Seven for You – Gifts We Love – by our Panel of Women

We did this last year and thought we'd do it again. We think back to Christmas and the gifts we gave and received, and we share our favorites with you. After all, it's February and the time to love and be loved, so why not spark some ideas for you in case you're treating yourself or another! Gift giving is hard, sometimes, and I personally love ideas and inspiration from others. Hope you enjoy our list!

Well, actually, my favorite gift is one I gave, not received. My mother had wanted an outdoor nativity set for years and my siblings and I were finally able to get one for her. She was so overcome with emotion. I videotaped the "reveal," which was a couple of weeks before Christmas, so my siblings out of state could share in the experience.

My children live in NYC and LA, so wasn't able to spend time with them, but my grandson flew in on Christmas Day! – Anita

The holidays were especially meaningful and hopeful for me this year. I had Covid Dec 2020 followed by other hospital admissions and illnesses. In July, my daughter, Alex had a stroke at age 27. She underwent brain surgery followed by 45 days of recovery and rehabilitation. Right after I returned home from helping her, I had to have the first of two major surgeries. I'm still recovering from the second one. Sometimes, the best gifts don't come in boxes with bows. You put things into perspective when you feel you might lose one of your children or may not make it out of surgery. Family, just their presence, is all you need. Having my family together for Christmas was all I wanted. My daughter was able to fly home and we were able to celebrate as a family. I wanted a photo of my two beautiful children to replace the one taken in the hospital together. Time with both of them and this photo – the best gift - family! – Cathy

My husband fills my stocking every Christmas with little goodies. This year he got me a coffee cup, among other things. The coffee cup is special to me because it says a message that I know came from his heart. It has Proverbs 31:29 written on it. I don't know if I believe this verse about me, but it was very touching that he did.

There was also a beautiful card with a sentimental note he wrote inside. And to top it off, he included a Ty beanie stuffed animal named Saffire. I was surprised he would get me this, but he said it just jumped out at him. And I love it! It is so cute! It must be my inner child coming out. I think I love it mostly because I know he was taking time to shop for just the right things for me. I think sometimes it's the fun little things that mean the most. – Carole

I got a new toaster oven – a silly thing to love but I do! I had kept the old one way too long, and this new one is simple, in a matte black finish, and looks so pretty on the counter. It was a gift long overdue! Also, this amazing robe from Uncommon Goods made from recycle saris is a fave as well. The colors, the comfort, the feel…it's one of my favorite robes ever. And finally, our kids gave me a basket of goodies for a cheeseboard night (with the basket, crackers, jam, etc.) and an invitation to brunch and a walk afterwards at a fancy hotel downtown. So thoughtful. – Marcy

Expensive sunshades - my husband and I splurge on this expensive gift for one another from time to time. They never last as long as we'd like; we're constantly in action so they fall, crack, and eventually break; but having expensive sunglasses is a nice treat we dote on one another

every couple of years. I got mine replaced this Christmas and may consider getting my honey's his for his birthday...maybe even Valentines!

Road trip shopping - My favorite Christmas find was an unexpected bakery while we were traveling from Missouri to Oklahoma. My favorite Little Debbies snack is "Devil Squares" and I cannot find them at any store in Austin. We stopped at this bakery while we were traveling and I found a box of Devil Squares for only $1!

A fun outing we enjoyed was at Wonder Works. We first saw this amusement park about a year ago in Florida and were able to go this Christmas. It was fun for all five of us and we went back twice in one day. - Jennifer

Spent time with family- tried a new recipe, "Smoked Mac 'N' Cheese," -- it was yummy. Learned a new card game Liverpool Rummy. Liverpool Rummy is a fast-paced game (using two decks of cards) that requires some strategy. It can be a bit aggravating. Created memories! – Edith
https://bushcooking.com/recipes/smoked-mac-n-cheese/

Simple Human – a funny thing to love the most in the gift department. The reason I like the trash can is because it has a trash side and a recycling side. Such a great and practical combo, and it looks nice too! - Melissa