenaki, works sampled archival voices into free improvisation and rock, with Andrew Broder on turntables. VERIFIED (credits) CLAIM (sound and citizenship, per Bandcamp Daily) Bandcamp Daily reports that Dartmouth began returning ethnological tapes to Odanak. CLAIM "I think being able to let these recordings unleash themselves is giving agency to the people who are in them," she told the site. CLAIM

Start here: track 2, "Automatic" (4:45). **Taste:** tape that left a community, coming home as new music.

SOURCES Mali Obomsawin on Bandcamp (10.16.2026) · Bandcamp Daily, Bret Sjerven (10.15.2026)

DOORS

Things you probably weren't going to search for. Each one says where to start and how we found it.

1

SOUND · GREENLAND · ARCHIVE AND NEW RELEASE

What does a Greenlandic duel song sound like?

VERIFIED CLAIM TASTE

One singer, one big frame drum. Sub Rosa's 55-track set *Inuit* gathers duel songs, kayak songs, lullabies and charm songs recorded in Greenland and Canada from 1905 to 1987, compiled by the Danish ethnomusicologist Michael Hauser. VERIFIED

The drum dance was nearly lost: Bandcamp Daily cites centuries of Danish bans, and the Associated Press reports that missionaries confiscated or destroyed drums. CLAIM Varna GL, the Inuit singer Varna Marianne Nielsen, now sets it against synths on her 2026 EP *ANERSAAQ*. VERIFIED (release) CLAIM (sound, per Bandcamp Daily)

START HERE Track 32, "Entertaining Drum-Song" (0:37), then track 2, "Duel-Song" (3:07). Then *ANERSAAQ*'s opener, "Anernerit," named for the Kalaallisut word for the northern lights. VERIFIED (lengths) CLAIM (name)

Taste: the old recordings and their living update, side by side, make a better door than either alone.

Connection: law. Bandcamp Daily says drum dance duels were a way to settle arguments, a tradition that mattered to Nielsen, a former judge. CLAIM

HOW WE FOUND IT Bandcamp Daily's Greenland scene report, then the label's Bandcamp page.

SOURCES Sub Rosa on Bandcamp (07.24.2020) · Bandcamp Daily, Devon Leger (09.11.2026) · Varna GL on Bandcamp (04.21.2026) · Associated Press via WSLS, Luis Andres Henao (03.23.2025)

2

SOUND · AUSTRALIA · NATIONAL ARCHIVE

Is a crossing button music?

VERIFIED CLAIM TASTE

It ticks. The PB/5 pedestrian crossing button, introduced in 1984, joined Sounds of Australia, the National Film and Sound Archive's annual capsule of standout recordings, in its 2026 intake. VERIFIED The NFSA credits the design to David Wood, Louis Challis and Frank Hulscher, and says it was made for pedestrians who are blind or have low vision, through sound and touch. VERIFIED

Its locator tick, vibrating arrow and crossing tone are, in the archive's words, "produced mechanically and in real time." CLAIM The NFSA says Orbital sampled the tick in "Walk Now" (1993) and Billie Eilish in "Bad Guy" (2019). CLAIM (Also in the 2026 intake: "Shaddap You Face.")

START HERE The NFSA's PB/5 entry.

Taste: an accessibility device, filed beside pop songs, shows what a country counts as its sound.

Connection: design. Miles Park, an industrial design lecturer at UNSW, writes that the button has Good Design Australia recognition and sits in museum collections. CLAIM

HOW WE FOUND IT A search for 2026 national sound archive additions, then the NFSA's own release.

SOURCES NFSA, Sounds of Australia 2026 (03.31.2026) · NFSA collection item (checked 10.30.2026) · Miles Park, The Conversation via ArchitectureAU (08.05.2026)

3

STYLE · SOUTH AFRICA · FAR SHELF

Shweshwe: South Africa's indigo cloth, bleached into pattern

CLAIM VERIFIED TASTE

Shweshwe is indigo cotton fed through copper rollers etched with patterns, with a weak acid wash bleaching white designs out of the blue. Brand South Africa says it was first worn by German settlers and Xhosa women from the 1840s. It says the cloth was later printed in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and that production moved to England in the 1930s. CLAIM

Da Gama Textiles says it bought the rights to the Three Cats designs in 1992 and shipped the original rollers, design library and machinery to its mill in Zwelitsha, Eastern Cape. CLAIM The name is believed to come from King Moshoeshoe I, who was given printed indigo cloth. CLAIM (Brand South Africa)

START HERE The British Museum's record 2012,2044.1, a 2012 dress in Da Gama shweshwe whose skirt panels bear Albertina Sisulu's image and dates. VERIFIED

Taste: the pattern is taken out of the cloth, not printed onto it, and that's the reason to look closely.

