

Holiday crafts

making gifts by the dozen

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WOULDN'T IT BE NICE if you could hire some of the elves from the North Pole to help you come up with your holiday gifts? With so many people on your list—from coworkers to next-door neighbors—it can be a challenge to find something special for everyone.

But there is a simple solution, and it doesn't involve lots of shopping. Turn your home into a gift-making workshop. Homemade presents are the best kind: They're cost-effective but carry sentiment that money can't buy. The ones we've come up with on the following pages have broad appeal and are designed to be produced in multiples. Using an assembly-line approach, you can make a number of gifts quickly and efficiently without losing one bit of their charm.

First, compile a list of everyone you want to acknowledge so you can figure out the amount of materials you will need. Then get your whole family involved, and spend an afternoon putting all the gifts together. Clear a work area, and assign each person to a task, such as cutting out tags or filling containers with popcorn. As time ticks by, you might find yourself *fa-la-lah-ing* as you work—that's the holiday spirit sneaking up on you.

RECIPES FOR SUCCESS A collection of holiday recipes, accompanied by a sweet sample, is a gift that will be appreciated for years. The cheery presentation adds to its appeal. Turn the page for the how-to.

recipe booklet how-to

Pass on your culinary traditions to friends. To make one booklet, cover the exterior of a blank greeting card with patterned wrapping paper using a glue stick. Remove the flap from an envelope that will accommodate 3-by-5-inch recipe cards. Glue the front of the envelope to the inner right-hand side of the greeting card. Stuff the envelope with recipe cards, printed by hand or on a computer. Finish by affixing a label to the front of the booklet.



candy-cane marshmallows

Give out homemade treats that are great in hot cocoa—or straight from the bag. Peppermint marshmallows are easy to make; they get their red swirl from a quick marblizing technique. Follow our recipe on page 66, then package them in small cellophane bags to show off their good looks. Fold the top of each bag over once, and staple it shut. Use a small hole punch on either side of the staple. Thread a length of red twine through the holes, and knot it in front. Pull one end through a gift tag, and finish with a bow.



holiday CDs

Share the jolly sounds of the season with a customized CD. Come up with a lineup of tunes, then download them from a legal online music service onto a disc. Using a CD-packaging kit (available at office-supply stores), create a label. The ones shown here were made by scanning wrapping paper; you can also try clip art or photographs. Print the design on the label that comes with the kit. On card stock, print a playlist with "liner notes," personal anecdotes related to the songs. Package each with a disc in a square envelope, and seal with a sticker tag.

striped soaps Delight someone with a fresh-scented and boldly striped soap. Purchase clear and white glycerin soap at a crafts store. Use a mini loaf pan as a mold; each "loaf" of soap requires 2 cups of each soap and yields six bars of soap. Melt the glycerin according to the package instructions, using $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time. Stir in a drop of peppermint oil (available at most health-food stores) with a plastic spoon; for the clear glycerin, add drops of red food coloring, stirring until you get the desired hue. Pour the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of melted soap into the loaf pan. Let cool for 20 minutes. Score the top with a fork. Repeat, alternating colors, until the pan is full. Let set for 4 hours. Pop soap out of pan, and slice into bars. Wrap each bar in cellophane; tape it shut, and tie with bakery string. Cut holly-leaf tags out of green construction paper.



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candy sticks

Dip these Christmas standbys in white chocolate and nonpareils for something extra-sweet. For 50 peppermint sticks, you'll need 8 ounces of white chocolate and 1½ cups of white nonpareils. Put the chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water; stir until melted. Let cool slightly. Dip peppermint sticks in chocolate; spoon nonpareils over chocolate. Stand candy, coated end up, in a loaf pan filled with dried beans; refrigerate until set. Package candy in cellophane bags. Cut rectangles out of card stock the width of the bags. Fold them over the tops of the bags; staple shut. Affix labels over staples.



popcorn tins Pack two kinds of homemade flavored popcorn in one bucket tin. Follow the recipes on page 66 to make macadamia butter-crunch and chocolate-almond popcorn. Purchase bucket tins at a home store. Then cut card-stock dividers to fit the diameter and height of the tins. Fill the containers by holding the divider in place and adding popcorn a handful at a time, alternating between the two flavors to keep divider from slipping. Finish with curled paper ribbon and gift tags.

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