

Wrap It Up: RI's Annual Holiday Gift Guide

By Amy Krzanik

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Where we live, you don't have to travel very far to find unique gifts for everyone on your list. Whether it's a thank you for your holiday party's host or hostess, or a package sent to a friend or family member far away, choose from our list of artisanal, homegrown goodies and don't forget to include a card that reads "from the RI region with love."

TO EAT & DRINK:

Oliver Kita Fine Chocolates Named one of the Top 10 Chocolatiers of 2015 by Dessert Professional Magazine, Rhinebeck's 20-year-old eponymous chocolate shop has used flowers, herbs, citrus, exotic fruits, berries, nuts and spices to create its line of organic and fair trade fine chocolates. Perfect for gifting, its 16-piece studio collection (\$40) was created to fulfill requests for a collection of its most popular flavors, but you can also make your own favorites from its selection of bon bons, buttercrunch toffee, hot chocolate, chocolate-dipped mallomars, and chocolate Mah Jongg tiles, buddhas and polar bears.

H.R. Zeppelin Chocolates Stockbridge's own organic and fair trade chocolatier will tempt your palate with inspired taste combinations you didn't know you craved, such as lavender-blueberry milk chocolate, raspberry white chocolate, and cardamom-lemon or sweet basil-lime dark chocolate. They also offer double chocolate truffles made with Berkshire Mountain Distillers corn whiskey and a four-piece box of peanut butter goodness (peanut butter nougat, caramel and peanuts) dipped in milk or dark chocolate and tied with a bow. You can find some of these goodies at Bizalion's and One Mercantile in Great Barrington, and at Six Depot in West Stockbridge. All of them will be available at the Berkshire Grown Holiday Market in Great Barrington on Saturday, Dec. 17.

Taconic Distillery This Stanfordville, NY distillery and tasting room was only officially completed in August of this year, but its Dutchess Private Reserve Straight Bourbon Whiskey already has earned accolades from Hudson Valley Magazine and Maxim. Its handcraft spirits are made in small batches using natural spring water from its 113-acre Rolling Hills Farm. Along with the Private Reserve, current offerings include three other whiskeys and a rum, as well as two versions of maple syrup (two 12.7 oz. bottles for \$40).



Hopkins Vineyard In 1979, Bill and Judith Hopkins transformed their New Preston, Conn. dairy farm into a vineyard and have been known for award-winning whites, reds and sparkling wines ever since. Hopkins Vineyard isn't a vineyard only in name — the location grows 11 varieties of grapes on land overlooking Lake Waramaug. Not only that, but its tasting room offers live late-night music, wine bottle painting parties and more.

363 Days of Tea Local author and artist Ruby Silvius has collaborated with Hudson, NY tea shop Verdigris to offer limited edition tea tins based on her new coffee table art book, 363 Days of Tea: A Visual Journal on Used Teabags. Her book (\$26.95) can be purchased at the shop and, gifted together with a tea-filled tin, the two serve as a daily reminder that inspirational art can truly be found everywhere.

Hillhome Products In 2009, David L. Davis began making jars of marmalade for his own use and to give to friends. The response was so positive that he began selling at farmers' markets around his Norfolk, Conn. home. Now you can purchase all of the marmalades, preserves, jams, chutneys, relishes, hot sauces, caramel and fudge sauces, pickles and dressings that David produces, "puts up" and markets by himself. He also offers private labeling, so you can make your holiday gift that much more personal. But as he warns on his website, be careful because "all products tend to be addictive!"

Bluecashew Kitchen Pharmacy Surprise your party host this season with a decadent gift from Rhinebeck's bluecashew, now offering white (\$100 – \$1,300) or burgundy (\$27.50+) Italian truffles and a selection of wild or farmed caviar (call for prices). In addition, your hors d'oeuvres table will be the talk of the town when you serve up La Madia White Truffle Acacia Honey (\$15), which the store suggests you drizzle over chunks of Parmesan cheese.

TO OWN:

Bottega Organica This Hudson shop is the brainchild of Dr. Andrea Alimonti, a world-renowned geneticist, whose products are based on patented scientific research into the most effective anti-aging plants. All ingredients come from farms in Italy and upstate NY, are made without preservatives or artificial fragrances, colors or synthetics, and each is hand-made in small batches. The line includes creams (\$85-\$165), balms for lips, face and body (\$36-\$125) and hydrating hair and skin mists (\$38-\$68).



Hawkins NY Based in Hudson, but known by chic people everywhere, Hawkins NY is famous for its furniture and its collaborations with other designers. The store offers highly curated wares including bedding, rugs, throws and tableware, but we've got our eye on their thick Amoeba wooden cutting boards (\$68), and Shapes Rugs which are a collaboration between Hawkins and Austin-based designer Alyson Fox (\$75-\$1,000 depending on size).

