

Published January 23, 2007

Valentine's Gifts That Have Heart

Beth J.Harpaz

I love you so much, I saved the world.

What more could your beloved ask for than that? To showcase undying devotion alongside your altruism, here are some Valentine's Day gifts with good deeds attached: organic flowers, fair-trade chocolate, diamonds that help remove land mines, and a perfume whose maker frets about global warming.

Flowers

Sending flowers might improve your relationship. But can it improve the world?

Yes, according to Amy Stewart, author of "Flower Confidential: The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful in the Business of Flowers" (Algonquin Books, February). Through the Organic Bouquet organization, you can order "Charitable Bouquets" for \$50 to \$75 plus shipping; proceeds go to charity.

"You can choose red roses for the American Red Cross, tulips for the Nature Conservancy, or calla lilies that support the Jane Goodall Institute, to name a few," Stewart said.

Some bouquets are 100 percent organic; others are certified by VeriFlora, a new eco-label that guarantees they were grown under decent conditions for workers and environmentally sound farming practices. Florists can also locate suppliers through VeriFlora's Web site.

"Many in the floral industry share my belief that 2007 is going to be the year of the 'green revolution' in cut flowers," she said.

- Organic Bouquet: Go to www.organicbouquet.com/c-21/charitable-gifts.html
- **VeriFlora: www.veriflora.com**

Chocolate

You likely have seen fair-trade coffee in bags with pretty designs and an interesting story about the place where it was grown.

Now get ready for fair-trade chocolate.

"In the next year, we're going to see an increase in the demand for fair-trade chocolate," predicted Nicole Chettero of Trans Fair USA, which certifies fair-trade products. "Fair-trade chocolate grew almost 85 percent in 2005 alone." And its reputation is approaching the "high-quality, gourmet" buzz of fair-trade coffee, she said.

Fair-trade chocolate means "not only did it come from a small, democratically elected collective of cacao producers, but they were paid above-market prices, and no child labor was used," Chettero said. While fair trade does not equal organic, she said it does connote "sustainable farming, strict environmental standards and none of the worst pesticides."

Theo Chocolate, a Seattle maker of premium chocolates, is the only "bean-to-bar" fair-trade chocolatier in the U.S., meaning that they roast the beans here in addition to creating confections, Chettero said.

"We have a smoking hot Valentine's Day Aphrodisiac collection," said Pamela Hinckley, Theo's West Coast sales manager. The six-piece box of organic ganache, \$13.99 plus shipping and handling, can be ordered from Theo at 206-632-5100. (The chocolate only has a three-week shelf life, so it won't be shipped until Feb. 1.) The box is wrapped in pink, red and brown paper.

Another high-minded chocolate enterprise is Divine Chocolate. The Ghanaian farmers who grow the beans own 33 percent of the company, according to Erin Gorman, CEO of its just-launched U.S. division.

Divine Chocolate Valentine gifts decorated with red and white hearts (a \$35 basket, \$16 box and \$14 bag) can be bought through several nonprofit organizations.

- Trans Fair USA: www.transfairusa.org
- Theo Chocolate: www.theochocolate.com
- Divine Chocolate sold by Catholic Relief Services: divine.serrv.org/crs/cart.php?mproduct-list&c8
- Divine Chocolate sold by A Greater Gift: www.agreatergift.org/Gifts/Valentines/GiftSets.aspx

Diamonds

What do diamond mines have to do with minefields?

Igloo Diamonds make the connection by donating to Adopt-a-Minefield to have mines removed in Mozambique. Diamond prices range from \$900-\$35,000; Igloo gives a percentage of the markup on each gem toward clearing minefields. For a \$5,000 diamond sold, the company would give about \$240 to Adopt-a-Minefield, and that amount of money pays to have over 1,500 square feet cleared of mines, according to Gad Zak, president of Igloo Diamonds. The bigger the diamond sold, the bigger the minefield cleared.

