

Cooks will love these gift ideas



A Question of Taste

By Hilary Keating Callaghan

A foray into a gourmet cooking store should provide a wealth of low-cost gift ideas. With that in mind, I recently visited Kitchen Stuff (330 Hamilton in Birmingham) and came away with, not just a fund of ideas but with an armload of inexpensive items I couldn't pass up.

One such item was Vege-Paper, a packet of four 22-by-22-inch sheets of pure vegetable cellulose paper (each of which can be reused about 15 times). Stiff and parchment-like in the envelope, the sheets soften when rinsed with water and are used to wrap vegetables before dropping them in boiling water. The vegetables remain dry, remarkably crisp, nutritious, and flavorful. It was worth the \$3.50 price just for the fascination of seeing the Vege-Paper work.

If you wanted to make a gift set including the Vege-Paper, you could combine it with citrus juicer and salad spinner. The citrus juicer, available for \$24.99 from Kitchen Stuff, is actually a tiny spigot which simply pokes through the skin of the fruit and funnels out the juice without the bother of cutting and squeezing. Even non-cooks would enjoy using this gadget for fixing drinks — from a morning glass of fresh orange juice to a whiskey sour.

The salad spinner is one of those gadgets I had considered to be not worth the cupboard space until I tried it. Working on the principle of centrifuge, the salad spinner throws all excess water off salad greens, leaving them perfectly dry so that salad dressings will adhere rather than running off the leaves.

The method is more efficient than patting greens dry with towels and doesn't leave you with stacks of soggy paper towels (save a tree) or tea towels (save on laundry). The salad spinner is available for \$6.97 from Wells Fargo.

The year gift set together with a recipe card for a green salad with crisp-cooked vegetables and a lemon-vinaigrette dressing.

WHILE IN KITCHEN Stuff, I also noticed the Grease-Mop, a device which is supposed to absorb oil and grease from the rim of soups, sauces, etc. I had always eyed this item with suspicion — even if it did work, what did anyone want with a used grease-mop?

My suspicions were allayed by Fran Hayes, co-owner of Kitchen Stuff who has had her own Grease Mop for three years and who assured me that it does work. It is, in fact, made by the same company that makes the ropes to clean up oil spills in the ocean. The mop simply rinses clean although, if it becomes discolored, for example by a spaghetti sauce, it is dish-washer safe.

The perfect gadget for anyone with a health- or aesthetic-based distaste for excessive fat in foods, this precludes the time-consuming stop of lifting a dish to congeal fat so that it can be chilled off. (\$3.95 at Kitchen Stuff). Another thoughtful gift for the health-conscious individual would be a bag of Columbian De-Caf coffee beans which yields a remarkably rich cup of coffee without the negative effects of caffeine.

ANYONE FOND of things Italian would appreciate a gift of French Roast or Italian Roast coffee for making fresh espresso. Fran Hayes recommended Dutch Chocolate Coffee beans which can be brewed for a delicious, unusual after-dinner drink, a beverage described by one of the Hayes girls as "a sin." If sinful as an after-dinner drink, imagine waking up to a cup of Dutch Chocolate Coffee.

You might even time your gift to arrive on a weekend, accompanied by fresh, flaky croissants — definitely something to linger in bed with. The croissants could come from your own oven or be purchased from a good French baker (available from Le Petit Prince, 124 West 14 Mile in Birmingham or from Tweeny's Cafe). The coffee beans mentioned, plus six other varieties, are available from Kitchen Stuff at \$5.95/lb., \$3 1/2 lb., \$1.50/1/4 lb.

FOR THOSE WHO prefer tea, a sampler of exotic teas would provide a pleasant break from the ubiquitous orange pekoe.

I came away from a visit to the Eastern Market this past summer with a small bundle of 1 oz. including Oolong, Darjeeling, Keemun, and green tea, and with a sense of having been adventurous, self-indulgent, and extravagant — all for a total of about \$2. Combining these tea samples with a tea ball would result in a lovely gift set for the tea connoisseur.

Perhaps one of the nicest aspects of buying kitchen gifts (along with price) is the shopping itself. A world apart from crowded and impersonal malls, gourmet cooking stores offer a respite, a chance to spend an hour or an afternoon browsing through a fascinating array of kitchen tools and gadgets. Unlike department store clerks, who are too often totally unfamiliar with their stock, the salespeople in a family-owned establishment are knowledgeable and personable.

Their enthusiasm is so contagious, you might end up with an assortment of items designed to speed you through your own holiday cooking. Whether for yourself or others, these items answer the need all of us have for "toys" under the Christmas tree.

