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Giving the Gift of Kitsch

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When it comes to the Festival of Lights, there is no shortage of gift schmaltz. Since the Forward first published festive holiday picks under the headline "Give the Gift of Kitsch" in 2005, schlock options have grown exponentially. The phenomenon originally explored in these pages has expanded to include such winners as the new Latka Spatula — the kitchen implement that sounds like Yiddish.

So which gifts take the prize on the fifth anniversary of our kitsch guide? Strictly the kitchiest of the kitsch: those celebrating Jewish tradition with whimsy, humor and innovation. Our recommendations, culled from sources coast to coast, are ranked in ascending order, growing light by light until the schmaltz glows in full eight-candle splendor. And the "shamash round" of honorable mentions, named for the ninth "helper" candle, shmears the love a little further.

Should you decide to take the plunge for the loved ones on your shopping list, be sure to order soon. The first night of Hanukkah is December 11.



7). The seventh candle has got nothing on Mama Doni. In the short time since her namesake band appeared on the music scene about a year ago, this award-winning, family-friendly entertainer has released three albums. Her latest, "Chanukah Fever: 13 Macca-beats for the Whole Family," features the beloved "The Funky Gold Menorah," "The Legend of Sour Cream vs. Apple Sauce" and "La Vida Dreidel." The Mama Doni Band, www.mamadoni.com, \$15.

Shamash Round: Honorable Mentions

Who wouldn't want to fry and flip latkes on a stainless steel latke server?

The Latke Spatula. SpertusShop.com, (888) 322-1740, \$5.

Gag Menorah Glasses offer an aura of goofiness and UV protection — seriously!

The Source for Everything Jewish, www.jewishsource.com, (800) 426-2567, \$9.99.

Lisa Alcalay Klug is the author of "Cool Jew: The Ultimate Guide for Every Member of the Tribe" (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2008), a humorous exploration of Jewish identity, pop culture and kitsch, and is a National Jewish Book Award finalist.

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