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We're lucky (??) in that by living in Cyprus we have a steady flow of friends who need to come and remain with us. OK, it means multiple trips to the airport each month but we can keep in touch with home and have someone to share the trials and tribulations of life abroad with. No matter what we love our lifestyle here and I would not change it for anything at all. I am happy to wake up early in the morning and go for some quick joking at the beach and come back to have breakfast. Then i love to take care of my garden, cut the grass, plant some aromatic herbs and pick up some fresh fruits and veggies like oranges, apples, mangos, figs, and lemons to name a few.

Our most recent guests have just returned to the UK and after dropping them off very early at the airport we returned home.

I doubt we were in the apartment for more than half an hour when there was a ring on the doorbell.

We joked that it was our colleagues returned from the airport having missed their flight but upon opening the door we found it was a courier who was delivering an high brow box of chocolates.

My wife undid the little envelope and read that it was a thank you from our colleagues. We've phoned them to thank them for their thoughtfulness but I had cause to think that although the box was welcome, we had already received our thanks from the warm smiles on their faces as we showed them the true Cyprus that these days is too sometimes hidden behind the consumerism.

To make the long story short, I don't know if you're like me or not but at this time of year it is always hard to think of what to get for ultimate Aunt Bertha or cousin Tilly for a December gift. A box of chocolates is nice as a gift but I wanted something else. Did you understand that last year 34% of presents received were classified as 'unwanted' basically meaning that the good concept to get Uncle Eric that rotary soup maker wasn't such a good idea.

some people go for gift vouchers or cash but that seems too impersonal or shows a lack of thought, so what's the alternative?

it is a bit strange, and personally I've thought it a bit unseasonal to do so, but why not send flowers. They last for a good while at this time of year, brighten up drab days and the everlasting message that flowers are sent with love fits in nicely with the season. Last year I sent my aunt a bouquet from CosmeaGardens.com; red carnations and gold sprayed bracken and it looked cute. The carnations had a slight scent that pervaded the rooms of her house and the colours were in keeping with the season. Each time I spoke to her in the year she brought up that gift. So it shows that if you're stuck for ideas, give flowers!

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