

The Charlotte Post

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS



One size fits all:

Easy gourmet holiday gifts

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

What size, what color, what brand? This time of year, most of us are racking our brains trying to decide on the perfect gift for everyone. Here's a tip: everyone eats. Food has long been a traditional gift during the holidays and for good reason. It is always appreciated and can be enjoyed by the whole family. It comes in all price ranges, and it can be easily packed and shipped as a surprise for far flung friends and relatives. Baskets of fresh fruit or nuts, cheese trays or popcorn tins have been the customary choices during the holidays. But why not be more original? There are so many other creative options available. "Most of us want to give something more unique than what you might buy at the mall for a last-minute gift," says Jill Blashack, president and CEO of Tastefully Simple, a gourmet foods company that sells products through home taste-testing parties. "By putting together interesting combinations of gourmet foods, you can personalize your gift to fit any individual or family." Here are some ideas for creating unique gourmet gift packages:

- The gift of a home cooked meal. Why not put together all the things needed for an easy home-cooked winter meal: a savory wheat bread and crackers paired with an interesting soup or chili mix. Add some fresh apples and oranges and a few bundles of cookies or brownies.

- Romantic picnic. Include everything needed for an intimate picnic: two wine glasses, a bottle of white wine, some small cheeses, a loaf of bread, some flavored olive oil for dipping (Tastefully Simple Balsamic and Basil Dipping Oil), a small tablecloth, a cutting board and paring knife, some fresh fruit and a box of Tastefully Simple Truffle Fudge Brownie mix.

- A party pack - everything needed for an impromptu cocktail party. A selection of seasoning mixes for making easy dips, gourmet crackers, chips or bread, a jar of black bean salsa and some candied almonds or pecans.

- A theme dinner. Gather the ingredients for an Italian night: dried pasta, a jar of gourmet tomato sauce, dried pesto mix, crunchy bread and a bottle of wine; throw in some amaretto cookies for dessert. Or how about a Mexican meal? Include a jar of fresh salsa, a jar of Tastefully Simple Sweet Pepper Jalapeno Jam, chips, a selection of colorful fresh peppers, a bottle of tequila, margarita mix, course ground salt and two margarita glasses.

- A mid-afternoon break selection including an instant chai blend and some hot chocolate mix, an apple cake or fudge brownie mix, some Anjou pears and a few gourmet cheeses.
- Rainy/snowy day gift pack.

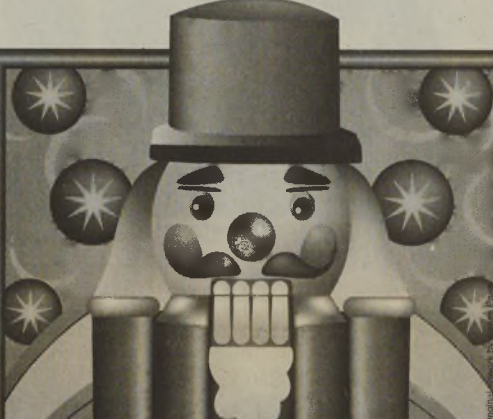


COURTESY OF ARA CONTENT

Think of all the things that would be great to have on a cold winter's day when you don't feel like going out: a few best selling novels, a deck of cards, some Tastefully Simple Bountiful Beer Bread, a creamy wild rice soup mix, and a ready-to-bake apple cake. If you don't have time to put together your own gift bas-

ket, Tastefully Simple has a number of distinctive gift packs already assembled. Spice It Up is a grouping of mulling spices, muffin mix and toffee oatmeal cookie mix; Souper Douper brings together three creamy soup mixes - cheddar broccoli, wild rice and potato cheddar; Sweet on You will satisfy any sweet tooth with Creamy

Caramel sauce and Twisty Grahams cookies. For more gift ideas and to find out how to order Tastefully Simple products and gift packs, visit www.tastefullysimple.com.



The North Carolina Dance Theatre
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December 21
Matinee 1 pm, Evening 5 pm

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NOTICE OF A CITIZENS INFORMATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR THE REALIGNMENT OF THE SR2804 (REEDY CREEK ROAD)/SR 2805 (HARRISBURG ROAD) INTERSECTION IN CHARLOTTE

WBS ELEMENT 36774.1.1 U-4401 Mecklenburg County

The North Carolina Department of Transportation will hold the above Citizens' Informational Workshop on Thursday, December 11, 2003 between the hours of 4p.m. and 7p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room at Reedy Creek Elementary School, 10801 Plaza Road Extension, Charlotte.

Interested individuals may attend this informal workshop at their convenience during the above stated hours. Department of Transportation representatives will be present to answer questions and receive comments relative to the proposed project.

The purpose of this workshop is to present information, answer questions, and receive comments regarding this project. This project consists of realigning Reedy Creek Road/Harrisburg Road intersection further away from the existing I-485 Interchange Ramp.

Anyone desiring additional information may contact Ms. Michele James, 1548 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1548, phone (919) 733-7844 ext. 233 or e-mail at mjames@dot.state.nc.us.

NCDOT will provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled persons who wish to participate in this workshop to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To receive special services, please contact Ms. James at the above address or phone number, or fax 919-733-9794 as early as possible so that arrangements can be made.

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Order a pair of Carolina Cobras Arena Football season tickets today and receive a FREE Cobras sweatshirt as a stocking stuffer! The Cobras kick off the 2004 AFL season in February at the Charlotte Coliseum.

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2004 HOME SCHEDULE

Sat., Feb. 21	Arizona	7:30
Sat., Feb. 28	Atlanta	7:30
Sun., Mar. 14	Dallas	3:00
Sun., Mar. 21	Tampa Bay	3:00
Sun., Apr. 4	New York	3:00
Sat., Apr. 17	Philadelphia	7:30
Sat., May 1	Columbus	7:30
Sat., May 22	Grand Rapids	7:30