



Seattle Post-Intelligencer

# LIFE AND ARTS

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A well-stocked pantry needs to have a few treats as well as staples. A tin of spiced macadamia nuts or a bottle of bubbly can add a spark to a dull afternoon.

## PERSONAL BEST

Special treats that make memorable holiday gifts or nice surprises for loved ones

ON FOOD

### HSIAO-CHING CHOU



IT COULD BE dangerous to your thighs, midriff and wallet if you try to experience every delight on the following list in a short span of time. Chocolate, cupcakes, ice cream,

bread... Atkins be damned.

My list favorite things was such a hit last year that I'm making it an annual feature. It's not exactly a holiday gift guide, but many of the items can be assembled in a basket to give to the food lover in your life.

Mainly, the list offers delicious ways to spoil yourself.

#### » Schokling Drinking Chocolate

When I was a kid, hot chocolate was a powder that came from a foil packet; just add hot water. (Aren't dehydrated marshmallows the best? Light.)

Now there's drinking chocolate from Schokling, an artisan chocolate maker in Germany. The chocolate was developed with Christopher Norman Chocolates in New York — one of my favorite candy makers.

Available in 1-pound tins, the blend consists of mini morsels of dark and milk chocolate covered in cocoa. You scoop some morsels into a mug, add hot milk and stir. The taste is rich without being sweet. And, if you want to be naughty, the chocolate is good to eat by the spoonful straight from the tin.

Buy it from the Home Chef Store at [www.schoklingna.com](http://www.schoklingna.com) or call 866-972-6879. The cost is \$14.95 for a 1-pound tin.

#### » Mountain Dome Winery Brut Sparkling Wine

If the French Champagnes are getting too steep for your pockets, give Mountain Dome sparkling a sip. It's unexpectedly good, with its dry yet fruity flavor. At about \$12 a bottle for the non-vintage brut, it's a steal.

Mountain Dome, based in the foothills outside of Spokane, specializes in sparkling wines made in

SEE CHOU D4

# CHOU: A few of my favorite things

FROM D1

the traditional *methode champenoise*; several types, including a vintage brut and brut rosé, are available. The Manz family, which owns the winery, has been making wine since the mid-'80s. The winery's name comes from the geodesic dome that's part of the house the family lives in.

Look for the label with the gnomes on it. The non-vintage brut is available at area wine shops and grocery stores, or at [www.mountaindome.com](http://www.mountaindome.com).

## ► Evangeline's Biscotti

You can go to Evangeline's for the cake, but there's a contingent of Seattleites that go for the biscotti. Hurkin' bars of biscotti the size of small rolling pins. They come in three flavors: hazelnut milk chocolate, dark chocolate pecan and milk chocolate macadamia. The milk chocolate macadamia biscotti has so many mac nuts in it that the \$1.75 price is a pittance.

Evangeline's Cafe is at 2711 E. Madison St., 206-322-1152. Call for the cafe hours, or visit [www.evangelinescakes.com](http://www.evangelinescakes.com).

## ► Newman's Own Oldstyle Picture Show Microwave Popcorn

The popcorn is light and crispy, the way popcorn at the movies ought to taste. Apparently, Paul Newman searched two years for the popcorn that goes into his microwave popcorn. It's a "hybrid with vigor."

Whatever it is, it makes for good eatin'. Plus, you're supporting a good cause, since the company's proceeds go to charities. The popcorn sells for about \$2.80 for a three-pack at your nearest grocery store.

a small artisan operation in Ballard next to everybody's favorite artisan pastry shop, Cafe Besalu.

The Tall Grass owners like to bake hearty grain breads and they like to bake the loaves dark. (Dark is good, because it means the crust has developed flavor.) The bakery also is known for its fresh baguettes, which you can pick up right from the oven.

Visit Tall Grass at 5907 24th Ave. N.W., 206-706-0991.

## ► Mustapha's Moroccan Olives

They've been around a while, but it's always good to be reminded that one of the best producers of olives is local, Mustapha Haddouch. You've probably had his olives at your favorite restaurant because local chefs love them and buy them by the bucket.

You can find several varieties of olives in the jar at your nearest grocery for about \$6. You also can get Mustapha's extra virgin olive oil, too. And they're available online at [www.haddouch.com](http://www.haddouch.com).

## ► Snoqualmie Ice Cream

There are more than 25 flavors, including blueberry cheesecake, Skagit Valley strawberry, pumpkin, mango, Mukilteo Mudd – which has four kinds of chocolate in it. The ice cream is dense, because there's no much air pumped into it. So, you get ice cream that wants to stick to the spoon.

Snoqualmie ice creams are made in Lynnwood. They are available at area food stores, such as Larry's and Thriftway, for about \$3.50 a pint.

## ► OXO Good Grips

The signature ergonomic, black handles of the OXO Good Grips are probably fixtures in your kitchen, but you just don't realize it. Even

those who recognize the brand, which is pronounced OCKS-o, probably don't know that the company has never done a piece of advertising in its dozen years of business. Its continual growth is due to word of mouth (and product placement in stores).

I have the peeler, ice cream scoop, pastry brush and salad spinner, and I enjoy using all of them. I have non-OXO versions of all these tools and I find that I consistently reach for the OXO. Look for OXO products at grocery and department stores. Visit [www.oxo.com](http://www.oxo.com) for more information.

## ► Bev's Special

It's a turkey sandwich with fresh lettuce, tomato, mayo, lingonberry preserves on freshly baked bread. It tastes so good that I'm willing to drive to the Rexville Grocery in the Skagit Valley to get it. It's fun to sit at the bar, get a soda (or beer, if you'd like), eat the sandwich and strike up a conversation with a neighbor, who could be a refinery worker, an artist or, if you're lucky, Tom Robbins.

Rexville Grocery, 19271 Best Road, Mount Vernon, 360-466-5522. (Go to [http://seattlepi.nwsources.com/food/75080\\_rexville19.shtml](http://seattlepi.nwsources.com/food/75080_rexville19.shtml) to read more about the Rexville Grocery.)

## ► Niman Ranch

You've probably seen menus boast "Niman Ranch pork chops" or "Niman Ranch applewood-smoked bacon." The livestock is raised according to strict animal husbandry principles and given natural feed with no growth hormones, which results in meat that has good texture and doesn't taste bland.

My favorite is the pork – the ribs are succulent and full of flavor.

You can buy beef, pork or lamb, and other products at