

Local Producers Provide Holiday Gift Ideas

by Steven Knudsen

Having trouble finding that perfect gift for the holiday season? Do your stocking stuffers leave something to be desired? Don't let the holiday spirit get lost in a department store. There are hundreds of great gifts available on the Central Coast that will be sure hits with your friends and family this year. Here are a few of our favorite picks for the holidays.

British White Beef Jerkey (805) 543-3674

From the coastal hills of Stenner Creek Ranch, British White Cattle Co. produces an all-natural beef jerky with organic spice that is as traditional as it comes. With a "just like Pop used to make it" flavor, their jerky has that old-fashioned, straight-out-of-the-smoker flavor.

British White's cattle are born, raised and finished without the use of antibiotics or growth hormones and never see a feedlot, while their beef remains tender and well marbled without excess fat. They also offer teriyaki and original flavors in quarter-pound packages, which can be ordered by calling Pete and Michele Cramer.

Chapel Hill Olive Oil (805) 238-7110

Chapel Hill Olive Oil is perfect for the culinary enthusiasts on your list. Grown on Chapel Hill and Clark Canyon near Shandon, the olives are hand picked, sorted and cold pressed (only once) to produce an extra-virgin olive oil, the highest quality by grade, in an old California Mission style.

Chapel Hill Olive Oil is a blend of two varieties—one part Mission, originally cultivated by the Franciscan Missions, to nine parts



Chapel Hill Olive oil pictured at the Avila Valley Barn.

Manzanillo. This top-shelf olive oil has a remarkably fresh taste that complements California-grown produce, fresh-cooked pastas and is a perfect finish dressing for meats and fish.

The William Clark family invites you to try their olive oil and visit Chapel Hill. The oil can be found at several Central Coast locations; call the Clark family for one near you.

Avila Valley Barn Honey (805) 595-2810 avilavalleybarn.com

From the busy and hardworking bees that live onsite at Avila Valley Barn come jars of 100 percent pure honey. Buzzing from Fuji apple flower to Olallieberry vine, the bees produce liquid gold while at the same time they pollinate the bounty of produce sold in the roadside store. The honey's dark amber color is indicative of the delicious, one-of-a-kind flavor produced from diverse pollination sources. One sample and you will be hooked.

The store, which first started in 1985 as a single table and umbrella placed along Avila Beach Drive, has grown to become a must-stop



Avila Valley Barn Honey.

location for hard-to-find, last-minute holiday gifts.

This Central Coast honey treat and many other treats can be found at Avila Valley Barn or their website.

Greenheart Farms Poinsettias **(805) 481-2234**

greenheartfarms.com

Greenheart Farms Premium Poinsettias project, begun in 1992, is the largest Poinsettia grower on the Central Coast, producing more than 400,000 plants each year.

They specialize in 6.5-inch and 4.5-inch pot sizes in many varieties and colors, including the favorites from the Premium and Prestige family. The pinks, whites and marbles are perfect for decorating during the holiday season. One popular variety, the Monet, blooms in multi-colored, creamy-pink bracts that continue to deepen in color as it matures.

The overwhelming favorite, however, continues to be the deep, dark red that dazzles the eye and turns the holiday season into a festive occasion.

For Central Coast distributors or special orders, contact Greenheart Farms by phone or online.



Poinsettias at Greenheart Farms

Mama's Surprise Preserve **(805) 801-3370**

mamaspreserves.com

Nothing goes over better than a gift straight from Mama, so we have selected a jar of Mama's Surprise Preserve, one of 17 flavors handmade in Arroyo Grande.

Mama's Surprise Preserve is a blend of fruit from Mama's berry patch made with only four ingredients—fruit, sugar, lemon and pectin. This simple recipe leaves the fruit to talk for itself and will have your mouth saying "Wow!"

Lori Heal (Mama) and her family have farmed in the Arroyo Grande Valley for 14 years, producing fresh raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, boysenberries and Olallieberries, a Central Coast favorite. During the season, Heal and her boys sell fresh berries and preserves at seven farmers' markets from Santa Barbara to San Luis Obispo. In December, look for Mama's Preserves back at the market just in time for the holidays.

For more information or a sample of preserves, call or go online.

Rotta Winery Dessert Wine **(805) 237-0510**

www.rottawinery.com

To cap off this season's recommendations, try dessert wine from Rotta Winery. Established in 1908, Rotta Winery is the only known winery in the United States to make Black Monukka dessert wine.

Black Monukka raisin grapes are pressed and then aged in oak barrels placed in direct Templeton sunlight, which can reach a scorching 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. The sun caramelizes the sugars, producing an intense flavor that makes this award-winning dessert wine a special treat.

Poured over vanilla ice cream



Mama's Preserves are available at Edna Valley Vineyard gift shop.

and garnished with a fig, or whipped in cream and spooned onto your favorite pie, Black Monukka dessert wine can add fabulous flavor to any dessert. It makes an excellent stocking stuffer for someone special on your list. For more information visit Rotta Winery's website.



Rotta Wines are available at Rotta Winery on Hwy. 46 West.

There you have it, six recommendations for excellent holiday gifts produced here on the Central Coast. And there are hundreds more gifts awaiting your discovery. Most important is that we support Central Coast farmers and ranchers during the holiday season by purchasing locally grown and produced items.

Photos by Steven Knudsen.