

FORK LIFT



STAFF PHOTO BY MATT STON

WINTER WONDERLAND: Beth Veneto, owner of Ginger Betty's bakery in Quincy, shows off one of her spectacular gingerbread sleighs.

Christmas in the kitchen

Gifts that foodies will savor

By **KERRY J. BYRNE**

Some of us like to think we're easy to shop for each Christmas: If we can eat it, drink it or cook with it, chances are it's a great gift.

Here are 12 last-minute gift ideas — one each for the proverbial 12 days of Christmas — for the food lover in your life or to quickly accent your upcoming holiday parties.

■ Aunt Chick's Merry Christmas Set vintage cookie cutters (\$20) — Tulsa, Okla., homemaker Aunt

Chick's cookie cutters were popular during America's post-World War II boom, before fading out of fashion. They were rediscovered by Gramma's Cutters in 2004. The Merry Christmas Set comes with stuffed stocking, jolly Santa, star and Christmas tree-shaped cutters. (Gramma's Cutters, 888-862-8373, www.grammascutters.com.)

■ Bricco Panetteria's fresh-baked panettone (\$8) — Panettone is the high-rise sweet Italian holiday bread speckled with fruit, usually raisins and candied orange peel. Boxed versions are found



It's all about tradition today on Boston Herald.com's Fork Lift blog. Watch Legal Sea Foods CEO Roger Berkowitz, renowned Boston teacher and advocate Sister Mary Black of Cathedral High School and Legal's own Rich Vellante dish about the Feast of the Seven Fishes, the



Italian Christmas Eve celebration. The trio enjoys a meal prepared by Vellante to celebrate his own family's heritage in this exclusive video! Only on Fork Lift, at BostonHerald.com.

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Raise a glass to holiday brews

We live in the Golden Age of American beer making. Domestic beer makers lead the world in variety, creativity and, yes, even quality these days.

European brewers, tethered to centuries of tradition, have flocked to the United States in recent years to study how Americans both brew and market their beers.

Brewers put their best foot forward each holiday season, typically with their biggest, strongest and most flavorful creations. Here are five of the best beers for the winter of 2012-13 — some of which are intentionally seasonal, some of which just taste better on chilly New England winter nights. Curl up by a crackling fire with a good book and these American beers this winter.

■ **Jack's Abby Fire in the Ham** — A German-style smoked lager that brilliantly re-creates the flavors and aromas of authentic Bamberg rauchbier, but made right here in Framingham.

■ **Pretty Things Our Finest Regards** — This English-style barleywine from critically acclaimed Pretty Things Beer and Ale Project

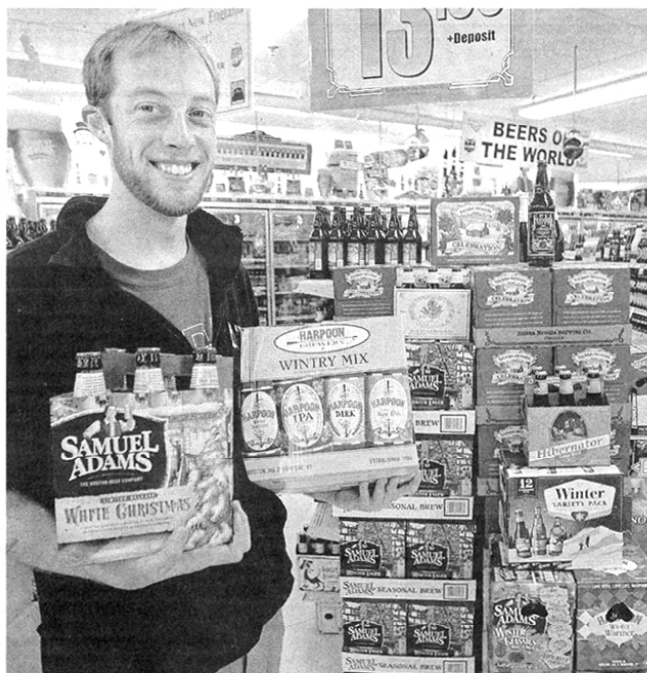
FAST FOOD Kerry J. Byrne

of Somerville is purposely sweet and malty, using grains that beer maker Dann Paquette grew fond of while brewing in the UK.

