

An Oregon Cottage Podcast

Episode 66: DIY Christmas Gift Ideas

Brian: Welcome to episode 66 where you, the listener are going to learn about Christmas gifts you can easily make yourself. You know, do you think even somebody like me could make these things myself that we're going to talk about?

Jami: Oh, of course some of them take more skill than others, but I'm sure you could do it. We also have some yard and garden updates, some true actual yard and garden updates because I made a mistake last episode. But real garden, yard and garden updates - say that fast couple of times. Plus I'm excited to share with you some ideas for edible DIY Christmas gifts.

Brian: And actually edible gifts can be the solution for giving a gift to the person who has everything, it's a great way.

Jami: Right! Or limited space. In my experience, people really value getting homemade food gifts.

DIY Christmas Gift Ideas

Brian: Well, it is the season for talking about DIY gifts, you know, things that are really meaningful to people plus that are within your budget because you're making them. But also we decided to talk about it because Jami's video about making homemade gifts had a huge spike in viewership in the past two weeks.

Jami: And the only in the past two weeks? [Yeah.] Oh, I thought it had been the past month.

Brian: No, about two weeks. Yeah. It just, it just shot up.

Jami: Right. So I wanted to talk about some of the gifts in the video and some things I've learned from viewers who've commented on them.

Brian: And the video is called, it's on YouTube of course, and it's called 17 Homemade Gift Ideas In Six Minutes. And it is like, that sounds like a rush. It's not that rushed.

Jami: We were trying to make it even shorter and we found out it's really hard to talk about these wonderful gifts in a really short amount of time.

Brian: I know. Give 30 seconds to each. Anyway, just a little inside baseball - what, for us, we call it going viral.

Jami: Inside baseball? What does that mean?

Brian: Meaning it's kind of the tech and the stats behind that most people might not care about, but people are curious. Well, okay, when we say a video goes viral, for us on your video channel, that's thousands of views a day. So that's unusually high. A couple thousand. This thing was getting like at its peak it was getting like, I think like 10,000 views a day. So, that's pretty substantial.

Brian: Yeah, that is very substantial for us. Vast majority of ours get in the hundreds of views a day - except for the paper floor.

Jami: Yep, the paper floor is perennially popular.

Brian: So what were some of your favorite gifts from the video? Out of the 17.

Jami: I loved all of them and most of them are not my own gifts. Most of them are from my family, which was one of the wonderful things about it. I did mention the chalk gifts that we've given because you can do so many things with chalk and I still love them to this day. Some of them are napkin rings. There's cupboard doors that we made into chalkboards - very popular. I love them. You know, it's something that you would use and other people would use. I really like the photo gifts that we've had from family. The ones that your sister made of the kids on the beach, remember those? I mean those are just, we'll have those forever.

Brian: I know, you can't really redo those.

Jami: And then of course I had mentioned on the video that we'll just cherish that wooden game that our sister-in-law made us, she calls it Dirty Marbles. That's what they called it when she was growing up. But it was this wooden, this beautiful wooden game, you know, complete with the marbles and all the directions.

Brian: Yeah, that was, it was really cool, actually. Quite some crafts work that went into that. See I, that's one I don't think I could make.

Jami: No. Well she had some help with that too, but yeah, I couldn't make it either.

Brian: So one of the great things about a video going viral is you get many, many more viewers. And so you get comments, you get feedback from people. Cause normally you put a video out there on something, you have no idea what people think. If they're confused, maybe if they like it. Sometimes you just get some weird comments.

Jami: You mean on YouTube? You always get weird comments on YouTube.

Brian: But sometimes not many comments. Not many that are useful. But in this case when many, many, many people see it, you get enough comments that you can get some useful feedback.

Jami: It's the kind of video, though, that most of the comments really are, "wonderful ideas," "great ideas," you know, "thank you for these ideas."

Brian: Oh it's just an applause. Yeah. Nice. Nice job.

Jami: But that's nice because we have other videos where we don't get such nice comments.

Brian: No, people are not happy.[laugh]

Jami: Anyway, one person was said she was inspired to get out her sewing machine and make some potholders. I thought that was nice. And another one was inspired to make some gift photos. Just, you know, remembering how you can make them for people like we just said, that we'd have forever. But the funniest comment to me was the one...I casually mention in the video, I'm showing some mug gifts and I say, "you know, everybody needs mugs." So they took umbrage with that and they're like, "everybody needs mugs? I don't think so."

