

Made in Tampa Bay

Cool Gifts IV

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Holiday shoppers who like to think outside the box don't have to look too far to find imaginative presents.

Our annual roundup of cool gifts showcases an eclectic assortment of products that come from the talented hands and creative minds of our neighbors. Read on.



▶ Candy Mountain

You'll be the favorite guest if you bring a hostess the gift of hand-crafted candies made from Macadamia nuts, toffee and dark chocolate ganache. That's just one choice from a dazzling array of chocolates and specially baked goods that Tampa pastry chef Kim Yelvington whips up at her boutique bakery, Chocolate π (www.chocolatapi.com). Her unique combinations of ingredients result in treats ranging from Sticky Toffee Pudding Cake to scented pear brandy truffles in milk chocolate.

For the holidays, Yelvington offers a cake shaped like a gift package, which comes in sizes ranging from bite-size to 10 inches. It also comes in different flavors, including Yelvington's favorite, "the trambuse" — our signature vanilla bean cake with raspberry jam, fresh raspberries and vanilla bean cream."

Candy prices start at \$2.95 for a duet party favor and go up to \$35.50 for a two-pound sampler box. Cake prices start at \$29.95.

Rock On ... It's Magical ▶

The best gifts leave people speechless. And Mark Mason's Zen-like stacks of rocks that balance on each other with no glue, wires or tricks, do just that. Mason added rock balancing to his sand and snow sculpture business because he enjoyed doing it for fun, and it fit perfectly with his passion for art that's here today and gone tomorrow.

Sarasota-based Team Sandtastic (www.teamandtastic.com) offers rock-stacking workshops, classes and team-building exercises for corporate clients, but anyone who appreciates art that is fascinating but fleeting can commission a rock statue (prices start at \$800) or hire Mason to do rock balancing performance art for a private function, which costs \$850.

"You get 150 people at a party and give them rock balancing to talk about and watch, and it blows them away," he says. "I love the ephemeral art of what we do. The more precarious something is, the more WOW factor it has."

▶ Walk on the Wild Side

Impress the animal-loving art aficionado with a gift straight out of Wild Kingdom. Gulfport artist Anne Andersson combines her passion for animals with talents in painting, sculpting and weaving to create stunning, life-size sisal sculptures that have received national acclaim.

After sculpting the plaster shape of the animal, Andersson (www.anneandersson.com) applies finely cut sisal rope mixed with glue to create the facial muscles. Longer strands of sisal fibers go on top, resulting in lifelike creatures whose personalities shine through hand-painted glass eyes. It takes one to four weeks to complete a sculpture, and prices range from \$500 for a lynx head to \$15,000 for a full-body adult lion.

Floridians can see Andersson's Siberian tigers and African lions on display at Busch Gardens, and can purchase her work at Sign of the Dolphin (www.signofthedolphin.com) in Madeira Beach and the Pavo Real Gallery (www.pavorealgallery.com) in Boca Raton.





▶ Bird's Eye View

For sports enthusiasts who want a first-hand record of their experiences, SportsCam Extreme Sports Video System offers the perfect solution. Mike Swain, a Sarasota videographer, developed a lightweight, hands-free camera system that can be attached to a helmet or goggles.

Swain designed his patent-pending system for skydivers to eliminate the weight of traditional helmet-mounted video cameras without sacrificing the photo quality. His system includes a one-inch-square video camera and a camera body pouch that holds your video camcorder. (SportsCam is only compatible with SONY video camcorders.) The lightweight system reduces whiplash effect and minimizes the chance of camera equipment getting

tangled with parachutes. The Helmet system is \$899 and the Goggle-Cam system is \$999.

The system is not limited to skydiving, though, says Swain (www.sportscam.biz). "SportsCam is ideal for anyone who is enthusiastic about their particular sport and wants to document their point of view."



▶ Get Hooked

Surprise the boat owner in your life with a newly patented Hunter Anchor that's sturdy, attractive, easily retrievable and environmentally friendly. Mike Moran, owner of Hunter Anchors in New Port Richey (www.hunteranchors.com), spent seven years designing an anchor that addressed boaters' most common problems. The anchors feature a sliding mechanism that enables them to be removed backwards, reducing damage to the anchor and the sea floor.

"People buy these anchors because they've been hung up or in dangerous situations," says Moran. "They're tired of losing anchors and bending them up."

Moran manufactures the anchors from quality stainless steel and high-tensile strength galvanized steel that is impervious to rust. He takes pride in producing anchors "that shine just like the chrome on a beautiful boat."

Anchor prices range between \$210 and \$2,000-plus, depending on the type and size of boat.



▶ Camaro Cachet

For the serious car collector who has almost everything, how about a one-of-a-kind, completely customized 1969 Baldwin Motion Camaro?

Motion LLC in Sarasota is taking twelve original '69 cars, stripping them to bare metal and performing complete rotisserie transformations and restorations. Clients choose all the features: strength of the power train, exterior color, type of leather interior and other amenities like the brand of stereo system. Final cost of the street-legal vehicles ranges from \$169,000 to \$250,000-plus. The cars have original 1969 Camaro VIN numbers, and are signed by Joel Rosen, founder of Baldwin Motion and an iconic figure in Chevrolet car collecting.

"This is a serious investment in a serious car, and once we've sold all twelve, we're not creating any more," says Larry Jaworske, CEO of Motion LLC (www.officialbaldwinmotion.com). "Each one is unique, and you'll never see another one like it anywhere in the world."

▶ Making the Case

Know someone who's always glued to an iPod? Consider a sleek new case that combines strength, protection and portability with an innovative design. Core Cases of St. Petersburg has developed cases for the nano, shuffle and 5G that are made of 100-percent anodized aircraft-grade aluminum and lined with protective EVA foam. The cases open and close with a unique sliding motion, eliminating the hinge and mail, making the product lighter and less bulky.

"The idea was to follow the design of the iPod—we wanted it to feel good in your hand," says Corey Cathcart, partner in Core Cases. For easy transport, the cases have a removable clip system and an 18-inch neck lanyard. All three models come in a variety of colors; prices range from \$15 for the shuffle case to \$25 for the 5G. The company (www.corecases.com) also offers the option of ordering cases that are personalized with a corporate logo.