HOW WE FOUND IT A craft-history search on discharge printing, then the British Museum's collection.

SOURCES Brand South Africa (11.18.2013) · Da Gama Textiles (checked 10.30.2026) · British Museum (checked 10.30.2026)

4

STYLE · ADELAIDE · ARCHIVE FILE

The clothesline offered to the Queen

VERIFIED CLAIM TASTE

In 1945 Lance Hill, a returned serviceman, built a rotary clothes hoist from scrap metal in his Adelaide backyard. His wife had complained that the fruit trees were competing for space with the prop line. VERIFIED (State Library of South Australia)

Hill wasn't first. The same page says Gilbert Toyne had patented a rotary hoist earlier, and calls Hill's "the first rotary clothes hoist to achieve national sales success." CLAIM

In March 1959 Hills Hoists Limited offered a hoist to the Queen and the Queen Mother. Officially, it was refused under rules on royalty accepting "presents of value from commercial houses." VERIFIED One handwritten note on the file calls it "Rather an unusual offering!" and suggests one might be useful to the Palace. A second answers: "I think this is rather nonsense." VERIFIED

START HERE The National Archives of Australia's page on the gift, A2880, 18/1/304.

Taste: an everyday object rarely gets an archive file this candid.

HOW WE FOUND IT A design-history search for Australian everyday objects, then the national archives.

SOURCES SA Memory, State Library of South Australia (checked 10.30.2026) · National Archives of Australia (checked 10.30.2026)

5

CITY · DAKAR · NOVEMBER 19 TO DECEMBER 19

A biennale about fragility, in Dakar's old courthouse

VERIFIED CLAIM ANALYSIS

Dak'Art, the Biennale of Contemporary African Art, opens its 16th edition in Dakar on November 19 and runs to December 19. The official theme is "(anti)fragilité: arts de la réparation et stratégies du contrecoup." Its official selection includes 54 contributions to the international exhibition and 21 in the design section. VERIFIED The curatorial program examines repair, care, shared knowledge and creative responses to disruption. CLAIM (Biennale de Dakar)

The main show is in the Ancien Palais de Justice, the city's former courthouse. VERIFIED

START HERE The official exhibition at the Ancien Palais de Justice, then Le OFF across Dakar and beyond. Hours and entry terms aren't published yet. VERIFIED

Connection: design and repair. The program's five curatorial threads include re-greening the former courthouse, sharing knowledge and connecting continents. CLAIM (Biennale de Dakar) ANALYSIS

Before you book: the UK Foreign Office (updated October 15) puts no part of Senegal off limits but urges care in Casamance and near the Mali and Mauritania borders. VERIFIED Check the U.S. State Department's advisory too; it speaks to U.S. citizens.

HOW WE FOUND IT A French-language search for the 2026 dates, then the biennale's own site.

SOURCES Biennale de Dakar, press dossier (10.13.2026), Visiter and Le OFF pages (checked 11.04.2026) · UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (updated 10.15.2026; checked 11.04.2026)

6

BREW · UNITED STATES · 1942 TO 1943

What was “Roosevelt coffee”?

VERIFIED CLAIM TASTE

One pound every five weeks. From November 29, 1942, that was the U.S. coffee ration for anyone over 15, after a week-long freeze on sales. VERIFIED In February 1943 it shrank to a pound every six weeks. VERIFIED

The problem was at sea. Per the National Park Service, U-boat attacks and cargo space diverted to the war kept coffee from arriving. VERIFIED So kitchens stretched it: pouring water over used grounds, which, the NPS says, gave “an additional 30% yield” and was sometimes called “Roosevelt coffee.” CLAIM

START HERE The NPS article’s brewing math, where boiled coffee went furthest and drip the least, and its line “four cups can serve five.”

Taste: a global supply chain, shown through one kitchen habit.

Connection: the war at sea. Rationing ended on July 28, 1943. The Michigan Daily reported that Roosevelt credited more shipping space and better results against U-boats. CLAIM

HOW WE FOUND IT Far shelf, coffee’s trade history in national records, via the National Park Service.

SOURCES National Park Service, Megan E. Springate (updated 11.16.2023) · *Victory*, Office of War Information bulletin (11.24.1942) · The New Ulm Enterprise via UNT’s Portal to Texas History (11.26.1942) · The Michigan Daily via U-M Bentley Library (07.29.1943)

7

BODY · MYTH CHECK

Myth check: does getting cold give you a cold?

