





dressed to impress

{ THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, DELIGHT YOUR FAVORITE HOST OR HOSTESS WITH IMAGINATIVE GIFTS WRAPPED IN PRETTY PACKAGING BY KELLEY L. MOORE }

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM HENKENS

* During this busy season of holiday parties and celebrations, preparing a thoughtful gift provides a wonderful opportunity to recognize your favorite host or hostess, be it a new acquaintance, a treasured relative or a longtime friend. Hostess gifts run the gamut from traditional to unusual. A bottle of wine is a well-appreciated standby, while a gift of exotic sea salt is a bit more unexpected. Likewise, the way you present your gift can range from conventional to creative. Even a modest gift—when dressed to impress—can wow the most discerning hostess; it’s just a matter of paying attention to the details. * “Containers and packaging are strongly influenced by fashion,” says Mona Williams, vice president of buying for the Container Store that just opened in Bellevue, offering everything for the chronic organizer from toothpaste holders to tape dispensers. “This year, similar to the designs you will see on the catwalk, tags are adorned with beads and totes >>

< **SILVER BELLS** Everyone loves a bottle of wine or champagne, especially during the holidays. This silver wine box from Packaging Specialties (\$1.20 per box; 515 S Michigan St.; 206.762.0540; ps-stores.com) is the ideal base for a gathering of silver bells. ¶ To make the wine tote: Cut the top off a wine box and on each side make a small incision that is slightly wider than a 2-inch-wide double-faced satin ribbon (\$3.05 per yard; *Packaging Specialties*). Weave the ribbon through the incision and tie a knot to secure the ribbon on each side, creating a handle. For the finishing touch, use a hot-glue gun to attach rows of jingle bells (69 cents per package; *Pacific Fabrics and Crafts*, 2230 Fourth Ave. S; 206.628.6237; pacificfabrics.com) of varying sizes around the top edge of the box, creating a tinkling cuff.

flocked with feathers. The focus is on texture and embellishment.” * While vibrant colors such as orange and fuchsia, popular last year, are still found in some packaging, this year’s trend recalls a traditional holiday color palette, with packaging, wrapping and ribbons in shades of green and red, with bold stripes and polka dots adding a touch of whimsy. * As you are choosing a gift, consider diverting a bit from the tried and true. A nonalcoholic beverage, for instance, is a refreshing change from wine and a wonderful choice for a hostess who prefers to raise a toast sans alcohol. Mark Thomasseau of Champion Wine Cellars recommends giving a bottle of Duché de Longueville, a high-end French sparkling cider (\$7.95 per bottle). For a twist on the usual wine bag, present the bottle in a jingle-bell-embellished box instead. * Another option is to share a festive cocktail. Bundle the ingredients of your favorite drink, along with the recipe and a fancy glass. My signature holiday concoction is a Champagne Royale. I add a splash of



TABLE CLOTHS

A crisp, hemstitched cocktail napkin, embroidered or adorned with a clever quote, is a luxurious gift (\$46 for 8 napkins; *Island Life at Home*, 212 First St., Langley; 360.221.8922; *islandlifeathome.com*). Package them simply in a clear cellophane bag (25 cents each or 100 for \$10.50; *Packaging Specialties*) and add a ribbon with a holiday tag. Adding a bit more detail is as easy as affixing a button to the tag.

1) PERSONAL BESTS

Monogramming is a classic way to personalize a gift, and with these colored acrylic containers in lots of different sizes (39 cents to \$2.99 each; *Container Store*, 700 Bellevue Way NE, Suite 120, Bellevue; 425.453.7120; *containerstore.com*), you don’t have to wait weeks for monogrammed packaging. To create the look: Center a wide ribbon on the box and attach it with a small amount of hot glue. Layer a piece of colored card stock (*Paper Zone*, 1911 First Ave. S; 206.682.8644; *paperzone.com*) on top of the ribbon and with hot glue add an iron-on initial from Nancy’s Sewing Basket (2221 Queen Anne Ave. N; 206.282.9112; *nancyssewingbasket.com*) to the center of the card stock. Keep the lid off and use the container in lieu of a basket to present a bottle of gourmet honey. Black sage honey (\$9.95–\$15.95; *Bella Cosa*, 1711 N 45th St.; 206.545.7375; *bellacosafoods.com*) is from a plant that blossoms only four out of every 10 years.

