Make someone happy: The art of gift-giving

JEANETTE FRIEDMAN

The most iconic gift I ever received is the handmade, needle-pointed pillow that reads, "THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE NOT THINGS." Maybe. But people really love "stuff," especially if it's different, has sentimental value, is an heirloom, or creates beautiful memories. And they love simply love, to rip of the bows and wrapping paper, open the envelopes, and crack the boxes to see what's inside.

Back in the day, gift giving rarely used imagination. People bought things they liked that they thought you would like or would pick a toy, game, or book that had been tested to fit a specific age group or celebration category from housewarmings to birthdays and bridal/baby/engagement/adoption showers to graduations. Birthday boys could get three baseball gloves. Today that translates into four smartphones or iPods. Birthday girls would score enough Nancy Drew books to stock a library and Barbie dolls to fill a mini-city. (Today that would translate into four smartphones or iPods and enough Barbie dolls to fill a mini-city.) Dresses and brides-to-be were gifted with enough glassware and serving pieces to stock a restaurant. All it took take would be one more punch bowl to send them over the edge. And yet homeowners keep on arriving — and after a while you wonder if you've been re-gifted and need to do a little re-gifting yourself. After all, "stuff" takes up lots of space, and you don't have any left.

Edibles are incredible gifts — bouquets of fresh fruits, chocolates, and candies are available from a number of vendors. Petits-fours and fingerpicks platters or a beautifully decorated cake are always welcome. They become part of your event, they're attractive, luscious, and scrumptious, and when they're gone, they're gone.

Diamonds and jewelry are absolutely forever and don't take up much space. Vintage collectibles, like Anchor Hocking's mid-century kitchen set Tulips or Ivory, would warm the cockles of any kitchen collector's heart.

Personalized items create a special link between giver and receiver, creating memories that will last forever, especially if there's a thoughtful message attached. There are folks who specialize in memories — they'll create themed photo/video scrapbooks, on-line or off, that document the fun and games. Others turn invitations into works of art, etch them in glass, or engrave heartfelt messages in to items, like a crystal wine decanter or silver charity box, that become family treasures. Google what you're looking for, and chances are you'll find it. There are now all sorts of gift registries where you can send cash to contribute to the price of a cruise, a car, a down payment on a house, or just about anything else. There's no re-gifting a cruise, a mortgage, or a trip to Disneyland!

TEANECK GENERAL STORE
1420 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, N.J.
(201) 630-1946
www.teanecklageneralstore.com

There's nothing like it in town. Bins on vacation during a few month vacation in 2009. The Teaneck General Store has been filling the community's needs for a cute, city gift shop and general store that offers a platform to local artists, musicians, authors, and even comedians. It also offers interesting lectures about Judaism, undeniable topics, and book signings. There are wholesale sets of glassware, handmade ceramics, picture frames, serving pieces, and so forth. The shop also does screen printing and embroidery a give-away gifts and party aprons and packing camp coasters with partner toys, and things children enjoy from home. One-third of the gifts including themes and cool fines, are fair trade items from developing nations. The shop also sells cupcakes, parties, or people's homes.

SWEETS ON CEDAR
408 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, N.J.
(201) 833-4100
Fax (201) 530-5385
www.sweetsoncedar.com
e-mail:monica@sweetsoncedar.com

A great place for "these addicted to sugar and sweets, pretty things and fresh ideas. Gift platters for your next party, party dinner in 28 flavored Jelly Belles, and pack them as gifts in the glass, jar or basket. The candyman or other gifts to pick from 20 lollipop flavors, so you can create a lollipop bouquet for your sweetheart. The shop also carries an elegant selection of disposable partyware. Corporate and organizations gifting accounts are available and specialty gift are custom-created for weddings, bar/bats, shiva baked, gin/wells, births, and so much more.

THE "HUM" TUBE
116a South Main St.
Englewood N.J.
(201) 227-4200
Fax (201) 227-6204
www.thepaletteline.com
e-mail:dave@thepaletteline.com

"Gifts to fit those wishes and dreams for infants, children, and adults," say the website. There's even a baby gift registry for your convenience. The shop specializes in hand-painted custom gifts for infants, noisy by lanetic crafters. The shop also can new custom-coordinated bedding, and accessories. Birth announcements, invitation, and stationery are also available.

SUNSHINE GIFTS
208 Grand Ave. (in rear)
Englewood N.J.
(201) 541-1308

A great place for Shabbat gifts for your hostess and her family. Treasures also more than 100 games you can play on Shabbat for children of all ages. Interesting items are a line of tempered glass dishes that wash well, hold up in a warming drawer and microwave, and are actually useful. There are picture frames,

serving pieces, crop are dip sets, fancy dinnerware or pieces and pot pardes. Gifts are romantic are themed and scented candles and diffusers. To see, you must go. Call ahead.

PARTY PLUS STUDIO
118 Engle St.
Englewood, N.J.
(201) 871-0800

A unique boutique specializing in custom invitations for all your special occasions. It offers a wide selection of giftware for graduation, teachers' gifts, wedding gifts, and more. To learn more, find it on Facebook.com

MATISSE CHOCOLATIER
208 Grand Ave. (in rear)
Englewood, N.J.
(201) 568-2200
www.giftswithchocolate.com

If you are looking for a chocolate gift that makes a special statement, this is the natural choice for gorgeous, high-quality corporate gift baskets and more. It offers a sophisticated yet down home variety of beautifully prepared and gift-wrapped chocolate gift ideas — perfect for business associates, clients, co-workers, your boss and more. There are traditional giftcandies, chocolate boxes, leather-look magazine bags and more. Though packaging is important, it's the delicious chocolate treats inside that really count. The shop also does themed gifts and chocolate platters for parties

MOUNT SAVAGE
48 Cedar Lane
Teaneck, N.J.
(201) 692-1200
Fax (201) 692-1990
www.mountsavage.com

Give a present gift card for partners in crime and so much more, going new meaning to be phrase "scrupulous consumption." The Giftcards are theme and shape of a debit card and work the same way, against the account set up by the giver. Theme

Teaneck and on the Lower East Side and Shelly's Gift on Cedar Lane

DEPOSIT A GIFT
131 E. 116th St, Suite 100
New York, N.Y.
(646) 335-5501
www.depositagift.com
e-mail:dana@depositagift.com

Deposit a Gift is for all of life's celebrations where gifts are needed and cash is preferred. Knowing that some people feel awkward asking for money — and others aren't accustomed to giving it — Deposit a Gift mainstreams the process with a user friendly site modeled on traditional registries. Users make their wants and needs with their guests who help them achieve their goals by giving them what they want most. Flexibility, blame for weddings, babies, graduations, anniversaries/birthdays, fundraising, retirement parties and more. Users create gift lists to get exactly what they want — from cards to college funds, bar/bat mitzvahs to rocks, even raising money for charity. Gift giers contribute via credit card. When users are ready they can — to recipients their money via their direct deposit, personal check, or visa gift card to spend it now, when, and where they want. There is no shipping, no gift wrap, no need for returns.

PICKELICIOUS
7th Cedar Lane

(201) 833-8100
www.pickelicious.com

Giftcards make a great gift for the pickle lover in every family. The souvenir section includes tees, T-shirts, M bags, and other pickle paraphernalia. Sauce and condiment baskets and pickle platters make welcome housewarmings.