MYTH CHECK VERIFIED ANALYSIS

Colds come from viruses: more than 200 can cause one. Many respiratory viruses circulate mostly in winter, but you can catch a cold any time of year. VERIFIED (CDC)

Whether a chill tips the odds is harder to call. Earlier clinical research hadn’t shown an effect, a 2005 trial by Johnson and Eccles notes. VERIFIED That trial randomized 180 healthy adults to a foot chill or a control. Within four to five days, 13 of 90 chilled people reported a cold, against 5 of 90 controls (P = 0.047). VERIFIED The colds were self-reported, and the authors say more work is needed to link the symptoms to infection. VERIFIED

VERDICT Mixed. WHAT THE EVIDENCE SUPPORTS Colds come from viruses; one trial found more reported colds after a foot chill. WHAT IT DOESN’T That cold alone gives you a cold, or that chilling causes infection. One small trial can’t settle it. ANALYSIS

Start here: the trial’s abstract.

HOW WE FOUND IT PubMed, then the CDC. General information, not medical advice.

SOURCES Johnson and Eccles, *Family Practice* 22(6):608 to 613 (2005) · CDC (reviewed 02.19.2026)

HOW WOOD ASH MADE A 1796 COOKIE RISE

Four recipes in Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery* call for pearl ash, a refined wood ash that did the job baking powder does now. Here's how a byproduct of the fireplace got into the gingerbread, and why it left.

VERIFIED CLAIM ANALYSIS TASTE

"two tea spoons pearl ash" From the ingredient list of "Cookies," *American Cookery*, Hartford, 1796.

A book printed in Hartford in 1796 has a recipe called "Cookies." Its ingredient list includes "two tea spoons pearl ash." VERIFIED

The book is *American Cookery*, printed by Hudson & Goodwin "for the author," and its title page credits Amelia Simmons, "AN AMERICAN ORPHAN." VERIFIED Connecticut History, a CTHumanities project, calls it "widely accepted as the first cookbook written by an American." CLAIM *American Heritage* draws the line more tightly: cookbooks had been printed in America before, but this was the first book of American recipes by an American author. CLAIM

That "first" is how most people meet the book. The better story is the pearl ash in the cookies.

Simmons uses pearl ash in four recipes: Cookies, Another Christmas Cookey, Molasses Gingerbread, and Gingerbread Cakes, or butter and sugar Gingerbread. VERIFIED Pearl ash is a refined form of potash, and potash is made from wood ash. CLAIM (Harold McGee, *On Food and Cooking*) So a cookie in a 1796 book was raised with something that started out in a fire.

RISING, THE SLOW WAY

Before chemical leaveners, a cake rose on yeast or on muscle. Writing in *American Heritage* in 1981, Martha C. Brown listed what the book otherwise leans on: "eggs and air whipped in by the cook, spirits, or homemade liquid yeast." CLAIM Simmons's yeast was emptins, which Brown describes as "a mixture of hops and the dregs of beer or cider casks." CLAIM

Yeast is patient. Jessica Carbone of the National Museum of American History told *Smithsonian* magazine that yeast baking meant "upwards of 12 hours of rising, usually more like 24 hours." CLAIM Pearl ash, by contrast, "produced carbon dioxide very quickly," according to a Johnson & Wales baking science text. CLAIM

That's the whole appeal. A gingerbread that doesn't need a day's notice. ANALYSIS

FROM THE HEARTH TO THE BARREL

Making pearl ash was heavy, hot work. Benjamin C. Pykles lays out the process in *BYU Studies*. Hardwood ashes were soaked with water, and the "highly caustic lye" was drained off. CLAIM The lye was boiled down in iron kettles to a dark residue called black salts. Heated further, the salts fused into potash. Potash "could be further refined in a specialized oven to produce a product known as pearlash." CLAIM

So the sequence runs wood, ash, lye, black salts, potash, pearl ash. Each step costs more fire. ANALYSIS

What comes out is "mostly alkaline potassium carbonate," McGee writes. CLAIM "Alkaline" means it's a base, the chemical opposite of an acid, and that turns out to matter a great deal for the cookie. ANALYSIS

The kitchen was never pearl ash's main customer. Potash went into soap, glass and textiles. CLAIM (*American Heritage*; Smithsonian's Lemelson Center) It was also an export. A table in the same *BYU Studies* article shows Britain importing 10 tons of potash and pearl ash from North America in 1760, out of 2,424 tons in all. By 1811 the figure was 6,595 tons of 8,927, or 74%. CLAIM The two years come from two different economic histories, which the table sets side by side, so read the jump as a direction, not a precise multiple. ANALYSIS

The new country noticed. The Smithsonian's Lemelson Center records that the first U.S. patent, issued to Samuel Hopkins on July 31, 1790, covered "a new method of making potash and pearl ash." CLAIM Nobody filed it under dessert.

