

Specialty Foods Are Special Gifts

How many fruit baskets have you sent or received during the past holidays or on past birthdays? I find that specialty foods easily surpass the traditional gifts and are some of the best gifts given or received for three reasons: they're unique, there's a wide range of choices, and they're tasty! During the next holiday season or for any gift-giving occasion, it will serve you well to remember that everyone appreciates receiving a specialty food gift.

Nobody wants to be known as having sent a gift that is a repeat gift, or that when you see it arrive, and see who it's from, you know exactly what is inside. I know that when I see a specific fruit basket arrive each year on our doorstep, I know precisely who it's from, and I know exactly what I'm going to do with most of the contents, and that is turn it into a quick fruit salad and be done with it. That same distinct lack of variety can rub off onto you as the gift giver.

The distinctiveness of a specialty food gift is in the variety. A specialty food gift once upon a time meant something from the international food section of your local grocery store. Today, it can mean anything from a set of exotic teas and candles to different fruit jams, to the most exceptional noshes you could possibly imagine, each for the discerning or curious palette.

The word choice refers to a variety of things, and specialty food lets you avail yourself of not only several different choices of one type of item, such as nuts, but allows you to pick and choose, say nuts and fruit, or nuts and candy, or even exotic items like chocolate caramel treats imported from Europe. And there is variety even in the most simple of items like jams, featuring not only your normal pear jam, but also a red pepper jam that will serve as a key component to a great appetizer.

The sure way to anyone's heart is through their stomach, and this is never so true as with specialty foods. Often a memorable component of any cocktail hour, many of these items are not of the sweet and salty dessert classification, but rather of the antipasti tradition. A sure way to make an indelible impression is to be sure you are remembered as someone enjoys the delectable hors d'oeuvre you helped to provide.

One of the best specialty foods gifts I ever received was chocolate covered fruit, but fruit that you wouldn't expect to be chocolate covered. These were Bing cherries and blueberries, dried, and coated in chocolate, creating such a unique flavor combination, but yet so satisfying that your five fruits a day allowance didn't seem so hard to meet after you sampled some of these treats.

When you give a gift, you want it to be memorable, enjoyable, and something that the person would not have thought of getting for themselves. As in the Japanese tradition, a gift itself should be equaled only by the way the gift is put together, or presented. A specialty food serves that purpose well, and ensures that not only the gift itself, but the way it arrives, and the presentation of the gift itself is an experience that the receiver will find indelible.

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