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Holiday foodie guide

Nine very special places in Ulster County



Treats from Lagusta's Luscious.

Story and photos by Jason Bover

GROWING UP IN the Hudson Valley, the holidays have a certain feeling for me that I haven't found in other regions of the country. The changing color of the leaves and the cold crisp air filling your lungs. A beautiful coating of white powder and a hot cup of cocoa on a peaceful morning.

I would go down to New York City. For me the holidays there meant a ride down to Arthur Avenue or to Manhattan to collect the goodies for special days.

Christmas in my house was a spread of bites from Zabbar's and meats and cheeses from Teitle Brothers. Though we weren't Jewish, there was plenty of white fish salad, lox and chicken livers to go around.

Now, in the Hudson Valley, I'm always looking for items with an over-the-top *je ne sais quoi* about them, something out of the norm which takes my guests – and would take yours – by surprise. I've found plenty to choose from. I've compiled a list of dishes and food in nine of my favorite foodie places that will grace my table this holiday season. You will find them as intriguing as I do!

Little Rye Bakehouse

588 Broadway, Kingston
<https://www.littlerye.com/>



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Can't decide on what dessert to bring to the family gathering? Why not bring all the desserts? Frankenpie is made of eight different slices. There will be something for everyone. How does one slice of salted maple, cranberry almond chess, maple pumpkin, dark chocolate caramel, browned butter pecan, and huckleberry apple custard crumble in an all-butter crust sound? You will surely be the talk of the party when you show up with this dessert.

Little Rye Bakehouse started in 2021 as a solo project selling only at a few farmers' markets around the Hudson Valley. Opening their small brick-and-mortar bakery in Kingston made them the little rye on the block (that's intended as a wry pun). Everything Little Rye Bakehouse bakes is hand-rolled, carefully crafted with local ingredients, and made from scratch in small batches.

For bonus points on Christmas morning, pick up a half-dozen of their extremely light and flaky morning buns. You won't be disappointed.

Helena Specialty Pierogies

5754 Route 209
Kerhonkson
845-626-2958

Thanksgiving Pierogies

Pierogies are a staple of Polish Christmas Eve dinner and are often the favorite dish of the twelve courses served.

Never heard of pierogies? They're unleavened dumplings that are filled, boiled, or fried and then served with butter or sour cream. They can be made with a variety of fillings, such as sauerkraut, cheese or potato.



Pierogies are also a special part of other Eastern European cultural celebrations and family gatherings. Often made at home by the whole family, these delightfully pillowy dumplings are a staple of my household, so when I got news of a Thanksgiving variety I instantly made the drive out to Kerhonkson.

Filled to the brim with turkey, stuffing, cranberry, corn and mashed potatoes, these pierogies are a sure hit, tasting like doughy turkey-pot-pie dumplings. You can even taste the crust on top.

Helena's Specialty Pierogies is run by Anna Samko and her daughter Alena. It turns out that Helena's is named for Anna's mother-in-law. For the holidays, Alena makes a caramel apple pie variety that I suggest you serve with ice cream.

These are not the kind of pierogies found frozen in the grocery store. If you were raised in an Ukrainian or Polish household and remember the pierogies your grandma made, though, these are those.

Half Moon Rondout Café

83 Broadway
Kingston
845-481-5419

Chocolate Babka

Chocolate babka was a staple on my childhood Christmas mornings. My father would pick up a loaf of Green's from Zabar's and often would use the chocolate babka to make French toast (It is life-changing, try it yourself). Green's is hard to find in the Hudson Valley, so the next best thing (maybe better) is the babka from Half Moon Rondout Cafe.



Co-owner J.T. Pinna was a student at the Pushkin Institute in Moscow studying Russian language culture and – apparently -- baked goods. Half Moon Rondout Cafe offers the best chocolate babka you have ever laid your lips on. They also fry hot made-to-order doughnuts.

Once you meet owners Kaira Tiegen and J.T. Pinna, you'll quickly realize why their cafe has won many awards for their baked goods and coffee.

The babka is prepared with as much love as chocolate. The crunchy, flaky outside crust gives way to a moist inside, where you are immediately hit with dark chocolate. Babka is traditionally and best eaten at breakfast with a cup of coffee.

And don't miss out on the hot made-to-order doughnuts while you are picking up your chocolate or cinnamon babka. You can find these loaves at their cafe on

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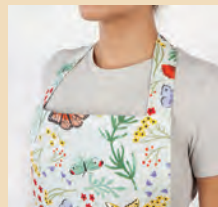
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Hand-dipped and genuinely delicious since 1929, Krause's Chocolates has been voted the Hudson Valley's best chocolate and candy store for many years. Using family recipes that have stood the test of time and traditional techniques that create unique confections, Krause's has been tempering our taste buds for over four generations. It has stores in Saugerties, Rhinebeck and New Paltz.

Every year, it is a must, filling our stockings with chocolate-dipped marshmallows and almond bark. The marshmallows come in gingerbread, snowman, reindeer, Christmas trees or Santa varieties. It wouldn't be a Christmas morning without seeing cute little heads peeking out of all the stockings.

