

The Perfect Gift

Mall gift cards are convenient, but let's be honest—they're just not very personal. Two years ago, my husband gave me the perfect gift for Christmas: personalized wine glasses.

My husband is wonderful at helping with household chores; you should see him whip through a stack of dishes. The only problem: sometimes he's more focused on getting the job done than being careful with delicate wine glasses (or coffee carafes—ours is now made of indestructible, stainless steel).

So TJ went to the local discount chain and picked up a couple of boxes of Libby, heavy duty wine glasses—difficult to break, but not all that classy. It took TJ's ingenuity to turn discount store "crystal" into something unique and personal.

He took the glasses to one of those kiosks in the mall that will engrave virtually anything. One of the glasses has my name on it, of course, but he also had glasses made for Darcy, Karen and Rene—three of my friends most likely to stop by for a glass of wine. So it was a gift for me, but also for three of my dearest friends. Now, when they stop by, I don't even need to tell them where the glasses are—they just dig around in my cabinets until they find the glass with their name.

Recently, two other women have been joining us more often. Several weeks ago, I'd invited a small group over to sample some new appetizers I was considering for a cooking class. As I ran down the stairs to grab a bottle of wine, I yelled over my shoulder, "Hey, can you guys grab the glasses? They're on the dining room table."

When I returned, Jill and Teri had huge grins on their face and in Jill's words, they were "verplumped." She says it's a real word and "they use in on Saturday Night Live all the time." I can't find it in the dictionary, but I know what she meant: overcome with emotion. Now, whenever she comes to visit, and we break out a bottle of wine, there's a special wine glass made just for her waiting on the shelf.

Does a wine-loving friend have a special occasion coming up? Engraved wine glasses are a thoughtful, personalized gift that requires little effort, planning or creativity ... but make someone happy many times throughout the year. How could it be more perfect?

- Jennifer Richards