



Yuletide yummies

Edible treats for holiday giving

YOU'D LIKE to give your brother-in-law a sweater, but you don't know his size.

A good friend just bought a compact disc player, but you're not sure what music she already has.

You'd like to surprise a valued employee, but you don't know much about his personal tastes.

These dilemmas are common at Christmas, but there is a solution, thanks to the one thing we all have in common: We like to eat!

Some creative planning, shopping and wrapping can yield tasty personalized gifts for everyone on your list from a rich great-uncle who has everything to the interesting strangers who just moved in next door. Consider some of these possibilities:

• HOLIDAY SPIRITS:
Box a selection of local wines or an

imported favorite with a corkscrew or a decorative carafe. Or make it the centerpiece of a basket that also includes nuts, crackers, sunflower seeds or an elegant jar of caviar. Or pair a crisp chablis with a round of cheese and a good wooden cutting board.

Fill a crystal decanter with someone's favorite brandy, or wrap the bottle with a set of snifters. Include fluted glasses with champagne or pilsners with an imported beer.

• BE CHEESY:

Head for the local deli to start assembling a collection of sausages and cheeses for serious snackers. Include a box of crackers and perhaps an herbed mustard so they can dig in right away.

A great gift for a family is a ham, a turkey or a box of juicy filet mignon, especially if it arrives in time to be

served for Christmas dinner. Or deliver a whole salmon on a bed of shaved ice.

Has someone complimented your chili or your homemade cornbread? Assemble the ingredients and present with a typed recipe card.

• FRUITFUL GIFTS:

Most people admire the colorful exotic fruits and vegetables in the produce department at the grocery store but feel trying all of them would be an extravagance. Give your friends the gift of an eating adventure. Decorate a country basket with gingham bows and fill it with eggplant, artichokes, pomegranates, plantains, squash and kiwis.

Or take a cue from the successful mail-order houses and give bountiful baskets of shiny red apples or juicy

oranges. Wrap the fruit individually with tissue paper for a festive appearance and to protect the fruit.

• GOURMET GIVING:

Splurge on flavored vinegars, seasoned mustards and exotic spices. People who take cooking — and eating — seriously will appreciate unusual pastas, a wreath made of bay leaves or a good bottle of olive oil.

• SUGARPLUM VISIONS:

Choices for the sweet tooth are almost unlimited. Shop for breads, rolls, cakes, cookies, pies, candies and ready-made desserts, such as baklava or fruit tortes. Package soda-fountain style banana split dishes with bananas and a selection of sundae toppings.

For someone whose favorite indulgence is breakfast in bed, present Eng-