

15 notable Bostonians share what they're gifting this holiday season

Business leaders, media personalities, an actress, and others talk about what's on their gift-giving lists.



A couple kisses moments after the Christmas tree lit up at Faneuil Hall in 2018.

–Matthew J. Lee / *The Boston Globe*

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By

[Kristi Palma](#), Boston.com Staff, [Megan O'Brien](#), [Kevin Slane](#), Staff Writer, [Erin Kushner](#), Boston.com Staff, [Hayden Bird](#), Boston.com Staff

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Looking for some gift-giving inspiration? We reached out to some of Boston's most notable people to see what they're giving their friends and family this year.

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Eliza Dushku, actress: "For the guys, husband, brothers, and dads: I have never met a man who didn't fall in love with the [Ugg slippers/slides](#). They wear them until holes form in them then I get them a new pair for the next Christmas after that. For

women, I love knowing my [friends and family] are switching over to natural facial products for their beautiful bodies and skin.

Boston's [Follain](#) natural stores carry the goods: Tata Harper cheek tint, May Lindstrom Blue Cocoon balm for winters, RMS all-natural concealer, hair care, etc."

Dan Fitzgerald, co-founder of Heartbreak Hill Running

Company: "My favorite thing to give is [custom sneakers](#) with personalized messages, whether it's for an athlete I coach or my wife celebrating a big milestone. I love custom sneakers as something special. You can personalize the colors to the person, and there are certainly message constraints — you can't write a whole lot — but I think it's really thoughtful. Depending on your scale, it's somewhat expensive or somewhat affordable, but for as low as 120 bucks, 150 bucks, you can get a really cool, customized pair of shoes for somebody that they can wear for a while."

Lisa Gozashti, owner and manager of Brookline

Booksmith: "What I like to do is focus on home and hearth, and celebrating loved ones, family, and coming together. Especially around the holidays, we're getting into this time of darkness, so I like to do a festive basket, something that shows the deep culture, traditions, and vibrant colors from around the world. I like to include items like cutting boards, fair trade-sourced spice mixes that have lots of color, tea, spoon rests, beautiful

handmade mugs, or an assortment of different colored handmade glasses.”

Betsi Graves, founder and director of Urbanity Dance: “I try to give local as much as possible, especially in our big-box online culture. There are so many great spots right around the South End in particular, where I live. A couple of my favorite spots would be [Tadpole](#) for the kiddos in your life, and [Olives & Grace](#) for really well-curated, unique gifts that I think really are quite out of the ordinary. And I’m a new mom, so I would say for me and for other new parents out there, any kind of massage is excellent. It could be, for someone who needs to relax, maybe a thoughtful candle from Olives & Grace, plus a bottle of wine from [Brix](#), and a massage.”

Brian Gullbrants, president of Encore Boston Harbor: “Every holiday season, my wife, Steph, and I give our friends and family home-baked cookies — from our family to yours. It’s a gift that takes effort, thought, and time ... and, of course, they taste amazing, too. There’s no better way to show that you genuinely care for someone than to bake something tasty around the holidays to share.”

Jack Hendler, co-owner of Jack’s Abby: “There are a lot of great beer books out there. I try to get a new one for my brothers every year since we all work together. Beer writer Joshua M. Bernstein just released a new one, “[Drink Better Beer](#),” which I’m planning to gift them this year. It’s filled with great insights on the state of beer today. I just hope my brothers don’t see this quote.”

Linda Henry, managing director of *The Boston Globe* and Boston.com: “My favorite gift to give is happy memories from funny moments or special events, so I give a lot of photo gifts. An album from a trip, a framed group photo — if everyone is looking good, I’ll get a glass print — or a photo Christmas ornament for a

very personal gift for my friends. I upload all of my photos to [Shutterfly](#). They have an app to upload photos from my phone, too, and make custom gifts from there.”

Linda Holliday, director of The Bill Belichick Foundation: “For women, I’m always asked about my ‘bling’ jackets and hats. So I try to support several of these ladies and gift personal accessories, such as [BROdenim](#) and [Custom Bling Inc.](#), a local shop. As for men, I try to think of things that they can use to relax and unwind. Bose has come out with amazing [noise-canceling headphones](#). And Concepts has collaborated with Canada Goose on [some exceptional coats](#).

Matt Light, former Patriots offensive lineman: “Look, you can’t go wrong with wine. ... I love companies that also give back, so purposeful giving is really important. At the end of the day, we don’t need more stuff in this world, but if you’re giving things with a purpose and a meaning behind it, it goes a little bit further than just regular gifting.”

John Mandelman, vice president at the New England Aquarium and chief scientist at the Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life: “I focus my holiday gift-giving on sharing personal favorite items tied to hobbies I have, or items from companies doing great things in terms of either protecting the ocean or social justice. For example, I love providing friends some of my favorite local craft beers. I’ve also gotten my two daughters and other children in my family [4ocean bracelets](#). They use recycled materials for their bracelets and contribute proceeds from the sale to the cleanup of plastics and other debris in the ocean. I’ve also gifted products from companies with product lines or values linked to ocean conservation, including some unexpected ones like [Tumi](#) and [Lush](#). In the non-ocean realm, I love gifting tickets to live music that a person might love. Definitely a big gag gift provider. My latest go-to are those [Funko Pop! figurines](#) that are associated

with something personal about the person. And for my daughters, I definitely get them [peanut M&M's](#) so that I can in turn steal them all back to feed my never-ending addiction to that product."

Sue O'Connell, host and political commentator of NBC10

Boston/NECN: "I'm afraid I tend to be a good soldier and only give people gifts from their lists. Over the years, though, I have donated a farm animal in my family/friends' name to the [Heifer organization](#)."

Tom O'Keefe, founder of @BostonTweet: "Every year I buy my girlfriend a sweater or dress from [Brass](#), a Boston-based, women-owned clothing brand that recently opened their first retail store on Charles Street. They are a great professional woman clothing brand. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention for the runner on your list a [Stride for Stride](#) running shirt, in which 100 percent of the proceeds support low-income runners."

Ana Sortun, chef-owner at Oleana, Sarma, and Sofra Bakery &

Café: "I always give cookbooks to one of my sisters, and this year the choice is '[Mastering Spice](#),' by my good friend Lior Lev Sercarz. I think spices are an extraordinary gift. ... [My] favorite spices from [Burlap & Barrel](#) are the urfa pepper and the sumac, and my favorite blends from [La Boîte](#) are shabazi, O.M.G., izak, and ana spice."

Maria Stephanos, NewsCenter 5 anchor:

"When I was a little girl, my mother was famous for her peanut butter bon bons. She would have my sister and I mix the insides, and we would stand on our tippy toes watching her dip them in the chocolate. Now, all these years later, I make these religiously every year with my kids (who aren't kids anymore). I know the recipe by heart but I love reading her recipe because it brings me back to the magic she created for us every day but especially at Christmas. And the best

part is sharing them with my family, my friends, and people here at the station. It keeps her memory alive."

Astra Titus, owner of The Curious George Store: "We're a big book household. My sister is a really talented writer, and my mom is as well. So a lot of stuff revolving around writing books, or just books that we think are great ... Right now I don't have a particular book that I'm buying for someone, but if I were to buy a book as a Christmas present, I'm obsessed with [Eckhart Tolle](#) right now. So it would probably be some of his books."

Some responses have been lightly edited.

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