



GIVING THE SPLENDOR OF COLLECTING

Glimmering tabletop accents, unique holiday gifts, one-of-a-kind decorations and accessories can all come together to create holiday magic in the home. This time of year we rush here and there to find not just any gifts, but the perfect ones that will hold the memory of the season forever in the hearts of those nearest and dearest to us. Small antique gifts are the perfect way to give a soulful offering of a marvelous old object - especially in this sometimes very impersonal world - to a loved one.

I am a strong believer in collecting, decorating and living with antiques, and I personally relish giving the joy of beautiful objects to the ones I cherish. The best way to start this is to learn their certain hobbies and leisure interests. For example, my husband's interest in history and firearms led me to find his perfect gift one year - an antique, 130-year-old French double-barreled shotgun in its original fine leather case. The shotgun had Damascus barrels and was engraved with a commemorative passage indicating it had been a gift to the chief of a fire department in a small city of southern France. It is now proudly displayed in John's office, allowing all to appreciate its engraved embellishment and artistry of fine quality -

and its history.

My mother's fascination in oriental arts was the inspiration for her collection of antique Cloisonné, to which I have had fun adding to over the years. Her many Cloisonné jardinières, inkwells and vases that I have given her are tokens of my love, which have become our shared memories. Each is a celebration of a reciprocal daughter's love for her mother, displaying our affection for all who enter the home.



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A friend of mine, a whiz on the kitchen stage, loves any antiques of culinary origins - whether they are large or small. She uses each object in her entertaining, arranging flowers in a soup terrine or using a vintage cutting board in a gourmet cheese display. Intriguing culinary artifacts, such as a hand-cranked pasta maker or a grizzled and weather breadboard, make perfect gifts to add to her collective display.

Sometimes you can even cultivate the beginnings of a new and exciting antique collection, one that will grow and blossom over the years. You can begin with someone's color of preference. For the lover of blue, antique blue transferware, a flow blue pitcher or a hand-painted plate are perfect ways to support that color passion. If they have a fondness for earthy tones, an antique Provencal confit pot or a Majolica dish might be an ideal choice. And for those fond of the now-popular neutral and gray understated interiors, the warm patina of antique pewter and vintage white china or earthenware - in light tones, of course - would be the perfect gift selection, one that can add a bit of vintage whimsy in a complementary hue.

It is such a thrill to find a special, lovingly-selected antique gift for your family and friends. The beauty is indeed in the detail of the objects fondly placed in the recipient's home, providing years of warmth, sentiment and memories of affection and happy times spent together. Antique items of good design and craftsmanship are abundant with character and history, making them much more compelling gifts than anything mass-produced by modern methods. When you are fortunate enough to receive such a gift, it is a joy to display the objects you love and show off your cherished collections, glorifying the eternal beauty of timelessness.