2) HOLIDAY CHEERS

Gather the ingredients for your favorite cocktail and add a martini glass. Shown here is the Flirtini glass (\$24.95; *Blue Canary*, 2331 Second Ave.; 206.443.3328), with a hand-painted cocktail recipe on the bottom. Pack the glass and ingredients in a clear box (\$29.99 for a set of six; *Container Store*) and tie a whimsical ribbon (*black-and-white polka dot ribbon*, \$1.40 per yard; *black eyelash ribbon*, \$1.50 per yard; *Packaging Specialties*) around the box. Include a jar of festively packaged Sable & Rosenfield cherries (\$6.99 per jar; *Metropolitan Market*, 1908 Queen Anne Ave. N; 206.284.2530; *metropolitan-market.com*).

3) FRENCH ACCENTS

Save time during the hectic holiday season by choosing gourmet food items that are already imaginatively packaged. Le Pere Pelletier gourmet salts (\$14.95 for a 500-gram tin; *Bella Cosa*) are sure to please cooking enthusiasts. Each has a unique blend of herbs to accent particular foods.

4) DOG TAGS

My favorite furry friend, Mikey, ready to dig into his holiday goodies! Trim the top of a take-out container (80 cents per container; *Packaging Specialties*) and secure a 1-inch strip of faux fur (\$1.29 per yard; *Pacific Fabrics and Crafts*) along the top with hot glue. Fill with treats and toys (*All the Best Pet Care*, 2127 Queen Anne Ave. N; 206.283.3959; *allthebestpetcare.com*) and tie on a personalized tag or a preprinted tag like this one from *Packaging Specialties* (50 cents each or 25 for \$5).





BAUBLES UP

An exquisitely designed ornament will be appreciated for many years to come. These lovely, one-of-a-kind ornaments from local artist Kinga Czerska (\$48; *Butch Blum, 1408 Fifth Ave.; 206.622.5760; or agnikllc@hotmail.com*) are hand-painted, glazed and fired twice.

Chambord to my favorite champagne, garnish with a few pomegranate seeds and voilà! The effervescence of the champagne makes the pomegranate seeds appear to dance in the glass. * Spark party conversation and introduce your hostess to something new with a gift drawn from a local culinary trend, such as exquisite specialty honey (an increasingly popular accompaniment to a decadent cheese course) or a jar of sea salt. * For a gift that's a bit more personal, share music that inspires you, either by burning to CD a compilation of your favorite songs or by visiting a music store to purchase a classic holiday mix. Creating a personalized CD is a snap at online music stores such as itunes.com or napster.com. Include your favorite tunes from 2005 plus a sprinkling of holiday standards like Dean Martin's "Jingle Bells" or Bing Crosby's "Frosty the Snowman." * If you are invited to a party that takes place every year, begin a new tradition by presenting your hostess with an artful ornament. At parties to come, she'll be able to count your years of friendship by the number of baubles hanging from her boughs or placed on her mantel. The ornaments will also remind her of past celebrations. * Last but not least, don't forget your friend's favorite pet. Animal accessories have achieved new heights in design, from fluffy boas to sparkly, jeweled collars. Admit it: You always knew her retriever would look great in rhinestones. 5



EYE TUNES

It can be a challenge to creatively package a CD. If you want to do more than plunk it in a jewel case and wrap it in paper, choose a modern silk container like this one from the Container Store (*shantung CD gift box*, \$7.99 each). The elegant boxes come in a variety of colors. If you prefer a more traditional wrap, find a fabulous piece of fabric like this red dupioni silk (\$18 per yard; *Nancy's Sewing Basket*) and wrap the CD origami style.

BANNER YEAR

Give a busy hostess a stylish calendar, such as this Sapling Press letterpress calendar (\$15.50; *Flourish Greetings and Giveables*, 1705 N 45th St.; 206.675.0777) so she can keep track of important get-togethers—such as a monthly lunch or cocktail hour—during even the busiest times of the year.

ALL DRESSED UP: *Lifestyle and entertaining expert Kelley L. Moore heads out for a party with her favorite bottle of wine in a jingle-bell wine tote.*