For the more sophisticated chocolate consumers in our family, the almond bark and chocolate peanut-butter cups are a tradition of more than three decades.

You'll be able to find all your holiday confectionary needs at Krause's. If you



Provisions' matzo ball soup

have been naughty this year, Krause's has you covered. You can load up that stocking with some chocolate coal.

Terri's Market & Deli

56 Emerson Street
Kingston
845-338-5152

Thanksgiving Sandwich

Terri's, nestled in the middle of a residential neighborhood, has been a Kingston institution for many generations. Mostly known for its house-made roast-beef special with horseradish sauce, it offers a full-service deli counter.

You can find a supply of pantry items, soups, fresh salads, rotating hot entrees, beverages, and pastries if you need them

in a pinch. You can get your Thanksgiving leftover fix any day of the week.

Indulging in the glorious day-old turkey and gravy is half the reason we make the feast every year anyway, right? Terri's makes a Thanksgiving sub which combines house-made turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and cranberry mayo on a Deising's seeded roll. Always add bacon and cheese to take your feast to the next level, teleporting you right back to grabbing the leftovers out of the fridge and taking an afternoon nap on the couch.

Lagusta's Luscious

25 North Front Street
New Paltz
845-633-8615



Chocolate Bark

Did you ever think you could eat art? The beauty of Lagusta Yearwood's chocolates goes without saying. But how does it taste? Located on North Front Street in New Paltz, this little gem of an establishment serves handmade vegan chocolates in ways which you wouldn't think possible. One of my Halloween

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favorites is the full-sized anatomically correct chocolate skull.

Lagusta's bark, which comes in seasonal flavors and patterns, is sure to be a well-received gift idea. Freeze-dried

fruits and flowers adorn the bars with artistic expression. They're so beautiful they could be displayed instead of eaten.

This pick is my best emergency-gift idea. Just buy one -- and try to keep your

own hands off it.

Lagusta's also offers a selection of organic free-trade gourmet caramels, bars and truffles. This cute little chocolate shop is a great spot to grab a coffee and

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The Meltaway Bakery

3189 Route 9W
Saugerties
845-247-3944



Meltaway

The specialty of the house! A delicious combination of cinnamon, icing and crumbs make their namesake coffee cake a must-try. Meltaways is legendary in Saugerties. Just ask your grandmother

about it, and I'm sure you'll hear about the pastry cases of Lachmann's.

When the German baker decided to retire after 60 years, he passed the torch to his employee, Drew Piniero. Hearing the call from the community, Drew brought back a bunch of Lachmann recipes – to much acclaim. A Meltaway always has a place at my table during the holidays. It will blow your taste buds off. A danish as big as a hubcap is great for sharing any day of the year.

Their cases are loaded with eclairs, cookies, cupcakes and danishes. I always grab a six-pack of butter buns for a less sweet treat, so I have something a little more healthy after the meltaway is gone.

Provisions Takeout & Catering

4125 Route 28
Boiceville
<https://provisionswoodstock.com>
845-546-3354

Hanukkah Nosh

I did grow up loving all types of food. Hanging around in New York City, one might not realize how many of the most iconic New York staples have their roots in Jewish tradition. The mid-Hudson Valley, alas, is for the most part a Jewish deli desert. To get your fix often, you have to travel south to Rockland or Sullivan counties.

So when you find a good connection in Ulster, you've got to keep going back.

Provisions started as a 400-square-foot shop on Tinker Street in Woodstock, providing hungry locals and tourists with over-the-top-delicious sandwiches.

Every ingredient was made in-house from their house-cured smoked pastrami to their fresh-baked focaccia bread on which their sandwiches were served. The attention to detail, from breaking down whole animals in-house to making their own mozzarella daily, was mind-blowing. Childhood friends Emily Sherry (former COO of Fleisher's Meats) and Anthony Heaney (formerly of Bread Alone) made a team that certainly knew their way around a sandwich.



When Hanukkah rolls around, I put my trust in Emily and Anthony to make sure i'm loaded up with all the traditional dishes. Trays of brisket and kugel fill my kitchen counters, and quarts of matzo-ball soup sit in my fridge. There won't be a plate without a latke or scoop of kasha varnishkes over the twelve days this year. I might not be Jewish, but I certainly never said no to a whitefish salad.

Since Covid, Provisions has focused on its catering business, with a weekly rotating menu of items by the tray for takeaway. Provisions offers catering all year and is open for in-person dining. The Hanukkah dishes are all riffs on



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Emily's grandmother's recipes, except for the latkes, which are 100 percent like Anthony's bubbe made.

Smoke House of the Catskills

724 Route 212
Saugerties
845-246-8767
Wursts and Leberkäse

As a child, I grew up literally walking

to the Veteran Pork Store. The Austrian Smokehouse operated for five decades before brothers Bill and Peter Muellner hung up their aprons.

In 2001, Mike and Heidi Ferraro took over Saugerties' famous Veteran Pork Store and changed its name to the Smoke House of the Catskills. They continued the traditional German butcher shop's recipes and shelves full of European goodies.