WHY IT LIFTS A DOUGH

Here's the machine. A Yale teaching unit puts it in one line: pearl ash "reacts with acids in doughs to generate carbon dioxide gas." CLAIM McGee says much the same. CLAIM The gas makes bubbles, and the oven sets the dough around them. ANALYSIS

The base needs an acid partner. The Yale unit lists "yogurt, sour milk, buttermilk and molasses" as acidic ingredients that a leavener like baking soda can react with. CLAIM

Look at Simmons's four recipes with that in mind. In each one the pearl ash goes in dissolved in a liquid: milk, cream or water. VERIFIED (our description, not her wording) One of the four has molasses in its name and in its list. VERIFIED That recipe brings its own acid. ANALYSIS For the cookies made with milk, the book doesn't say whether the milk had soured, so how well they rose is something the text can't tell us. ANALYSIS

THE CATCH

Pearl ash had problems, and the sources agree on them. It "tends to leave a bitter residue," Brown writes. CLAIM *Smithsonian* calls it "difficult to make, caustic and often smelly." CLAIM The Johnson & Wales text says it "smelled terrible." CLAIM

The food historian Sarah Lohman, who made pearl ash cookies for her blog, reported "a horrible, alkaline bitterness" and suspected heavy spice was how gingerbread hid it. CLAIM Four recipes, two of them gingerbread. The pattern fits her guess, though four is a small sample. ANALYSIS

The acid was the other weak link. Sour milk was cheap, *Smithsonian* notes, but "it was hard to control how acidic the sour milk actually was." CLAIM Too little acid, and the leftover base flavors the cake. ANALYSIS

There's also a wrinkle in the timeline. Brown writes that neither pearl ash nor the other chemical leaveners that became baking powders "are usually thought to have been used in cooking before 1830," which would put Simmons, "and presumably other American cooks," well ahead of their time. CLAIM

WHAT REPLACED IT

The successors arrived in steps. First came saleratus, from the New Latin *sal aeratus*, "aerated salt," a leavener of potassium or sodium bicarbonate. Merriam-Webster dates the word in that sense to 1834. CLAIM

WyoHistory.org says shops had sold saleratus only since about 1840, and that emigrants on the overland trails scraped it from dry lake beds near Independence Rock. CLAIM Bread made with it sometimes came out "a faint green." CLAIM

Baking soda followed, dated by *Smithsonian* to 1846. CLAIM It still needed an acid from the cook. Baking powder solved that by packing the base and the acid together, so the bubbles wait for water: a Library of Congress teachers' blog describes it as chemicals that "produce carbon-dioxide bubbles through an acid-base reaction." CLAIM

Who made it first depends on whom you ask. *Smithsonian* credits the English chemist Alfred Bird in the late 1840s and says Eben Norton Horsford

patented “the first modern baking powder,” dating the patent to 1856. CLAIM A 1930 U.S. Department of Agriculture circular says “the first formulas for baking powder were developed in the United States in the year 1850,” when Preston & Merrill of Boston sold one. CLAIM Two “firsts,” two definitions. ANALYSIS

Pearl ash, Brown writes, “was eventually discarded in the process of perfecting baking powders.” CLAIM

THE PIE ON THE NEXT PAGE

Thanksgiving falls on November 26 this year. VERIFIED *American Cookery* has two entries headed “Pompkin.” VERIFIED One calls for “mace, nutmeg and ginger”; the other, “molasses, allspice and ginger.” VERIFIED Neither uses pearl ash. VERIFIED The pie never needed to rise. ANALYSIS

Connecticut History says the book was reprinted 13 times and that only four copies of the Hartford first edition are known today. CLAIM The text, though, is free to read online (see Try).

Back to “Cookies” and its “two tea spoons pearl ash.” The can of baking powder in your cupboard does the same job, with the acid already inside and the fire already far away. Simmons had to bring the acid herself. And the ash.

START HERE

The Project Gutenberg text of *American Cookery*. Search “pearl ash,” then read the two “Pompkin” entries. TASTE the four recipe titles and the ingredient lines show the whole story in a few minutes, with no translation needed.

HOW WE FOUND IT The far shelf, national cookbook collections; the Library of Congress pages wouldn’t open, so we went to the Project Gutenberg text and Connecticut History, then to the chemistry and trade sources.

