

Short Orders Gift Guide 2007

J. Scott Wilson, Food Editor

So another holiday season has rolled around, and once again you're left wondering what in Hades you're going to buy for the foodies on your gift list. You've already given them gift cards to Bed, Bath and Beyond, Sur La Table, Williams-Sonoma and every other vaguely kitchen-oriented store on the planet. You're scared to buy your friend any "important" tools since you heard he climbed a mountain in Japan and spent six months apprenticing for the master swordmaker who made his chef's knife. In other words, you need my help. And, as ever, I'm happy to be of assistance.



Bake Up A Present

Let's start off this year's cavalcade of goodies with a trio of delectable baked offerings that will add an elegant touch to any meal. At Chef Michael Gagné's Robinhood Free Meetinghouse, diners enjoy his 72-Layer Cream Cheese Biscuits, invented more than three decades ago when the chef was working in Virginia. Over the years, he's added cinnamon rolls and a Five-Herb Parmesan Cream Cheese biscuit to the menu, and now you (lucky stiff) can get them at home.

These are not your ordinary frozen bread products. The biscuits bake up nice and tall, and they will melt in your mouth without the addition of butter. For real decadence, split them and add just a touch of Berry Best Jam from Imladris Farm. The cinnamon rolls are completely decadent, and follow one of the cardinal rules for making a really good version: don't drown it with icing! There is a nice drizzle of vanilla glaze across them, but the real star is the cinnamon-sugar filling, which balances the sweetness of the sugar with the cinnamon richness beautifully.

If your family, like mine, has a tradition of Christmas morning breakfast being something quick and sweet that Dad or Mom can pop in the oven while the kids attack their presents, the cinnamon rolls are a fantastic idea. They're guaranteed to pull the kids away from their new Wii or whatever other electronic brain-drainer Santa has seen fit to bestow upon them.

My favorite, though, is the Five-Herb Parmesan Cream Cheese biscuit. This little beauty will make even the most humble jarred spaghetti sauce into a gourmet dinner. With most breads of this type, you get a headslap of cheap cheese and maybe a jolt of oregano. These biscuits have everything in proportion, and are stellar eaten by themselves or dunked in a bit of sauce.



You can find the Gagné Foods products at Whole Foods and Wild Oats stores, or [visit www.gagnefoods.com] for a list of online and local vendors who will help you stock your freezer. Order them online and have them shipped directly to your giftee, then wait for the thank-yous!