

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

WEEK THREE OF FOUR: CHARM BRACELETS, GADGETS FOR WOMEN, FOOD AND WINE



JESSE JENKINS

tech products to women simply shows a profound misunderstanding of them. 'Think of the boardroom, not a teenager's bedroom. No woman would dream of bringing her pink laptop into a meeting. It's about sleek and sophisticated design like the BlackBerry Pearl. Women are tired of products that pink up and dumb down.' So steer well clear of Swarovski crystal-encrusted mobile phones and Hello Kitty laptops if you are looking for a gadget gift that will endear you to your wife/partner/mother/sister this Christmas.

The most important technological feature, according to Dr Genevieve Bell, anthropologist at Intel, is simplicity: 'If you want technology that appeals to women, it needs to work flawlessly the first time out of the box. They don't have the time to faff about.' Maybe that's one reason why women love Apple products like the iMac and iPod. With Apple you literally just plug in and play. Some men apparently get a perverse pleasure in solving

the testosterone technology challenge; most women can't be bothered.

Having consulted the all-female tech gurus at GirlGeekDinners.com and PopGadget.net, here are our recommendations for a very merry Christmas:

THE NEW CASIO EXILM Available in black, blue and silver (and pink!) these fabulous digital cameras are simple, sexy and skinny. They come with YouTube software, making it easier than ever to shoot videos, upload and share.

ZINK DIGITAL CAMERA PRINTER This cool-looking camera is a high-tech version of the Polaroid. No more messing around connecting printers; you print straight from the camera.

APPLE IPHONE With their ground-breaking touch screens and easy and intuitive usability, the iPhone is a winner. It's the sexiest phone around. Only available in the UK on O2.

THE 3SKYPEPHONE This phone allows you to call any Skype number in the world for free, with a monthly subscription. Sure to appeal to women who use Skype on their computers.

ARCHOS 605 WIFI This portable video player is better than a video iPod. You can record shows direct from TV, download videos from the web and listen to music. Big enough to store 200 movies, 1.6 million photos and 95,000 songs, small enough to fit into handbags.

Finally, if you are shopping in the States, you may want to think about picking up the new **CEIVA DIGITAL PHOTO FRAME**. The frames look very cool, and are unique in that they have no need for a computer or memory card.

The frame dials into an existing landline and simply downloads the pictures you want to display. Out here next year.

Basically when it comes to buying gadget gifts for women, the watchwords are style and simplicity. Women may be consummate multi-taskers, but one of the things that we have little desire to spend time on is working out technology. Any of these girlie gadget gifts should win you points this Christmas: just don't assume that we want pink — you may even find that you end up using some of them yourself!

My new best cellar

Dig deep for the wine-lover in your life, says **Jonathan Ray**

I know what I want for Christmas and it ain't socks or handkerchiefs, thanks very much. I want a cellar. A grown-up, temperature-controlled, computer-catalogued cellar with lots of racks and bins for bottles, shelves for books, benches for decanting. I want the whole shebang.

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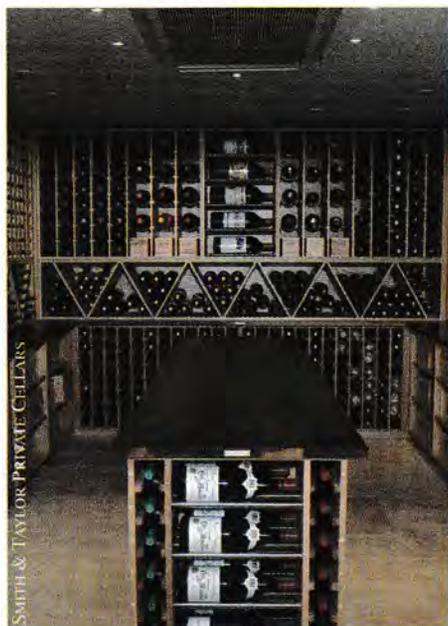
I'm fed up with cracking my head every time I go to the Cupboard of Cobwebs under the stairs in search of a special bottle.

In my line of work I'm lucky enough to get sent a lot of wine — at a rough count there are now 300 bottles encircling me in my study — and I buy a bit too. The trouble is there's nowhere to put it all. The cupboard is groaningly full and I need to drink as fast as I can just to keep a path clear from my desk to the door. Heaven knows what Elfin Safety would say.

When I worked for Berry Bros & Rudd we stored wine for a number of customers, one of whom used to call regularly to ask whether he might come and look at his bottles. He clearly fancied that his purchases were gathering picturesque layers of dust in our 300-year-old cellars in St James's Street when in fact they lay snug in sealed boxes in a modern temperature-controlled warehouse off a roundabout in Basingstoke. We put him off each time, anxious not to disillusion him. He once rang back to check that we were turning his bottles of vintage port regularly 'to keep them fresh'. We assured him that we weren't and explained why.

Like him, I store the few cases of top-notch stuff I own at the merchants whence they came. I long, though, to be able to sit down at home to admire the maturing bottles and talk grandly of 'popping to the cellar for some Sauternes'.

And it appears that I am not alone. Investing in wine has become all the rage and the well-heeled are falling over themselves to buy wine and build fancy-dan cellars in which to show off their Cru Classé clarets and marvel at how much their hard-earned scratch has bought them. David Roberts, an old chum



from Berrys, set up his own wine consultancy a couple of years ago to meet such demand. He advises some 600 clients on their purchases, each of whom spends between £5,000 and £150,000 per year on wine.

'Business is booming,' he says. 'Fewer people are inheriting wine these days and with Russia and the Far East entering the market there is less wine to go round. It makes sense to be proactive and build a portfolio, because if you don't buy *en primeur*, you often won't get another chance to buy such wines when they're mature. Demand for First Growth claret, Grand Cru Burgundy and fine Rhône is rocketing, but supply is finite.'

Since wine is seen as a wasting asset, it is not subject to capital gains tax, and most of David's customers lay down wine not just for drinking but also for capital growth. And it makes a tax-efficient way of passing assets from one generation to another. One friend of mine reckons that by dint of shrewd buying and selling of wine he has put two sons through public school. And, as David points out, if the investment goes pear-shaped, you can always drink it.

'We've never been so busy,' concurs

Sebastian Riley-Smith, MD of Smith & Taylor Private Cellars. 'We used simply to store and manage wine on behalf of our clients, but demand has led us to specialise in the design and build of custom-made cellars too.'

Riley-Smith makes bespoke cellars that range from wine cabinets which hold 500 bottles to whole rooms which accommodate thousands (and cost six figures). Having seen one of these hand-crafted beauties (between a dining room and an indoor swimming pool, since you ask), all glass, maple and oak alcoves with individually controlled temperature and humidity and low fibre optic lighting, I am completely smitten. Wine is clearly no longer to be consigned to the dark downstairs, but to be shown off in the light upstairs.

'Everyone wants the wow factor,' says Riley-Smith. 'In an age where interiors count for so much to so many, a wine room off a dining room, or a wine cabinet within a kitchen, can achieve a two-fold statement both in the quality of the space in its own right and in the quality of the contents. Simply put, wine has become both an interior design and a social statement.'

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