



## Having a merry, non-traditional New Year's Eve

By Bill Casper  
staff writer

It's time to start thinking about what to do and where to go for the traditional New Year's Eve soiree.

But you're not necessarily interested in another one of those mind-bending, rock-thrilling, survival-of-the-fittest, endurance-test blowouts in an overcrowded, smoke-filled saloon or someone's basement.

How about something a little different? Like a country-style barn bash, complete with a hay or sleigh ride, or a fireworks display on the ski slopes, or a dry (no snow, no booze) evening on roller skates, or a weekend train trip to Toronto.

For example, Farmer Joe (no last name) has space in his barn on Sugarbush Farms for groups of country bumpkins, bunkering for a New Year's Eve hoedown, complete with 30-minute, horse-drawn hay or sleigh rides — the latter requiring a sufficient snow cover.

Farmer Joe said he will take reservations anytime for groups of at least 30 people, no fewer.

A \$45 deposit is required to reserve space for a four-hour barn party that will cost \$8 per person. That's the normal rate — not an inflated holiday fee, Farmer Joe said.

If your group wants to square dance, you'll have to hire your own caller, and you'll have to provide your own food and refreshments, but no beverages in glass bottles (to prevent horse/boof injuries) and no alcoholic drinks for under-age groups, Farmer Joe said. Electric heaters or cooking devices are not allowed, but an open fire is permitted.

THE BARN is heated, but it still can get cold and Farmer Joe advises that you dress warm. There's an ice pond for skating, but bring your own skates, plus a toboggan hill and

Farmer Joe will rent toboggans for \$2 each.

If you're having too much fun to leave after four hours, you can stay longer, but Farmer Joe will charge your group \$25 for each extra hour you party.

Call Farmer Joe at 482-4741 to make reservations. Sugarbush Farms is at 3620 Goffredson Road, Ypsilanti, four miles north of Canton Center Road in Canton Township.

Check the Yellow Page listings under "hay rides" for closer farms that may offer such New Year's Eve parties down on the farm.

Or how about ending the year with a bang at the third annual New Year's Eve Torch Parade and Winter Fireworks Spectacular at Alpine Valley Ski Resort in Milford?

The festivities begin at 8:30 p.m. with multiple torch parades down the slopes, followed by the fireworks show at 9 p.m. The Alpine people said the cold air, dark sky and white snow combine to make the winter fireworks more brilliant than their summer equivalents.

Arrive early for skiing and best fireworks viewing, then stay late to ski some more and ring in the new year in Alpine's lodge.

You may wish to line up a backup party because the Alpine event could be postponed due to foul weather and take place on the next clear night.

Call Alpine at 887-2180 for more information or check other area ski resorts for similar snow parties.

IF YOU prefer an inexpensive, indoor party on roller skates with family and friends, who don't mind if there are no alcoholic beverages, check with roller rinks in the area. Party favors are usually included in the very reasonable admission fees and reservations are generally not needed, but make sure.

DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

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