As soon as the door opens, the aroma from the cases stacked with cured meats and cheeses hits you. The Smoke House is a hidden gem. For those in the know, it's the go-to for all holiday roasts, hams, turkeys and meats. For me, it's the traditional Austrian leberkäse and a selection of liverwursts that you can't find anywhere else.



Leberkäse literally translates to liver-cheese and is basically a mild German bologna. Traditionally cut thick and served with mustard on a roll, it is a staple of Bavarian culture. Leberkäse is served on almost every street corner in Germany and Austria. I made sure to have my fair share of it while traveling there last summer.

Do yourself a favor and seek out this small family-run business before it changes hands at the end of this year.

You'll be glad you did visit. Make sure to grab a piece of German candy for the little ones when you check out -- and maybe some double-smoked bacon ends.

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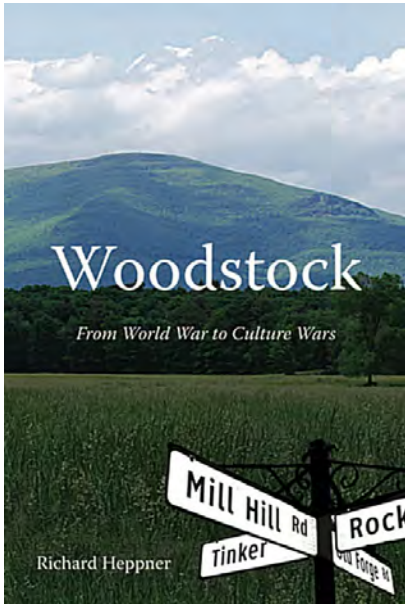
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Get thee behind me, Scrooge

Six inexpensive, meaningful and unique gift ideas for Ulster County giftgivers supporting local businesses

by Zac Shaw

AS THE CRISP Hudson Valley air fills with the scent of pine and the Catskills don a snowy cap, thoughts naturally turn to the holiday season. Yet this year the jingling bells might sound a tad muffled under the weight of an uncertain economy. Fear not, festive friends. Tightening belts doesn't mean we have to tighten our hearts. In fact, there's no better time to embrace the art of giving by finding the cheapest gifts possible. The thought

is what counts, so here are six cheap gift ideas that are thoughtful enough to support local businesses while providing your gift recipient an unforgettable treat.

Catch a flick at a small-town movie theater

A corporate theater gift card for movie tickets is no innovation in thrifty gift-giving. Plus, a small popcorn's gonna be \$12. But a pair of tickets to Tinker Street Cinema is a delight you can't grab on your way through the WalMart self-checkout surveillance cube. This Woodstock main-

stay features mainstream blockbusters and edgy modern flicks alongside vintage cult classics and punk cinema, especially on "Psychotronic Tuesdays,"

Our area boasts a number of movie theaters with small-town charm. Upstate Films in Rhinebeck and its counterpart, the Orpheum Theatre in Saugerties, are hotbeds of screen-borne creativity, showing the most critically acclaimed features alongside mainstream productions, peppered by screenings of classic movies and Q&As with filmmakers. Rosendale Theatre boasts similarly intimate environs



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Give a book that matters

There's a unique joy in gifting a used book from one of Ulster County's many local bookstores. Each tome carries not just a story within its pages, but also a story of your relationship and personal connection with the recipient, reflected in your ability to pick something they would be excited to read. Give a book that matters

Places like The Golden Notebook in Woodstock, Inquiring Minds Bookstore in New Paltz and Saugerties, Barner Books in New Paltz, Half Moon Books and Rough Draft Bar & Books in Kingston, and Postmark Books in Rosendale (to name a few) offer a treasure trove of



Table top games at World's End Comics.

pre-loved books waiting to find a new home.

Selecting a book from these shelves allows you to handpick a narrative that resonates with someone you care about, reflecting your deep understanding of their interests and passions. It's an intimate act that says, "I see you, and I know what moves you," strengthening the bond you share.

Adding a personal inscription inside the cover elevates this gift from thoughtful to truly heartfelt. The simple act of putting pen to paper allows you to express feelings that might be hard to convey in conversation. It transforms the book into a keepsake.

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Slay a dragon

Foundational tabletop role-playing game Dungeons and Dragons celebrates its 50th anniversary this year with a brand-new update a decade in the making. The game has never been quicker to learn. Even if you don't identify as geek, you might find yourself getting swept away in the drama of acting out fantastical adventures, rolling dice to determine outcomes, and overcoming

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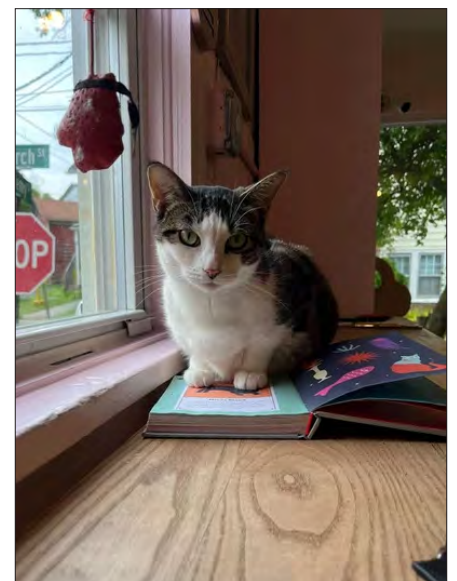
fierce monsters and cunning villains with a table full of friendly faces.

