

# Culinary GIFT IDEAS

Statewide organization offers tips on how to support local businesses and give a great gift this season.

story by CATHY SHOUSE

If the Indiana Foodways Alliance played a character in the classic movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, it would be Clarence the angel. That's because the nonprofit organization lifts up the food industry in the state by promoting restaurants and other food businesses, which have navigated some choppy waters recently.

IFA is inviting Hoosiers to join its own "wonderful," positive philosophy. One way to do that is through buying gift cards from their members' businesses this holiday season. IFA is also shining a spotlight on the state's products that can make the perfect gifts for friends, family, and others such as teachers, neighbors, and service providers. People who do this will have the dual satisfaction of giving a gift and also supporting a local food business.

"Our members have been checked out and go through an assessment process to verify they meet our standards," said Lindsey Skeen, marketing and media director for IFA. "We went a step further and made food trails. By going to [www.indianafoodways.com](http://www.indianafoodways.com), you'll find twenty-one food trails, including The Hoosier Pie Trail™, the Tenderloin Lovers Trail, and the Wine, Wine, Anytime Trail."

IFA member Joe Phillips owns **Pints and Union** in New Albany, an old-world style pub offering European and American classics. He's meeting the ongoing challenges partly by a focus on service, changing the pub's air circulation system, and looking for silver linings.

"We owe each other a sense of strong realism," Phillips said. "Although it has had sad moments, ultimately, we are going to move forward together. The times are creating a sense of unity. We took that for granted before."

He's passionate about people coming in for the full experience and the popular fish and chips and Chicken Tikka Masala. Yet the dad of two young sons, with his wife working as a 911 dispatcher, understands limits. Sometimes giving a gift card or arranging for some take-out beers are the perfect choice. It's why he's made curbside pick-up a permanent option.

"Food is the last real moment that we have," Phillips said. "Eating together and any shared food experience is one of the most personal things you do."

The "I Scream For Ice Cream Trail"™ is one of 21 trails promoted through the Indiana Foodways Alliance.  
PHOTO: Lindsey Skeen

The **Bluebird Restaurant** in Morristown gets personal with homemade sugar cream pies for a yummy gift. Or try hand-dipped almonds from **Lowery's Homemade Candies** in Muncie, wine from **Cedar Creek Winery, Brewery and Distillery** near Martinsville, and gift cards for fish dinners, chicken dinners, pizzas, and more.

Supporting local businesses is a great way to give back to the community, and gifts or gift cards can be used for hostess gifts and other occasions. At Elwood's **Tin Plate** restaurant, which is located not far from the Red Gold company, owner and IFA board member Patrick Rice has listed his business on the Tenderloin Lovers Trail.

"Our roast beef Manhattan's really unique and different. The red gravy has tomato sauce in it from Red Gold," Rice said. "You would not believe the number of people that come through my doors because of what the Alliance is doing for us. Earlier this year, people buying gift cards, along with community support, is what sustained us. All of the different



Patrick Rice of the Tin Plate in Elwood makes some of Indiana's best pork tenderloin sandwiches.  
PHOTO: Elizabeth Granger



The massive tenderloin sandwich at 33 Brick Street in French Lick.  
PHOTO: Visit French Lick West Baden

local businesses, we all kind of banded together and gave each other tips to make it through."

It's that shared connection that is behind everything IFA does.

"The best part of my job is connecting with the restaurant owners," Skeen said. "They've all got a story and we're inviting fellow Hoosiers to contribute to

one of their chapters. A gift card, maybe with a note naming a specialty food or drink your family has enjoyed, can add that personal touch. Whether in big or small amounts, everything helps. We're hoping to expand on 'buy local,' take it to a whole new level."

Who knows? Maybe there is a part of Clarence the angel inside of us all.

21 Trails.  
1 State.  
200+  
great culinary  
experiences.

INDIANA  
**FOODWAYS**  
ALLIANCE

For a full list of trails and members, go to [www.indianafoodways.com](http://www.indianafoodways.com)

Support the Indiana Foodways Alliance and you'll be supporting local businesses throughout Indiana.



Pints & Union in New Albany offers a great variety of food and drinks, and now has permanent curbside pick-up options.  
PHOTO: Pints & Union

