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TRAVEL

Spread some holiday cheer with these made in New England gifts

This year, we want comfort, schmaltz, and all the trimmings. And while we're at it, let's wrap up some thoughtful gifts that are made here at home.

By **Diane Bair and Pamela Wright** Globe correspondents, Updated November 19, 2021, 10:00 a.m.



Plant-based treats keep sprouting, but this one will keep 'em coming back for more: A frozen dessert made with extra-virgin olive oil from Greece, made by Wildgood of Montpelier, Vt. DIANE BAIR

Do we need some holiday cheer, or what? Not the liquid version, but the cozy, fuzzy-sweater-wearing kind where we hang with the people who make life worthwhile, and play the music and eat the foods that remind us of gentle, happy times. Bring on the Hallmark Channel holiday movies! Bring on Adam Sandler's "Hanukkah Song," and "A Charlie Brown Christmas!" This year, we want comfort, schmaltz, and all the trimmings. And while we're at it, let's wrap up some thoughtful gifts that are made here at home (as opposed to sitting in a shipping container somewhere). These are a few fun things that showed up on our radar this year.

Not your average hostess gift — an olive oil-based frozen dessert

Everybody brings wine to the party. Ho-ho-hum. This season, why not tote a cooler with a couple of pints of Wildgood, a 100 percent plant-based treat that gives ice cream a run for its money? Launched this year in Montpelier, Vt., the certified-vegan frozen dessert is made with extra-virgin olive oil, sourced from founder Sotiris Tsiachopoulos's family's ancient olive groves in Greece. The olive oil is harvested and pressed in Greece, and then sent to the United States, where it is combined with ingredients including fresh pistachios and mangos to make a creamy frozen dessert, minus the dairy. For sweetening, they use non-GMO fructose derived from beets.

Wildgood is available in eight flavors including vanilla bean, chocolate hazelnut, and salted caramel; we find the mango and coffee versions especially crave-worthy. It's silky, not too sweet, and doesn't taste like olive oil. "It took me eight years to perfect an olive oil-based, non-dairy ice cream that beats the taste of the dairy-based ice cream I've been making for decades in Greece," Tsiachopoulos says. \$9 per pint; look for it at Whole Foods or order online at www.wildgood.com.



Host/hostess gift idea #2: Mumsy, may I have some ginger beer?

Hard seltzer, hard cider, hard kombucha, and dear old eggnog: So many choices of adult beverages! Here's an unexpected gift for that cocktail-concocting pal: Vermont-made ginger beer. Inspired by recipes that date back to the 1750s, head brewer Kenny Richards of Halyard Brewing Company in South Burlington is reviving this lost art. Using organic and fair-trade ingredients to brew alcoholic ginger beer (naturally gluten free and low in sugar), he incorporates unique flavors like hibiscus and lime, black currant, and island aromatics. One that's perfect for the season: "The OQ" (Octopus Queen), an extra-spicy ginger beer (5.5 percent ABV), brewed with cinnamon, Madagascar vanilla, autumn-invoking spices, and loads of ginger, with a citrus note from the yeast. It's a ginger snap cookie, with a kick.

These brews can be enjoyed on their own, on ice with a squeeze of lime, or in a cocktail (the Moscow Mule is a popular option). Among the five, our testers were keenest on Volcano Juice (4.5 percent ABV), a ginger beer shandy brewed with organic lemons; crisp, and slightly sweet, with a nice gingery lemon bite. \$11 or so per 12-ounce six-pack. Find it at Dave's Fresh Pasta in Somerville, Pemberton Farms in Cambridge, Whole Foods, and at their taproom in South Burlington, Vt. www.halyardbrewing.us.



There's a cool backyardy behind family-run North Country Wind Bells of Round Pond, Maine. They make a thoughtful gift for someone who loves the ocean. DIANE BAIR

Buoy oh buoy: North Country Wind Bells

Lobsterman Jim Davidson of Round Pond, Maine, spent hours on the water, listening to the constant peal of bell buoys. He found the sounds haunting, yet comforting, and began recording the sounds of the bell and gong buoys. He then set out to match the tones, working with pieces of steel. In the mid-1970s, he produced his first set of bells. Now, his family-run company makes a series of wind bells that echo the familiar, distinctive tones of coastal and harbor buoys, including Bar Harbor, Block Island, Camden Reach, Nantucket, Boston Harbor, and more. One bell is a bit different: the “island pasture bell” captures the tones of the sheep and cattle bells found on Maine islands.

