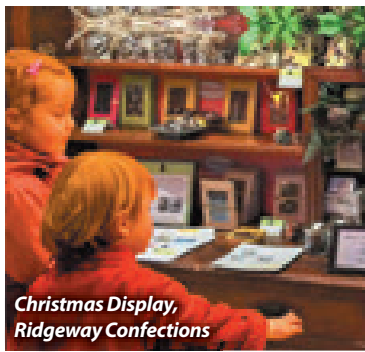




Christmas Display,  
Ridgeway Confections



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Gingerbread Houses,  
Briarlea Kitchen



Christmas Plates,  
Briarlea Kitchen

# CHRISTMAS SHOP & HOP IN LYNDHURST & SEELEYS BAY

By Andi Christine Bednarzig

Christmas shopping already? It's a tradition we either love or endure. Just after the last leaves have fallen, Christmas songs are piped through stores, and shopping centres are festooned in bright holiday colours.

How about an alternative shopping event away from the stress of crowded malls, or impersonalized on-line shopping?

On **Saturday, December 7th**, enjoy a day visiting merchants and businesses offering unique gifts and delectable treats at a Christmas Shop & Hop in the Lyndhurst and Seeley's Bay district.

Step into your car and drive along the countryside to one of Leeds and Thousand Islands Township's best kept secrets. This largely rural area is home to many local craftspeople and artisans who will happily share their creations and stories with you.

Start with an information gathering stop at **The Green Gecko (435 Lyndhurst Rd.)**, set in a historic home in the heart of Lyndhurst. Owner, Terri Dawson has organized this event for seven years. It is not all confirmed, but Dawson expects 14 vendors this year.

"Everyone was very supportive from the start," Dawson said. "Local merchants like the opportunity to work together and promote our area, while local shoppers enjoy the chance to shop locally, and of course have fun collecting stamps for the chance to win prizes."

A prescribed route of the area to meet local merchants has been drawn up. At each stop, shoppers will be met with welcoming smiles, specials, treats, or giveaways. Participants can accumulate stamps along the way. With a minimum number of stamps, a ballot can be entered to win prizes.

"We make it reasonable," Dawson explained. "The idea is for people to experience shopping at each location and not just feel they are dashing about collecting stamps."

Before setting out, see the treasures the Dawsons have brought back from their travels in south-east Asia, as well as sterling silver jewellery, pottery, gourmet food, art, candles, bath products and woodwork. Dawson realizes how busy shoppers are and offers greeting cards and gift bags. For the Shop & Hop, taxes are exempt, and you'll receive a gift.

Is there someone on your list especially hard to buy for? Head out to **LYNDHURST LASER (3336 County Road 3, Lyndhurst)** where Marilyn Wykes can custom laser engrave on just about any medium (glass, ceramic, or wood). Just choose your artwork or message. It was Wykes' first experience last year.

"It was fabulous and fun and lots of people just loved it," Wykes said. She is still deciding if this year's giveaway will be a laser cut snowflake or an angel ornament.

Take a short, 10-minute drive towards Seeley's Bay with a stop at **Briarlea Kitchen at Sweet's Corner Rd.** It was here at Chef Moira Vanderwerf's farm where conception of the event took place. When she opened her doors of her storefront and commercial kitchen to business, she wanted to encourage people to visit other local businesses. The event started with just a few locations in Lyndhurst and then expanded to include Seeley's Bay. Soon there were enough stops to make it a full day's event.

There will be a variety of sweet and savory samples to taste on Shop & Hop day. Traditional Christmas cookies, mince meat tarts, shortbread and gingerbread, as well as take home ready-to-heat meals, perfect for the busy holiday season.

Need a caffeine fix by now? The next stop would be **SHaBean Coffee Roastery (127 Haskins Point Rd.)**, a small artisanal coffee roastery operated out of a Seeley's Bay home. Here Mary Whitney and her husband, John Barker will offer a free cup of freshly roasted coffee made of hardy, intensely flavoured arabica beans. **On Shop & Hop day, save \$2:00 off a package of coffee.**

What is Christmas without chocolate? A stop at **Ridgeway Confections (159 Main St., Seeley's Bay)** would gratify your sweet tooth. For the 4th year, owner Cindy Healy has been creating fine, hand-crafted Belgian chocolates with 100% sustainable cocoa beans, and fresh local ingredients.

"We typically offer free hot chocolate, made with dark cocoa, and freshly whipped cream - a little pick me up for holiday shoppers," said Healy. **Healy also offers a customer favourite of brittles (chocolate covered sponge candy) and barks at 20% off.**

This event is sponsored in part by the **Lyndhurst, Seeley's Bay & District Chamber of Commerce** to promote the region and to help local businesses grow.

Now, imagine for a moment that it is the beginning of December. The first snow is gently falling, gifts have been wrapped, your freezer is filled with baked goods and holiday meals, as you sit back and relax with a glass of eggnog or cup of tea, while the rest of the world hurries on. **LH**

**Editor's Note:** There are many more vendors participating, and the list is still growing. Keep up to date by visiting the website and signing up for emails at [www.shopandhop.ca](http://www.shopandhop.ca)