



These days, gift baskets are everything but what you might expect. They're about eclectic themes and unusual ingredients presented in beautifully creative containers. They're filled with wonderfully practical surprises and delicious gourmet starter mixes.

Whether the message is "Thanks for the warm hospitality" or "Hope you're feeling better soon," one-of-a-kind gift baskets are brimming with eye-pleasers and scent-teasers personalized to the unique tastes of each special recipient.

Imagine lavishing friends just settled in a new home with a hand-painted ceramic bowl filled of flavorful ready-to-go mixes. In one keepsake jar is the delicious jump-start for Sun-dried Tomato and Penne Soup. You layer robust sun-dried tomatoes, dried mushrooms, penne pasta and spices.

The appreciative recipients add an aromatic Bouquet Garni, canned cannellini beans and vegetable broth. While the soup simmers, they stir up a batch of homemade Buttermilk Biscuits with the mix that you provide.

Think about an elegant shower collection for a friend who loves to pamper herself. Line an ice bucket with an exquisite embroidered tea towel. Fill it to overflowing with jars of homemade Lavender Champagne Jelly and Citron Scone Mix. Embellish with lavender sachet or Flower Blossom Tea bags tied with a satin ribbon.

Remember that gift baskets aren't just for the women in your life. Got a child-loving brother? Pack a handy tool tote with base fixings for a quick, hearty meal he can put together himself, including a big jar of Four Bean Chorizo Chili Mix and homemade Sour Cream Corn Bread Mix.

# Gift Basket

## Sun-Dried Tomato and Penne Soup Mix

- 2 cups penne pasta
- 1 cup sun-dried tomatoes
- 1/2 cup dried shitake mushrooms (or other dried mushrooms)
- 1/4 cup onion flakes
- 1/4 cup parsley flakes
- Bouquet Garni (see recipe)

Layer mix ingredients into a quart home canning jar in the order given. Adjust cap. Prep the bouquet garni. Attach bouquet garni and recipe card to neck of jar.

- 1 quart jar Sun-Dried Tomato and Penne Soup Mix
- Bouquet garni
- 8 cups vegetable broth
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced roma tomatoes
- 1 (15 ounce) can cannellini beans
- 1/4 cup Madeira or other sweet white wine, optional
- Salt and Pepper

Combine soup mix, bouquet garni, vegetable broth and tomatoes in a 6 to 8 quart saucepot. Simmer covered until pasta and vegetables are tender. Stir in cannellini beans and wine, if desired. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Continue simmering for 15 minutes. Remove bouquet garni.

*Note: If there is not enough liquid in soup, add additional vegetable broth or water.*

## Bouquet Garni

- 1 tablespoon dried minced garlic
- 1 1/2 teaspoon dried crushed thyme
- 1 1/2 teaspoon dried minced basil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper

Combine herbs in a bowl and gently stir to blend. Place herb mixture in the center of a 15 x 5 inch square of cheesecloth. Bring corners together to form a bag and secure with a piece of white cotton string. Or use a mesh spice bag. Tie bouquet garni to rim of Sun-Dried Tomato and Penne Soup Mix.

## Buttermilk Biscuit Mix

- 2 cups flour
- 2 1/2 tablespoons butter/milk powder
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

Combine flour, buttermilk powder, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Pick mix into pint home canning jar. Adjust cap. Attach recipe card to jar.

- 1 pint jar Buttermilk Biscuit Mix
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2/3 cup water

Combine biscuit mix and butter, cutting butter into mix with a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add water and stir until soft dough forms. Knead dough on a lightly floured surface 5 or 6 times. Roll dough to 1/2 inch thickness. Cut into 2 inch rounds. Place biscuit rounds on ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 425 F for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Makes about 11 biscuits.

## Lavender Champagne Jelly

- 3 cups champagne
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 package powdered pectin
- 4 1/2 cups sugar
- 24 heads lavender (flower only)

Combine champagne, lemon juice and pectin in a 6 to 8-quart saucepot. Bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Add sugar, stirring to dissolve. Return mixture to a rolling boil. Boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam and lavender. Discard. Idle hot jelly into hot jars, leaving 1/4 inch headspace. Adjust caps. Process 10 minutes in a boiling-water canner. Yield about 5 half pints.

## Citron Scone Mix

- 2 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup candied citron

Combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Pack into pint home canning jar. Place candied citron on top of flour mixture. Adjust cap. Attach recipe card to jar.

- 1 pint jar Citron Scone Mix
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 large eggs, divided
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

Remove candied citron from jar, set aside. Combine remaining scone mix with butter, cutting butter into mix with a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal. Combine 1 egg and cream together, beating lightly. Stir egg mixture into flour mixture until soft dough forms. Knead dough on a lightly floured surface, turning 5 or 6 times. Roll dough to 1/2 inch thickness. Cut into 2 inch rounds. Place scones on greased baking sheet. Beat together 1 egg and 1 tablespoon water. Brush egg wash over top of scones. Bake at 425 F for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Makes about 24 scones.

## Four Bean Chorizo Chili Mix

- 3/4 cup dried white beans
- 3/4 cup dried kidney beans
- 1/2 cup dried pinto beans
- 1/2 cup dried black beans
- 4 to 6 dried jalapeno peppers
- Corn husk garni (see recipe)

Layer mix ingredients into a quart home canning jar in the order given. Adjust cap. Prepare corn husk garni. Attach corn husk garni and recipe card to jar.

- 1 quart Four Bean Chorizo Chili Mix
- 1 1/2 cups finely diced onion
- 1/2 pound chorizo
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 pound plum tomatoes, diced
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can tomato puree
- 2 cups water or cooking liquid from beans
- 1 lime, optional
- Corn husk garni
- Salt

Cook beans separately in water to cover by 1 1/2 inches until almost tender. Drain, reserving cooking liquids for soup, except from black beans, if desired. Remove casing from sausage, crumble sausage. Crush dried jalapeno peppers. Saute sausage, crushed peppers and onion in oil until cooked through. Raise heat to medium high and continue cooking until ingredients become richly brown, but not burned. Drain sausage and onion on a paper towel. Combine all ingredients in a large stockpot. Simmer soup 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt. Continue simmering 15 minutes. Remove corn husk garni.

*Note: If there is not enough liquid in soup, add additional water or cooking liquid from beans.*

## Corn Husk Garni

- 3 thin corn husks
- 4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 6 to 8 sprigs dried oregano, broken (Mexican if available)
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns

Layer 2 corn husk together, turning base ends in opposite direction. Tear remaining corn husk into thin strips lengthwise. Place garlic, oregano and peppercorns in center of layered corn husks. Fold long sides toward center, then bring ends together, forming a packet. Tie ends securely with strips of corn husk.

## Sour Cream Corn Bread Mix

- 1 1/2 cups stone ground cornmeal
- 3/4 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons toasted cumin seeds, ground

Combine cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Lightly toast cumin seeds in oven at 350 F. Cool. Grind toasted cumin seeds with mortar and pestle or in food processor. Stir ground cumin seeds into flour mixture. Pack into pint home canning jar. Adjust cap. Attach recipe card to jar.

## For Sour Cream Corn Bread

- 1 pint jar Sour Cream Corn Bread Mix
- 2 large eggs
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Combine eggs and milk, lightly beating with a whisk or fork. Add sour cream and butter, lightly beating until well blended. Stir in corn bread mix just until dry ingredients are moistened. Bake in a 9 x 9 inch pan at 425 F for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden brown. Makes 9 servings.