Anyone who loves the ocean (and lives someplace where wind chimes won’t annoy the neighbors), would appreciate this oh-so-New England gift. The Davidsons sell the bells online — you can hear each bell before you buy by clicking on the Play button. The bells are also available at gift shops, including Brass Lyon in Newburyport and Walpole Outdoors in Norwood. From \$55.95.

www.northcountrywindbells.com.



Repurposing never looked so cool — vintage water skis become longboard skateboards in the hands of Charles Linden of Denmark, Maine. DIANE BAIR

Transforming skis into skateboards: Linden Longboards

What do you do if you find a cool pair of vintage water skis collecting cobwebs in a closet? If you're Charles Linden of Denmark, Maine, you turn them into skateboards. When Linden was a youngster, a Swedish water-skiing champion gave him a pair of handcrafted, trick water skis. (Trick skis are shorter than typical water skis.) Years later, inspired by a comment from his wife, Linden decided to transform the 1960s-era skis into longboard skateboards.

"I have combined my love for skateboarding, water-skiing, and repurposing," Linden says of his business, launched in 2012. He scouts out trick skis from the 1950s through the '70s, typically made of ash or mahogany, and then refurbishes and refinishes them. He adds risers that he makes out of red oak and attaches top-of-the-line hardware. Finally, the wheels go on. These longboards are cruiser skateboards, he explains, used for getting around, as opposed to shortboards, the kind you see at skateparks. Adding to the vintage vibe: Linden leaves the original details of the skis intact. No two are alike. Junior boards are around \$150; adult boards are \$350 and up. Available on Etsy or at Linden's barn/factory in Denmark, Maine. www.lindenlongboards.com.



Give them the beach year-round, or at least prints that conjure the feel of the seaside, by Rockport-based artist Rob Diebboll. Spring for a package of note cards, shown here, or choose a print or original painting. DIANE BARR

Beach days forever: Artist Rob Diebboll

There's something about Rob Diebboll's work that reduces a beach day to its purest essence — kids playing in the waves, dogs cavorting. You can almost smell the scent of the sea, hear the happy shrieks of the children, and feel the damp fog. The Rockport, Mass.-based artist "reduces complex figures to simple shapes, delineated by emboldened colors," as he describes it. His art reflects the coasts and islands of Massachusetts, Maine, Rhode Island, Florida, the Caribbean, along with the Adirondack mountains, he says. It's so joyful, we'd love to fill our home with his paintings. Diebboll sells original work at his studio, along with limited edition prints that range in price from \$120 for a 10-by-10-inch print to \$500 for a 30-by-30-inch piece. Original paintings range in price and size, from \$280 to \$8,000.

Happily, you can be a bit less spend-y and still share his delightful work with the folks on your gift list — boxes of eight note cards are available for \$24. To buy, visit Diebboll's studio by appointment, buy online from his site, or shop at Goodlinens Studio, Gloucester, or Muzio Designs, Essex. www.robdiebboll.com.



For that refined hippie chick: Crunchy Diva Designs

We're guessing that even the most committed fashionista on your gift list doesn't have a piece of jewelry made with actual African porcupine quills. That's where Heather Wright of Madison, Conn., comes in. This jewelry designer works with semi-precious stones, leather, metal — and porcupine quills. About eight years ago, "I was at the Brimfield Flea Market and got my hands on a bunch of quills. I started playing with them and thought they were so naturally beautiful that they would be super cool as wearable natural art."

Wright sources her quills from an importer who purchases them from Africa, she explains. Porcupines shed their quills naturally, so "no animals are harmed in the making of my jewelry." They're beautiful, and quite sturdy, she says. We especially like the necklaces (most from \$34 to \$64). Dangly porcupine quill earrings run from \$38 to \$48. Order through Wright's website or buy at The Blue Butterfly, Belmont. www.crunchydivadesigns.com.



