



# enriching ideas

for your holidays

## Scented Gifts

### Flavored Sugar

A mason jar filled with scented sugar is a simple but inventive gift. Layer granulated sugar with aromatic, edible items like rose petals, scented-geranium leaves, orange and lemon peel (first set out for a day to dry), or vanilla beans. The result is an exotic sweetener that adds a subtle perfume and flavor to drinks, fruit desserts, and baked goods. Mix up small batches and let them sit for a few days in tightly sealed jars.

### Pomanders

These aromatic spheres, prepared by studding citrus fruits with cloves, have been used since medieval times and still make lovely holiday decorations. If they dry out without getting moldy, they'll last up to a year before their fragrance completely fades, and can also be used to scent closets and drawers. To make a pomander, stud an orange with whole, stemmed cloves. It is easier to insert the cloves if you poke a hole first with a nail or knitting needle; space them evenly and as close together as possible. If you'd like to add additional notes of fragrance to the pomander, place powdered spices like cinnamon or powdered dried lavender in a resealable plastic bag, and shake the pomander inside the bag until it is coated with the scent. Add powdered orrisroot as well, to promote quick and even drying.

### Pomanders Bowls

Inexpensive, one-of-a-kind bowls often show up at flea markets or imported-goods stores. Turn one into a gift by adding a pomander. Finish the gift with ribbons and ornaments.

## Inexpensive & Personal Gifts

- Your favorite recipe with a sampling
- A handmade ornament for the tree
- Your favorite Christmas book
- A letter telling what you love and appreciate about the recipient
- Several of your favorite recipes on cards tied with a pretty ribbon
- A Christmas mug filled with packets of hot cocoa
- A holiday plate to leave "Santa cookies" on
- A calendar for the new year
- A framed photo of you and the recipient
- A handmade stocking filled with goodies
- A gift of SELF — the best gift of all!

## Homemade Hot Chocolate Mix

This simple Martha Stewart recipe makes 5 3/4 cups dry mix or 92 delicious eight-ounce servings, and will keep all winter if stored in an airtight container. A dollop of fresh whipped cream is a perfect complement to a mug of cocoa, but you can also add a pinch of cinnamon for Mexican hot chocolate or a candy cane for a taste of mint.

- 3 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 1/4 cups cocoa
- 1 tablespoon table salt

In a large bowl, combine sugar, cocoa, and salt, and whisk to combine well. Store the mixture in an airtight container.

For individual servings, pour 1 cup whole milk into a microwave-safe mug, and microwave on high just until hot. Add 2 tablespoons of cocoa mix, and stir to dissolve. For a larger batch of cocoa, warm the milk in a saucepan set over medium-low heat, taking care not to let the milk boil; as it warms, stir in 2 tablespoons of mix for each cup of milk.



## Sand Art Brownies

Layer ingredients into a quart or liter-size jar in the following order:

- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 2/3 cups cocoa powder (clean inside of jar with paper towel after this layer)
- 1 cup sugar (yes, a second sugar layer)
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1 1/4 cups flour mixed with 1 teaspoon baking powder and 1 teaspoon salt

Press each layer firmly in place before adding next ingredient. Decorate a lid and screw it on tightly; attach a label with these instructions:

### Brownies

- 1) Empty contents into a bowl and mix with hands. Add 3/4 cup very soft butter and 4 slightly beaten eggs. Continue mixing with hands until completely blended.
- 2) Spread into greased or sprayed 9"x13" pan.
- 3) Bake at 350F (180C) for 30 minutes. Cool completely in pan. Cut into 2" squares. Makes 2 dozen brownies.

## Gifts-in-a-Jar Layered Mixes

Try these two layered mixes for fun and easy gift-giving any time of the year.

**Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies-in-a-Jar**  
Layer ingredients into a quart or liter-size jar in the following order:

- 1 1/3 cups oatmeal
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 1/3 cups flour mixed with 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 teaspoon baking powder and 1/4 teaspoon salt

Decorate a lid and screw it on tightly. Attach a label with these instructions:

### Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies

- 1) Empty contents into a bowl and mix with hands. Add 1/2 cup melted butter, 1 slightly beaten egg, and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Continue mixing with hands until blended.
- 2) Shape dough into balls and place 2 inches apart on greased baking sheet.
- 3) Bake at 350F (180C) for 10 to 12 minutes, or until lightly browned. Cool. Makes 3 dozen cookies.

### M&M's Chocolate Cookie Mix

- 3/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 cup M&M's mini baking bits
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 3/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 1/4 cups oats

In medium bowl combine flour, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. In a quart or liter-size jar, layer flour mixture, walnuts, half of the M&M's, raisins, brown sugar, remaining half of M&M's, and oats. Seal jar; wrap decoratively.

