

THE EPICUREAN'S GIFT GUIDE

Delicacies to thrill the sophisticated palate

Say goodbye to run-of-the-mill gift baskets filled with boring, prepackaged fare — there's a whole world of extraordinary food and drink out there, just waiting to be discovered. These unique, gourmet and perfectly scrumptious treats will satisfy even the most selective of tastes.

The Flavor of New York

The epicenter of food on the Upper West Side, Zabar's is the gourmand's destination for that real taste of New York: coffee, smoked fish, cheese, caviar, olives, deli, and Jewish food as it was made generations ago.

"We're about quality, and getting the best of everything," said Saul



ILLYCAFFÈ

Zabar, whose father, Louis, opened Zabar's as a small storefront in 1934. "That's what makes Zabar's unique."

Run today by Saul Zabar and his brother, Stanley, Zabar's ships 50,000 gift baskets a year, and last holiday season sold more than 12,000 pounds of smoked salmon, 4,000 pounds of whitefish and 19,000 potato latkes. "There's a lot that hasn't changed that much," said Saul Zabar, 84. "We still pickle our own herring. We still choose the best fish from the smoke houses, only now we have nova; back then, it was only lox." And Zabar's roasts and sells more than 8,000 pounds of coffee every week.

While out-of-towners can't experience the delicious smell and feel of Zabar's in person, the store's online catalogue features 25 different gift crates and baskets that bring the Big Apple to them. For that displaced

This special advertising feature is sponsored by participating advertisers. The material was written by Andrea Kahn, and did not involve the reporting or editing staff of The New York Times. ©2012 The New York Times

ILLY CAFFÈ, 3.0COLS, 10.375", PROCESS COLOR,
GIFTING FESTIVE FOOD & DRINK, 1000497205_1

FAIRWAY MARKETS, 3.0COLS, 5.5", PROCESS COLOR,
GIFTING FESTIVE FOOD & DRINK, GIFTING FESTIVE
FOOD & DRINK, 1000501661_1

New Yorker, the “Don’t Be Homesick” crate, Saul Zabar’s favorite, is a must: it’s filled with bagels and cream cheese, salmon, rye bread, cinnamon rugelach, kosher salami, pastrami, deli mustard and coffee.

Shipping, along with your personalized message, is included in all Zabar’s boxes and baskets. “A Zabar’s gift looks different, and it feels different,” said Saul Zabar. “It’s something special.”

Visit zabars.com or call (800) 697-6301.



THE 2012 CATALOG FROM NEW YORK DELI ICONS SAUL AND STANLEY ZABAR. Photo: Juan Carlos Lopez Garcia-Espantaleon

An International Gastronomic Experience

Any foodie who lives within a 100-mile radius of New York knows the Fairway that is Fairway Market. Jam-packed with a vast selection of fresh foods and a wealth of exceptional, world-class items at great value, Fairway is a beloved staple of connoisseurs, newbies, chefs de cuisine and home cooks alike.

Opened in 1933 as a corner stand on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, Fairway now boasts 11 markets in the tristate region, with more on the way. Fairway always was, and still is, among the first to offer imported, things-you-didn’t-know-existed foodstuffs. Clementines premiered at Fairway Market. Pruneaux d’Agen, the world’s finest prunes. Wonderful white pickled anchovies from Catalonia. Even radicchio was unheard of in New York and the rest of the country before Fairway started importing it.

Fairway’s cheese department overflows with more than 600 gourmet, artisanal cheeses. It’s headed by master cheesemonger Steve Jenkins, author of the cheese industry’s bible, “Cheese Primer,” who travels the world in search of the best artisanal cheeses.

Fairway Marketplace takes the best of what Fairway Market has to offer and delivers it right to your door. Jenkins hand-selected each item in the Steve’s Pick Basket — and he takes the process seriously. “I eat, sleep, breath and sweat artisanal cheeses,” he said. “All of these items are exclusive to us, and all of them belong in your pantry.”

The popular Italian Basket overflows with pasta from Italy, Fairway’s own pesto, olive oil, balsamic vinegar and tomato sauce. Holiday gift baskets feature traditional Christmas items such as panettone and stollen. You can also order select cuts of Fairway’s U.S.D.A. prime meat. Fairway premises-roasted coffee is a top-selling gift; choose from more than 75 varieties, in whole beans or a specific grind.

“We import everything ourselves,” said Jenkins. “Anything from Fairway is always the best of the best.”

Visit fairwaymarket.com or call (646) 616-8295.

