

Wednesday, November 23, 2016

The New York Times
Watching

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Dear Watchers,

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving in America, and for many of us that means a lot of together time. We're coming to you early this week with some suggestions about what to watch at these gatherings. And if these suggestions aren't enough, there are always more, of course, on [our website](#).

Everyone here at Team Watching is thankful for your readership and feedback in the months since we've launched. Have a lovely holiday. And please tweet me your thoughts about the new episodes of "Gilmore Girls." I'm [@margeincharge](#) over there.

— **Margaret Lyons**



Tamal Ray in "The Great British Baking Show." Man, Tamal is the best. Love Productions

I Am Watching TV With ... a Disparate Group, Including Kids

It's Thanksgiving, which means that people need to be able to come and go from the TV area and still follow what's happening, which is why any reality-contest show will fit the bill. But above all, you seek "[The Great British Baking Show](#)." This is the most earnest and enjoyable of any reality-contest show in living memory, and the skills and passion on display are significant and inspiring. (*"Masterclass" episodes, with Paul and Mary, are [free to stream on PBS](#); three seasons are [available for members of Thirteen](#) and other [participating PBS broadcasters](#).)*)

Something Else With Food?

"**Chopped**," always. Chefs compete in ridiculous face-offs, and each episode stands alone; there's no unifying narrative. This is an all-ages show, too: nothing scary, nothing violent beyond aggressive dessert whipping, nothing sexual. (*Watch it on [Netflix](#).*)

Something With Football That's Not Actual Football?

"**Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making the Team**" covers the selection process to the most grueling and underpaid position in professional football. Unlike with other reality-contest shows, its format isn't fixed, so there's no regular elimination moment, and the show isn't constantly telegraphing who's going to be cut. This is better for teens and older, and might provide a good opportunity to talk about healthy body images. (*[CMT](#), free with a cable login*)

No, Something Farther Afield

"**Face Off**" is "Top Chef" for special-effects makeup, and it is riveting. Even better, there's no boring infighting, and no malicious behavior. All of the contestants work hard and are kind to one another, regularly helping their competitors and praising one another's work. Once in a while there are horror-character episodes, but those are easy to skip if you're watching with elementary-age kids; anyone over 12 or so will be completely fine. (*[Syfy](#), free with a cable login*)



Amaury Nolasco, left, and Wentworth Miller in “Prison Break.” Fox

... The Same Group, but No Kids

This is still not the time to finally watch “The Wire,” or anything too dialogue-rich: People chitchat, someone gets up to stir something — you don’t want to be shushing people or asking everyone to pause stuff while you check on the pies. It’s time for solid shows that still don’t require tremendous brainpower. Go with “**Prison Break**,” Fox’s big, twisty, drama answer to “Lost” from 2005. Season 1 is a solid action soap, although the show grows exhausting after that. ([Netflix](#))

Something With Food?

“**Kitchen Confidential**” is a short-lived but fizzy and fun half-hour comedy based on Anthony Bourdain’s memoir. It stars Bradley Cooper, John Francis Daley, John Cho, Nicholas Brendon, and Frank Langella, plus other familiar faces. Darren Star is among the show’s producers, so if you like shows like “Sex and the City” and “[Younger](#),” give this a whirl. It aired on network, so it’s not too risqué, but it does spend a lot of time talking about (and talking around) sex. ([Hulu](#))

The riveting documentary series “**Last Chance U**” is one of my favorite shows of the year, and there is no one on earth who cares less about football than I do. If you like “[Friday Night Lights](#)” and “[30 for 30](#)” documentaries, this series, about a community college football team known for sending players to Division 1 programs and then to the N.F.L., is a must. ([Netflix](#))

No, Something Farther Afield

“**Clash of the Corps**” is about competitive drum corps and focuses on two teams vying for top honors. Drums, horns, color guard — everyone’s here, everyone’s talented, everyone’s very, very sweaty. Warning: You will have to go to YouTube to find the corps’ full routines, since they’re each about 14 minutes long. Worth it! ([Hulu](#))



Keri Russell and Matthew Rhys in “The Americans.” Craig Blankenhorn/FX

... No One. I’m by Myself, Which Is Fine

Something With Food?

If you're looking for upbeat but still substantive, "[Please Like Me](#)," an Australian coming-of-age comedy about a young gay man and his quirky pals, is a charmer. Each episode title is the name of a food that is cooked or consumed during the episode. ([Hulu](#))

Something With Football That's Not Actual Football?

Duh, if you haven't watched "[Friday Night Lights](#)," holy TV lord in TV heaven, do so now. If you're bummed and want to steer into the skid, "F.N.L." has plenty of weeping. If you're bummed and want to cheer up, "F.N.L." has hope and determination. If you feel great and want to feel even better, again, turn to "F.N.L." There is no bad time to watch "Friday Night Lights," and there is no better time to watch it than when you have a few days to yourself and can just go to crazytown on it. ([Netflix](#))

Something Farther Afield?

