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Made With Love: A Quick Guide to Homemade Gifts

by Taylor Armstrong



A homemade gift is like giving someone a piece of your heart. It shows that someone truly thought about you and spent the time creating something just for you. No matter if you are just starting your homemade gift journey or if you are a pro looking for new ideas, there is something for everyone.

Homemade edible goods are a great starting point. While we all love the traditional cookies and hot chocolate mix, there are a few options that are a bit more unique and just as delicious. A classic **limoncello** only needs four ingredients: lemons, high-proof alcohol (vodka or a grain alcohol), sug-



ar, and water. The extraction takes about two to four weeks and once the alcohol is combined with simple syrup, you have a delicious, fresh batch of limoncello.

Vanilla extract is also made with just a few ingredients: high-proof alcohol (vodka or bourbon work great) and vanilla beans. It takes a while to truly turn to extract, but the wait is certainly worth it. Split each bean so the seeds are visible and let them soak in the bottle for at least six months for the richest flavor.

Herb infused olive oils are simple, but so elegant. Pour your olive oil of choice into a plain glass jar or bottle and add herbs of your choosing. Some of my favorites are rosemary and lemon or garlic and chili. Remember to always use dried herbs, store the completed oil in the fridge, and consume within a few days.



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For the coffee lovers in your life, an **infused syrup** is a great choice. Most syrups are equal parts water and sweetener, plus flavoring of your choice. Lavendar, banana, caramel, cinnamon, vanilla, gingerbread, the options are endless.



For someone with a favorite four legged friend, there are options such as **homemade catnip toys**. This could be made with fabric scraps, if you are already into knitting, or child-size socks. Just stuff the sock with polyfill, a small sprinkle of catnip, and even a bell, and close the end with needle and thread. Simple **dog treats** using oat flour, peanut butter, and sweet potato or pumpkin are easy and delicious for our furry friends. For something a little more fun, you can add bacon and milk.



For those who are already proficient at **knitting or crocheting**, there are lots of options besides the typical scarf or socks. Bowl or mug cozies, bookmarks, or even small bags or wine carriers are a few unique options. As long as you keep the recipient in mind, your gift is sure to be a hit.

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ICE ICE BABY!

by Cynthia Leigh

If you are one of many who enjoy winter temperatures and snow, ice skating may be just your forte. Ice skating in Virginia can be traced back to the 1700s where outdoor enthusiasts enjoyed the fresh open air and the magic of an evening sky. As the love of ice skating grew in popularity, indoor arenas became more desirable, thus prompting the introduction of indoor rinks. No matter what the temperature outside, you can still skate on ice and find a few pop-up outdoor areas during the holiday winter months.



However, for those who want the adrenaline of year-round skating, our local indoor rinks provide access to figure skating, hockey and recreational gliding all year long.

Our first indoor facility is **RICHMOND ICE ZONE** (formerly known as Richmond Ice Forum), located at **636 Johnston Willis Dr., North Chesterfield**. It has been operating for over three decades and offers public skating sessions, figure skating classes, speed skating, and youth or adult ice hockey leagues or clinics. The arena features two regulation-size ice surfaces to accommodate simultaneous practices, lessons, and public sessions.



Their sister rink, **SKATENATION PLUS**, located at **4350 Pouncey Tract Rd., Glen Allen**, offers public skating sessions, figure skating, ice hockey leagues and clinics, skating lessons and group rentals. Visitors can also enjoy a rock-climbing wall. Their full-service pro shop and cafe are sure to please. Whether you are a beginner, a lifelong skater or somewhere in between, you will have a great time.



To help burn more winter energy, head over to our most recent rink, **RICHMOND ICE BOX**, located at **13100 Tredegar Lake Pkwy., Midlothian**. The facility brings a new era of ice sports through community events, recreation and a full range of competitive fun. They have a regulation-size ice rink suitable for hockey, figure skating, public skating, and fun experiences for skaters and players of all ages and skill levels, from



beginners to elite competitors. Skate rentals are available for youths and adults. For your next party or group event, consider their multipurpose/event room.

Whether you want to learn, compete, or just do some recreational ice skating, there are plenty of indoor local facilities offering a convenient environment for winter sports without the harsh outdoor weather. So, fuel your desire to glide across the ice with a cool breeze all year long by visiting one of our local rinks.

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From the Pantry

Cinnamon Orange Hot Chocolate

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INGREDIENTS:

- 4 c. Milk
- ½ c. Sugar
- ½ c. Cocoa Powder
- Pinch of Salt
- ¼ to ½ tsp. Cinnamon

Whipped Cream:

- 2 c. Heavy Whipping Cream
- 1/2 tsp. Orange Extract
- 1/2 c. Sugar
- 1 tsp. Orange Zest
- Cinnamon Stick for Garnish

DIRECTIONS:

Warm and whisk milk, sugar, cocoa powder, salt and cinnamon until it comes to a slow boil. Take off burner and set aside.

Zest the orange and set aside. Mix heavy whipping cream, orange extract and sugar until peaks appear. Pour hot chocolate into mug and add several spoonfuls of whipped cream mixture and top with orange zest.



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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST

The **Whispers of Eden Farm Annual Pumpkin Recycling Drive** will start at the beginning of November and continue through Christmas. They accept all pumpkins/squash that do not have ink or decorations on them and are not moldy. You can drop off at the farm at any time if you have less than 30 items. If you or your neighbors have more than 30, you can call/email and arrange pick-up. (804-598-3163)



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH AND SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH

The **69th Urbanna Oyster Festival** will have plenty of oysters: prepared raw, roasted, fried, grilled and stewed from 50+ food vendors. There will also be Virginia wine tasting and craft beer tasting, art shows, crafts, local boutique shopping, and historical/marine science exhibits. (UrbannaOysterFestival.com)



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH THROUGH SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH

It's kind of a big dill. The **Richmond Pickle Party**, starting at the **First Friday Block Party** on the 6th, will include pickle art, a parade, live music, pickle vendors, and of course, plenty of pickle foods. (RVAMoonMarket.com)



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH @ 7:30 PM

Marine veteran, former banking professional, and current country music sensation **Tony Jackson** will be at the **Perkinson Center**. Get ready to enjoy the arts in style. (PerkinsonCenter.org)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH @ 11 AM - 5 PM

Hops in the Park returns to **Henricus Historical Park**. An outdoor festival showcasing Virginia craft beers, local ciders, and wines, it will also include brewing demonstrations, live music, food trucks, and a crafts market. (HenricusFoundation.org)



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH @ 8:45 AM - 1 PM

Chesterfield Coffee Con will take place at the **Chesterfield County Fairgrounds** and will be featuring product samples, brewing equipment demonstrations, and new and established coffee vendors. (RichmondCoffeeFestival.com)



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH @ 6:30 PM - 9:30 PM

Bourbon, Brisket, and Brushes, a fundraiser supporting the **Perkinson Center**, will include dinner from ZZQ Texas Craft Barbeque, a guided bourbon tasting, a silent auction, and live artist demonstrations. (PerkinsonCenter.org)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST @ 2 PM AND 7 PM

Conflux Dance Theater, Richmond's leading contemporary dance company, performs **Interplay** at the **Perkinson Center**. They are celebrating their 5th anniversary with a performance showing their commitment to bringing exceptional, diverse, and inclusive movement to the stage. (PerkinsonCenter.org)



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