SOURCES Project Gutenberg, *American Cookery* (10.30.2026) · Connecticut History, CTHumanities (11.21.2021) · *American Heritage* (Aug./Sept. 1981) · *BYU Studies* 41, no. 1 · Smithsonian Lemelson Center (10.30.2026) · Harold McGee, *On Food and Cooking* (2004) · Yale National Initiative (2017) · Johnson & Wales University pressbook (10.30.2026) · *Smithsonian* magazine (10.30.2026) · Library of Congress teachers’ blog (11.2021) · USDA Circular 138 (11.1930) · Merriam-Webster (10.30.2026) · WyoHistory.org (03.31.2016) · Four Pounds Flour (05.23.2012)

WHAT UNESCO DECIDES IN XIAMEN

One committee, six days, and a list that runs from a plywood paddle to a pot of yogurt.

VERIFIED CLAIM ANALYSIS TASTE

The net is an 8-inch wooden board laid across a road in Barbados. Caribbean360 reports that road tennis began there in 1930, among working-class players shut out of the island's lawn-tennis clubs: paddles cut from plywood, tennis balls stripped of their felt, a court 10 feet by 21, games to 21 points. CLAIM

Now the sport has a file number. "Road tennis, a traditional sport in Barbados" is among the nominations being examined at UNESCO's twenty-first session of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee in Xiamen, China, from November 30 to December 5. On October 21, UNESCO announced that the committee would examine 64 elements submitted by 82 countries, including 18 nominations submitted jointly by several countries. Road tennis was one of the examples UNESCO named. VERIFIED These are nominations awaiting a decision, not new inscriptions. ANALYSIS

The same list carries music. Angola filed "Semba: music and dance in Angola" (file 2420). VERIFIED Start here: Os Korimbas, "Sémba Braguez," track 12 of Analog Africa's *Angola Soundtrack*, a reissue of Luanda recordings from 1968 to 1976, streamable on the label's Bandcamp page. VERIFIED Taste: it's a licensed release on the label's own page, which makes it a cleaner first listen than an anonymous upload.

Brazil's file 2445 covers the Maracatu Nação in Pernambuco. VERIFIED Agência Brasil, in a report carried by CNN Brasil, describes it as a royal procession through greater Recife with a percussion ensemble, also known as maracatu de baque virado. The same report says Brazil filed the dossier on March 31, 2025, expected a decision by the end of 2026, and would count it as the country's eighth item if it's inscribed. CLAIM

Then the table. Cameroon filed "Achu: an expression of the traditional culinary art of Cameroon" (file 2428), and Indonesia filed "Culture of Tempe" (file 1970). VERIFIED The titles alone show what each country chose to put forward: one a culinary art, the other a whole food culture. ANALYSIS

Two food files carry more than one flag. "Artisanal knowledge and cultural practices of Pakhlava/Baklava" comes from Azerbaijan and Türkiye together (file 2411). "Traditional techniques of yogurt making and related social practices" comes from Bulgaria, Türkiye and Romania (file 2285). VERIFIED Each is one nomination with several countries' names on it. Three countries, one yogurt.

Whatever Xiamen decides, the net in Barbados stays 8 inches high.

THE LINKS

UNESCO, 21.COM session page: ich.unesco.org/en/21com
UNESCO release, 64 practices to be examined (10.21.2026): unesco.org
UNESCO, Files 2026 under process: ich.unesco.org/en/files-2026-under-process-01395
Caribbean360 on road tennis: caribbean360.com
Os Korimbas, "Sémba Braguez," on Analog Africa's Bandcamp: analogafrica.bandcamp.com
Agência Brasil via CNN Brasil on Maracatu Nação: cnnbrasil.com.br

HOW WE FOUND IT UNESCO's "Files 2026 under process" page, reached while scouting for music and food files; the road tennis file turned up on the same list.

SOURCES UNESCO, 21.COM session page (10.30.2026) · UNESCO release (10.21.2026) · UNESCO, Files 2026 under process (11.04.2026) · Caribbean360 (05.27.2026) · Analog Africa on Bandcamp (10.30.2026) · Agência Brasil via CNN Brasil (04.02.2025)

TRY

A free room in London, a lantern on November 11, and a 1796 cookbook you can search tonight.