Several area game shops offer free and low-cost D&D sessions where both newbies and veterans are welcome and present. World's End Comics in Kingston and Gunks Gaming Guild in New Paltz offer the most regularly scheduled sessions. Some games are one-shots that last for a few hours. Others are epic campaigns spanning months or years, and some are both intertwined.

If you're curious, search online for videos of people playing the game, and you'll realize anyone can jump in and have fun.

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Scarlett, one of the cats found at Bean's Cat Cafe in New Paltz.



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beyond treating your friend to their favorite beverage. It's an invitation to share a moment together in a community space you both appreciate. It's a simple act that speaks volumes about your appreciation for them and the shared experiences that have deepened your friendship.

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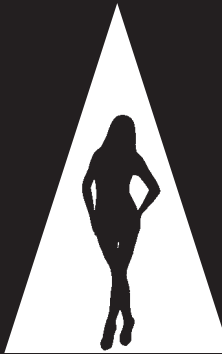
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We've all heard of gifting plants, but why don't we all do it? Think of the myriad benefits. They're inexpensive. They live up any room. Who doesn't like a plant? The gift recipient will be reminded of you every time they see or water that plant you gave them - at least until they forget to water it or give it ample sunlight and it dies. Maybe we should end the metaphor there.

But seriously, a single spider plant acquired from any of the many local nurseries can grow into gifts for the whole extended family. Grab some small plantpots and a little bit of potting soil, pop those offshoots (with roots already forming) into said soil, keeping it moist but not soggy. Within a few weeks you'll have an easy-to-care-for botanical pal to keep your family and friends company 24/7. Plus, the plant is known for its ability to clean air and remove toxins from the environment.

The idea of gifting a plant isn't unique, but propagating spider plants will stretch your budget as far as it can go without obligating your recipients to orchid-level plant maintenance.



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When In doubt, cats

Beans Cat Cafe in New Paltz provides one of the best cheap holiday gifts on the market. It's like offering a warm hug wrapped in fur and purrs. For just \$12.50 or less per person, you can treat someone to 60 minutes of pure feline bliss - lounging with adorable cats in a cozy, inviting atmosphere.

The cafe provides a unique and relaxing experience that any pet lover would cherish, combining the comfort of a local coffee shop with the therapeutic joy of interacting with friendly cats. It's an escape into a world where the stresses of daily life melt away under the gentle kneading of a cat's paws.

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Just buy presents

from the “secondary market” (that means eBay)

by Sparrow

MOST OF US spend three weeks every winter racking our brains for the perfect gift to bestow upon our spouses, uncles, mothers, and certain ambiguous acquaintances during the “holiday season.” But why not take the opposite approach? How about finding an imperfect gift – in fact, an item the recipient will despise?

I know this sounds like a bad idea, but it has several virtues. For one thing, we don’t know for sure what anyone will like. You think you’re giving a reprehensible present, and the person may love it.

.....
It’s a good way to remove annoying people from your life.
.....

Secondly, the item can always be regifted, and regifted again, and yet again, until it

finally – perhaps six years in the future – reaches the correct destination.

Thirdly, it’s a good way to remove annoying people from your life.

Fourthly, a surprising number of recipients will find it funny. Each person is unique; a self-help article can’t tell you everything. Still, you might try this ploy: innocently remark to your friend,



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“You know what I hate? Tuna-fish sandwiches on a roll,” and see if that elicits a torrent of complaints. If so, take careful mental notes.

Of course, certain substances are hated by (almost) everyone, but they cannot be mentioned in a family newspaper – with one exception: unpaid bills. Suppose you owe \$94.26 to Paraco. Simply wrap up the bill and give it as a present. The

person unwrapping the gift will probably be surprised, and infuriated.

Or garbage. Place some of your kitchen trash inside gift wrap, and set it under a friend's Christmas tree. Unless they're an avant-garde artist, they'll be summarily appalled.

Colors can be repellent. Certain nauseating shades of yellow, for example. A perfectly elegant scarf may be invalidated by its vomit-like hue.

Some subcultures are easy to buy lousy gifts for. If your aunt is a Marxist, give her one of those self-help books for businessmen. (Looking at the current list, I'd suggest *Extreme Ownership* by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin.)

Finding a gift that will shock born-again Christians is wonderfully achievable. (Pornography comes immediately to mind.) Conversely, a Christian refrigerator magnet will repel most of your irreligious pals. (Let me open the bible at random and see what I find. Here goes: As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead -- Ezekiel 3:9. Pretty



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(845) 255-1960

weird, huh?)

A gun makes a good antagonistic gift for a pacifist, or anyone with a rational fear of firearms. (Is it legal to give a gun as a gift? Yes, it is, according to Google.)

