

## THE OFF DUTY 50

### Holiday Gift Guide

Cashmere cable knits and candles will do in a pinch, but why mess around when there's only one thing on anyone's mind? Here are 50 food-themed items your gift-ees will devour: epicurean tools, delicious deliveries, covetable tableware and a pear (minus the partridge)

#### 1 Our Monthly Bread

Anyone can send a panettone for the holidays. But there are so many other seasonal breads to enjoy—and Hyannis, Mass., bakery Pain D'Avignon ships them across the USA. Their Bread of the Month Club delivers soda bread in time for St. Patrick's day, focaccia buns for Memorial Day barbecues and, yes, a killer panettone come December—plus a whole calendar's worth of loaves to see you through the rest of the year. \$150 for 3 months, \$275 for 6 months and \$500 for 12 months. [paindavignon.com](http://paindavignon.com)

#### 2 Spice Odyssey

This luxe take on a mortar

and pestle—by British designer Tom Dixon—could just be *le grind amour*. The mortar is carved from white Morwand marble and the cast brass pestle has an iron core—herbs and spices will feel honored to get pummeled by it. Even at rest, this set looks smashing on the counter. Tom Dixon Stone Pestle and Mortar, approximately 8 inches by 4 inches, \$240. [mrporter.com](http://mrporter.com)

#### 3 The Lovely Cones

Is there any more appropriate time for nostalgia than the holidays? Charlotte Olympia's Darcy ballet flats offer a modern indulgence with a charming ice-cream-cone print that evokes the 1950s—an era of gleaming diners and Archie

Comics. Whether she's a Betty or Veronica, these jaunty slippers are sure to please. \$725. [CharlotteOlympia.com](http://CharlotteOlympia.com), 212-744-1842



#### Beyond Garnish

Parsley's reputation isn't exactly glamorous. But Australian beauty brand Aesop is working on that with its cult-favorite Parsley Seed Anti-Oxidant Serum. The lightweight moisturizer absorbs in seconds, leaving skin smooth, soft and revelry-ready. And the day after, ingredients like soothing aloe vera and anti-inflammatory chamomile oil can help ease any signs of a Champagne-soaked night out. \$67. [aesop.com](http://aesop.com)

#### 5 A Shaker That Stirs

If your mixology maven's cocktails are classics, consider giving accessories to match. Sniff out a vintage shaker in antique shops, on eBay or at a purveyor of gentlemanly gear such as Sir Jack's. This restored

silver-plated "Dial a Drink" model was made in the early 20th century by American jewelry manufacturer the Napier Company. No need to include a recipe book: Simply twist the shaker's base to reveal formulas for everything from an Old Fashioned to a Gin Rickey. \$1,350. [sirjacks.com](http://sirjacks.com)

#### 6 Very Merry Citrus

Why send a case of Christmas oranges or lemons when you can provide a perpetually replenishing source of the stuff? California-based Four Winds Growers counts more than 60 varieties of citrus among their offerings. A great option for

growing indoors, the Meyer lemon tree, pictured here, may or may not arrive with festive yellow orbs dangling from its branches, but with a little love and plenty of light, it will flower and fruit throughout the year. \$80. [fourwindgrowers.com](http://fourwindgrowers.com)

#### 7 This Book Really Cooks

This season, there's no shortage of glossy celebrity-chef books full of recipes no home cook in his right mind would attempt. At least as suitable for coffee-table display as any of those volumes, "The Gramercy Tavern Cookbook" is the one to bestow upon loved ones who actually want to spend time at the stove. Chef Michael Anthony translates his contemporary-classic dishes into user-friendly recipes fit for weeknight suppers as well as festive meals, while the tale of the nearly 20-year-old Manhattan restaurant unfolds in accompanying anecdotes. \$50. [ClarksonPutter.com](http://ClarksonPutter.com)



#### TASTING NOTES

### The Candy Cane Mutiny

Peppermint's supremacy is over. The classic holiday treat now comes in umpteenth upstart flavors—some considerably more appetizing than others

**Pomegranate**  
Deliciously complex and fruity, with a subtle hint of "Does this have healthy antioxidant powers and, if so, am I being punished?" \$8 for one dozen assorted. [gambiris.com](http://gambiris.com)

**Cream Cheese Icing**  
Heady sweetness, balanced by a slight tang. This one beat out Guava and Cotton Candy to be named Candy Cane Flavor of 2013 in an online poll. \$8 for one dozen. [gambiris.com](http://gambiris.com)