1

See LAIKA's two decades for free, Design Museum, London

The Design Museum's *LAIKA presents Wildwood: The Exhibition* runs from October 15, 2026, to January 10, 2027, in its Level 2 gallery, "with an additional free display in the Mezzanine." VERIFIED Time Out reports that the free area tells the studio's back story across two decades of films, including *Coraline*, *ParaNorman*, *The Boxtrolls* and *Kubo and the Two Strings*. CLAIM

Cost: the mezzanine display is free. The main show starts from £15.29 for adults, £11.47 for concessions and £7.65 for children, about $20.45, $15.34 and $10.23 at the Federal Reserve's October 23 rate of $1.3375 to the pound; members go free (prices checked 11.05.2026). VERIFIED
Free option: the mezzanine display.
Dates and hours: the museum lists no separate closing date for the free display; the main show closes January 10, 2027. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Thursday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday to Sunday. VERIFIED
Taste: if you want the studio rather than one film, the free room is the better door, because it covers two decades and the paid show covers *Wildwood*.

SOURCES Design Museum (10.30.2026) · Time Out London (09.11.2026) · Federal Reserve H.10 (10.26.2026)

2

Walk with a lantern on Martinstag, November 11

Martinstag remembers Bishop Martin of Tours, who died in November 397, according to evangelisch.de, the Protestant church portal in Germany. The first lantern processions start in early November, and on November 11 many children walk the neighborhood singing with lanterns. The portal adds that saint veneration is foreign to Protestantism, yet Protestant children join the processions too. CLAIM

For a sense of the shape: Munich's official city portal lists a procession on Wednesday, November 11, 2026, starting at 4:30 p.m. with a Martinsspiel (a short play of the cloak story) on Frauenplatz, then lanterns and songs through the old town to St. Michael for a short service. VERIFIED

Cost: the Munich listing names no fee. VERIFIED
Free option: make a paper lantern with a battery light and walk your own block at dusk.
Dates: November 11; some processions run earlier in the month.
Find one: search your town's listings for "St. Martin" or "lantern walk." **Taste:** the custom comes from the church calendar, so a parish or a German-language school is the likeliest host near you.
Connection: Estonia's nomination on UNESCO's 2026 list covers "Mumming and masking in Estonia during St. Martin's Day and St. Catherine's Day" (file 2380). VERIFIED

SOURCES evangelisch.de (undated theme page; checked 10.30.2026) · muenchen.de, official city portal (10.30.2026) · UNESCO, Files 2026 under process (10.30.2026)

3

Search a 1796 cookbook for “pearl ash”

Amelia Simmons’s *American Cookery* (Hartford, 1796) is free to read on Project Gutenberg, at gutenberg.org/ebooks/12815. VERIFIED Search the text for “pearl ash” and you’ll find the four recipes from The Detour: Cookies, Another Christmas Cookey, Molasses Gingerbread, and Gingerbread Cakes. VERIFIED

FROM THE 1796 RECIPE

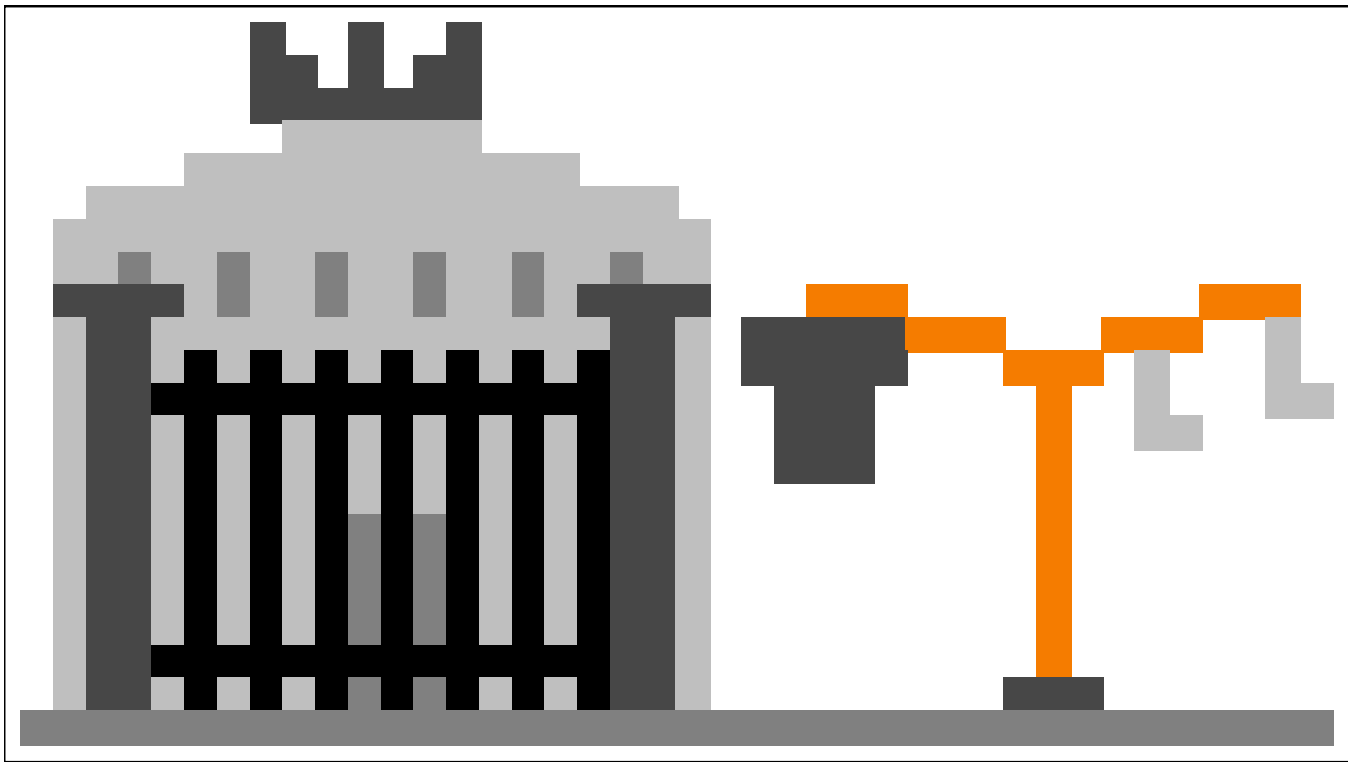
> “One pound sugar boiled slowly in half pint water, scum well and cool, add two tea spoons pearl ash dissolved in milk, then two and half pounds flour, rub in 4 ounces butter, and two large spoons of finely powdered coriander seed, …”

