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It's in the cards

Last-minute shopping is easy with these gift card ideas

By Metromix staff

Sadly, you've put off shopping for so long that there's no time left for leisurely browsing. You're so far gone that you're considering calling in sick to the family party or—gasp!—re-gifting.

But there's still one solution that won't make you look like a cheapskate or a Scrooge: the gift card. It takes the tough decision-making out of gift-buying, and best of all, with these picks, there's often something in it for you.

GIVE THE GIFT OF FOOD

Everyone's gotta eat—including you—so you can't go wrong with a gift card from these restaurant groups, which give the buyer a bonus for purchases of \$100 or more.

For the indecisive diner

A certificate good at any of four **KDK restaurants** (Gioco, Marche, Opera and Red Light), which gives you a \$50 bonus for every \$100 you spend. Purchase at any KDK restaurant.

For the hopelessly indecisive diner

A gift card from **Lettuce Entertain You**, good at all Lettuce restaurants (from Wow Bao to Everest), which gives you a \$25 bonus for every \$100 you spend. Purchase online at leye.com or call 773-924-4438.

Gift cards from Broadway in Chicago

Anyone who gets one of these cards and will surely sing your praises. They're good toward any Broadway in Chicago show, including musicals "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," "Jersey Boys" and "Wicked." Available amounts: \$10, \$25, \$50, \$75, \$100, \$200. Purchase at Cadillac Palace Theatre (151 W. Randolph St.), Ford Center for the Performing Arts (24 W. Randolph St.), LaSalle Bank Theatre (18 W. Monroe St.) or ticketmaster.com.

Bonus: Here's your chance to finally impress your mom with your "Spelling Bee" savvy!

Bomb shot cards from Brownstone Tavern & Grill

3937 N. LINCOLN AVE. 773-528-3700

Nothing says, "I love you, dude," like the gift of a bomb shot. Cash the card in at North Center's Brownstone, where you can order bomb flights (\$19) or shots (\$6.50-\$8) from a menu of 12 Brownstone Bombers. In December, try the 12 Bombs of Christmas for \$6 each. Available amounts: \$25, \$50, \$75 and \$100. Purchase at any of the Four Corners Tavern Group spots (WestEnd, Sidebar, Kirkwood, Brownstone, Schoolyard and Gaslight) or at fourcorners-taverns.com.

Bonus: Cards are good for bombs at any Four Corners bar, and it's anyone's guess where the night will end up after redeeming this puppy.

Gift certificates from 1154 Lill Studio

904 W. ARMITAGE AVE. 773-477-5455

A gift certificate for this design-your-own handbag studio will thrill your crafty mom or fashion-obsessed friend who simply can't be seen toting the same store-bought bags everyone else has. Available in any amount. Purchase by phone or in person.

Bonus: The shop will organize a private party (BYO wine and snacks) for groups of five or more for no charge, and the organizer (that's you!) gets a discount based on the number of bags ordered. Dole out certificates to your gal pals and you've got an instant girl's night out.



[BILL HOGAN/TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO]

Spa cards from The Aveda Institute

2828 N. CLARK ST. 773-883-1560

Because supervised students perform the services at this salon and spa training ground, prices are dirt cheap—haircuts start at \$14, facials (pictured) at \$40, body wraps at \$45—which means you can spend less and your giftees will get more. Available in any amount. Purchase in person only.

Bonus: If folks on your gift list don't trust their locks to a scissors-wielding novice, cards also are good for the institute's retail shop, stocked with natural bath and body goodies.

Gift certificates from Old Town School of Folk

4544 N. LINCOLN AVE. 773-728-6000

Back the dreams of the budding musician on your list with a certificate to this venerable school, which isn't just for guitar-strumming folkies. Classes range from beatboxing to drumming to DJ/turndablist workshops (pictured). Eight-week courses (\$160) begin Jan. 7. One-time workshops (\$30-\$40) are offered throughout the term. The gift certificate also

is good toward Old Town School concert tickets, CDs and more. Available in any amount. Purchase at oldtownschool.org, by phone or in person.

Bonus: Students get \$15 off an eight-week course if they register by New Year's Eve.

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[JOSE M. OSORIO/TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO]



[MEGAN ROSSMAN FILE PHOTO FOR REDEYE]

Gift packages and certificates from Flirty Girl Fitness

1325 W. RANDOLPH ST. 312-666-2266

Regale that gal on your list who's more naughty than nice with a gift package such as the Sexy Santa, which includes four weekly pole dance lessons, a pink feather boa and Flirty Girl logo tank top (\$100, regularly \$130)—from this all-female gym. Gift certificates good for classes, services or merchandise also are available. Purchase in person or by phone.

Bonus: Buy more than \$100 in certificates and get one free class for yourself.