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cupcakes

Celebrate
MOMS!

We examine the most difficult, but rewarding, job there is: motherhood, and what it means to our families, communities and lives overall.

+10 local moms
who help raise
the world

DIRECTORIES: School Open House // Winter Family Fun // Holiday Retail

► **KAJSA JAMES,**
*a Dana Point mother
with a compelling story of
strength and courage*

**Here's
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night out with
these simple
steps

The
truth
about
tonsils

win
Two tickets to
Festival Ballet
Theatre's
'The Nutcracker'
ocfamily.com



BY DEBBIE LAVDAS

11 best baby finds

If you're expecting a little one soon, put these items on your holiday wish list.

As the holidays near, we've rounded up some great baby finds to put on your wish list. From a creative portable play yard and a dream crib to "teething bling" and modern safety gates, these 11 picks will make this season, plus 2013 and beyond, that much sweeter for you and your baby.

1 Kudos cribs

This Kudos crib, from Young America, really stands out, thanks to its fun Chili Pepper style with Espresso spindles. Young America cribs boast the most stringent safety standards in the industry. They're GREENGUARD- and Intertek-certified and made in the U.S., which ensures complete production control. (About 95 percent of all cribs sold in the U.S. are made overseas.). Young America cribs are made to order and can be assembled at your house when you order online – brilliant! Kudos, featured on CBS' "The Talk," is just one of Young America's collections, from traditional to contemporary. A bonus: The crib converts to a toddler bed. \$800 youngamerica.com



2 The brilliant Breeze playard

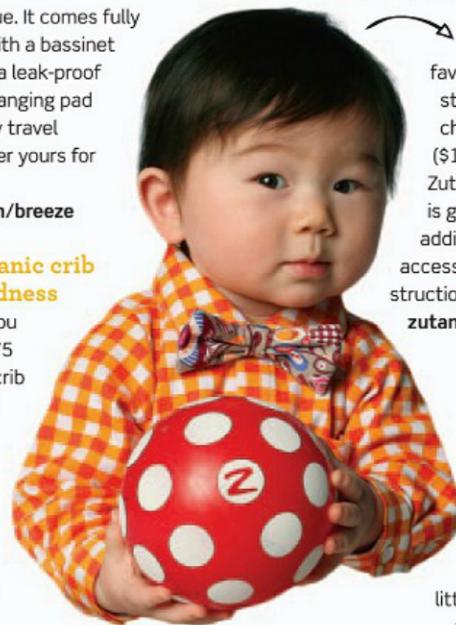
When you have a baby, who doesn't like anything that makes life easier? The brand-new Breeze playard, from 4moms, is an easy, breezy dream for mothers. To open it, just pop the center down – and you're done! Simply pull on the center loop and, voila, the whole thing folds up in a flash. Say goodbye to the days of sequence-snapping each cumbersome side together or collapsing each side one by one to close up when you're on the move. Think of the Breeze as an iPhone 5 versus a rotary dial phone – or just call it genius. The Breeze looks smart in modern black with a pop

of bright blue. It comes fully equipped with a bassinet for infants, a leak-proof portable changing pad and a handy travel bag. Preorder yours for \$299.99.

4moms.com/breeze

3 Organic crib goodness

Did you know that 75 percent of crib mattresses in the U.S. contain suspect or dangerous chemicals? If you want your



baby to sleep safely, visit Pottery Barn Kids to purchase an organic crib mattress by Natura World, the leading natural and organic bedding producer. The mattress is all natural and hypoallergenic. \$549 at potterybarnkids.com

4 TemporalScanner

When your baby isn't feeling well, you want to check his temperature fast, gently and efficiently. The Exergen TemporalScanner is an infrared thermometer that reads a temperature in just two seconds. Just run it across your baby's forehead to get a temperature readout. It's used in more than



two-thirds of all hospitals and half of all pediatricians' offices in the U.S., and it's simple and sanitary (no caps to change, compared with ear thermometers). It's ideal for all ages. \$50 or less at Walgreens, Babies R Us and more. exergen.com

5 Zutano style

Zutano celebrates color, whimsy and the wide-eyed wonder of babies with its vibrant line of clothing. Some favorite styles include their striped Gnome Hat (\$24), checked Button-Down Shirt (\$19) and Bow Tie (\$16); Zutano's quirky Fox Trot line is graphically charming. In addition, the company makes accessories, such as its Construction Nursery mobile (\$60). zutano.com

6 On-trend Teething Bling

Celebs such as Tori Spelling like to show off their babies' Teething Bling pendants when toting their little bundles of joy. These fun-fashion necklaces are made of the same

FDA-approved material used in most teething toys, and come in a fun assortment of colors and designs. Priced from \$19.99; smartmomjewelry.com

7 Minky Couture love

The deliciously cozy, soft blankets from Minky Couture are warm and wonderful for winter. Like all of its blankets, Minky's turquoise Camden features a colorful design that will brighten any season. The silky ruffle adds a luxurious touch. All of the blankets are made in the U.S. Enjoy choosing from a variety of eye-catching patterns and colors! From \$65; softminkyblankets.com

8 Clearly a top-notch gate

Designed by One Step Ahead, the Clear Advantage Safety Gate blends with most any modern home décor. Its transparent panels free you from feeling boxed in. Designed with a cherry hardwood frame, it looks elegant and goes perfectly

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Baby

with any wooden staircase. The gate keeps your baby safe and offers an open feel to your home. Its swing-open style is easy to pass through, too, and it is sturdy enough to be placed at the top of the stairs. \$99.95; onestepahead.com



9 Bring your own highchair

Wonder what's germs are lurking on all those restaurant highchairs? Play it safe: Bring your own. Chicco's 360° Rotating Hook-On Chair keeps meals more sanitary. The easy-to-use chair is fully rotating, and it comes with a snap-on serving tray. It works with easy, secure rubber table clamps. The seat folds for easy travel and storage (carry bag included). It fits kids from ages 6 months to 3 years – up to 37 pounds. \$69.99; chiccousa.com

11

Decorative Summer Infant gate

If your home has accents of wood and wrought iron, this gate will be perfect for you. Easy to install, the



10 Orbit Baby Color Packs

In sunny SoCal, it's always fun to mix it up with a pop of fresh style. So splash some color onto your Orbit Baby stroller. The fun Color Pack comes in nine shades, from Apricot to Pacific Blue to Watermelon. The set is easy to swap out and machine washable. And here's a planet-plus: The fabrics are eco-certified. \$120. orbitbaby.com

Stylish & Secure Wood & Metal Walk-Thru Gate, from Summer Infant, has elegant accents. The gate is pressure-mounted, so you don't have to get out the drill. Its hinged swinging door opens easily in either direction with one hand, and it automatically swings closed. summerinfant.com