Amelia Simmons, *American Cookery* (Hartford, 1796), “Cookies.” A historical text, not a tested modern recipe. Search the linked text for “two tea spoons pearl ash” to find it. VERIFIED

Cost: free.
Free option: this one.
Dates: none; read it whenever you like.

SOURCES Project Gutenberg, *American Cookery* (10.30.2026)

SQUARED AWAY



The Hills Hoist began in an Adelaide backyard in 1945. In 1959 the company offered one to the Queen. One note on the royal file: ‘I think this is rather nonsense.’

From Door 4: the State Library of South Australia says Lance Hill built a rotary clothes hoist from scrap metal in his Adelaide backyard in 1945, and the National Archives of Australia’s file A2880, 18/1/304 records a hoist offered to the Queen and the Queen Mother in March 1959, refused under the rules on presents of value from commercial houses, with the handwritten note “I think this is rather nonsense.” Every mark is a square from the PD module; one orange thing per cartoon.

PLAY

Q1

In a cookbook printed in 1796, what was pearl ash for?

a. Sweetening the cookies
b. Making the cookies rise
c. Keeping the cookies fresh

Hint: It started out as wood ash, and baking powder does the same job now.

Q2

According to Bandcamp Daily, what were drum dance duels in Greenland a way to do?

a. Settle arguments
b. Forecast the weather
c. Name a new boat

Hint: That's why the tradition mattered to a singer who used to be a judge.

Q3

Which everyday sound joined Sounds of Australia, the national sound archive's collection, in 2026?

a. A tram bell
b. A lawn mower
c. The tick of a crossing button

Hint: It was introduced in 1984, made for people who are blind or have low vision.

Q4

Starting November 29, 1942, how much coffee could each American over 15 get?

a. One pound a week
b. One pound every five weeks
c. One pound a year

Hint: In February 1943 it shrank to one pound every six weeks.

Q5

In 1959, what did an Australian company offer the Queen and the Queen Mother?

a. A rotary clothesline
b. A garden swing
c. A lawn sprinkler

Hint: Lance Hill built one from scrap metal in 1945 because the prop line was crowding the fruit trees.

Answers Q1 b, pearl ash, a forerunner of baking powder. Q2 a. Q3 c, the PB/5 button. Q4 b. Q5 a, a Hills Hoist, and the offer was refused.

WHERE THIS BRIEF COULD BE WRONG

RED TEAM

Base case. Door 7 calls it Mixed: colds come from viruses, but a 2005 trial found more reported colds after a foot chill.

Counter-case. That rests on one trial of 180 adults, self-reported colds, no infection test and a P value just under the usual cutoff. Earlier clinical research hadn't shown an effect. If the trial was a fluke, "not supported" is the fairer verdict.