1/4 to 1/2 cup fresh-minced parsley
salt
fresh-ground black pepper
1 lb. slender young zucchini
1 lb. thin green beans
1 cup paper-thin carrot slices
2 heads Boston lettuce
Simple Vinaigrette

Boil the potatoes in their jackets in salted water until they are just tender. Drain the potatoes and chill them. When they are cold, peel and thinly slice them. Put them in a bowl with 3 tsp. of the olive oil, the parsley, and some salt and pepper. Toss and set aside until you are ready to serve the salad.

Slice the zucchini 1/4-inch thick, cutting on a slant if they are particularly slender, and drop the slices into boiling salted water. Cook the zucchini for 5 minutes exactly, drain, and run cold water over them. Chill the zucchini. Trim and wash the green beans and cut them in 1-inch lengths. Boil them in salted water until tender but still crunchy. Drain the beans, run cold water over them, and chill them.

Boil the carrot slices in a little salted water for just a few minutes — they, too, should be a bit crunchy.

Wash the lettuce, dry the leaves by spinning them gently with a tea towel or patting in a salad spinner, and then tear them into manageable pieces.

Just before serving, combine all the vegetables in a bowl, pour the vinaigrette over them, and toss lightly until everything is evenly coated. Add salt and fresh-ground pepper to taste. Serves 6 to 8.

(Adapted from The Vegetarian Epicure Book Two by Anna Thomas)

SIMPLE VINAIGRETTE

1/4 cup white wine vinegar or herb vinegar
1 tsp. lemon juice
1/4 tsp. dry mustard or 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
salt and fresh-ground black pepper
1/2 cup olive oil

Combine the vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, salt, and pepper. Add the olive oil, a little at a time, beating with a whisk until the mixture emulsifies. This may also be combined in a blender.

CAFE AU LAIT

(This is the traditional French breakfast coffee.)

4 cups strong fresh hot coffee
2 cups whole milk
Tiny pinch of salt
Granulated sugar, if desired

Have ready 4 large coffee cups, warmed. The fresh hot coffee should be kept warm in a little pan or pot over hot water while the milk with the salt is warmed in a separate little pan. Bring it just to a boil, stirring all the while. Pour the coffee and milk simultaneously into each cup. Season with granulated sugar, if desired. Serve at once. Makes 4 to 6 servings, depending on size of cups. (From The Dione Lucas Book of French Cooking by Dione Lucas and Marion Gorman).

CROISSANTS

1/2 cup butter
3 to 3 1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 pkg. yeast
1/4 cup milk
1/4 cup water
2 eggs
1 tsp. milk

Cut the butter into 1/4 cup of the flour until the mixture is a paste. Place between 2 sheets of waxed paper and roll to a 10x4-inch rectangle. Chill one hour. Combine 1 cup flour, the sugar, salt, and yeast. Heat 3/4 cup milk and the 1/4 cup water to 120-130 degrees. Add to the dry ingredients and beat two minutes at medium speed, scraping the bowl occasionally. Add 1 egg and 1/2 cup flour. Beat at high speed two minutes. Stir in more flour to make a soft dough. Turn onto a floured board. Roll to a 12-inch square. Place the butter on the center of the dough. Fold a third of the dough over the butter; cover with the remainder of the dough. Roll to a 12-inch square. Fold as above. Roll and fold 3 more times. Wrap in waxed paper; chill 2 hours.

Shape 1/3 of the dough at a time. Roll each into a 12-inch circle. Cut into 8 pie-shaped pieces. Beat together the egg and the 1 tsp. milk. Brush on the points. Roll up each piece, beginning at the wide end. Seal the points. Place on greased baking sheets, points down; curve slightly. Brush with the egg mixture. Let rise in a warm place, until light, about 30 minutes. Bake at 375 degrees about 12 minutes, or until done. Makes 2 dozen.



Byrd's Kitchen

by Vivian Byrd

'Toys' for the kitchen for Christmas giving

Let's go Christmas shopping. Selecting a Christmas gift for a spouse, lover, friend or relative who is into cooking presents a different kind of problem. There are unlimited exciting possibilities, so many, in fact, that the difficulty becomes narrowing the choices to just the right item, and the price range that fits your budget.

Imagination and careful thought, however, can overcome any budget considerations. For example, on my last birthday I received a small present which has given me a great deal of pleasure.