If you like bleak ensemble dramas, try "[Blackstone](#)," a Canadian import set on a fictional First Nation reserve. It starts out a little jumpy and underwritten, but it kicks into gear after about five episodes. Intense, thoughtful, and one of vanishingly few shows about present-day indigenous communities. ([Netflix](#))



Homer and Marge living the dream on “The Simpsons.” Fox

Looking for a Basic Cable TV Marathon?

- BBC America is airing Seasons 1 and 2 of “[Sherlock](#),” twice. It started today at 6 a.m., but starts again tonight at 6 p.m. and goes through the night. Then it’s all “[Star Trek](#)” and “[Star Trek: The Next Generation](#)” from Thursday at 6 a.m. until Saturday at 8:25 p.m.
 - FXX is running another mega marathon of “[The Simpsons](#),” airing 600 episodes starting at noon on Thanksgiving Day. It runs through Tuesday Dec. 6, ending at midnight. Holy cannoli, that is a lot of “Simpsons.”
 - FYI is pretty much always airing a “**Tiny House Nation**” marathon. This week, it starts at 9 a.m. Thursday and runs until 5 a.m. Friday. Then there’s a “Storage Wars” marathon starting at 2 p.m. Friday and running until 4 a.m. Saturday.
 - Esquire Network also airs a lot of blocs, but they are going all-in on “[Parks and Recreation](#)” for Thanksgiving. Journey to Pawnee on Thursday from 7 a.m. to midnight.
 - IFC is airing “**The Rocky Horror Picture Show**” 10 times in a row starting at 6 a.m. Thursday. I will tell you from experience it is surprisingly easy to learn several of those songs on ukulele, so if you have the whole day ... well, you can be really singing along by the last two airings. Teach a cousin how to play, too! Make it a thing!
 - TV Land has 22 episodes of “**The Andy Griffith Show**,” starting at 9 a.m. Thursday.
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Michael B. Jordan, center, and Sylvester Stallone, right, in “Creed.” Warner Bros. Pictures

We Want a Movie That Will ... Get Us Amped (but Also Teary)

“[Creed](#),” the latest chapter in the “Rocky” series, is now available to stream. The story picks up with Apollo Creed’s son, Adonis (Michael B. Jordan), as he trains with Rocky (Sylvester Stallone) to claim his father’s mantle. And if you need more movies to watch on Thanksgiving or over the long weekend, both Amazon Prime and Hulu are offering the complete “Rocky” series to stream. (Watch it on [Amazon Prime](#) or on [Hulu](#).) — **Monica Castillo**

... Make Us Laugh

Combining the comedic powers of Rose Byrne, Allison Janney and Melissa McCarthy — and undercutting the leading man personas of Jude Law and Jason Statham — “**Spy**” is a cheeky espionage spoof with great one-liners and a fair amount of

infiltrate an illegal weapons ring. Her main asset is the fact that no one, neither her organization nor the enemy, takes her seriously as a spy because of her appearance. McCarthy proves she's one of the best physical comedians working in Hollywood today. ([HBO](#)) — M.C.

... Satisfy Kids Who Really Just Want to Go See 'Moana'

Try “**Lilo and Stitch**,” Disney’s first feature-length animated foray into Hawaiian culture. A furry blue alien with an Elvis obsession crash-lands on earth and befriends a lonely Hawaiian girl. This “E.T.” riff is one of Disney’s stranger animated entries of the 2000s. Kids will probably find the mischievous antics of the alien Stitch most endearing, while adults may laugh more at his taste for kitsch. ([Netflix](#)) — M.C.



John Wayne, left, and Jimmy Stewart in “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance.” Paramount Pictures

Looking For a Basic Cable Movie Marathon?

John Wayne Westerns on AMC

Gather the granddads as AMC briefly turns back into American Movie Classics, the network it was before going all in on original television. Beginning at 10 a.m. Thursday, it's *The Duke* all day long. There are few deep cuts like "**The Shootist**," which was Wayne's last film and co-starred Lauren Bacall and James Stewart. But the highlight of the series is the marathon's first film, "**The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance**." It's one of director John Ford's darker Westerns, and with stupendous performances from Wayne and Stewart, it's one of Ford's most fascinating classics.

The 'Jurassic Park' Trilogy on Spike TV

If you haven't revisited "**Jurassic Park**" or its two sequels since watching the fourth installment, "**Jurassic World**," here's your chance. Starting at 11 a.m. Thursday, and then again beginning at 7 p.m., it's dinosaur after dinosaur on Spike TV. Each story follows the same basic rhythm: Humans go to dinosaur island, some of them get eaten, the remaining people get away. It's a solid choice if you need something you can step away from for the big meal or for a walk around the neighborhood. — M.C.