Brian: [laughing] People don't need mugs...But you know, I am of the opinion, people can get too many mugs. So the law of containers takes over like we've faced. Where if we get a mug and it's very special, another mug has got to go. So maybe, I don't know, maybe I half agree with that.

Jami: Well, okay, maybe I shouldn't have said "need" a new mug, but I will take a specialized, personalized mug any day over the mass produced mugs in our cupboard. So if we get a mug like that, I'm going to keep that and I will get rid of some of the other mugs because you're right, we don't need a ton of mugs.

Brian: Well, unless you have a bunch of people over, then you do need a ton of mugs.

Jami: And we have run out before!

Brian: Yeah, once a year. Hot chocolate for 16 people and yikes, where are the mugs.

Jami: That's when you go with the paper cups, I guess.

Brian: So what were some other, besides the mugs, what were some other things that you were, you've just been especially happy with among those gifts?

Jami: Well, actually I didn't really mention a lot of gifts that we've made on the video. So what I thought I'd do is just kind of like, mention a few on the blog that are super popular or newer gifts. So these are DIY gifts that you can make, um, literally in, well some of them minutes. Some of them just take minutes to make, other ones maybe take a little bit longer. So the first one is actually, it's an older tutorial on the blog, but I just updated it with newer, better photos and um, easier to understand. And it's the log carrier. Do you remember? I made you one one?

Brian: Yeah. I used to use that to trudge out to the log pile - or the woodpile.

Jami: Yeah. And I've made it to give to some of our friends and, um, it's super easy. I mean, if you can sew a straight stitch, you just get some canvas and webbing and a straight stitch on a sewing machine and it's less than an hour. And log carriers, so to carry wood to your fireplace and it really helps to not, cause before we had that, you would just bring them in like in your arms and you'd get it all over you. You'd get the bark all over you and then a trail would be left,

Brian: Right. And moss and even yellow jacket sleeping in the wood.

Jami: That's right. It really did help with cleaning. I mean, so it's a very useful thing. But making it yourself is literally less than \$10. So even though they're not that expensive to buy, it's still way less to make it. And again, special. Um, if you're a knitter, I have on the blog a gift idea for knitted cable headbands and there's a printable you can download that you can wrap around it so that people know what it is. And, um, this is a super easy cable stitch. Like, I made these in an hour. They're super easy. So if you're a knitter, that's a great one. And I gave those to all the nieces and nephews and my sisters, everybody loved them. They just loved them. That was a good one. The next one is at was actually your idea, the hot sauces in a box.

Brian: Oh, the hot sauce is in a box. What do we call that?

Jami: We called it a hot sauce bar, I think.

Brian: Oh, hot sauce bar. That's right. Yeah. And I just took scrap wood and it made it easy because I had a chop saw to cut the wood and I had a pneumatic air nailer because you just, it went together quickly in just a few minutes. And I made little, like little elongated crates out of old recycled wood and then filled them with hot sauces. Like four or five hot sauces.

Jami: Yeah, I think I just shredded some paper, put them in there. And then,

Brian: We made a little personalized sign for the front of it.

Jami: Just with a computer.

Brian: Yeah, it was, this was a gift for guys. This seems to be more of a guys thing. Hot sauces.

Jami: Yeah, but you could actually put anything in a box. You could put spa stuff in a box, like make it any box. And you don't have to have a pneumatic gun nailer. Can't you use a hammer and nail it?

Brian: Oh yeah. You can even glue it together.

Jami: So that actually is on the blog too. And then probably the most popular gift that I've ever given, I actually even made it and took it and sold it at craft fairs a number of years ago, was the flax seed warming pillows. Again, straight stitch sewing, super easy, relatively cheap. Everybody loved them. I kept getting requests for them. Years later they'd wear out the one they had and they'd ask for another one. My nieces and nephews asked for one one year. Do you remember that? That is super popular. So, um, that is a great idea too. And these are just like four that I just pulled out. There are just many more ideas in the project gallery. So if you go to the project gallery on the blog and the crafts and handmade gifts area, you'll get tons of ideas.

Brian: Right. So there are, so the 17 in the video, a bunch were given to us, so some of them necessarily, there aren't instructions. But then on the blog you can go there and get full instructions on these and ideas. That's great. Okay.