If your gift-victims are nudists, give them tuxedos. If they're vegans, wrap up a bacon cookbook for them. (I recommend *The Bacon Bible: More Than 200 Recipes for Bacon You Didn't Know You Needed.*)

One virtue of bad gifts is that they are generally cheaper than good ones. Crap-piness costs less than beauty.

The political divisions in our nation make sadistic gift-giving easy. If your friends – like mine – are 99.2 percent liberals, you're in luck! Donald Trump has a vast selection of merchandise for sale. Here is a small sample: a "TR(I)UMP(H)" T-shirt (\$25.89), a leatherette whiskey flask with the number 45 on it (\$32), the Trump deluxe bathrobe (\$205). (I know what you're thinking: it's morally wrong to give money to this incendiary wanna-be-fuhrer. That's okay, just buy presents from the "secondary market" (that means eBay) so that you can enrich some struggling



I stumbled into my career as the Gift Giver From Hell inadvertently. In the mid-'70s I was obsessed with natural foods, and decided to make fruitcakes for my extended family.

North Carolina farmer who realized Trump is a fraud and wants to sell

his keepsakes.)

If your sister hates technology, give her a robot! (I suggest the SANBOT Max Business Service Robot: \$9999.00.)

If your brother hates sports, buy him a football jersey. (Try the New York Jets number 34 (Brian Pool): \$75.99.)

Another controversial area is music. I was recently thinking: "It's wonderful that the Seventies ended, so that I have no more danger of turning on the radio and hearing 'Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head.'" That gives you an idea what sort of gift will nauseate me.

New-Age albums are a good bet. The relentlessly soothing synthesizers – often augmented by chimes, birdsong, and a burbling stream – is so reassuring, it makes you want to kick a dog. (I recommend anything by Laraaji.)

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But be careful; some music is so “square” that it’s “cool.” Muzak of the 1950s is one example – especially if it has a Polynesian theme.

I stumbled into my career as the Gift Giver From Hell inadvertently. In the mid-Seventies I was obsessed with natural foods, and decided to make fruitcakes for my extended family, as Christmas presents. I used the purest ingredients: organic apricots, whole-wheat flour, molasses, imported raisins.

Fruitcakes are famously inedible, but mine reached another level. No ordinary knife could pierce them. They were more suitable as projectiles than as snacks. It’s possible that one or two of them still inhabit freezers somewhere.

One thing I’ve learned: people love eccentric gift wrap. I was about to throw out an atlas five years ago, but decided instead to tear out its pages to wrap presents with. I’m a terrible gift-giver,

but almost everyone becomes fascinated by the terrain of Sumatra (and, on the reverse side, New Zealand) – or whatever page they’ve been given. So

try that as the perfect yin and yang: a terrible gift, wrapped in thought-provoking paper.

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LAUREN THOMAS

Big Gas Dispensary co-owner Kareem Haynesworth makes the very first sale on opening day to Chris Alexander, the executive director of the NYS Office of Cannabis Management.

by Zac Shaw

WITH FIVE ULSTER County recreational marijuana dispensaries now open and several others preparing for their debut, it is easier than ever to impress the cannabis connois-

seur in your life with the gift of green.

The most recent surveys suggest approximately one in five New Yorkers use marijuana at least occasionally. If you know one or more of these people, you're in luck. With the guide below on how, where and what to buy, you can quickly check their name off your gift list with

great confidence that you have chosen something all but guaranteed to bring a wide smile to its recipient.

Who knows what creativity will be unleashed by your thoughtful gift? What pains and aches might be ameliorated? What bad vibes will you make chill? What ridiculous jokes will be told? What even

more ridiculous takeout munchie orders will ensue?

If you weren't jazzed enough to give such a great gift, consider that your purchase is likely to support a local business. Not only are most of the dispensaries locally owned and operated, but much of the product comes from growers in the Hudson Valley.

Before you're familiarized with our area dispensaries and the panoply of products they offer, please exercise common sense when giving weed as a gift. Avoid giving marijuana to people suffering from serious mental-health issues or those with a history of substance abuse. Don't give it as a gift to someone who doesn't use it. If grandma has never eaten a weed edible, this is not the time to spring it on her.

Unless you want to spend Christmas behind bars, don't give it to anyone under 21, which is the legal age of possession in New York (and in every other U.S. state where recreational cannabis is legal).

Okay, the fine print is over. Let's go shopping.

How to buy

If you've never purchased recreational cannabis, you might be surprised that it's incredibly easy. When you visit any dispensary, you'll be asked at the door for your ID to prove you're 21 or older. When you enter, you'll see some products laid out to look at, a checkout counter, and often a few "budtenders" happy to talk shop and give recommendations.

The goodies are stored in a highly secure room behind the counter. Once you place your order, they are quickly ushered out to you. Also, note that most

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Peter Hujar, Susan Sonntag, 1975, gift of Marcus Pfeifer

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local dispensaries have websites where you can browse products and pre-order for store pickup.

Wherever you go, cash is king.

