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# Gift of surprise

It's gift-giving season, and I'm sure folks who have me on their list are groaning right about now. Jewelry? Not really a collector. Gift card? I lose them! A sweater? Meh. If asked what I want from Santa, I usually smile and say, "I have everything I possibly need." True for most of us, I suspect.

The best gifts are total surprises, of course, something out of the ordinary that the recipient would never dream of buying and may not even know they desire. Or a donation to a favorite cause, requiring no recycling of wrapping paper. Or an experience not yet attempted but dreamed of...

One year, my sister-in-law gave me an expensive pair of shoes. Talk about bold! Who buys shoes for someone else? But I had been borrowing her stylish pairs for years for special occasions, and she gifted me with ones that fit perfectly. I wore them until they literally fell apart. Another year, my mother gave me a photo album of my life, from my babyhood to when I had my own baby. I was so touched by her effort. My list of all-time favorite gifts runs the gamut from fishing waders (launching a new hobby) to a donation toward children's literacy.

Looking for new ideas this year? Start with our Holiday Hot List gift guide on page 13. We searched all over the West to find offerings that will surprise and delight. Not in the mood for buying stuff? Check out the peaceful getaway ideas on page 34 and book a trip for this winter. Still stumped? Bake our mini cakes (page 82) as a sweet gesture, and tuck in a donation to a local food bank in your loved one's name. Share your own gift suggestions with me on our Facebook fan page (see "Get in Touch," at left).

*Katie*

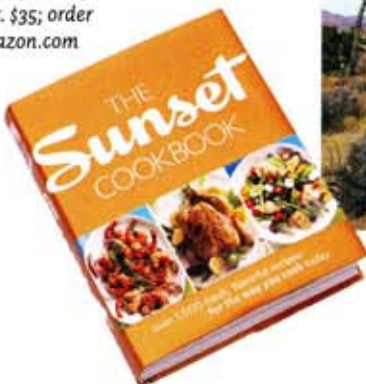
Katie Tamony, Editor-in-chief

## Katie's gift ideas



**FOR EVERYONE** Plant rosemary in a cute pot (Tripod, from \$36; pigeontoeceramics.com). See more combos on page 44.

**FOR MOM** I know what I'm giving the cooks in my family this year. \$35; order from amazon.com



**FOR A FRIEND OR MORE** Run away to the desert together after the holiday chaos. Joshua Tree is on my list. nps.gov/jotr