

DELIGHT THE COOK WITH A GOURMET GIFT BASKET

Plenty of people cook on a regular basis, but there are those who are truly great cooks and whose passion and knowledge of cooking surpasses the ordinary. These are the gourmet cooks. If you've got such a person on your gift list, gourmet gift baskets are one perfect idea.

When making gourmet gift baskets, your 'basket' can be any kind of container, customized to reflect the cook's specialties and particular areas of interest. The container should be as useful as the contents. For example, the artisan bread baker can never have too many bread baskets. You can line the basket with an attractive cloth to keep the bread warm and covered at the table. The cookie fanatic will love a cookie jar, while the roasting expert is sure to be thrilled with a clay pot roaster. Each of these containers can then be filled with an assortment of items related to the function of the container.

For the bread baker, you might start this gourmet gift basket off with little jars of Kalamata olives, fire-roasted red peppers or sun-dried tomatoes, which are nice additions to fancy breads. Unless you're sending this gift by mail, more exotic cheeses, like Havarti dill or smoked cheddar, are also great. The cheese can be incorporated into the bread or served on the side.

The cookie baker's jar is easy to fill. Get online and search out some vintage cookie cutters. Cookie decorating tools, baking molds and flavoring extracts are also good in cookie gourmet gift baskets. Sweet seasonings, such as cinnamon, allspice, cardamom and coriander make any cookie something special.

Clay pot recipes rely, in part, on seasonings to produce the heavenly results. The clay pot cooker can hold several small nursery pots of fresh herbs to sit on the windowsill and snipped as needed for a dish. Alternatively, jars of dried herbs are also pleasing to this cook.

Shops that specialize in cooking supplies have the most unusual gadgets you've ever seen. There are butter curlers, chocolate shavers, nutmeg grinders, cheese shakers and zesters. Utensils, such as whisks, strainers, slotted spoons, olive wood spoons and melon ballers are other possibilities for gourmet gift baskets. Table setting items, such as napkin rings, knife holders and wine openers are also hits with the gourmet cook. Find a sales clerk who can help you identify the most interesting items. If you don't know what it is, chances are good that your cook doesn't have one already!

Those who love to cook are always thrilled with yet more kitchenware and exotic ingredients. You can't go wrong with gourmet gift baskets. You may have so much

fun putting it together, you'll want one for yourself!