

New York
RESIDENT

FOODIE GIFTS

November 14, 2007-Dining

Here are items for the food-lover in your life that might bring a smile to their lip. —Sylvie Bigar



Pick a jar or two of griottines [1], sweet Morello cherries distilled in kirsch and other liquors, just in from France. Delicious in a chocolate fondue, mixed with gourmet yogurt for a creative dessert, or served as an accompaniment to the best foie gras, the griottines make for a sophisticated choice. They are available in small or large glass jars at either \$12 or \$24. Visit Trois Crepes Patisserie, on East 75th Street, or 3crepes.com.

Eli's on Third Avenue is the only store in Manhattan that carries the new **flash-frozen foie gras from Rougié [2]**, the French company based in Périgord and dating from 1875. You can decide to thaw the precious meat or not and then just sear each side for a few minutes. Numerous top New York restaurants are already using this luxurious commodity. Now is the time to cook it at home and impress those holiday guests. A truly gorgeous appetizer at \$47 for four slices. elizabar.com.

There really is no competition for the best caviar in town. Head to Petrossian on Seventh Avenue and ponder how to decide between the array of dazzling black pearls. This time you can have it all or give it all, if you buy **Six Months of Caviar [3]**. For \$1,695 (plus \$185 shipping) your giftee will receive bi-monthly tastings of precious caviar and blinis: January/50g. Alverta Caviar, March/50g. Imperial Special Reserve Persicus, May/50g. Royal Transmontanus Caviar, July/50g. Chataluga Prestige, September/50g. Royal Baerii Caviar, October/50g. Royal Ossetra Caviar (50g. = 1-2 servings). Includes a package of six mini-blinis with each delivery of caviar. petrossian.com.

Food from Spain is all the rage but if you cannot get a reservation at El Bulli this year, **grab a copy of the newly translated bible of Spanish cooking "1080 Recipes" [4]** by mother and daughter team Simone and Inés Ortega. With its 1,080 recipes, over 100 specially

commissioned color photographs and more than 200 hand-drawings by celebrated Spanish designer Javier Mariscal, the book is divided into 17 chapters including: appetizers, cold plates, fried dishes/savory tartlets/little turnovers/mousses, sauces, stews/soups, rice/pulses/potatoes/pasta, vegetables/mushrooms/truffles, eggs/savory custards/soufflés, fish/seafood, meat, poultry, game, and desserts. Phaidon Press, \$40.

For cooks who want to hone their skills, **choose a gift certificate from The Institute of Culinary Education [5]** on West 23rd Street for one of 1,500 hands-on courses offered throughout the year. "Techniques of Fine Cooking," a five-hour, five-session course, teaches fundamental skills such as roasting techniques, grilling and mousse-making. Or look at "The Secrets of Asian Greens," "Game for Winter Dining" or "Doughnuts, Beignet & Fritters," in addition to a wide variety of wine classes such as "Glories of Bordeaux" or "The Mysteries of Burgundy." Courses range in price from \$85 to \$115 for a single class, and \$310 to \$575 for multiple-day sessions. Gift certificates are available by calling 888-958-CHEF.

If you are a fan of "restauratrice" extraordinaire Donatella Arpaia, and have been following her from restaurant to restaurant, you can breathe easy. Donna, as she is known to her friends and family, has launched **a delicious line of authentic and delicious tomato sauces [6]** steeped in the rich Apulian tradition. Made from the sweet San Marzano tomatoes grown close to Napoli, the Essential Sauce is completely natural and utterly versatile. The newest addition to the line, Marinara, combines just the right blend of fresh basil and vine-ripe tomatoes with a hint of garlic. Puttanesca is a zesty mix of green and black olives, capers and tomatoes with a touch of anchovy, and Arrabiata is a spicy blend of red peppers and tomatoes with a touch of garlic. The sauces retail for \$8.95 and \$9.95 and can be found at Whole Foods, at Anthos on West 52nd Street, or davidburke & donatella on East 61st Street, or at donatellastyle.com.

For such a sophisticated pasta sauce, you need a refined pasta pot. Alessi, the Italian home design company, has released the **Rolls-Royce of pots, designed by Alain Ducasse and Patrick Jouin [7]**. The pot uses an ancient cooking method invented by olive pickers. In fact, the starches are not discarded with the cooking water but absorbed by the pasta. You start by putting the dry pasta in the pot, sautéing lightly if you wish; then adding the various ingredients of the sauce; then last the water or broth, all at once or gradually,

cooking everything together with the specially designed cover, stirring occasionally. In just a little more time than normally required to boil the pasta according to the classic method, your pasta with sauce is done and served directly at the table on the included gorgeous trivet. A booklet containing recipes developed by Ducasse himself is included. The pot can be purchased at the store on Spring Street for \$238, or at alessi.com.

From the same sunny company that brought us L'Occitane and its luscious body products from Provence comes O&CO, specializing in Mediterranean food offerings. At the stores on Bleecker Street or in the Grand Central Terminal, **three new vinegars [8]** make their mark: Cherry Balsamic Vinegar, Fig Balsamic Vinegar and White Balsamic Vinegar with Oregano. Ripe cherry flavors add a bright, round sweetness and go well with a fall salad or dessert. The luxurious, heady flavor of figs combines well with the Balsamic vinegar, capturing the very essence of the region. Use it in a sauce or reduction, perhaps with a loin of pork or a duck magret. The light-bodied White Balsamic, made with white Trebbiano grapes, comes with natural oregano flavors to add a note of herbal earthiness. It will shine with grilled vegetables or pasta salads. Fig and Cherry cost \$33 each, White Balsamic, \$29; a set of three is \$95, available at oliviersandco.com.