What would settle it. A larger trial that tests for infection, not just symptoms. We haven't seen one.

Also. Door 5's travel line rests on the UK view; the U.S. State Department's Senegal page still shows an advisory issued February 20, 2019, so we print no U.S. level. Check it before you book. Door 1's tracks have Bandcamp players, but nobody has confirmed in a browser that they play free.

PUBLIC CALLS LEDGER

CALL	MADE	ODDS	STATUS	SCORE
SPIEL Essen 2026 reports more visitors than 2025's 220,000	10.19.2026	75%	Resolved yes: the organizer's release of 26 October reports 230,000 visitors, 22 to 25 October	Brier 0.0625
Pantone announces its 2027 Color of the Year by 10 December 2026	10.19.2026	85%	Open; resolves 10 December. Pantone's page named no 2027 color on 10.30.2026	
Pantone's 2027 Color of the Year is a blue	10.05.2026	30%	Open; resolves by 31 December 2026	

The Brier score is the squared gap between the odds and what happened: 0 is perfect, 1 is as wrong as possible. A 75% call that comes true scores 0.0625. The SPIEL count is the organizer's own figure, not audited. The Benjamin Moore call was scored in Edition 001.

ASK MIND CLUB AND CORRECTIONS

Ask. No reader questions yet. Send one and we'll answer it in a later edition, with sources.

Corrections. None known. If you find an error, reply or write to intelligence@pdmc.life. Material corrections run here.

SOURCES

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USC RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE	Sikh holy days calendar (Bandi Chhor Divas, November 8, 2026)	11.04.2026
DRIK PANCHANG	Karwa Chauth 2026, Los Angeles (October 28)	11.04.2026
DRIK PANCHANG	Chhath Puja 2026 calendar (November 13 to 16)	11.04.2026
USDA ERS	Food Price Outlook, summary findings (10.23.2026)	10.30.2026
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OECD	Family Database PF2.1, parental leave systems (May 2026)	10.30.2026
BLS	American Time Use Survey, 2025 results (USDL-26-1022)	10.30.2026
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MALI OBOMSAWIN	Automatic (Bandcamp, 10.16.2026)	10.30.2026
SUB ROSA	Inuit: 55 historical recordings of traditional Greenlandic music	10.30.2026
SUB ROSA	Entertaining Drum-Song (track page)	10.30.2026
VARNA GL	ANERSAAQ (Bandcamp, 04.21.2026)	10.30.2026
NFSA	PB/5 pedestrian crossing button (collection item)	10.30.2026
NFSA	Media release: Sounds of Australia 2026 (03.31.2026)	10.30.2026
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DA GAMA TEXTILES	Who we are	10.30.2026
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BIENNALE DE DAKAR	16e Biennale de Dakar (home page)	10.30.2026
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U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT	Senegal travel advisory (issued 02.20.2019)	11.04.2026
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MUENCHEN.DE	Martinsumzug der Münchner Innenstadt	10.30.2026
SPIEL ESSEN	Press: SPIEL Essen 2026 breaks all records again (26 October 2026)	10.30.2026
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FREE PRESS JOURNAL	Karwa Chauth: husbands embrace fasting (10.19.2024)	11.04.2026
CAFE IMPORTS	Blog post on wet hulling	10.30.2026
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AP VIA WSLS	Greenlanders embrace pre-Christian Inuit traditions, Luis Andres Henao (03.23.2025)	10.30.2026
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WYOHISTORY.ORG	Saleratus Lake (03.31.2016)	10.30.2026
FOUR POUNDS FLOUR	Sarah Lohman, the history dish: pearlash (05.23.2012)	10.30.2026
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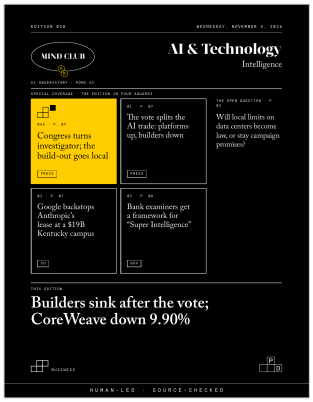
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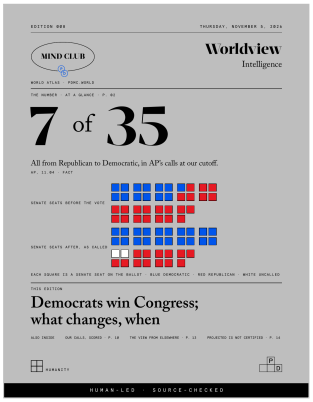
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