Give ‘em a hand: Blue Loon Botanicals

Who needs snakeskin gloves when your own hands are scaly-reptilian (way to go, hand sanitizer!). Marilyn Plummer of Candia, N.H., a former health care manager, has a solution: “lotion bars.” Packaged in round, reusable aluminum containers, the bars are made with shea butter, beeswax, avocado oil, calendula and chamomile-infused olive oil, coconut oil, and vitamin E — no harsh chemicals that will make your beleaguered mitts feel even worse. Plummer uses essential oils for fragrance (lavender, orange, and eucalyptus). She also makes an unscented version. Anyone who travels by air will appreciate the concept — no more exploding lotion!

Unlike a jar of gooey body butter, the texture is like a cake of soap. The bar stays solid at room temperature, but when you remove it from the tin and rub it in your hands, your body heat will soften it slightly. Massage it into your skin, and, ahh! Silky paws, smooth elbows, soft feet. Bars are available in three sizes. The largest (two ounces, \$10) is best for gifting; the jar has a clear top that reveals a cameo-like carving in the bar. Plummer’s line includes soap plus bayberry and pure beeswax candles. Lotion bars are \$4, \$7, \$10; available at Manchester Craft Market in Manchester, N.H., and online at www.blueloonbotanicals.com.



Does your BFF wear their heart on their sleeve? With bracelets from Nautically Northern, the word works, too. Each cuff is hand-stamped by Laurel Ryan of Clinton. DAVID BISH

Statement jewelry: Nautically Northern

Is there a warrior princess on your gift list, or a guy who believes that saltwater cures everything? Or someone born and raised in the Bay State, and proud of it? Laurel Ryan of Clinton has the perfect gift for you. Her hand-stamped cuff bracelets, made for men and women, in brass, aluminum, or sterling silver, enable the wearers to share their journey on their wrist.

Ryan's "Home" collection is especially popular; all 50 states are in stock, along with Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard. (She launched her business as a hobby while living in Wellfleet, and admits a slight Cape bias.) She sells her own curated designs, including a "warrior" collection with messages like "Braver. Stronger. Better," and a nautical line that includes statements like "Beach Girl" and "Saltwater cures everything." Bracelets stamped with latitude and longitude numbers are best-sellers. Each piece is hand-stamped, so no two are exactly alike. Ryan donates 10 percent of profits to charity; to date, that's \$10,000, which tells you just how successful she is. Other pieces include dog tags, key chains, and earrings. Women's cuff bracelet, \$25; men's, \$35; available at Locally Yours in Plymouth, Beautiful Horizon in Weymouth, and online at www.nauticallynorthern.com.



For the tea lover, interesting loose-leaf tea and accessories are always welcome gifts. Rhode Island-based Amber Jackson of Black Leaf Tea & Culture Shop designs bold, delicious teas, and sells them by the package and as gift boxes. She also sells tea-making accessories. DIANE BAIR

Teas, please: Black Leaf Tea & Culture Shop

What's cozier than curling up with a cuppa tea under a fleece blankie? Um, nothing — unless you add a big warm dog. Amber Jackson offers gifts aplenty for the tea lover in your life, including loose leaf teas, tea accessories, and gift boxes. Jackson designs and formulates all the tea blends (bold and delicious) herself. A current favorite is Chider, an apple cider flavor blended with red rooibos, apples, ginger, and other spices. We love Chai-Town, an ode to Jackson's hometown of Chicago, a chai blend with a hint of chocolate and black pepper. Her CoCo Bae, with toasted cocoa nibs and shredded coconut, is reminiscent of cocoa tea served in the Caribbean.

Jackson launched the business in 2019 to share her love for tea, celebrate Black culture, and engage with the community. She also hosts Young Black Professionals Mixers at various locales in Providence, and offers Tea Talks on YouTube. The shop operates out of Hope & Main in Warren, R.I., an incubator for local food businesses. Packages of tea from \$6.50; gift sets, from \$40. Order online at www.theblackleaftea.com.