The diamonds come from mines in Canada's Northwest Territories, about 120 miles from the Arctic Circle. They are available loose, set in rings or in solitaire pendants, and come with a certificate from Adopt-a-Minefield and Igloo attesting to the minefield clearance.

Zach Hudson, program manager of Adopt-a-Minefield, said mines were laid in Mozambique for three decades, ending in the early 1990s, in various conflicts. "Now we're dealing with the ramifications of what was put in the ground," he said. About 350 sites in the country are believed to be contaminated by unexploded mines, putting more than a half-million people at risk, he said. In 2005, the last year for which data is available, 57 people were killed or injured by mines; typically half the casualties survive, but most who die are children, Hudson said. He added that so far, the organization has received \$20,000 from Igloo Diamonds to pay for mine removal. "We're definitely very excited about it," he said.

- Igloo Diamonds: diamonds.org
- Adopt-a-Minefield: www.landmines.org

Perfume

You can make your beloved smell beautiful, and support environmental action at the same time.

- The bottom line: If you spring for the \$270 1.7-ounce bottle of Royal Ceylan perfume by the House of Creed, available only from Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman, the company donates 10 percent of the proceeds (from U.S. sales) to the Natural Resources Defense Council.
- The back story: Erwin Creed, a member of the seventh generation to take part in his family's Paris-based perfume business, was asked by his father what he wanted for his 26th birthday, according to Adam Brecht, a company spokesman. The younger Creed expressed an interest in stopping global warming. Both Creeds are avid skiers and worry about climate change in the Alps. They decided to support the NRDC.

House of Creed fragrances have been worn by royalty and celebrities, from Queen Victoria to Audrey Hepburn, according to Brecht. Royal Ceylan ingredients include lotus flowers from Sri Lanka, tea, ginger, tangerine and cedar; it has a lush, complex, tropical scent that subtly changes as it warms on your skin.

Because Royal Ceylan is new, no money has yet been donated to NRDC, but NRDC spokeswoman Jenny Hudson confirmed the arrangement.

- House of Creed perfume: www.creedcollection.com
- Natural Resources Defense Council: www.nrdc.org

Associated Press writer Sam Dolnick contributed to this story. **Fair trade and organic: how do you know?**

What does it mean when something claims to be "fair trade" or "organic," or when products are said to be made under conditions that protect workers and the environment?

And how can you be certain that the claims are true?

For fair-trade products, look for the "Fair Trade Certified" seal, a black and white logo that is displayed prominently on products such as Newman's Own Organics coffee and Starbucks' Cafe Estima Blend.

"Fair Trade Certified" is a trademarked label, described by TransFair USA as "an independent, third-party consumer guarantee that companies have complied with strict economic, social and environmental criteria." Those criteria including direct trade with farmer organizations, bypassing middlemen; fair prices and decent working conditions for workers; democratic decision-making associations for workers and farmers; and sustainable agriculture, including restrictions on use of chemicals. TransFair USA, one of 20 organizations that label fair-trade products, says it is the only third-party certifier of fair-trade products in the U.S.

The Web site www.transfairusa.org lists fair-trade brands of coffee, tea and other products.

For organic products, look for the "USDA Organic" seal from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which certifies that a product is at least 95 percent organic. For organic meat, poultry, eggs and dairy, the seal means that the products come from animals raised without antibiotics or growth hormones. For produce, the seal means that the produce must be grown without "most conventional pesticides," without synthetic fertilizers, and without bioengineering or ionizing radiation. For more details, go to the USDA Web site, www.ams.usda.gov/nop/Consumers/brochure.html.

VeriFlora, a new label for cut flowers and ornamental plants, establishes standards for agricultural practices used in growing flowers. These include standards for soil preparation, seed planting, production, harvest, and post-harvest handling, according to the Web site www.veriflora.com.

Consumers Union, which publishes Consumer Reports magazine, offers a guide to evaluating a variety of labels at www.eco-labels.org.