**Sriracha**  
Initially horrific—in a mouth-scorching way—but sophisticated on the finish. Unquestionably lively. Pairs well with buckets of water. \$9 for one dozen. [theotmeal.com](http://theotmeal.com)

**Gingerbread**  
Smooth and soothing, with strong hints of cooziness. Obvious holiday relevance. Would pair well with warm milk and gossip. \$30 for one dozen. [hammondsandies.com](http://hammondsandies.com)

**Pickle**  
A challenging flavor. May elicit unlightened critiques, such as "ew," from those with immature palates. Prankish. Fun. \$5 for a half dozen. [mcphee.com](http://mcphee.com)

**Anise**  
Complex, brawny, earthy, full-bodied licorice taste. A cane Ernest Hemingway might have liked while killing something. \$8 for one dozen assorted. [gambiris.com](http://gambiris.com)

**Gravy**  
A clumsy, savory, out-of-balance flavor that's humorously repugnant at best. Aftertaste of bitter disillusionment. \$7 for half dozen. [godgetsandgear.com](http://godgetsandgear.com)  
—Dale Hebb





## THE OFF DUTY 50: HOLIDAY GIFTS



### 8 Where the Wild Things Eat

Mealtime and story time can seamlessly merge when you lay the table with Smiling Planet's Zebra Plates; the illustration is taken from the company's charming children's books. The dishes are 100% recycled, medical-grade plastic that's free of BPA, phthalates and lead. Inch-

high sides keep food corralled, and the design is scratch-resistant and dishwasher-safe. \$15 each, [smilingplanet.net](http://smilingplanet.net)

### 9 Push-Button Barista

Automated espresso machines have a poor reputation among coffee snobs, often deservedly so: The espresso tends to be over- or under-extracted, the

### WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER

We invited friends, relatives and readers to ask their kids to describe an ideal holiday meal. The responses appear throughout these pages.



**Lark, 6**  
 "Spaghetti with one pizza slice, two lollipops, one Rice Krispie treat and one banana. One juice box. And a third of a cupcake for dessert. Music will be Christmas carols and the soundtrack to 'Grease.'"

frothed milk too foamy. But the specs on the Breville Oracle may assuage even the most ardent naysayers. Its built-in conical burr grinder doses and tamps 21 grams of finely ground coffee into a stainless-steel filter basket; two precision boilers bring water within 1.8 degrees of your preferred target temperature; and its frother lets you tweak the milk texture to your liking. The Oracle can prepare two cappuccinos in about 90 seconds—and is easy enough to operate before your first cup. \$2,000, [brevilleusa.com](http://brevilleusa.com)

### 10 Blades of Glory

Forged in Massachusetts by R. Murphy, a company that's been honing its craft since 1850, these knives have handles of pecan wood reclaimed from an old Chrysler plant. Of course, none of that would matter if the blades themselves—high-carbon steel that holds a wickedly sharp edge—weren't the business. One 8-inch chef's knife, one slim filet knife and one paring knife are all any home kitchen requires. But the back story that comes with

them does add a certain something. R. Murphy Knives Reclaimed Pecan Carbon Steel Knives, \$249 for set of three knives, \$125 for chef's knife, [food52.com/provisions](http://food52.com/provisions)

### 11 Salt of the Bath

No cook could function without olive oil and salt. But in Norma Kamali's Olive Oil Salt Scrub—with Dead Sea salt and a citrusy fragrance—the kitchen staples turn into spa essentials. The scrub handily tackles the flaky and parched skin winter inflicts. Just don't mistake it for a marinade. \$20, [thewellnesscave.com](http://thewellnesscave.com)



### 12 Swig With Swagger

A little bit rustic, a little bit rambunctious, these Old West Shot Glasses are also a little bit misnamed (they're crafted from copper, not glass). Handmade by Jacob Bromwell, which claims to be the oldest maker of kitchenware in the U.S., the sturdy sippers should last for years, whether left to patina or polished to a pink-gold shine. \$125 for four, [jacobbromwell.com](http://jacobbromwell.com)

### 13 Primo Pour

Never be the guest who arrives without a bottle. This year, the one to bring is Martin Gran Lusso. Formulated from a recipe dating to 1871, this sweet vermouth, based on Barbera wine blended with a little Trebbiano and Moscato grape must, is fruitier than other bottles in its category, with a delectably bitter edge and bottomless depths of herbal nuance. Mix it into cocktails (your Negronis will never be the same), or serve it neat, chilled and with a twist, to appreciate its charms undiluted. \$38, [drinkupny.com](http://drinkupny.com)





WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER



Imogen, 11, and her brother, Fabian, 6

**Fabian:**  
"A gingerbread house. About the size of a microwave."

**Imogen:**  
"Does it have to be something Christmas-y?"

**Fabian:**  
"I picked something Christmas-y!"

**Imogen:**  
"That's not what I want though. Maybe I would have a filet mignon with rosemary and spinach. And something sweet to balance it...umm...maybe a pear-cider reduction...maybe a pear-cider reduction...or an apple-cider reduction. Yeah, that's what I would have."

