

HOUSE CALLS

# Holiday season etiquette

## What to tip and what to take

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FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

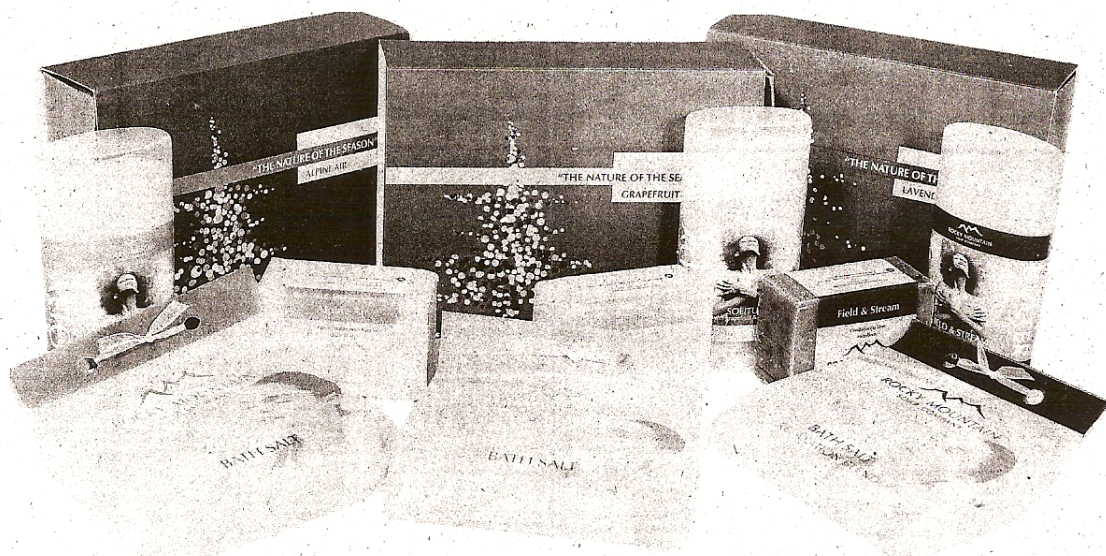
**T**is the season for more than tinsel and lights — it's also a time when gratitude is in order, either for those who've provided excellent service all year or for those who are hosting us in their home. But that leads many of us into a quandary. Exactly how much should we tip... and what can we take as a guest that goes beyond the usual flowers or chocolates?

I talked to Cynthia Pickering, founder and owner of Calgary's Time is Money Executive Concierge Service (timeismoney.ca) about this potentially tricky subject. How do you say thank you adequately, without going over the top?

"Every situation is so personal that you really do have to look at the situation, look at the relationship with that service provider or hostess and let that be your guide," she says. "It's really about putting that little bit of extra thought into things."

She also notes that tipping shouldn't be something that's necessarily expected. "To me, it should be something that means you've gotten exceptional service... if someone's going to work hard, I'm going to really reward them," she says, adding that it doesn't have to be done at Christmas — you could always try saying "happy new year" instead, to start 2008 off right.

Pickering likes the idea of personalizing your offering, whether it's a tip or a host gift. "Try to customize it if you know the person, to what their personality is or what they like doing," she suggests. "Put it into context — if your newspaper guy is just trying to make an extra little bit of money, I bet he needs that night out for him and his wife and



Photos courtesy, Rocky Mountain Soap Company, Canadian Tire, Fruits & Passion

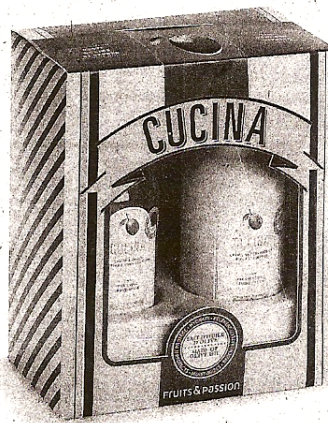
could really use that \$100 gift certificate to Earls.

"It also depends on the relationship you have with the person who's providing the service. If you don't know them very well, it might be monetary: you can get a prepaid Tim Hortons card, Starbucks card, Chapters card or movie coupons — one of the more general places and something pretty standard. That keeps it general enough that they'll enjoy it and you're still saying thank you."

If you know the person better, however, get more specific. One of Pickering's clients is giving her child's teachers gift baskets, tailored to the individual.

On that note, she suggests gift baskets, magazine subscriptions and Christmas dec-

orations as handy ideas — a frequent traveller's basket could include a passport holder, luggage tag, Thermos and magazine subscription, for example, and a bottle of wine could come in a beautiful wine carrier.



**Small but thoughtful gift ideas include, from top, Rocky Mountain Soap Company gift sets (locally and naturally produced), Fruits & Passion "Cucina" kitchen gifts for the cook, and an insulating bottle bag (preferably filled), inset left, from Canadian Tire to keep water or wine cool for the traveller.**

### Holiday tipping guidelines

The folks at Emily Post (emilypost.com) emphasize that these amounts are merely guidelines, and that what to give is your choice:

- Babysitter: One evening's pay, plus a small gift from your child
- Barber: Cost of one haircut
- Beauty salon staff: Cost of one salon visit, split among the staff
- Child's teacher: Check the school's policy first, but consider a homemade or small gift from your child or a joint gift such as restaurant or bookstore gift certificate from the whole class
- Day-care providers: \$25 to \$70 each and/or a small gift from your child
- Personal fitness trainer: Up to the cost of one session
- Housekeeper/cleaner: Up to one week's pay and/or a gift
- Newspaper deliverer: \$10 to \$30 (for Calgary Herald subscribers, you can call 235-7323 to arrange monthly or one-time tips, or to let the carrier know you're leaving something in your mailbox; the average tip is \$2 a month or \$24 for the year)