Yard & Garden Updates

Brian: Well the weather has been relatively mild here for late October, early November. And in Oregon that means no snow. I mean mild means you may get rained on a little bit.

Jami: Well, very little. We've actually been quite dry. Yeah. After having record rain in September so that all the vegetables kind of moldered. Then we've gotten hardly any rain since then. So we're, we're now lacking.

Brian: So you put on a sweatshirt and gloves, maybe a little, get a little bit warm and we've been doing that and actually getting things checked off our list in the yard and garden.

Jami: Yes. And so what I mentioned in the opening that I had, this was actually some updates that we finished because in the last episode I mentioned again this mound that we and the brick wall that we took down, but we'd already mentioned that in the previous episode. So it wasn't a new thing. So I was kind of living off that for two episodes.

Brian: Oh man. So for people with bad memories, that sounded good, but for the rest of you, oddly familiar,

Jami: But these are actually new. And one I'm really excited about is our little orchard that we planted. So we have a cherry tree that was on the property, very old cherry tree. And next to the cherry tree I've now planted four other, um, dwarf and semi dwarf little fruits. So two Italian plums for the dried plums that we love. And then two apples. And why did we decide apples?

Brian: We like apples. They grow well here. You had a little strategy on early and late, didn't you?

Jami: Yes, I made sure to get them a month apart so that we'll get the first one. So there's a Spitzenberg. And then one called a Woosten or, oh I can't remember the name of it, but it's a native to the Northwest which I thought was kind of cool. And they both they ripen one month apart, so I mean they'll probably overlap, but at least we'll start getting some early and some later.

Brian: And some late. Yeah. Oh they're just so good.

Jami: No, but I, the reason that we weren't going to do a bunch of fruit trees cause we didn't want the maintenance of pruning them and all that. But you missed apples. You missed having apples.

Brian: Oh yes, that's true. I know, I know. Those cherries are ripe for like one week. They're very narrow. They're good, but man, you're kind of sick of cherries. There are a lot of them. Well I was able to finally get the garden watering system

finished and that involved, I think we've done videos on how it was done before and talked about it. We, we use, um, three quarter inch PVC, buried, so that you can use a computer and just set it and forget it. So that we're not in the middle of the night in bed, and one of us says to the other, did you shut the water off out in the garden?

Jami: Which has been our life, our gardening life up until now. And we actually had the other half of the garden going on that all summer. Wasn't it wonderful?

Brian: Oh, it was great. Yeah, it just worked. And so the thing, I mean, PVC other, other than it's really cheap and it's really easy to put together. It's like putting Legos together with a little bit of glue. I mean, you, you kinda, I didn't even use a measuring tape. You kind of hold your thing up, cut it, slide it in with a little bit of glue and boom, you're onto the next thing. It's relatively simple. It's very hardy. And then we buried it. We don't need to bury it because of freezing, but just so that getting stepped on. So it's enough underground, you don't see it. And then, uh, yeah.

Jami: So you don't step on it. And we did add sand because we have a lot of gravel and we didn't want gravel poking into it.

Brian: Right, gravel could poke into it. So anyway, yeah, that's all done. I'm glad.

Jami: Yes. And the other part that we wanted to finish out there was, well we made a little patio. I did talk about it on Instagram and saved it to the garden stories. So if you didn't see that on Instagram you might want to. But we're calling it the coffee patio that is in the vegetable garden. And we're making it with some broken concrete we have, which is actually called urbanite. Did you know that?

Brian: I sort of knew that.

Jami: There's a movement in the gardening, you know, reuse, recyclable, I don't know, what do you call that - people, to reuse all this broken concrete that just gets in the landfills. So they, they've had a lot of really great ideas that I saw from it. Like, you know, building walls like garden walls, and then they have plants hanging over them. And the rough edges kind of grow moss, well where we live, it grows moss. You know, it just kind of looks a little rustic. So it's a little more rustic, but it's kind of cool. And in our other house we had used them for stepping stones and edging of garden paths. And we did to a path up to the porch with it as well. So, um, we used some of our broken concrete, of which we have a LOT.

Brian: A lot. And broken like path and patio, so it's relatively thin. I mean, you can get, concrete gets really heavy if it's like chunks, you know, cinder block size chunks.

