



At Express Yourself Gifts & Baskets, owner Sharon Kuchenbecker customizes each basket to meet the special preferences of her clients.

## Ideas to solve your "present" dilemma

**H**ow often have you searched for the right gift for a business associate but weren't sure where to turn?

"Just give them a gift basket," someone advises. But from where? If you're lucky, they'll direct you to Sharon Kuchenbecker, owner of Express Yourself Gifts & Baskets in Oxford, MA. You'll end up with a unique gift that your colleague or client won't already have.

Sharon customizes each basket once she understands the recipient's likes and dislikes. Favorite color? Hobbies? Pets? Kids? And a key question, food allergies?

"I look for tasty, full-size products with beautiful packaging," she explains. She attends several gift shows each year to seek out unique items not found in local stores. She collaborates with local artists and bakeries. And she keeps her finger on the pulse of shifting cultural trends, as gift baskets reflect the day's fashions.

Baskets may have a mix of fancy foods, plus a keepsake, silk flowers or other creative addition, like a light bulb filled with popcorn. Sometimes a basket isn't a basket. It might be a garden hose, a chest, or a silver tray.

The final product offers another way to stand out from the competition. Gifts can be part of an overall marketing campaign, and Sharon is happy to bring her ideas into your office. As an affiliate member of the Advertising Specialty Institute (ASI), she can coordinate the imprinting of corporate logos onto ribbon and promotional items within the basket.

Sharon offers an early bird discount for holiday

gift orders placed by mid October. "That gets it off your plate and onto mine," she says, "and I can plan accordingly." If you just can't decide what to give, she has "basket bucks" available.

Because not everyone wants a gift basket (or at least not every year), Sharon has recently extended her line to include "stand alone gifts" - mantle clock,

### Express Yourself Gifts & Baskets



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**Website:** www.shayenterprises.com

**Number of Employees:** 1

**Top Executive:** Sharon Kuchenbecker, Designer/Owner

**Product or Service:** Customized gift baskets and personalized gifts, centerpieces, etc.

**Year Founded:** 1995

hand-painted collectibles and home accessories.

"It seems that in five-year cycles, my business moves forward in a large way," Sharon comments. This year, she changed her company logo and moved to a bigger, brighter retail space.

She expanded her offerings after finding space on Oxford's Main Street, not far from I-395. In addition to serving corporations and walk-in customers, she also sells gifts through her website. Look for her grand opening event September 14-16.

Sharon understands creative marketing opportunities. Check out her booth in "All Lit Up," a feature film due out at Thanksgiving about dueling neighborhood light displays that are bright enough to be seen from space. Starring Matthew Broderick, Danny Devito, Kristin Davis and Kristin Chenoweth, the film needed a display of holiday gift baskets on the set. The Massachusetts Convention and Visitors Bureau put out a call, and Sharon spoke to a producer and set designer the next day.

Set at a winter carnival in a Massachusetts town, "All Lit Up" was actually filmed in British Columbia — in June. Sharon had three weeks to plan, find and ship enough holiday-themed merchandise to fill a 10' x 10' booth (and clear customs).

Her set-up included a banner with her actual toll-free number. If that scene doesn't hit the cutting-room floor, she'll have a very thoughtful holiday gift.