■ **Sierra Nevada Celebration Ale** — A consistent winner each year, with brilliant golden-cranberry color, thick rocky head and big flavorful balance of plenty of malts and bitterness. My "everyday" brew each Christmas season and one of the most beautiful beers ever made.

■ **Slumbrew Flagraiser India Pale Ale** — This intensely dry-hopped locally made IPA celebrates a seasonal event: the "unfurling of the Grand Union flag atop Prospect Hill in Somerville on Jan. 1, 1776." Mouth-puckering bitterness.

■ **Stone 12-12-12 Vertical Epic Ale** — Just released on Dec. 12 (12-12-12) as the final addition to Stone's Vertical Epic series that was launched in 2001. Each beer is meant to be aged for years and tasted together — a "vertical" tasting. The 2012 version is brewed with spices in the tradition of a Belgian Christmas beer.



WINTER WONDERLAND: Josh Durant displays a variety of seasonal beers available at Supreme Liquors in Quincy.

Foodies

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at many markets. Bricco Panetteria bakes it fresh each Christmas season at its rustic bakery hidden down a North End alleyway. Available Friday. Call ahead to order. (Bricco Panetteria, 241 Hanover St., North End, 617-248-9859, www.bricco.com.)

■ **Bully Boy White Rum (\$28)** — Local rum was a foundation of the Boston economy during the days of the "triangle trade" with the West Indies and Africa. Bully Boy brought the tradition back when it opened last year, distilling white rum and other spirits here in Roxbury. Celebrate the season with the Hail Mary cocktail: white rum with a splash of champagne. Recipe on page 36. (Bully Boy Distillers, 35 Cedric St., Roxbury, 617-442-6000, www.bullyboydistillers.com.)

■ **The Butcher's Shop's** prosciutto sausage (\$12 per pound) — Perhaps the best handmade sausage in Boston, a city in which charcuterie has become

would love a gift from our menu of holiday treats

high culinary art: tangy and aromatic prosciutto ground down and stuffed into casings. (The Butcher Shop, 552 Tremont St., 617-423-4800, www.thebutchershopboston.com.)

■ **Centerville Pie Co.** sweet and savory pies (\$55 for 2 pies, plus \$29.95 shipping) — This Cape Cod pie-maker was famously discovered in 2009 by Oprah Winfrey, who made it an overnight success. Purchase pies at the Cape Cod retail store or restaurant, or have frozen pies delivered to your door. The tasty selection of sweet, fruit and savory pies includes chocolate cream, cranapple, french meat and, yes, even clam pie. (Centerville Pie Co., 1671 Falmouth Road, Route 28, Centerville, 774-470-1406, www.centervillepies.com.)

■ **Community Supported Agriculture** shares (prices vary) — Community Supported Agriculture allows you to invest in local farms and get fresh produce in return each week in season. Go to www.mass.gov/agr, which lists 144 CSA farms in Massachusetts, to find one near you.

■ **Del Frisco's** holiday sides to go (\$11 to \$46) — Ditch the calorie counter and add the decadent touch of Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House to your holiday dinner with one of its signature sides to go: chateau potatoes, spinach supreme, potatoes au gratin, maque choux, mac and cheese or bourbon sweet potato casserole (recipe follows). Available in three sizes, Friday to Monday. (Del Frisco's, 250 Northern Ave., 617-951-1368, www.delfriscos.com.)

