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For Better Living  
Healthful holiday gift ideas

Are you looking for just the right gift for a holiday exchange or for someone who enjoys spending time in the kitchen and is interested in promoting good health? Check out these gift ideas with a food and health focus.

**Kitchen gadgets.** Create a unique gift basket by combining one or more of the following gadgets with an assortment of seasonings, potholders or holiday dish towels. Each gadget sells for under \$20 (some less than \$5) and can be found in kitchen stores, catalogs or the housewares section of department stores and supermarkets.

- \* Gravy separators. Skim the fat from gravy and homemade soup by pouring mixtures into the separator, which looks like a measuring cup with a spout. After the fat rises to the top, pour the lower-fat portion of the gravy or soup from the spout.

- \* All-purpose household shears. Surgical stainless steel shears are great for trimming skin and fat from poultry or meat. Select ones that are designed for use with food.

- \* Egg separator. Replace one egg with two egg whites using this plastic tool that catches the yolk while the white flows into the bowl.

- \* A seasonal soap dispenser for the kitchen, filled with your favorite fragrant soap, to help encourage frequent hand washing.

- \* Two cutting boards, one red and one green for the holiday season, to help keep raw meat and vegetables separate.

- \* A meat thermometer, to help cook holiday favorites like turkey, ham or beef to proper temperatures.

- \* A crock pot, rice cooker or steamer. These will help the gift recipient prepare food in a healthier way. Throw in a few recipes for a tasty soup or a meal that includes steamed vegetables.

**Fitness gadgets and certificates.** For gifts that truly will be "heart-felt," consider gadgets and gift certificates that promote fitness and help relieve stress.

- \* Pedometer or step-counter. Available for under \$20, step-counters are an easy way to track the number of steps taken each day. They may provide the encouragement needed for that goal-oriented person on your list to take the stairs instead of the elevator or take the dog for a real walk. Step counters only measure steps taken. Pedometers tend to be more sophisticated and include information on distance traveled and calories expended. They also are more expensive and difficult to operate.

- \* Exercise classes. For the person who wants to exercise but hasn't quite gotten motivated, how about a trial membership to the neighborhood fitness center or a series of aerobics or yoga classes.

- \* Massage. Day spas and independent licensed practitioners offer a variety of massages, from total body to scalp-only massages. All are guaranteed to be stress-relievers.

- \* Books and cookbooks. An increasing variety of books on nutrition, fitness and low-fat, low-

calorie cooking are available in a variety of prices.

Source: Colorado Cooperative Extension

### **Ham 'N Cheese Muffins**

1/3 cup finely chopped onion  
1 tablespoon butter  
2 cups shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese  
1 1/2 cups reduced-fat biscuit mix  
1/2 cup skim milk  
1 egg, beaten  
1 cup finely chopped cooked ham

In a nonstick skillet, saute onion in butter until tender. Set aside. In a bowl, combine cheese and biscuit mix. Stir in milk and egg just until moistened. Fold in ham and onion mixture.

Coat muffin cups with nonstick spray or use paper liners. Fill 3/4 full. Bake at 425 degrees for 13 - 15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack. Serve warm. Yield: 1 dozen