

As we begin this year's holiday season most of us are hesitant to turn our backs on the looming possibility of an international economic recession. A lot of us are planning on spending less and tucking away what we would have spent in years past, for safe keeping. But there is more we can do as consumers to fortify our economic security. What we do spend we can use to boost our local economy, strengthen our community, and support more sustainable markets. In a big way, people are starting to assess the impact their buying habits have on our environment. For those with the will but who lack the way, may I offer some suggestions? What I propose is that this year we shower our loved ones with gifts from local artisans and craftsman, bakers and farmers.

Hit the Market....

You don't have to look hard to find a cornucopia of local crafts and culinary gifts. From artisan breads to canned preserves and pie fillings. Start your search at your local farmers market. Most markets have everything from cheese to paintings and the vendors usually have sustainability at heart. If you're not sure where to find farmers markets near you check out Local Harvest (www.localharvest.org). Also, ask at your local co-op or natural food store, most carry local produce and a variety of organic items from farms in the area.

While at the farmers market ask area farms if they offer CSA memberships. This gift will give long after the snows have gone. CSA stands for community supported agriculture and the idea is you buy a membership at the beginning of the season and share in the harvest, usually from May until October.

Eat, Drink, and Be Merry....

Let's not forget local restaurants and micro-breweries. You can get gift certificates or bring home growlers of the local brew. Ask at liquor stores if they carry local wines or visit your local homebrew store and get someone on your list a

home brewing kit so they can make their own Lager or Ale, Pinot or Riesling.

The Craft of Giving....

Search for local potters for dinner and cook ware. Find a woodworker for furnishings or small items like jewelry boxes. Browse local artists for paintings or sculptures or get creative and become your own artist or craftsmen.

The land of misfits....

Browse for treasures at consignment and thrift stores. All the items in these stores were saved from landfills and need a home for the holidays. Ask kids on your list if they could play any instrument what would it be and buy it used at a pawnshop or a music store. And don't be afraid to haggle, it's half the fun.

Let's take the commercialism out of this holiday season and celebrate the creativity and hard work of our neighbors, of our community. As consumers we have the power to decide where we spend our money and what businesses we want to support. We can use our money to support local small businesses not huge multinational corporations and at the same time do some good for the environment. Just try it out. I think it'll look good on ya.



Happy Holidays

- Adam Steele © 2008

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