■ "Elizabeth David's Christmas," edited by Jill Norman (\$54.95) — The late David was the Julia Child of the United Kingdom, inspiring Brits to cook in new and creative ways, but with an eye on tradition. This new book is packed with recipes and Christmas tales. Available online only (www.foliosociety.com).

■ **Ginger Betty's** gingerbread sleighs (\$35) — Ho, ho, ho! Santa delivers doleful gingersnap cookies in these cute and edible sleighs. Rudolph not included. You must order by tomorrow. Also try Ginger Betty's do-it-yourself

gingerbread house kits. (Ginger Betty's, 215 Samoset Ave., Quincy, 617-472-4729, www.gingerbettys.com.)

■ **Ole Smoky Apple Pie Moonshine (\$28)** — OK, if they sell it in your local liquor store, it's not really moonshine. Moonshine only passes muster with booze aficionados if it's distilled illegally by guys named Popcorn. But Ole Smoky has a cool marketing shtick and its seasonal "moonshine" comes with flavors of apples, cinnamon and a 40-proof kick. Also, check out its Moonshine Cherries, "an Appalachian party tradition." (www.olesmoky.com)

■ **Staub coq au vin cocottes (\$199 to \$239)** — Staub makes a long line of heavy-duty enameled cast iron cookware, none more beautiful than its oval coq au vin cocottes with brass rooster handles. They come in eight colors, most of them eye-popping brilliant (aubergine, cherry, dark blue). They are both a decorative kitchen accent and a

durable piece of cookware that will last decades. (www.staubusa.com)

■ **Yankee Candle's** holiday-food scents (\$1.99 to \$27.99) — Yankee Candle releases food-scented candles each holiday season. New for 2012: Peppermint Bark and Red Velvet — that's right, a cupcake-scented candle.

DEL FRISCO'S BOURBON SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

For the topping:

½ lb. unsalted butter, room temperature
½ lb. brown sugar
¾ c. pecans, ground medium

1 c. Old Fashioned Quaker Oats

1 c. all-purpose flour

For the potatoes:

6 sweet potatoes
¼ c. Jack Daniel's whiskey
¼ lb. brown sugar
¼ lb. unsalted butter
¾ T. maple extract
¼ T. vanilla extract
1 t. iodized salt

Combine the topping ingredients and set aside. Preheat oven to 350

degrees. Roast potatoes in their skins until fully cooked. Remove skins and place potatoes in a stainless steel bowl. Add whiskey, brown sugar, butter, extracts and salt and mash with wire whisk until smooth consistency. Place sweet potato mixture into a casserole and cover with pecan oatmeal topping. Bake 15 minutes in 350-degree oven. Remove and let stand for 6 minutes. Serves 2 to 4.

THE HAIL MARY COCKTAIL

1½ oz. Bully Boy white rum
1 T. fresh lime juice
½ t. simple syrup
Champagne or sparkling wine

Combine rum, lime juice and simple syrup in a cocktail shaker with ice. Strain into chilled white wine glass. Makes 1 cocktail.

CHESTNUT APPLE TURKEY STUFFING

2 lbs. fresh chestnuts
10 oz. milk
5 oz. water
6 oz. salt pork or fresh pork

belly, diced small
1 lb. sweet apples
2 shallots, finely chopped
Fresh parsley to taste, finely chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
1 egg, beaten

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Make crosswise incisions in rounded part of chestnuts. Roast 10 to 15 minutes. Take out a few at a time and shell while still hot. Mix together milk and water in sauce pan and stew chestnuts in the mixture until soft, about 30 minutes. Break up chest-

nuts into rough chop. Simmer diced pork in a small amount of water in a separate sauce pan, about 10 minutes.

Peel and core apples, and stew in a very small amount of water until reduced to a puree. Mix together apple puree, pork and chestnuts. Add shallots, parsley and salt and pepper. Add egg and mix together to bind stuffing. Makes enough stuffing for a 12 lb. turkey.

(From "Elizabeth David's Christmas.")

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