While cannabis is legal at the state level, it remains woefully classified as a Schedule I controlled substance under federal law. This puts recreational dispensaries in a pickle, as banks don't generally want to mess with processing Schedule I controlled substance sales. You'll find ATMs at dispensaries for this reason - they aren't in a position to scan your credit card or accept your Apple Pay. Debit cards are commonly accepted, and where there are exceptions there are cash machines.

Where to buy

Etain

445 Route 28
Town of Ulster
etain.com



Catskill Mountain High.

Established as the first medical dispensary in Ulster County back in 2016, Etain has been servicing medical marijuana patients since shortly after it became legal to do so in New York State. Built by an all-woman team of pioneers, the company was sold in March 2022 to an investment firm. Of all the dispensaries in the area, it feels like the most professional and polished, sort of like what you'd expect Target to be like if it only sold weed.

Menus are easily browseable on tablets. The atmosphere is relaxed, and as with most dispensaries the staff is eager to help you find the product that's right for your gift recipient. This is a great choice if you're new to recreational marijuana, as Etain's medical marijuana background means it carefully trains its staff to truly care about giving their customers the best experience.

Big Gas
98 North Chestnut Street
New Paltz
biggasdispensary.com

What once was a Stewart's with a gas station is now Big Gas, with the honor of being the first recreational dispensary in Ulster County. You can't miss the gas price sign out front, permanently fixed at \$4.20. It was the 100th legal dispensary to open in New York, which seemed like 99 too many for the thousands of customers who came through New Paltz's temporary cannabis farmers' market

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during post-legalization, pre-dispensary purgatory.

Big Gas has a kaleidoscopically wide selection and friendly, knowledgeable and laid-back staff. They're currently working behind the scenes on a delivery option. The vibe is classic dispensary – clean and professional, yet chill and casual.

Catskill Mountain High
308 Plaza Road
Kingston
catskillmtnhigh.com

This Kingston Plaza dispensary (strategically situated near Plaza Pizza) first opened under the same kind of farmers'-market exemption as the New Paltz market, but then closed for a few months for renovations. In October 2024, it reopened as an official recreational dis-



pensary after a painfully complicated approval process.

Catskill Mountain High is as close to a mom-and-pop pot shop as one can imagine. Its product offerings focus on local growers. The staff is incredibly inviting, knowledgeable and personable as well as ebullient. Nobody here feels like they would call themselves a “budtender.” Instead, there is a sense of community and camaraderie inside, with customers and retailers alike celebrating the same wonderful plant.

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On the way from Kingston to Rosendale you'll find Royal Blend Dispensary. Founded by Jamaican immigrants, the road to opening the dispensary was byzantine, with significant legal, regulatory and financial battles won on the way.

For lovers of bud, it was all worth it, as the convenient location, generous selection and competitive prices have been noticed by many local customers who call Royal Blend their go-to dispensary. Its selection is a bit different than the others in the county. It's still sourced in New York, but you'll find some brands not carried by the others. What truly makes this dispensary royal? It currently offers home delivery to local customers.



Royal Blend Dispensary

Back Home Dispensary
3056 Route 213
Stone Ridge
backhomedispensary.com

If you're all about local business, head to Back Home Dispensary. This shop stands apart from the others in that it doesn't carry the larger cannabis brands, opting instead to grow its own and work on a personal basis with other local growers to fill their product line.

With great friends in high places, Back Home takes extra care to get the best and freshest product to its local customers. Think farm-to-table, but farm-to-bong. These close relationships with no middleman means the product is priced extremely competitively while ensuring top quality. Don't worry that you're going

to walk in to see a few mason jars on the counter – this is a real-deal dispensary offering the full array of smokables and edibles.

What to buy

Know your recipient. As Jimi Hendrix would ask, "Are you experienced?" Or is this person easily prone to Brewer & Shipley's "One Toke Over the Line"?

Folks enjoy recreational marijuana in many different ways – smoking and vaping are the most common, but the ingestion method is also reaching peak popularity thanks to the revolution in delicious edibles and drinks. Knowing what your recipient prefers will help steer you toward the right product.

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Covering every product option would take up the rest of this magazine, and anyway, that's what the budtenders are for. A few things to keep in mind:

If you're giving weed as a gift, do not buy gray-market weed at a gas station or a sketchy smoke shop. Stick with the dispensaries above.

If they smoke joints, bowls or bong, they'll always be happy with flower. "Flower" is the industry term for the dried, cured, smokable bud of the female cannabis plant. Regular people call this "weed" or "pot." This is what Cheech & Chong were talking about. Pre-rolled joints are another great gift option, as they're portable, convenient and shareable.

You don't need to be a cannabis expert or even a cannabis user to buy cannabis confidently. The budtenders will do all the work. Don't worry about 'Indica,' 'Hybrid' or 'Sativa' nomenclature - the industry is slowly moving away from these terms as they're not particularly accurate scientifically.