Give as a gift with these instructions:

Preheat oven to 350F (180C). In a large bowl beat 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, 1 large egg, and 3/4 teaspoon vanilla until well blended. Stir in contents of jar until well blended. Roll into 1-inch balls and place 2 inches apart on greased cookie sheets. Bake 12 to 15 minutes. Cool 2 minutes on cookie sheets; cool completely on wire racks. Store in tightly covered container. Makes 4 dozen.

Some thoughts from

## The Little Book of Christmas Joys

- Be the first to wish everyone you meet a Merry Christmas.
- Fill your house with the holiday fragrance of cloves, orange peel, and cinnamon sticks simmering on the kitchen stove.
- Don't count calories from Dec. 15th through Jan. 2nd.
- Add a new Christmas CD to your music collection each year. A few great ones: Harry Connick Jr.'s *When My Heart Finds Christmas*; Christmas Collection by Mannheim Steamroller; Barbra Streisand's new album, *Christmas Memories*; anything Kurt Bestor
- Tie jingle bells on your kids' shoelaces.
- Go caroling.
- Enjoy a couple of meals illuminated only by the Christmas tree.
- Wear outrageous Christmas socks.
- Curl up with loved ones and hot chocolate and watch a few holiday classics: *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *White Christmas*, *Holiday Inn*, *A Christmas Carol*
- Record a cheerful Christmas greeting for your answering machine.
- When you don't know what to give, give a book. Inscribe it with your name, the occasion, and the date.
- Create a special Christmas morning breakfast menu and serve it every year.
- Throughout the season, give your family the gift of a sweet disposition.
- Start a collection of Christmas cookie cutters.
- Wear a Christmas apron while cooking in the kitchen in Dec.
- Read one of these holiday classics to your family: *The Gift of the Magi*; *The Littlest Angel*; *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*; *The Other Wise Man*; *The Christmas Box*
- Buy a big red candle for the kitchen table. Light it every night at dinner during the holidays.
- Open Christmas cards as a family activity each night at the dinner table. Read the messages aloud.
- Plan an evening with your family the week after Christmas. Talk about your goals for the coming year.
- Keep an open book of Christmas

carols on the piano.

- Tie candy canes to children's packages.
- If your child gets a new game for Christmas, play it with him and let him win.
- Answer your phone by saying "Merry Christmas."
- This Christmas, give yourself the gift of living in peace with those things you cannot change.
- Trade out baking with three friends. Each of you bake double batches of your favorite recipes, then swap.
- Take time to remember that the greatest gift is a home filled with the people you love.
- Ask children, "What are you *giving* for Christmas?" instead of "What are you *getting* for Christmas?"
- Learn to say Merry Christmas in several languages.
- Help your children bake Christmas breads or cookies for teachers, coaches, and school bus drivers.
- As you pack up the decorations, ask family members to write a prediction for the coming year on a piece of paper. Put them in the ornament box and read them next year.
- Don't try to do everything yourself. Even Santa needs helpers.
- Invite a friend who doesn't attend church to come to church with you for a special Christmas service.
- Research your family history and serve a special holiday food that your ancestors might have enjoyed.
- Let the youngest child in the family who's old enough read the Christmas story on Christmas Eve. Record it on tape, and save it for them when they are grown.
- After opening the presents, hug all your family members and tell them they are the best gift of all.
- Don't expect your husband to wear a halo during the holidays. Give your spouse the gift of patience, flexibility, and a sense of humor.
- On New Year's Day, light three candles and think about the three things that happened the past year for which you are most thankful.
- Don't forget to put out Santa's milk & cookies (& carrots for the reindeer).
- Don't forget to hang the mistletoe.
- Don't forget the batteries.
- Don't forget whose birthday we're celebrating.

## Gifts of the Season

This Christmas, mend a quarrel.

Seek out a forgotten friend.

Dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust.

Write a letter.

Give a soft answer.

Encourage youth.

Manifest your loyalty in word and deed.

Keep a promise.

Forgo a grudge.

Forgive an enemy.

Apologize.

Try to understand.

Examine your demands on others.

Think first of someone else.

Be kind.

Be gentle.

Laugh a little more.

Express your gratitude.

Welcome a stranger.

Gladden the heart of a child.

Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth.

Speak your love and then speak it again.

Christmas is a celebration, and there is no celebration that compares with the realization of its meaning—with the sudden stirring of the heart that has extended itself unselfishly in the things that matter most.

*President Hunter, December 1994*

## Holiday Fun for the Whole Family

### Host a slumber party.

Gather your quilts and pillows, and spend a silent night beside your twinkling Christmas tree. (Be sure to turn off the tree lights after your children have fallen asleep.)

### Make gifts for each other.

If you can't make one for everybody, throw names in a hat, and have each family member draw one.

### Play a picture-perfect game.

Turn holiday cards with photos into flash cards to help familiarize your kids with faraway friends and family. Give clues such as "When we went camping with them in Colorado, we all ate s'mores by the fire."

### Prepare and eat a special family meal together.

Give yourselves a couple of hours with everyone participating, and afterward sing a few songs you all know.