**Fabian:**  
"I think mine would be better."

**14 Give La France**

Goodbye second-rate salami and fluorescent-orange Cheddar. Epicerie Boulud, the Manhattan specialty-food store owned by French chef Daniel Boulud, has assembled a holiday gift basket that puts others to shame. Stocked with goodies such as foie gras terrine, fresh-baked canelés, Boulud's private-label smoked salmon and a hot-chocolate mix that includes handmade marshmallows, the three stacked boxes contain enough spoils to extend holiday indulging into the new year. Ultimate Holiday Gift Box, \$499, store.danielnyc.com



**15 Double the Bubble**

What to give the girl who has Champagne wishes and caviar dreams? If Robin Leach isn't available, try Jimmy Choo's sleek Sweetie clutch bag, which transforms the bubbly-filled flute—that symbol of fizzy festivity—into a stylish motif with a Double Magnum's worth of glamour. \$975, Jimmy Choo, 212-759-7078



**16 Irish Rambles**

It's a less obvious epicurean destination than Italy or Spain, but with its artisanal cheesemakers and centuries-old covered markets, Ireland has plenty to please the palate. Culture, Crafts & Cuisine of Ireland, a new 15-day tour from Artisans of Leisure, crisscrosses the country and includes a chocolate-making class, a smokehouse visit and whiskey tastings. Guests stay in five-star hotels (including renovated castles) and the trip can be booked for any date. From \$14,570 per person, artisansofleisure.com

**17 Let Them Eat Cake**

This handsome stand will equip recipients to showcase pastries, cookies and cheeses—for however long their loved ones can resist gobbling them up. Our estimate: Less than 30

seconds, given how good anything edible looks on its sustainably harvested acacia-wood surface. Cake Stand, approximately 5 by 11 inches, \$49, kaufmannmercantile.com

**18 Tasty Tablecloth**

While people often own a sensibly formal white tablecloth, they may not have a sprightly, merely marvelous model like this persimmon-orange Lulu DK for Matouk spread. Depending on the season, its bursts of brush strokes can seem floral, firework-like or snowflaky, but its mood is invariably joyous. Also available in champagne, navy or silver. Bloom Cotton Twill Tablecloth, from \$159 for the 68-by-108-inch size, matouk.com

**19 Food For Thought**

In recent years, a bumper crop of independent food journals

has sprung up to satisfy literate gastronomes craving the tactile pleasure of page-turning. Three particularly gift-worthy examples: Each issue of Swallow (\$30, swallowmagazine.com) provides a big, colorful dispatch from a different eating destination (Mexico City, the route of the trans-Siberian Express). The quarterly publication Modern Farmer (\$8 per issue, \$20 for a subscription, modernfarmer.com) traces the many paths our food takes to

get to the table, be it from a potted basil plant on the kitchen windowsill or a NASA vegetable plot in outer space. Published biannually, the striking White Zinfandel (\$28 per issue, \$56 for a subscription, orders@whitezinfandel.org) calls on chefs, artists, designers, writers, curators and architects to examine the overlap between food and art, in issues on themes such as "Food Fights" and "TV Dinner." Who says print is dead?



STOCKING STUFFERS  
**For Those Who've Been Naughty**

Six foods that look like lumps of coal, but—we swear—are tasty



**Black Winter Truffle**  
Lovely shaved over pasta or polenta, or used to infuse butter. Cannot heat homes. From \$300 for 5 ounces (pricing subject to market availability), earthy.com



**Black Walnut**  
Richer and more pungent than the English walnuts you find in grocery stores. There is no such thing as a "black walnut baron." In-shell Nuts, \$15 for 5 pounds, hammonsnutemporium.com



**Coal Candy (British)**  
Conceived to fiendishly resemble coal, but contains delectable sponge toffee and chocolate. Soothing not sooty. Christmas Coal, \$15 for 7 ounces, goretandstone.com



