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**Food Lover's Gift Secrets**

**By H Porter**

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Gifts for Food Lovers

Hampers are the perfect gift for people who have everything or those you are unsure about purchasing for. Rather than buying a ready made hamper personalise one for that extra special thought.

Top tips for buying a Hamper Who is the Hamper for? Male or Female is it for a Couple, what age are they Young, Middleaged or older? Organic food or normal produce, more people are moving to organic produce for less interfrance and keeping farming to the more traditional methods Does the gift receiver drink? Do you want to go savoury, sweet or a mix of the two Is your hamper a christmas hamper? If yes remember most people buy christmas pudding and other traditional christmas products themselves and may appreciate something different

Choosing your Hamper

The hamper basket itself can be reused so see this as an investment, dark wicker hamper baskets are traditional.

Fill your hamper basket with either rolled up tissue paper or for the more traditional filling use straw packing. Bubble wrap is not an option!

Wrapping your hamper

Use traditional tarten ribbon all around and create a large bow on the top. Then take a brown paper gift tag using black ink write your gift message

Top products to include in your Hamper

## Food Lover's Gift Secrets

### Drinks

Alcoholic to be considered for over 18's only –Red wines include Merlot or Shiraz, Whites we recommend are Chenin Blanc, Chablis or Sancerre. Why not fill the Hamper with some Fizz, if you are on a budget some Cava is a cheaper fizzy but still full of flavour Condessa Blanca, Segura or freixent. Supermarkets have a good range of wines with recommendations pick a budget and read their reviews. Always go for something morelight than focusing on a specific flavour unless you know their tastes. Avoid Cherrys & ports these usually stay in peoples cupboards and collect dust!

Non Alcoholic – Cordials like elderflower are perfect however supermarkets now offer a range of non alcoholic drinks which are full of taste and flavour.

### Savoury Hamper

Cheese – Brie, Camermbert, stilton are classic cheeses however as a balance why not put in a goats cheese, mozzarella in a secure tin or speciality cheese like feta in olive oil which should come in a jar; remember that you need to buy these as late as possible and they should be wrapped in greaseproof paper so they can breathe. A good chutney is always good to accompany go for a traditional raison and fruit or perhaps a homemade picallilly.

Bread Products – Foccacia (italian bread), bread sticks or a olive or sundried tomato cibatta is perfect. Other dried biscutis work well try for rosemary and seasalt crispbreads or perhaps a chesse biscuit selection including oat cakes.

Meats – Hams have a longer shelflife consider purchasing a Parma or San Danielle ham or pancetta which are all cured to take on a richer flavour. Salamis, Chorizio and other sausages usually require more thought when eating so avoid unless the receive has a love for them.

Fish – You can get tinned anchovies or sardines are loved by some but not all. Somked salmon is perfect since it has a good shelf life, consider purchasing some gravlax with it and some dark rye bread.

Pasta & Rice – There are great varieties of dried pasta and perfect as a gift. Rice is not such a good option unless you got for a flavoured risotto version

Vegetables – Unless you are purchasing a few days before you cannot purchase fresh. Consider some more unusual flavours like dried porchinni mushrooms, sundried tomatoes, olives, roasted peppers in a jar with oil a comination of all would work.

Fruits & Nuts – Dates are traditional at christmas, again avoid fresh fruit and go for dried or long lasting foods like dried apricots, mixed nuts, dried banana apricot & apple are tasty snacks

Oils – Olive Oil is a common kitchen cooking oil, however you can get flavoured oils such as rosemary, chilli & basil. You can make your own by purchasing a glass bottle with cork stopped fill with an extraq virgin olive oil and then simply drop the flavours in such as garlic and rosemary or my favourite fresh

sundried tomatoes. Balsamic olive oil is another great dipping oil and a perfect compliment to this dish.

### Sweet Hamper

Biscuits – Your supermarket will have a range of biscuits but shortbread is an older favourite. Why not make some of your own for that extra special touch.

Cakes – Panatone is a traditional italian cake and since this is not an oftenly purchase product perfect for a hamper.

Fruits & Nuts – This is the same suggestion as the savoury hamper, but consider nuts which are chocolate dipped or perhaps suger coated almonds

Sweets & Chocolate – Consider a rich chocolate the majority of people prefer milk chocolate but if you are not sure include a small plain and milk to be on the safe side.

Jams & Preserves – You can now find speciality jams such as champagne & strawberry whic is a little

different to the basic jams. I love to give honey a local variety

Non Food – Perhaps a chocolate fondue set or recipe/cook book

You can always mix the 2 hamper suggestions. With these simple suggestions you are sure to give someone a yummy festive feast! Enjoy!

H Porter writes gift articles for

.

## **Romantic Valentine's Day Nights At Home**

### **By La Tunya Sifford**

Pamper your sweetheart without spending a lot of money. If you are looking to do something romantic and special for Valentine's Day, here are a few ideas you can do at home with your sweetheart that will make him or her feel truly special.

A fireplace Picnic– Get a warm fleece blanket and lay it down beside a fireplace. Grab some champagne on ice, serve strawberries with the champagne to add flavor, and then put on some romantic music on the stero.

Sweetheart's Spa Night– when your sweetie gets home from work, have a hot bath filled with rose pedals. Have a glass of champagne or wine, chocolates to nibble on by the side of the bathtub. While your sweetie is in the bath, get the bed ready, add fresh warm towels on the bed, get some spa

products, and washcloths.

Spa products can include massage oil, moisturizers, footrubs, etc..... Give your sweetie a massage! Afterwards light some scented candles, and enjoy your favorite take out in bed, while you watch a romantic movie.

These are a just a few ideas, another favorite is a 'Red Hot lover's Gift Basket" for both you and you Valentine to enjoy. Whatever gift you choose to give, make it as romantic as possible for your sweetheart.

La Tunya Sifford is an WAHM with a online gift basket business, she owns Full Moon Gift Baskets, where she enjoys creating gift baskets for every occasion. You may find her at

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