

Xmas greetings

With so many foodie options available locally, it's easy to find pressies to suit every taste, says **Roz Crowley**

THIS year's crop of foodie gifts is more impressive than ever. With terrific value in shops and markets, it's worth looking now at your local market or retailer to enquire what else is to come.

This year I focused mainly on the best of Cork produce and retailers with best value for quality in mind. Not featured here are those who have

topped our surveys in the past and who are still favourites such as Hedermans and Ummerra for smoked salmon and eel and the Farm Gate, Middleton which stocks a wide range of excellent local produce.

More than ever, this year we need to support our own, and good food is one way of getting superb value and buying useful and exciting gifts.

GO WEST

Lettercollum Kitchen Project, Connolly Street, Clonakilty, serves West Cork well. Pan forte (€14.95) is full of aromatic, fruity flavours, while rum truffles (€10.95 for 12 in a beautiful box, or €1 each) (picture 1) are superbly rich and silky. They will post countrywide, from www.lettercollum.ie, or by phone, 023-8836938.



GO NUTS

Crisp and rich, chocolate-coated almonds and Brazil nuts (€5.90) (picture 2) make excellent gifts, from a wide selection of treats at The Chocolate Shop, English Market, Cork. The chocolate and praline-coated hazelnuts, from Eve chocolates, at their beautiful shop on College Road, Cork, are delicious (€7.80). Pair them with morello cherries, wrapped in chocolate gianduja (€9.60).



GO SAVOURY

Fainne Oir Fine Foods, of Limerick, make delicious garlic-and-parsley bread sticks, (picture 3) for easy nibbles with party drinks (€3.20), as well as longer, olive-oil bread sticks (€4.25), both from On the Pigs Back.

Hard Buffalo cheese, from Toonsbridge (€2.76 for 138g), is a terrific substitute for Parmesan (try it with Irish honey as a gift), available from The Real Olive. Almondeli Pain de Figs aux Amandes (€3.90) is a delicious combination of dried figs, almonds, aniseed and cinnamon. Give with manchego and other salty cheeses. From Iago. These stalls located at English Market, Cork.



GO ELEGANTLY

Gurman's Tea & Coffee World has top quality teas and coffees, sold in packs as small as 50g (€1.75) (picture 4). Put together elegant treats of chocolate coffee beans, Ginger Warmth green tea, vibrant Earl Grey, and Easy Breathing tea, made from liquorice, eucalyptus, ginger, basil, fennel, cardamom, cinnamon, pepper and blue lucerne blossoms, which translate any cold symptoms into a feeling of bliss. From Gurman's, no 4, Fenns Quay, Cork.



GO STATESIDE

Diva of Ballinspittle is always worth a visit for gift packs, including this crunchy, honey

granola, paired with raspberry jam, along with poppy-seed salad dressing (€13.95) (picture 5). They do great, homely versions of classic cakes and various American treats made in their

busy bakery, by US owner, Shannen Keane. A voucher for her café would make a welcome gift, too. Now online at www.divaboutiquebakery.com.



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GO SALTY

Salt is the condiment of the year. There are a few Irish producers, including Irish Atlantic sea salt, which has plain flakes (€2.99 for 100g), (picture 6) as well as interesting flavours of chilli and paprika, garlic, dillisk, lemon and pepper (€3.79 — €4.20). Available at selected Dunnes and Tesco stores, and others, listing at www.irishatlanticsalt.ie. I have paired this with a beautiful salt bowl, from Ardmore pottery, Co Waterford, which I use all the time (€16.50, including ceramic spoon). They will post orders. Tel: 024-94152.

GO FUN

Koko chocolate shop, Pier Road, Kinsale has fun shapes in chocolate, including a mobile phone (€6), a Christmas pudding (from €12.50) and Santas (€6) (picture 7).

15 minutes drive away, Rohu's Country Market, Inishannon, always has new, interesting producers and is open on Sundays.

GO RICH

Deliciously rich, chicken liver pâté (€7.95), paired with pickled plums (€4.95) (picture 8), is a winning combination of tastes for a perfect foodie gift from Nash 19, Prince's Street, Cork. From an extensive selection of festive foods, online, www.nash19.com. 