**Coal Candy (American)**  
Resembles anthracite coal, not bituminous coal like its U.K. cousin. Another point of difference: surprisingly cinnamon-flavored. Candy Coal, \$8 for two bags, hammondscandies.com



**Chocolate Cookie**  
Were this exceptional, chewy, melty treat—each almost half a pound—available to be mined, the miners would not be slim. Dark Chocolate Chip Cookies, \$27 for four, levinbakery.com

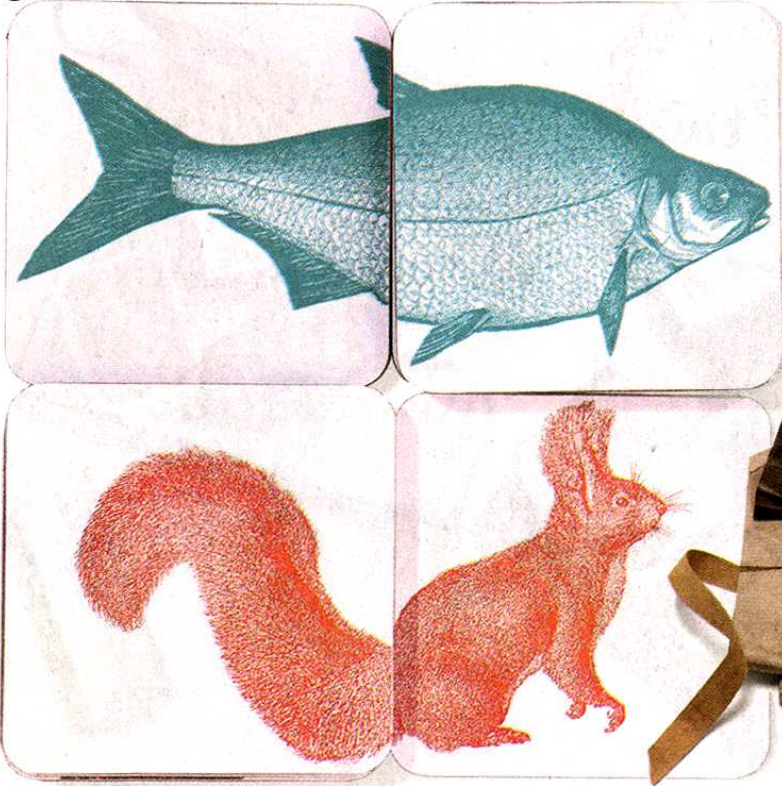


**Fermented Black Garlic**  
Sweeter, more complex and concentrated than regular garlic. Can be eaten straight—unlike coal. \$24 for three 2-ounce packs, melissas.com —Dole Hrabí



## THE OFF DUTY 50: HOLIDAY GIFTS

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### 20 Critter Coasters

These melamine drink rests from Thornback & Peel give new meaning to the phrase “you complete me”—each one is screenprinted with half a fish or squirrel. Wrap up a set for your favorite matchmaker, or anyone who appreciates punchy design. Squirrel Coasters and Seabream Coasters, \$30 for a set of four, [us.amara.com](http://us.amara.com)

### 21 Seasonings Worth Greeting

Though salt and pepper are all about battling blandness, they

often find themselves in terribly dull containers. Help your loved ones house their spices with distinction: This jazzy Art-Deco-esque set is made of hand-painted buffalo bone. No two are exactly alike. Chevron Salt & Pepper Shaker Set, \$30, [williams-sonoma.com](http://williams-sonoma.com)

### 22 Insta-Lists

Even the most list-averse person in your life will find it hard to resist the Hiku, which looks like a mini donut but is far more functional. Use it to scan the barcode on foods you need to restock and it will add them to a categorized shopping list on your iPhone. Need oranges, escarole or another

item that doesn't have a code? Just hit a button and say what you require—Hiku will tack it onto the list. \$79, [hiku.us](http://hiku.us)

### 23 Fruitcake Break

This Christmas, think outside the tins that hold those dense loaves studded with neon-hued nubbins. Pandolce, the yeasty sweet bread served in Italy's Liguria region around the holidays, makes an appealing alternative. From Berti, a 117-year-old pastry shop in Genoa, comes this distinctive take, filled with hazelnuts from the Piedmont region and chocolate from cult Turin-based producer Venchi. A heady splash of rum makes it all the

more festive. \$30, [formaggiokitchen.com](http://formaggiokitchen.com)