Source Adage Founded by creative directors Christopher Draghi and Robert Dobay, the Hudson, NY based fragrance brand and flagship store are dramatically dark (the shop, black; the product line, black) but the scents are inspired by nature. All fragrances, which are named after great American landscapes, are available as candles (\$95), reed diffusers (\$115) and room sprays (\$60). Most recently, the brand launched two parfums for humans (\$160) so you can smell good wherever you go, and a collaboration with local gallery The Gilded Owl — the limited edition candle, "Leonor", smells of cedar wood, musk and dark incense with dusty rose and wild lavender and is inspired by artist Leonor Fini (\$95).

Amrita Lash Pottery Not only does Williamstown resident Amrita Lash make beautiful music with her band Long Journey, she creates beautiful pottery, too. Her vibrant work, which is food, microwave and dishwasher safe, includes plates, bowls, mugs, salt cellars, tumblers, yarn bowls, spoons and other items. They can be found on her Etsy page or you can catch her at the annual holiday shindy at Shire City Sanctuary this weekend or at the Pottery Sale in Williamstown on Thursday, Dec. 15.

TreacleanWolf A perfect gift for the friend or family member who loves to entertain, Great Barrington's TreacleanWolf aprons are handmade with retro-inspired prints and designed with deep pockets to make sure you have enough room for a "plethora of paper umbrellas and a surfeit of swizzle sticks." Half aprons are \$24, and full are \$36.

Floating Girl Artist, children's book author and educator Valorie Fisher lives in Cornwall, Conn. with her husband, children, two cats, many mice and even more trees. Her collaged art cards (\$4 each or 6 for \$18), on sale at her Etsy shop "Floating Girl", are a witty way to send a smile across the miles.

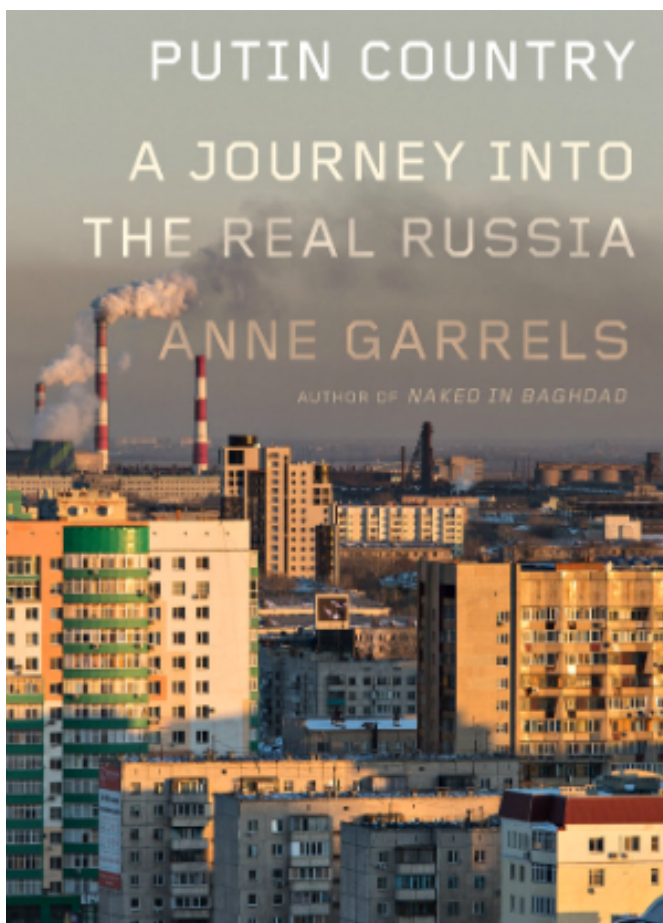
TO READ:

Fresh Fish by *Jennifer Trainer Thompson* Hancock Shaker Village's new CEO is also a published author, and her latest is a "fearless guide to grilling, shucking, searing, poaching, and roasting seafood." Put out by North Adams, Massachusetts-based Storey Publishing, the book offers simple step-by-step instructions on how to buy and cook everything from whole fish to shrimp, mussels, calamari and more.

Pacific by *Simon Winchester* The bestselling author and Berkshire County resident tackles the history of an entire ocean in his latest book. From Silicon Valley to China, and from Magellan's 16th-century discoveries to the future of the world, this memoir of the Pacific covers it all.

Mr. Splitfoot by *Samantha Hunt* Hunt's latest novel (her third), described as a "contemporary gothic," has garnered acclaim from Vanity Fair, The New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. Set in Upstate, NY, this is a "subversive ghost story that is carefully plotted and elegantly constructed."

Putin Country: A Journey into the Real Russia by *Anne Garrels* For more than three decades, Garrels reported from some of the most dangerous places on earth as a correspondent for ABC and NPR. Called "a quiet masterwork" by Bookforum, the Litchfield County resident's newest is based on her years reporting from Central Russia and helps explain Putin's appeal to his country's people.



Fire + Ice: Classic Nordic Cooking by *Darra Goldstein* For those not familiar with Scandinavian home cooking (I'm guessing that's a lot of people), this James Beard-nominated cookbook offers more than 100 recipes that showcase the region's sweet and savory dishes. Along with how to make smoked arctic char, savory puffed pancakes and cardamom braids, the book contains Goldstein's illuminating essays on the countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.