Jami: These are, I would say they're like one by one (foot), you know, or eight by eight.

Brian: Yeah, they're relatively like, yeah, no more than a foot and a half across. And then probably three inches thick, right around there. Some a little thicker, a little bit. Yeah. Lifiable by a human.

Jami: So, uh, we set that patio and then we just fill it. So we leveled it as much as we can. And then we just filled it. We swept in dry concrete mix and then wetted it down. And I think it's good.

Brian: We keep walking on it and it's not cracking it so it's pretty solid.

Jami: Yeah, it's looking really good. I think we need to do one more little cover of, you know, just plain mortar to fill in some little holes. But other than that, it looks really cool. And then that, those were kind of the last things that needed to happen before I could finish the woodchip paths. And because the weeds are still growing in that, in that gravelly area, they're just like, they don't stop. These weeds even when it's winter, they just grow. So we did get, I got half of the woodchip paths laid. So we finished the patio, finished the watering system, got half the wood chip paths laid. Hopefully by the time this airs, um, after Thanksgiving we might have the rest of the chips laid.

Brian: I know I've got to find another cardboard source.

Jami: Yeah, got to have some cardboard.

DIY Food Gifts

Brian: Well, the holidays are a special time for food. People are making all kinds of really good things they don't normally make. And it's also a great time to give as gifts, special food that you make.

Jami: Yes. I think DIY food gifts are like some of the best ones you can give you. You can give them to, you know, your kid's teachers, your neighbors, hostess gifts, the bus driver and your family. Like they just work for everybody. They work for everybody, friends and family. And um, they're relatively inexpensive and I don't think you ever have to feel bad about giving a jar of homemade granola or something to someone. Because to me that's, that's special.

Brian: Mm hm, and we've received them like, wow, this is, you can't get this in a store. This is like really precious. This person made it for us.

Jami: Yeah. So, I do have quite a few on the blog and I thought I'd just highlight a couple. Um, Mason jar gifts are always welcome and most of the things you just put in a Mason jar and you can do. We tend to think of Mason jar cookies or desserts or something. Okay, I've got two pancake mixes on the blog. One of them is a cinnamon oat and one of them is a gluten free buckwheat, oat, and cinnamon mix. And they're not only just good to give, but they're actually really delicious. I keep these mixes in our cupboard just to use them because they're very good. Another unusual one is red beans and rice. And so you can give a whole meal in a jar to someone with the seasonings and the red beans and rice. And then you can actually even do a little jar of focaccia bread and give it with it.

Brian: Oh my gosh. And so you just take the jar and you just dump all the red beans and rice all at once?

Jami: Well, no. No, there's directions and they're kind of separated. So you have to do the beans first.

Brian: Read the directions. [laugh] If the jar has directions, read the directions.

Jami: Yeah. And then, uh, another little fun one I gave one year was this, ranch dressing in a jar. So I took a Mason jar, cause it was all about these lids. You can get those really cool Mason jar lids that have a pop top on them. And we now, it's like the gift that keeps on giving because we, I got one for ourselves and we just use them. I mean, that's what we use for our salad dressings because they're so easy to mix up the dressing in the jar and then use a pop top.

Brian: And that was really popular. People love those lids. I mean they liked it, it was neat. It was kind of like, if you can get a little kitchen gadget and innovative gadget that solves a problem that goes with food you've made, that's like the winning combination, right there.

Jami: Yeah. And that was the idea. So, um, that was kind of fun. And then of course there's the ever popular baskets. So, we, one year we did a sundae basket, which was really kind of fun.

Brian: Not like Sunday day of the week, but like hot fudge sundae. Yes. Okay.

Jami: But some even little homemade toppings. And others, a breakfast idea, a breakfast basket idea on the blog and peppermint mocha baskets. Those were really popular, super easy too. You know, you can even just use a quart Mason jar and put anything you want in it. You can make a homemade granola. Like I mentioned, you can make some spice nuts and put those in there. You could do some homemade candies. You know, I've got one on the blog, a chocolate peanut butter cups, and they're kind of a healthier peanut butter cup. You put those in a jar, everybody will love them. Inexpensive quick, you got a gift.