Instead, don't be afraid to buy a product with a fun name or cool branding you think your recipient will appreciate. Yes, there can be differences between products, but the cannabis lover will rarely be disappointed by a particular strain. If you're unsure and willing to spoil the surprise, ask them what they like most. They will probably forget about the conversation before Christmas.

If they're a regular cannabis user, fancy edibles are much appreciated. Be on the lookout locally for Lagusta's Luscious THC-infused chocolates and candies, which are as mouth-watering as they are uplifting. Seltzers are also becoming quite popular, and edible gummies are a perennial favorite. Edibles can have a different, more intense and long-lasting effect than smokeables, and are better gifts for experienced users.



52nd Annual
Holiday Craft Fair
Weekend after Thanksgiving
11/30 & 12/1
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Made in Kingston.

Hudson Valley's best holiday markets

THE HOLIDAY SEASON is upon us and it's that time of year to buy that special something for the loved ones in your life. Shopping local is the best way to do exactly

that. There are several holiday markets in the area, big and small, that are the perfect shopping destinations this season.

Shopping local across the Hudson Valley offers more than just unique gifts - it's

a way to support our community and celebrate the region's rich creativity and tradition. The region is home to countless small businesses brimming with hand-made goods, sustainable products, and one-of-a-kind treasures. To make things even easier, these markets are putting highlights from the very best under one roof. By choosing to shop local, you're not only finding thoughtful gifts but also helping local entrepreneurs thrive, keeping the spirit of our community strong.

Here is your go-to guide on Hudson Valley's best holiday markets.

52nd Annual Craft Fair

Nov. 30 & Dec. 1
Dutchess Community College, Poughkeepsie

Quail Hollow Events is again partnering with the Dutchess Community College Foundation to continue the more than a decades-long tradition of the Dutchess Community College Holiday Craft Fair. This event offers Hudson Valley locals and visitors the opportunity to shop small. Boasting just over 100 artists,

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the fair has become a holiday shopping tradition for many in the region, and one that stands in stark opposition to the Black Friday culture propagated by Big Box Stores. Now entering its 52nd year, the fair presents an alternative to the frenzied buying experience that Black Friday consumers experience. This is not a festival for imported or mass-produced products; everything onsite is handmade, with the artist or maker in attendance. Find holiday favorites, like fresh, locally sourced wreaths, delicate holiday ornaments, and tasty treats, but these seasonal staples are part of a broader sea of handcrafted pieces. Rows of carefully curated booths will display something for every taste – and for everyone on your gift list!

Artisans Handmade Holiday Market

Nov. 29 4 to 9 p.m., Nov. 30 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Old Dutch Church, Kingston

This 5th annual holiday market will kick off the holiday season on Black Friday. Hosted by Circle Creative Collective, the market is an opportunity for artists and makers to connect themselves, while shoppers hear personal stories about creative processes. There will be up to 40 vendors and admission is free. This year they will have a craft area where visitors can create their own lino-printed holiday cards and gift tags. There will be chestnuts roasting, hot cocoa, cookies and of course, holiday music to kick off the season.

“What I feel really makes this market stand out is that it's a warm and welcoming holiday experience,” said Melissa Hewitt, executive director of Circle Creative Collective. “We've cultivated a community-driven experience where artists, makers, and shoppers come together to celebrate creativity and connection.”

Made in Kingston

Dec. 5, 3-8 pm
YMCA, Mid-town Kingston

70+ vendors of exquisite artists, crafters and vendors who are creating their goods right in Kingston. Delicious food & drink from Kingston eateries, bakeries and breweries. Free admission.

“Made in Kingston is a fantastic event that brings together neighbors, showcases our talented local artisans, and offers attendees a wide variety of goods

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Led by guest conductor William Stevens, our holiday concert “Home for the Holidays,” will have local choruses joining in for “I’ll Be Home for Christmas,” songs from *Home Alone*, and “Sleigh Ride.” The program will also include music from *The Polar Express* and festive Christmas and Hanukkah medleys.

“Home for the Holidays”
Saturday, December 7, 2024
4:00 p.m., Franklin D. Roosevelt High School, Staatsburg, NY

**Family package available.
\$40 for one adult and two children.**

Learn more and buy tickets at www.ndsorchestra.org



Our concert season is made possible, in part, through funding from the County of Dutchess and Dutchess Tourism, which is administered by Arts Mid-Hudson and by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.





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made right here in our city,” said Mayor Steve Noble. “From the food, drinks and wares to the commitment to sustainability, this community event highlights just how unique and special the people and businesses of Kingston are.” Every year Made in Kingston continues to grow and show more talent than it did the previous year so shoppers are sure to find special one of kind items that will make this shopping season a success!



RUBI ROSE

Made In Kingston.

Peace, Love & Lights

Nov. 29 - Dec. 29
Bethel Woods Center for the Arts,
Bethel

From Black Friday through New Year’s Eve, guests can enjoy the beauty of a 1.7-mile light show as it illuminates the scenic grounds of Bethel Woods Center for the Arts. It will take holiday shopping up a notch, creating a day full of family fun. Weekends feature a Saturday Holiday market with seasonal food and drinks, plus special visits from Santa. On December 7, 14, and 21, visitors can shop from 80 local artisans with unique holiday gifts. Each Saturday will feature an entirely new selection of vendors.