### 24 Generous Helping

The perfect gift for the person who has everything: something for those who don't have enough. Feeding America, a national hunger relief organization, has an online

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### WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER



Kate, 5

“Mac and cheese and a smoothie. And I want the President to visit. Does he know where our house is?”

catalog that allows you to donate staples like chicken, apples and oatmeal in the name of anyone you choose. Your donation goes to the organization's network of more than 200 food banks across the country. [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)

### 25 Core Value

Why not give some shine to the apple of your eye? French designer Aurélie Bidermann just debuted her line of fine jewelry. Each of her Big Apple Earrings—they're sold in singles—is pavé with 63 rubies, three champagne diamonds and eight white diamonds. Pretty sweet. \$6,890 per earring, [Barneys.com](http://Barneys.com), 212-826-8900



## THE OFF DUTY 50: HOLIDAY GIFTS



### WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER



Penelope, 11

"There would be a centerpiece of mashed potatoes shaped like flowers and plants. And everyone would get a tiny turkey carved out of turkey breasts. And five cakes. Not gross frosting cakes, but tarts and pies. And maybe one salad so my mom wouldn't yell at me."

### 26 Garden Plate

A side dish of the surreal: Fornasetti's painted porcelain Arcimboldesca plates, each about 10 inches in diameter, are inspired by the work of 16th-century artist Giuseppe Arcimboldo, who used a cornucopia of fruit, plants, fish and vegetables to compose trompe l'oeil portraits. Frosty's got nothing on these carrot—not to mention bean pod and pepper—noses. \$2,800 for a set of 6, *En Avance*, 305-576-0056

### 27 Sock It to 'Em

Men love socks. And as unromantic as it may seem, a clever bit of hosiery can really stuff a stocking. J. McLaughlin's Pima cotton pair is printed with fishbones in an elegant small scale, so that only your special guy and his shoe shine man will be in on the joke. \$24, [jmclaughlin.com](http://jmclaughlin.com)



### 28 Glass Distinction

Though they'd look just as good hanging on the tree, these 3-inch-tall crystal tumblers—from the craftsmen at German company Carl Rotter, which dates to 1870—are meant to ornament the table. A clear layer of glass is mouthblown over a colored layer, which is then carved into countless designs. This "Spulen" pattern stripes our fancy. \$292 each, [artedona.com](http://artedona.com)

### 29 Chop Art

Yes, it's irresponsible to lull someone into a hypnotic state while they're handling sharp objects, but this transfixed cutting board has arguments in its favor. It's made of durable, warp- and bacteria-resistant marble. It's gorgeous. And it doubles as a cheese tray that is at least one cut above wood. Bethan Gray Herringbone Chopping Board, approximately 14 by 11 inches, \$364, [bespokeglobal.com](http://bespokeglobal.com)

### 30 Smart Snips

Why are scissors so underutilized in American kitchens? Japanese cooks know that snipping is at least as effective as slicing. These ergonomically sound, high-carbon stainless steel shears from Japanese knife-maker Shun pass right through everything from paper and noodles to greens and chicken breast. Bones? Not a problem, thanks to a nifty notch in the blade. And a spe-

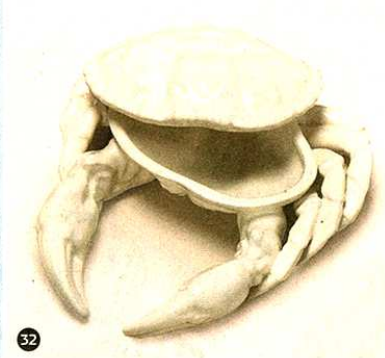
cial screw makes it possible to adjust the blade tension to suit whomever the recipient may be. \$80, [williams-sonoma.com](http://williams-sonoma.com)







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### 31 Slow Cook Like a Pro

If you've had a short rib lately that's managed to be both impossibly tender and still pink, there's a good chance it spent 48 or maybe even 72 hours cooking in a sous vide bath. The process, which literally translates to "under vacuum," involves vacuum-sealing food in plastic, then immersing it in a water bath for hours, sometimes days, on end. For years, this black art among cutting-edge chefs has required expensive equipment, but the Anova Sous Vide Circulator (\$199, [anovaculinary.com](http://anovaculinary.com)) makes the technique accessible to any home cook with a stockpot and a good cut of meat. Put the gadget—which is roughly as wide as a wine bottle and a bit taller—inside a pot filled with water to regulate temperature to a hundredth of a degree. For vacuum sealing, we recommend the cordless Waring Pistol Vac (\$70, [waringpro.com](http://waringpro.com)), which sucks air out of proprietary BPA-free plastic bags.