A green plant in a one-inch pot, about three inches tall, was set into a tin measuring cup (size — one cup) with a bright plaid ribbon tied around its middle. It fit perfectly on the windowsill over the kitchen sink and I enjoy it every day.

It was a fitting present and I was touched and pleased by the care and planning that had gone into its selection.

OTHER OCCASIONS or other relationships might call for expensive presents. Yet, even with an unlimited budget, the amount of care given to choosing a present which will be pleasing to the recipient makes a difference in how it will be received.

The following are some items encountered on a recent shopping trip. They are offered only as suggestions which might spur creative ideas for what to give that special person in your life. Brand names and approximate prices are given. However, no stores are mentioned as a number of shops were visited and items chosen are generally available.

None of these is intended as simply an eye-catcher for one reason or another.

Fresh bean sprouts can be harvested from your own bean farm right in the kitchen. A one-liter sprout jar sit upside down over a drainer dish. Seeds are included, Corning, \$10.

THE FIRST WHIFF of brewing coffee in the morning can set a pleasurable note for the day. Coffee lovers can grind their own beans in a handsome coffee mill. Waring, \$20.

If the Cuisinart food processor is the Cadillac of processors as some folks

maintain, their cookware certainly qualifies as the "mink coat" of the kitchen. A stainless steel outer layer surrounds a three-layer core. Colander with a long wooden handle, \$45; 10-inch saute or omelet pan, \$50. Cuisinart also has a line of kitchen knives.

Like variety in your coffee? Salton makes an espresso, cappuccino and filter coffee maker — plastic with sleek contemporary styling, \$175. For multiple kitchen use, Farberware's 12-inch electric fry pan can be used to saute, fry, pan broil, grill, stew, make a pot roast, or use in a buffet service, \$60.

Time is certainly important in cooking and a handsome clock in the kitchen keeps track of it. Verichron has a square version with rounded corners, quartz movement and a second hand, \$27.

BAKE AND SERVE your favorite quiche in the same fluted edged stoneware pan by Palisgraf. An off-white, 9-inch size is \$7. This one goes into microwave or conventional ovens.

After putting energy into preparing those special recipes, you will want something pretty to serve it on. India brass offers a polished brass 15-inch serving tray at \$45. A short Lucite stand for displaying this beauty when it isn't in use is \$10.

Women who have full or part-time jobs, or who are very busy with volunteer work, will appreciate the convenience of slow cooking. Hamilton Beach has a four-quart model with a stoneware cooking crock that comes out and has a see-through lid for easy checking on what's cooking, \$29.

James Beard's "American Cookery" is available in paperback. Nearly a thousand pages of solid information, cooking lore, advice and recipes from the country's better known experts in the kitchen. Little, Brown publishes it, \$9.95.

WANT TO watch the calories this year?

Weight Watchers has a "Party & Holiday Cookbook," designed for the hardest times to stay on a diet, \$12.95.

Vitamins and nutrients are retained as food cooks in its own juices without the addition of fat and oil in a Clay Baker, \$22 to \$25. These are excellent for chicken.




PEPPERIDGE FARM
THRIFT STORE

It's worth the trip! Save 10%-50% on Thrift Bread, Rolls, Cookies and Frozen Goodies. Also New Danish and Coffee Cakes.

10% OFF ON ALL ORDERS WITH AD
EXCLUDING SENIOR CITIZEN DISCOUNT
Expires Dec. 22, 1980

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA
1900 SOUTHWEST CORNER OF 2815 1/2 MILE W. BLOCK EAST
14 MILE. 642-4227 OF MIDDELBURY-477-2044

Select the Finest



Brewed to meet the world's highest purity standard, The "Reinheitsgebot"

100% Imported
Bavarian Hops
For That Very
Special Flavor

Absolutely No Additives
or Cereal Adjuncts

OAK DISTRIBUTING CO.

A slick plan for a rainy day.

Some people manage to go through life without ever having a rainy day. But most people run into a storm now and then.

So it pays to plan for a storm and then hope it never happens.

The Payroll Savings Plan is one sure, safe, easy way to force yourself to start saving. And savings are a must to keep any financial plan from going on the skids.

The little you set aside each payday for U.S. Savings Bonds will grow. And help to keep you covered come rain or come shine.

And if you're lucky enough to miss the rain, it might help you plant a few shade trees.

Take stock in America.

When you put part of your savings into U.S. Savings Bonds you're helping to build a brighter future for your country and for yourself.

SALAD TORCOLOTTI
1 1/2 lbs. small white potatoes
3 tbsp. fruity olive oil

A 1979 service of the publication and the Advertising Council