

FamilyCircle

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GIANT CHRISTMAS ISSUE!

Easy Entertaining, Festive Trees & Trims, Fabulous Desserts

**50 GIFTS
UNDER \$50**

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SPECIAL HOLIDAY SECTION

**25 MERRY &
BRIGHT
IDEAS
TO DECK YOUR HALLS**

... ALL-NEW ...

**Weeknight
Chicken
Dinners**



The
Most Delicious
Chocolate-
Coconut Cake
You've
Ever Tasted!
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DECEMBER 2010
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Spend Less, Celebrate More

SECRETS TO A STRESS-FREE SEASON

2010 TECH HOT LIST

As 2011 dawns, we're not yet living the *Jetsons*-esque life we imagined—in other words, no skyways, mechanical dog or robot maid who cleans and brings us cocktails. As always, Mom wants to work smarter rather than harder. The kids want the newest in video game gadgetry. And Dad is hoping to enjoy a cold beer in front of the latest entertainment device on the planet. Being good this year was worth the effort if we end up with these gifts under our tree.

BY DAN TYNAN
AND CHRISTINA
TYNAN-WOOD

TOP PICKS
FOR MOMS,
DADS, TWEENS
AND TEENS,
FROM \$35



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**1) POWER GIG:
RISE OF THE SIX STRING**

When our teen son walks in on Guitar Hero in progress, it's Game Over for the adults—Cole is the master. He's also pretty good with a real instrument, when he practices. All hail Power Gig: Rise of the Six String, a game with a strummer that connects wirelessly to an Xbox 360 or Sony PS3 console but also doubles as a fully functional guitar. When he's not earning bonus points shredding Kid Rock's "All Summer Long," he can plug it into an amp to jam with his friends. Music to our ears (well, sort of, anyway). Powergig.com, \$60 (game only), \$180 (game plus guitar), \$230 (game, guitar, drum kit and accessories)

**2) DUAL CAMERA XACTI,
MODEL VPC-CA102YL**

Our kid-video archive includes first steps and Halloween costumes from princess to zombie, but nothing that didn't occur in a totally dry environment. If we'd had the Sanyo Dual Camera Xacti, footage from the ski trip where our daughter screamed her way down a hill citing imagined child cruelty laws and our son's first perfect flip-turn in the pool, among other things, could be poised to go viral on YouTube. This pocket-size camera combo captures 1920 x 1080 full-HD video and 14-megapixel stills at the touch of a button and is waterproof to 10 feet. Us.sanyo.com, \$350

**3) EGO COMPACT
PORTABLE HARD DRIVE**

Every year we end up buying the kids at least one USB key drive because they have to work on different computers at school and at home. Now we have a drawer full of these, crammed with old essays and projects. Would that it all were on one drive—our kids would each have a complete digital record of their school experience (and we'd have less clutter). That's why we like the eGo portable drive—with capacities of 320 gigabytes (GB) to 1 terabyte (TB), it holds more data than most typical computers. File space would cease to be an issue, and we could finally stop shelling out cash for individual drives. Go.iomega.com, from \$80



4) IFROGZ NERVEPIPES

Both our kids are major music fans, but never of the same singers. Nothing starts a fight faster than one—or both—cranking the volume and setting a favorite tune to loop infinitely. We have better things to do than break up another Kelly Clarkson versus Black Eyed Peas slugfest, so we're designing them custom NervePipes headphones online. These over-the-head phones sound amazing, sit on the ears rather than in them and fold up to stash in a backpack. For ourselves, we're jonesing for the EarPollution CS40, which has a supercomfy ear cushion. Maybe next time a war breaks out, we'll be so engrossed in our oldies we won't notice. ifrogz.com, \$35 to \$40

5) ROKU XDS

We don't subscribe to cable TV anymore because almost all of our entertainment is beamed over the Internet to our Roku media player, through Netflix, Amazon or one of the dozens of Roku channels like Kung Fu Theater or Major League Baseball. The XDS streams full-high-definition (1080p) movies and shows to our HDTV and plays home movies or music stored on a USB key drive. A nifty new remote offers "instant replay" that can rewind the last 10 seconds, as well as a button that displays program info without interrupting our show. The biggest problem? Keeping our teenage son from bankrupting us by ordering endless episodes of *30 Rock* at \$2 apiece from Amazon. Roku.com, \$100

6) SONOS S5

We've been fighting over music for more than a decade: She wanted tunes in the bedroom (where she likes to relax) and the kitchen (where she cooks). He wanted a tricked-out system in the living room for entertaining. Since he is the audio/visual department in our family, she never got her way. But then he bought her the Sonos S5. In a word: harmony. It does everything she wants and fits on the bedside table or counter. We plugged it into an outlet and our Wi-Fi router, and installed the software on a laptop. It found the songs on every computer in the house, asked for log-ins to our subscription services (Sirius Satellite Radio, Pandora and Napster) and was operational in minutes. Then he gave her the \$100 ZoneBridge add-on. It plugged into the router and the S5 became a portable unit. The S5 still taps all our music, but wirelessly, so

we can carry it around easily. And the alarms—and sleep timer—are heaven. Every morning the S5 wakes us with an hour-long selection from a playlist that spans decades and genres. On weekends it lets us sleep late. And we can control the selections and volume from anywhere in the house using a laptop, iPhone or iPad app, or a dedicated Sonos controller (\$349). Sonos.com, \$400

7) VIRGIN MOBILE SAMSUNG INTERCEPT

Our son has been insisting his social life will wither if he doesn't get a data phone fast—preferably one running Android. We aren't fool enough to fall for that, nor do we plan to pay \$40 a month and sign a two-year contract for a kid who has already put two phones through the laundry. But we do have a solution: the Samsung Intercept, the first Droid phone to work with Virgin Mobile's prepaid service. It has a slide-out QWERTY keyboard and a touch screen. And at \$249 (or about 11 mowed lawns), he could buy it himself. Or maybe, just maybe, we'll get it for him for Christmas. Best of all, Virgin Mobile's cheapest Beyond Talk plan is \$25 a month for unlimited data, texting and e-mail (with 300 voice minutes), and there's no commitment. So if he washes his phone again, we can just stop paying the monthly fee. Virginmobileusa.com, \$249

8) TIMELINEX

Being a working mother of teens and tweens is a lot like running a business where the employees are doing everything possible to avoid hard labor, except without the cushy office and salary. That's why netbook computers have been a huge hit with this crowd, even though most units are too small and weak to be a serious minivan warrior's main machine. Acer's 11.6-inch TimelineX is a prime example of how that's changing: It's fast and powerful, yet the 3-pound machine is small enough to go anywhere. Included is Intel's newest and fastest processor (the i7), 4 GB of RAM, and enough storage to hold everything from photos and kids' art to presentations and spreadsheets. If you want to watch movies and don't mind a slightly larger netbook, you might want to move up to a 14-inch screen (price depending on specs). Don't need that much speed? Save some *dinero* and get the i3 model (\$599). Acer.com, \$900