A Taste of Maine

It all began in Carol Ford’s kitchen some 25 years ago, on Little Cranberry Island off the coast of Maine. Experimenting with 100-year-old recipes for gingerless island gingerbread and whoopee pie, Ford and friend Karen Haase decided to take their favorites and go into business. “Cranberry Island Kitchen is a combination of our best recipes and our aesthetic sense,” said Ford. “We really want to convey the simple pleasures of island life, what makes it so unique and special, through what we bake.”

After six years, Cranberry Island Kitchen has developed a near cult following for its scrumptious desserts made in the shapes of the Maine coast — particularly its whoopie pies, Maine’s official state treat. The pair transformed the often shortening-and-artificial-ingredient-laden childhood treat into a decadent grownup dessert, using homemade Maine butter, fresh local eggs, Maine sea salt and spring water. They’ve also wowed customers with filling



FAIRWAY’S FRENCH GIFT BASKET.

CAJUN GROCER, 2.0COLS,
3.25”, PROCESS COLOR,
GIFTING FESTIVE FOOD &
DRINK, 1000498257_1

CRANBERRY ISLAND
KITCHEN, 2.0COLS,
3.25”, PROCESS COLOR,
GIFTING, GIFTING , FAR
FORWARD,
1000505038_1

flavors such as Cointreau and orange zest, espresso chocolate pearl, and Chambord.

Other Cranberry Island Kitchen favorites include rich clam-shaped buttermilk cakes and lobster-shaped shortbread cookies, along with unique Maine gourmet food products. Choose your own selection, or try an elegantly packaged “Taste of Maine” sampler.

Need help? Ford or Haase will walk you through it — they love speaking to their customers. Said Ford: “We try to impart a little piece of the Maine experience in everything we do.”

Visit cranberryislandkitchen.com or call (207) 774-7110.

A Trip to Cajun Country

In Louisiana, everything is slower, richer, spicier. Here, the native Creole and Cajun seasonings don’t just flavor the food; they flavor life. Give the gift of an authentic Southern experience with the Cajun Grocer, which carries more than 1,000 authentic Cajun and Creole food products — including turducken, a turkey stuffed with a duck stuffed with a chicken then layered with sausage or seafood jambalaya.

“You haven’t experienced real Southern food until you’ve tasted a turducken,” said Charlie Hohorst III, owner of the Cajun Grocer, which sells some 30,000 triple-stuffed birds every November and December — with more than 40 percent of business coming from repeat customers.

What to serve with your turducken? Hohorst recommends praline pecan sweet potato casserole, jalapeno crawfish stuffing and New Orleans-style bread pudding. All of it is available at the cajungrocer.com and can be shipped in dry ice overnight to arrive just in time for Thanksgiving.

“We try to do everything Louisiana,” said Hohorst. “We’re a one-stop-shop for Cajun food.” If you need more ideas, just give the Cajun Grocer a call — the phones are manned by authentic Cajuns, ready to help.

Visit cajungrocer.com or call (888) 272-9347.

To Italy: A Connoisseur’s Coffee

Illycaffè, a third-generation Italian coffee company, has been known to make coffee-lovers swoon. Pioneering some of coffee’s most important innovations, illy is known for its distinctive blend of fine Arabica coffees with a smooth, rich and full-bodied taste — flawlessly consistent, balanced and never bitter.

CAJUN GROCER



There’s an illy roast, grind or format ideal for all coffee preparation methods — espresso, cappuccino, drip coffee, French press and Moka. The new, beautifully packaged Live Happ-illy Collection transforms a regular coffee moment into a sip of happiness. Different sets include espresso or cappuccino cups and saucers, mugs, a stainless travel mug, and a designer can of ground medium-roast coffee.

Giorgio Milos, illy’s master barista, offers this gift-giving advice for the coffee novice: the illy’s Francis Francis X7.1 machine. “It makes a quick and easy espresso at home,” he said. “And the iperEspresso capsule is so easy, there’s no mess. The machine is ready in minutes and the coffee is always excellent and consistent.”

And for a real coffee connoisseur? Perhaps illy’s striking Francis Francis espresso machine, designed by renowned Italian architect Luca Trazzi, which makes café-quality espresso and adds a strong visual statement to any kitchen. Or just ... coffee? “Illy coffee makes an elegant and memorable gift for the discerning coffee connoisseur,” said Milos. “And our holiday tins can be customized to suit the specific preferences of all the coffee lovers on your gift list.”

Visit illyusa.com or call (877) 4MY-ILLY (469-4559).



CRANBERRY ISLAND KITCHEN

ZABAR’S & CO INC., 2.0COLS,
5.188”, PROCESS COLOR,
CATALOG, GIFTING FESTIVE FOOD &
DRINK, 1000501906_1