### 32 Center Claws

Oscar de la Renta's snowy-white ceramic Shell Crab Comiment Server brings a whimsical touch to the coffee or dinner table. Filled with cranberry sauce or foil-wrapped candies, it serves as both centerpiece and conversation piece. File under: Give them what they never knew they wanted. 8 inches by 7½ inches, \$165, [bloomingdales.com](http://bloomingdales.com)

### 33 Pump Up the Jam

Admittedly, this jam jar is insanely expensive. But it's made



of sterling silver and hand-blown Murano glass by the legendary silversmiths at Italy's Buccellati who, after all, aren't just any legendary silversmiths. If you adore someone who adores jam but not commercial packaging, this sublime, pear-shaped dispenser makes a certain crazy sense. Pear Jam Jar, approximately 10 inches tall, \$4,030, Buccellati, 312-600-9224

appliqués: a leopard, a ginger jar, a jaunty giraffe, among other designs. Cocktail Napkins, 5 by 8 inches, \$38 each, [sharynblondlinens.com](http://sharynblondlinens.com)



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### 36 Duck, Duck, Delicious

"By the book, period," is how Ariane Daguin, owner of premier meat and game purveyor D'Artagnan, describes her recipe for duck rillettes. The scrumptious spread—new to the company's roster but made as it has been in Gascony for centuries—is nothing more than duck legs slow-cooked and shredded, then creamed together with duck fat, garlic and spices. An indulgent addition to any holiday table, it's the perfect hostess gift or stocking stuffer for even the hardest-to-please epicures. \$7 for 7 ounces, \$36 for 2 pounds, [dartagnan.com](http://dartagnan.com)

### Flicker of Genius

Designed in 1962 by Danish architect Mogens Lassen, who eschewed traditionally ornate candlesticks, this candleholder is the perfect gift for that relentless minimalist in your life. (Unless the relentless minimalist in your life is under 10.) Crafted in copper-plated steel, it will acquire a green patina as it attends holiday dinners over the years. Kubus 4 Candleholder, 8 inches tall, \$225, [dwr.com](http://dwr.com)

#### WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER



Indigo, 9

"Grilled salmon with a lemon peel tied in a bow, and milk with a choice of chocolate or strawberry flavorings. And a candy-cane straw."

### 35 Snappy Napkins

If someone on your list loves throwing cocktail parties, throw these clink-worthy napkins her way. Funny but glamorous—a rare, Holly Golightly mix—they're made of natural linen with hand-embroidered



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L: MSGM; Apron, \$97, [yoox.com](http://yoox.com); Woodland Camo Shop Apron, \$40, [pointerbrand.com](http://pointerbrand.com)

**37 Chichi Chefware**

Stepping into the kitchen doesn't mean your fashion sense has to go down the drain. Online retailer Yoox has teamed up with eight brands, including Moschino and Missoni Home, to create a collection of aprons that would suit the vainest of chefs. Italian designer Massimo Giometti lent his flair for prints to a punky floral number that would fit in smashingly at a mad tea party. Should wild boar ragout or smoked pork shoulder be on the menu, consider this more rugged option: Woodland Camo Shop's cover-up, a macho swirl

of brown and olive green. MSGM Apron, \$97, [yoox.com](http://yoox.com); Woodland Camo Shop Apron, \$40, [pointerbrand.com](http://pointerbrand.com)

**38 Addictive to Crack**

There's a new nutcracker on the agenda this holiday season: Tory Burch's Robinson. Named for the designer's parents, Buddy and Reva Robinson, the design is a tribute to a family tradition of shelling and eating nuts together. The appeal of this object, hand-cast in brass and shaped like a walnut, is anything but a tough nut to crack. \$95, [toryburch.com](http://toryburch.com)

**39 No More Tears Over Diced Onions**

R.S.V.P. International's onion goggles are so fun and goofy-looking, they are guaranteed to brighten up the atmosphere of any kitchen. They're also highly utilitarian for anyone who has a CSA box stir-fry session in her immediate future. The one-size-fits-all specs' anti-fog lenses allow a home chef to slice and dice in full confidence that dinner isn't about to take a turn for the maudlin. \$20, [The Brooklyn Kitchen](http://TheBrooklynKitchen.com), 718-389-2982



