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Mouthwatering Gifts for the Foodies in Your Life

Here's what to give every type of person with gourmet tastes.

By Charles Passy December 20, 2007
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It's easy to think of foodies as gourmet snobs who insist that all their olive oil be extra virgin, their bread made by artisan bakers and their chocolates imported from Belgium.

But not all foodies care about all foodstuffs. That is, they're not equal-opportunity snobs but ones with specific areas of interest and expertise.

Some have a sweet tooth. Some have a savory one.

With that in mind, here are last-minute gift suggestions for a half-dozen distinct types of foodies.

We've included items available in stores as well as those that must be ordered by mail -- keep in mind the cutoff dates for holiday delivery with the latter (and be prepared to pay shipping surcharges, although that's standard with perishables in any case). Many mail-order merchants will also give you the option of ordering a gift certificate up until the true last minute.

For the java junkie: Yes, it's the most familiar name in high-end coffee, but that makes Starbucks (SBUX - Cramer's Take - Stockpickr - Rating) all the better an option for holiday shopping (i.e., they're everywhere). The gift options are many, from a cool set of espresso shot glasses in a chrome carrier (\$12.95) to a newly released espresso blend, Espresso Regalo (\$8.95 per half pound).

For those java lovers with a sentimental streak, Mr. Coffee has come out with a Classic Edition Programmable Coffeemaker (\$90) to mark the brand's 35th anniversary -- it does a good job brewing a cup of joe, plus it has such features as backlit ambient lighting and a top cup rack for storing your mugs. Conversely, if you're looking for something new in coffee brewing, consider the single-cup machines, which are becoming very popular: Breville has a new Gourmet Single Cup Brewer (\$300), that has lots of, well, perks -- a built-in water filtration system, 60-ounce tank (good for 10 cups) and a starter kit of 18 "K-Cups" (the machine uses Keurig-style coffees).

Finally, if you prefer your java in an altogether different form, consider a coffee "bar" -- namely, Caffe Acapella's (610-450-4590) bars made from coffee beans and cocoa butter (\$3 to \$4). They look like your typical chocolate bar, but they taste like an eye-opening, sweetened shot of espresso (actually, they come in a variety of flavors, from "Espresso Serenade" to "Cappuccino Connoisseur"); they're available both by mail and in many grocery stores and coffee shops.

For the chocoholic: There are almost too many choices in this category, but if you want to make a big statement -- literally -- consider the Heavy Chocolate candy bar (800-551-6831) (\$50). True to its name, it weighs 10 pounds. But we're talking 10 pounds of quality stuff -- in this case, from the acclaimed San Francisco chocolate maker Guittard. It comes in varieties, from Dutch-style milk to white chocolate.