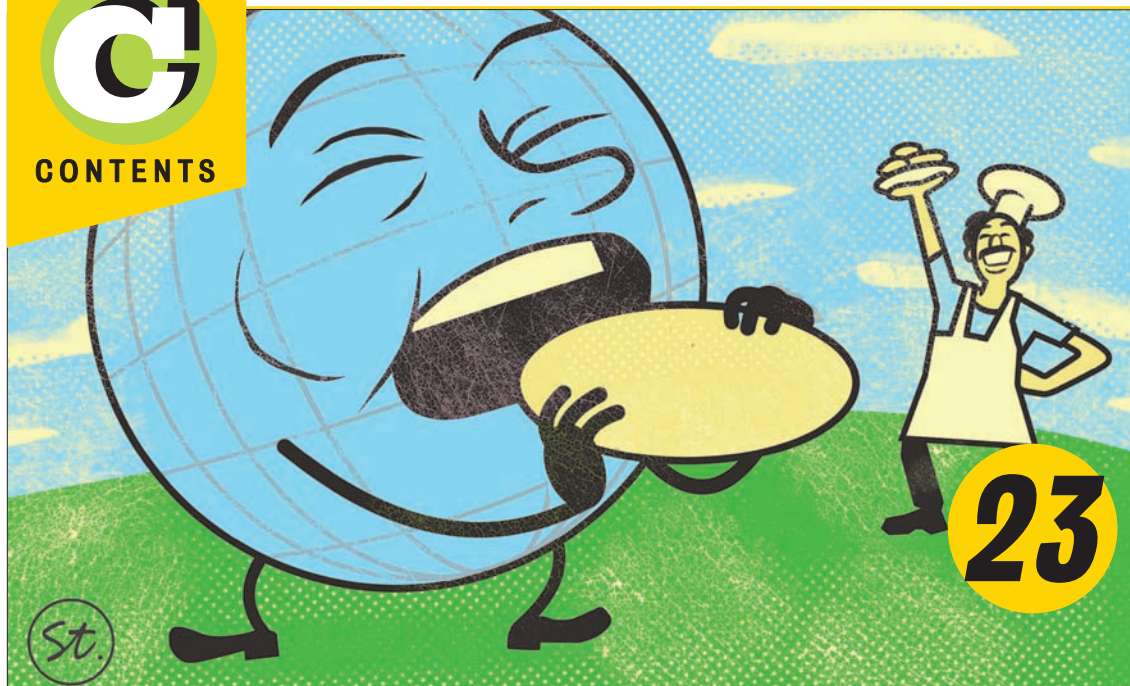




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Sacramento News & Review

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Life isn't always a Hallmark movie

True confession: During the holidays, I sometimes binge Hallmark channel Christmas movies.



They are two-hour cable TV versions of greeting cards—heartwarming or sappy, depending on your point of view. They feature

a rotating cast of the same actors. Many

of the plots are very similar: Big-city executive visits picture-postcard small town just before Christmas and meets local man or woman. Or the main character returns home and runs into an old flame.

Either way, the couple doesn't hit it off right away. But as they go to Christmas tree lightings, decorate gingerbread houses and ice skate, they fall for each other. There's an interrupted first kiss, then a crisis—another suitor, or a great job back in the city. But after the last commercial break, everything is tied up in a neat bow. True love prevails.

Not exactly avant-garde cinema, but the ratings are high enough that 37 new Hallmark Christmas movies will air this holiday season, a record.

The movies give you that warm holiday glow. But they also remind us of all those whose lives aren't so storybook.

This year, a special mention should go to the families who are trying to recover from the Camp Fire. The North Valley Community Foundation (nvcf.org) is coordinating the relief effort.

Maybe if we get into the holiday spirit, we can create some happy endings in real life.

—FOON RHEE

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