**40 Like Brita, but Fitter**

The Soma water carafe has more going for it than its svelte hourglass figure. The extra-tight-fitting top stays firmly in place when you pour; its biodegradable carbon filters, made from coconut shells, have a layer of silk to keep any black flecks of carbon from floating around in your water; and there's no need to remove the lid to refill—just put the Soma under running water and its hinged door opens automatically. This limited-edition yellow version, available through January, benefits Charity: Water, an organization devoted to bringing drinking water to people in developing nations. \$49, [charitywater.drinksoma.com](http://charitywater.drinksoma.com)

**41 Case Futures**

An iPad is ideal for browsing recipes and watching cooking videos, but the kitchen counter can be a treacherous place for a touch screen. To protect against splatters, spills and the inevitable fall, home cooks can armor their tablet with the LifeProof Nuud. This provocatively named case for second-through-fourth-generation iPads (does not include the new iPad Air) is designed to guard the device from 4-foot drops and full dives into pancake batter—as long as the gizmo is fished out within an hour. Unlike most cases, the Nuud seals the iPad's buttons and ports without enclosing the screen behind a layer of glass or plastic—so your device stays as bright and responsive as it would in the nude. \$130, [lifeproof.com](http://lifeproof.com)

**WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER**



*Nelson and Del, twins, 7*

**Nelson:** "Some pasta, cotton candy, marshmallows covered in chocolate, carrots and sushi. And a little umbrella in my drink."

**Del:** "All my Halloween candy. And shrimp on the side. And, afterwards, I would like a whole second Christmas dinner."



**42 The Tasty Science Kit**

You can buy kits these days for brewing beer, smoking salmon and even pickling kimchi. But the cutting-edge foodies on your list will be most excited about the Modernist Cuisine Spherification Kit. Developed by Nathan Myhrvold, co-author of the seminal "Modernist Cuisine" series, it includes the hard-to-find equipment required to make caviar-like, burst-in-your-mouth orbs filled with your choice of liquid. (The instructions recommend starting with Concord grape juice.) You'll get your very own syringe and spherification spoon, as well as unusual ingredients like sodium alginate, calcium chloride, xanthan gum and sodium citrate. \$50, [modernistpantry.com](http://modernistpantry.com)



**HOT PROPERTIES**

**Home, Sweet Home**

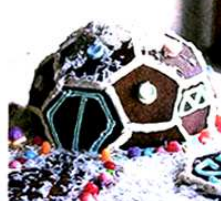
Holiday gingerbread houses now come in so many styles and sizes, they practically need their own real-estate listings



**Unique Starter Home**  
Spicy fixer-upper on compact lot has tons of charming gum drops, distinctive "half door," iced by board-qualified toddler. No two windows alike!



**Midcentury-Modern Stunner**  
Has it all—dramatic shed roofline, innovative Life Saver carport, foil "reflecting pool." Just needs visionary buyer to eat holes/windows out of walls.



**C. 1970 Geodesic Dome**  
Based on a radical design popularized by architect Buckminster Fuller. Mint icing in mint condition; ideal for neo-hippies with a crunchy aesthetic.



**Pristine Federal-Style Townhouse**  
Decadent four-story residence. Rustic jelly-bean foundation; wrought-licorice railing; hot-chocolate sprinkler system.



**Vast Labyrinthine Castle**  
Fairy-tale gorging at its finest! Many tasty turrets; 87 bedrooms, most with partial views of exhausted bakers. Includes marzipan support staff. —*Dole Hrobi*





**GOOD ADVICE**  
**Booze for Hairdressers**

No matter how crazy you are (or aren't) about your hairdresser, the last thing you want is to give him any reason to let his opinion of you slide. He wields the scissors, and has the power to transform your locks into a frizzy pom-pom or a silky 'do that takes 10 pounds off your face. This is a fragile relationship, and come holiday season, you'd be foolish not to lubricate it with a bottle of white Burgundy, one of the greatest whites in the world. Here are suggestions for each grade of stylist.

**The Blow Hard**  
This hairdresser talks to her sister on the phone while working on your hair, interprets a request for a "half-inch trim" as license to chop off four times as much and has a habit of scraping your ear with her comb.

**Suggested Wine:** A nice but not terribly serious 2012 Macon Villages from Domaine Michel (\$16) with pleasant notes of citrus and floral is probably more than she deserves.

**The Decent Do-er**  
This hairdresser always runs on time and lets you read your magazines in quiet while he gives you a reliable, if not trailblazing, tuncup. You like him a lot more than his predecessor, who experimented with edgy, gender-bending cuts and whose single-process made clumps of your hair fall out.

