

Quick & Personal

HOLIDAY GIFTS



Great gifts don't have to break the bank. Giving a homemade treat or supplying your recipient with the fixings to make a scrumptious nosh will win hearts and be gentle on your checkbook. With little effort your gift can be one of the highlights of the season.

If you're heading out to a holiday party, bring both a snack and a gift basket filled with the raw ingredients and recipe. Your hostess can sample firsthand the gift you're giving her and helps lighten her load. Providing a guilt-free snack to graze on will be a welcome and healthful alternative to yet another fat laden treat. That's why popcorn is a great option.

Plain or buttered, sweetened or spiced, popcorn can be flavored or even combined with other foods like nuts, fruit or cheese to create a delicious and nutritious snack. As a whole grain food, popcorn is a carbohydrate that is not only low in calories, but also a good source of fiber. It's an ideal in-between meals snack because it satisfies, but doesn't spoil your appetite.

For others on your list, whether you're down to the wire or just beginning holiday shopping, simple gift ideas are sure to please. You can give a decorative tin filled with your favorite popcorn recipe or a basket filled with the ingredients to make the popcorn treat. Add a favorite board game, DVD, movie rental passes, or a subscription to an online DVD rental service for an extra touch and – voila! Who knew holiday shopping could be stress-free, inexpensive and thoughtful?

Spicy Italian Popcorn

10 cups hot, freshly popped popcorn
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/3 cup grated Parmesan and Romano cheese
1 teaspoon oregano
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/4 teaspoon garlic salt

- Drizzle olive oil over popcorn in large bowl.
- Add remaining ingredients; toss well.

Yield: 10 servings

Perfect Popcorn Popping Tips

- Warm a heavy pan with lid. Add 1/4 cup of vegetable oil to the pan, or just enough to cover the bottom.
- Drop in two or three kernels and cover. When the kernels pop, add the remaining popcorn. Pour just enough kernels to cover the bottom of the pan. Cover with lid.
- Shake the pan while the kernels heat and pop. Occasionally lift the lid slightly to allow steam to escape. When you hear the last few pops, remove the pan from the heat, take off the lid and empty the popped popcorn into a large bowl.