“We look forward to the Bethel Woods Holiday Market every year for several



Holiday Gift Market at Bethel Woods.

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reasons,” said Patrick Miller, Bethel Woods Operations and Events Manager. “Not only is it our largest vendor market on the upper campus, it brings business to local makers and artisans on a weekend that is largely dominated by big box stores, and it serves as the kick-off to Peace, Love & Lights, our holiday light show.”

Its 2024 footprint has been expanded to allow more vendors to participate than ever. There will be live music throughout the weekend, light displays and photo ops at the Market Sheds, and of course, plenty of shopping.

HSW Holiday Market Fair

Dec. 6, 7, 8, 14, 15

Historical Society of Woodstock, Woodstock

Shop local crafts, holiday cards, local books, original artwork, delectable treats, handknit items and more. The Historical Society Bakers are busy at work preparing for their ever-popular cookie tins. They are also bringing back the Woodstock cookbook, *The Cookie Collection*. This updated edition is dedicated in memory of longtime Society Board members, Kathy Anderson and Jean White. As always, delicious, spiced cider, treats and fresh holly and greens are holiday gifts to all shoppers. Shop for the coming days, while enjoying an old-fashioned themed holiday event.

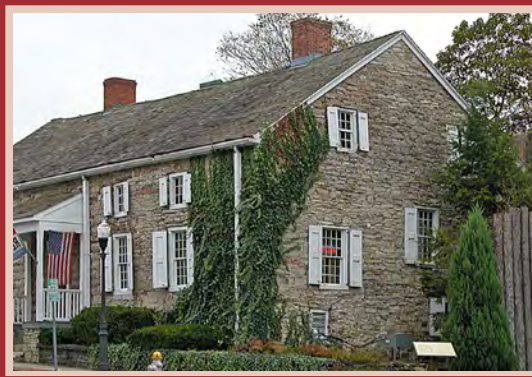
Dutchess Handmade Holiday Pop-Up Shop

Nov. 8 - Dec. 14 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Arts Mid-Hudson, Poughkeepsie

Head to this holiday market for an inspiring selection curated to the spirit of Fall, Winter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, and other season festivities. It's a an opportunity to discover one-of-a-kind gifts and support over 65 local artisans who are selling everything from glass, jewelry and ceramics to greeting cards, textiles, prints and paintings.

“This year, we're excited to showcase an even wider variety of offerings, including new artisans and fresh designs that reflect the season's spirit,” said Adrian Torres-Trinidad, programs coordinator. “I look forward to the pop-up show because it celebrates creativity and community, bringing people together to support local artists and discover truly special items.”



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This show and sale features more than 30 regional ceramic artists, along with jewelers and other artisans. Pottery ranges from the whimsical to the highly sophisticated and includes sculptural works as well as some items for children.

As people are becoming more focused on supporting locally made products the sale is becoming more and more popular. And as a bonus to Art Center members, the center offers a members-only preview. Proceeds from the sale benefit the artists and the Art Center's education programming.

Farm and Flea Holiday Market 2024

Nov. 29 - Dec. 1 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Basilica Hudson, Hudson

This holiday market was born on Thanksgiving weekend 2013 as "an antidote to big box Black Friday," and has

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been thriving ever since. It's a timeless flea and farmer's market with a diverse group of regional vendors. With over 10,000 square feet of space, this market is one of the only in the region at this scale. It's an integral part of Basilica Hudson's arts and cultural programs.

"Our mission at Farm & Flea has always been to serve and celebrate our community of entrepreneurs while offering locals an ethical alternative to big-box retailers and online shopping," said Basilica Farm & Flea coordinator and Hudson Valley artist Elise McMahon.

It's one of Basilica Hudson's largest events, welcoming thousands of attendees throughout the weekend.

Hudson Valley Art Market

Nov. 29 - Dec. 1

Locust Grove, Poughkeepsie

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, this market will celebrate art, craftsmanship and community with both visitors and locals alike. As in previous years, it's committed to showcasing the finest in handmade, small-batch and fine art products. Canvas & Clothier will provide coffee, tea, cookies and food, as you shop amongst the several local vendors on site.

"We're excited to celebrate a decade of supporting local artisans and bringing the community together," said Erica Woolley of Earth Energies with E and Lany Leclair of Indigo Lane Jewelry, organizers of HVArtMarket. "This year's market promises something special for everyone, and we're thrilled to welcome our new artisans into our magical market."



Above, menorah-making at Mountain Laurel's gift-making winter fair; below, a painting by Jean White at the Christmas market at Woodstock Historical Society.



33rd Annual Craft, Art & Design Fair

Dec. 7 & 8

Unison, New Paltz

Unison's longest-running annual event, celebrating the region's vibrant community of makers while raising essential funds for the art center. Described as, "an intimate holiday shopping experience, where visitors can browse and purchase extraordinary handmade crafts and fine arts. It's a unique opportunity to connect with and support local artists from the Hudson Valley."

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