**Suggested Wine:** The superb 2010 Billaud-Simon Chablis Premier Cru Montée de Tonnerre (\$42) is a wonderfully pure expression of Chablis—a classic white Burgundy for a hairdresser who knows how to give a cut that's a classic as well.

**The Cut Above**  
This hairdresser remembers the names (and nicknames) of every member of your extended family, and doesn't laugh when you show her an "Instagram on photo" or Halle Berry if you call at the last minute, she will help you in to her schedule. And you trust her with 31 of your secrets.

**Suggested Wine:** Such a stylist deserves a great premier cru white Burgundy from a top producer. The 2011 Domaine Paul Prieux Volney Montagne le Cru Fûtées (\$87) is deliciously rich and concentrated—a wine that reveals just how much you think of your hairdresser's talent and taste.

**43 Licorice, With a Kick**

Lakrids by Johan Rølow, a line of Danish craft licorice with a pure, not-too-sweet flavor and a gratifying chew, comes in a range of enticing flavors. You can always do as the Danes do and go for the salty kind, while those whose tastes skew sweet will fancy the chocolate-covered varieties—dusted in espresso or licorice powder, or coated in festive edible gold. Either way, it's a far cry from Twizzlers. *\$11-\$15, chelseamarketbasket.com*

**44 A Mod Mixer**

Unless you spend a lot of time in Stockholm, or are a dedicated home baker, there is a good chance you've never heard of the Ankarsrum Original, and that is a shame. This multipurpose stand mixer, released in Sweden during World War II, is a serious workhorse. With an 8-quart stainless-steel bowl and a 600-watt motor, it's the highest capacity, most powerful noncommercial mixer on the American market. Unlike a KitchenAid, the Ankarsrum's motor is on the bottom, which makes adding ingredients while the bowl is spinning much easier, and the whole unit tilts on its side to accept a range of attachments—from a meat grinder to a grain mill. Comes in 10 colors. *\$700, ankarsrumoriginalusa.com*

**45 Deunustal Decanter**

It's the "Nude Descending a Staircase" of crystal wine decanters—refractingly askew, seemingly caught in the motion of pouring. If you're seeking a gift for a wine lover who avoids predictable sizes, look no farther than this piece, designed by Patricia Urquiola for Barcarati. *Variations Decanter, approximately 9 inches tall, \$700, barcarati.com*

**46 Porcine Placement**

These little piggies have ventured so far from the sty. Made in solid silver by British brand Smythson, the set of eight place-card holders comes with 25 gilt-edged cards, which can be replenished as needed. The petite porkers are ideal for those dinner-party-throwing, foodie friends who fetishize anything remotely bacon-related and who worship at the altar of nose-to-tail. And their charmed guests will be saying "Chic, chic, chic" all the way to their assigned seats. *\$295, Smythson, 212-263-4573*

**47 It Mitt**

From the Department of Christmas Cheer, Scandinavian Division: You'd have to be pretty curmudgeonly to gaze upon this 100% cotton Marimekko oven mitt—in a classic Finnish flower pattern that dates to 1965—and not feel slightly more sanguine. But something tells us curmudgeons don't do a lot of baking. *Puketti Oven Mitt, \$22, us.marimekko.com*

**48 Big Apple for Li'l Kids**

For those among us who'd rather throw food on the wall than eat it, Italian artist Enzo Mari's apple print—the sibling to an equally peppy and iconic pear—is more cheerful than a splatter of spaghetti sauce. And measuring 44 by 44 inches, the 1963 design is a square meal, of sorts. *Uno, La Mela \$283 (unframed), www.danesemilano.com*

**WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER**



**Mason, 4**  
"Actually, I would have healthy mango with healthy water because they are healthy. For dessert we could make chocolate chip cookies. After dinner, we would play Sorry."

**49 Gold Spice**

Saffron's red-gold threads are exotic, evocative and expensive. In her Saffron Cologne Intense, British perfumer Jo Malone distills all of those qualities into a single beautiful bottle. The woody and warm unisex fragrance has a lasting bit of freshness. *Old Spice doesn't come close. \$145, jomalone.com*



**It's a Wrap**

The final gift in this guide is our gift to you—a sheet of wrapping paper created for Off Duty by Brooklyn-based photographer Henry Hargreaves. This "tasteful" op-art panorama of seasonal fruits and vegetables is just the thing to bundle up a present for a food fan.

**Turn to D16**