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Exclusive

**OCTAVIA
SPENCER**

**THE CHRISTMAS
TRADITIONS SHE
CHERISHES**

Make
Room
for Joy



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An Attitude of Gratitude



Visit Parade.com/Octavia to find out why Spencer loves making vision boards.

Octavia Spencer has played an abundance of strong female characters—from her Oscar-winning turn as Minny Jackson in *The Help* to real-life NASA scientist Dorothy Vaughan in 2016's *Hidden Figures*.

"I've learned so much from these women," says Spencer, 47. "They have taught me to embrace an attitude of gratitude and have helped me to become more grounded." The Montgomery, Ala. native will portray another powerful character in the Cold War-era fantasy *The Shape of Water*, out Dec. 8.

Soon, Spencer will head South for the holidays. "My sister is an amazing cook and all of my family and their kids come over for Christmas," she says. "The fire is on and all the smells are reminiscent of my childhood. I love it!"

The actress chatted with *Spry Living* about keeping healthy, finding her first gray hair and her favorite Christmas indulgences.

I'm paying more attention to my health. If you look at my pictures from when I first started in this town, I was actually 100 pounds heavier. I've come to realize that you only have one body and if it doesn't work, you aren't going to be running at full speed. I do weight training three times a week and try to fit in some cardio.

The pressure that we are put under as women angers me. Snide people will say, "You don't want to lose too much weight because you are going to change the types of roles that you get." If a man doesn't like my body, he doesn't have to be with me. If I don't like my body, then I have to change it. I'm not changing it for you, you or you. I'm doing this for me.

OCTAVIA SPENCER ON WHAT SHE'S LEARNED FROM PLAYING FEARLESS WOMEN AND HOW THE HOLIDAYS FEED HER SOUL. *By Nicole Pajer*

Education changed my life. I had humble beginnings and I'm at a very different stage because of education. Now, I work with City Year Los Angeles—they partner with area schools to tutor kids.

I found my first gray hair a while back. I keep a close watch on it. I've had a hairstylist say, "You want me to pluck it out?" "No!" Because I've heard that old wives' tale—if you pluck it out, it brings friends. I'm watching it like a hawk, and so far it's still only the one!

I made a personal Christmas CD and that always gets me in the holiday mood. I play that and light cinnamon candles and it just puts you right there. Poinsettias are a must for me every year, too.



Spencer scored her second Oscar nomination for *Hidden Figures*.

I go crazy for my mom's sweet potato pie. It's delicious. I eat it morning, noon and night. After I've had it for Christmas dinner, I make sure I have some with my coffee the next morning.

I surround myself with positive people. Someone said to me, "Your trees are bearing fruit because you are pruning them" and that really stuck with me. You clear away all of the toxic people and there is so much joy and light that comes in.

I don't squander time. I spend it exactly the way I want to. I don't like to be late for anything because I don't want to waste anybody's time. I don't agree to do things that I don't want to do because it's time that I won't get back. We have such little time on this earth and I want to spend it with people who allow me to live out my full potential, doing jobs that inspire me and volunteering with causes I'm passionate about. ●