Cool Things

Brian: Well, something I keep talking about that I like to do is run. Like, I like to run 5Ks and that kind of thing. And I like to get my running out of the way in the morning. That's usually when it's coldest. And so I'm always, instead of dressing like a, you know, a snowboarder wearing a bunch of stuff, trying to run, you want to wear the least amount possible, but keep your hands and feet warm. That's the hardest thing when running. It's when your fingers and toes are cold, you're miserable. So, um, one thing that I've found lately that is quite amazing, cause I was kind of skeptical but I read about it on the REI website, is a silk stocking. So it'd be a liner, it kind of acts, it's a silk white silk sock that acts as a liner inside cold weather socks. And then the same thing, you can get gloves that are also like glove liners made out of silk. And it's really amazing the amount of warmth that they add. And I have to say I've tried, I bought like these, you know, high-performance warm weather socks that are kind of thick off of Amazon and got like their top..

Jami: You mean cold weather sock?

Brian: Cold weather. What did I say?

Jami: Warm weather.[laugh]

Brian: It feels like it's warm weather when it's cold weather. And they were okay, you know, down to a certain level. But really, when it's really cold you just kind of need that extra insulation. Especially if you're wearing, you know, little running shoes. So,

Jami: And by really cold you were in the 20s.

Brian: Yeah. Like under when it's, I won't go like in the low 20s, but when it's just below freezing and I use minimal running shoes. And so I had tried wearing like, an extra layer like dress socks underneath these warm socks and they didn't, it didn't really do it. I would still get, my toes, would still get really, really cold. So I went on, this is on Amazon and we'll have the links to them, I got ,they're like 80% silk and there these, they're these really long socks. They look like some kind of what a school girl would be wearing and it's kind of weird. But um, I, they, when you put them on, it just feels like a thin dress sock. It's like, how is this gonna work? And I put them on and ran when it was in the low 30s and my toes were just like toasty warm. And the same thing when I had running gloves and wore the silk liners underneath, the same thing. And it must trap an extra layer of air? There must be something about silk. Silk must be some kind of super fiber. Anyway, they're not super cheap, but they are worth it for keeping your hands and feet warm in any kind of cold weather activity, really.

Jami: Wow. My really cool thing is not like yours at all, but anyway. It's a Micellar cleansing water. And, I think years ago I might've mentioned it on the blog once, but I thought I'd mention it again because it is kind of amazing to me. Uh, I was, I guess in one way it's similar because I was very skeptical. I'm like, I use water to wash my face. Why would I buy water?

Brian: Are you serious? [Yes!] It's better than tap water for washing your face.

Jami: That's what it says. But you know, I think I must, I don't know what made me try it, but I tried it and it really works. It really works. It just gets off way more than just using water on your face. And I don't really know why. There's some sort of science about it. Um, I use Garnier Skin Active, Micellar water, uh, cleansing water. There's other ones and they're different. Some have aloe and whatever, but I just use the plain one. And I, you know, I just put it on a round cotton pad and that's what I use to clean my face. I don't have to put any, any chemicals. I don't have to put any drying soap. I just use this water and it takes all the makeup off. It even takes like the mascara off and stuff and water never does that, cause I use waterproof mascara. So it's kind of amazing actually. And I thought I would just mention it again as a cool thing for anyone listening if they have not tried micellar cleansing water, give it a chance because it really is quite amazing.

Brian: Wow. That is amazing. Well that is all that we have time for on this episode. So we would love to get your feedback on anything we've talked about on, we'd love to hear if you have any DIY homemade gifts you've made that had been really popular, we'd love to know what those are. Or you can be one of the, one of the

thousands of people to watch our video, see if you can, see how you feel about mugs. Let Jami know if there's such a thing as too many mugs. We've really appreciate the feedback we've been getting from people. And you can leave that either on the podcast notes page or you can reply to Jami's email newsletter. I hope you are subscribed to that. That is, I read it. It's a really good thing. Or like on Facebook or any of the other, um, the social things. And then also I want to say that we've really appreciated the ratings and reviews we've been getting from people that have been helping people find the podcast, especially on Apple, the Apple platform. So like the podcast app or iTunes, however you do it. So,

Jami: Apple podcasts, there is no more iTunes remember?

Brian: Well, I think there is iTunes because what is there?

Jami: There's Apple music and Apple podcasts and Apple TV.

Brian: Okay. Well anyway, it's doing the job of iTunes, whatever it's done. Anyway, whatever it is. Thank you.

Jami: Thank you.