

Wish list

BY EDITOR KAREN BARNES



How do you decide what to buy? Everything you see and read about here has been chosen from the hundreds of products we see, test and try out. Only the most useful, most beautiful and best value for money make the final cut

Gorgeous ceramics lend simple style to kitchen and dining room. Although my home is filled with colour, for china I veer towards neutral glazes with a simple design etched into the clay.

Charlotte Storrs goes beyond mugs and plates, crafting herb pots, from £22, and handled buckets for gathering flowers or veg from the garden, from £52. Beautiful. charlottestorrs-stoneware.co.uk



Turn the page to find out more →



MEET THE POTTER

“I’m into usable things, not art”

CHARLOTTE STORRS works in her garden studio near Oxford, making plates, bowls, bread and cooking pots, all stunning in their simplicity.

delicious STAR **HOW IT BEGAN** I grew up in Holland and we had Wednesday afternoons off school to do something creative. I’d go to a friend’s house and her mother would give us clay to make things with. Somehow it stuck with me and, in my 20s, I went to an evening class in pottery and the teacher was brilliant.

THE CRAFT What I love about ceramics is the transformation; after a short while you have something you can use. I’m into usable things, not art, and I particularly like throwing big pieces – there’s something so rewarding about making a huge dish. Working on the wheel with a lump of clay is magical and calming. For me, food is more important than the plate it’s served on and, because food can be so colourful, it doesn’t work to set it on a multi-coloured dish. I prefer something muted, or just white.

MY WORKING DAY When I first started making pots, my husband John, who used to be a harpsichord maker, had just set up a workshop in the garden, and said, “Why don’t you use it as your pottery?” He probably still regrets it! It’s a lovely space. I invite young carers to try pottery after school and at weekends. It gives them such a kick. Like me, they feel proud to make something.

For more details and to order, visit charlottestorrs-stoneware.co.uk

Grate expectations

Rice pudding or the white sauce for a lasagne wouldn’t be the same without a grating of nutmeg. My beloved nutmeg grater went blunt after 20 years of use and all the new ones I’ve tried have been useless – until this mini spice mill by Microplane, which works like a dream. Plus you can keep spare nutmegs (or other spices) in the top of it, and there’s a cover for the base to stop rogue gratings escaping. *£24.95, hartsofstur.com and independent cookshops*



KEEP IT COOL

It’s important to carry water when it’s hot, and even better if you can keep it cool for ages – and shun single-use plastics. Sistema stainless steel bottles are sleek, leakproof and not too heavy. I put one to the test and was impressed to find my drink stayed cool for 12 hours. It also keeps things hot. *£15 from Sainsbury’s, Waitrose and Amazon*

Ever tried a golden kiwi?

If not, you really need to. I associate kiwi fruit with those green fur-coated bullets that appeared on disappointing nouvelle cuisine restaurant plates in the 1990s. Golden kiwis, on the other hand, are a revelation: sweet, sharp and yielding. Eat like an apple – skin and all – or halve and scoop out the flesh with a spoon. *Available from now until January from most major retailers (prices vary, but expect to pay around 50p per fruit)*



INTERVIEW: KERRY FOWLER. ILLUSTRATIONS: ISTOCK/BETTY IMAGES. PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTIAN BARNET, AGNESS CLARK



Ready, steady... bake!

The Great British Bake Off is back on TV later this month, which means the nation will again be enticed back into the kitchen (if they ever left it) to dust off whisks, cake tins, piping bags and cutters. High on the kit list is a robust mixing bowl, and my top choice is the In The Forest collection by Mason Cash, from £13 for a 21cm bowl, available from Amazon, Dunelm and cookshops nationwide. I’ve had my MC bowl for 20 years, so it’s seen many a cake mix in its time, yet it’s as good as new. *Visit masoncash.co.uk for more stockists*

HOT ON THE SHELVES

SUNSHINE SOUP

Yorkshire Provender’s limited-edition summer tomato soup tastes of warm, ripe toms brightened with balsamic, fresh basil and orange juice. Delicious hot or cold – let the weather decide for you.

£2.50 for 600g from Waitrose, available until end of September



I CAN’T BELIEVE IT IS BUTTER

Creamy and pleasingly salty, The Butter Works Softer Butter is wonderfully creamy. It seems softer than similar butters I’ve tried, and you can just about spread it straight from the fridge. Slather on toast for a savoury treat that needs no pimping.

The Butterworks Softer Butter, £1.90 for 250g, Morrisons



SPREADABLE PIMM’S

The favourite summer tippie has found its way into a jam – Pimm’s Strawberry, Tangerine & Mint Preserve. It really does taste of Pimm’s, although we didn’t get much mint. I enjoyed it but would prefer a slightly softer set. *£2.49 for 330g from Asda and Waitrose, available all year round*



in the know.

VALENTINA’S BEST OF THE REST

PERSONAL-PICK RUNNERS-UP FROM OUR PRODUCE AWARDS AMBASSADOR

THIS MONTH Gooseberry gin liqueur by Windsor’s Fruit Liqueurs



“I’ve always been slightly addicted to gooseberries; growing up in Italy they were a rare treat. So my heart lifted at the sight of this slender bottle of pale gold delight – and I wasn’t disappointed. Smooth and

not at all reminiscent of gin, it’s an even more special pleasure when drizzled over good-quality vanilla ice cream as an affogato (the word means ‘drowned’, so it doesn’t have to be made with coffee, as is usual).

Alternatively, just sip slowly – on its own or over ice cubes.’ *£16.50 for 200ml, windsorsfruitliqueurs.co.uk*



FOR BETTER BBQ

There are times when you want to barbecue things that are small enough to slip through the bars on the grill (I’m thinking prawns, veg and slices of halloumi), but don’t want the fiddle of skewer-threading. That’s where this Scandinavian cast iron griddle pan comes in. Handmade to last a lifetime, the plate stays hot for ages after taking it off the heat, keeping food warm in the run-up to serving.

Skeppshult Grill & Frying Plate, £82, eu.skeppshult.com (please note that prices on the website are in euros)