

## CATALOG CRITIC

Gift Baskets  
For Bundles of Joy

**WHAT DO YOU GET** for the baby who may have everything?

Those adorable, tiny outfits are often outgrown before new parents have time to do the wash. Educational toys might just be tripped over on groggy, late-night runs to the nursery. And nobody needs another cutesy stuffed animal.

The answer? Be practical.

We went shopping for gift baskets packed with useful baby goods. Over the phone and the Internet, we ordered five baskets, ranging from \$30 to \$100, filled with items that parents of a newborn can use almost immediately.

The \$56.95 basket from **Ishtot** was the most sensible. It was packed with necessary, if not glamorous, baby essentials, such as a nose aspirator, medicine dropper and nail clippers. The company managed to make the pragmatic look presentable by placing the items in a doll-size wicker bassinet, tied with ribbons.

We were also impressed with the \$60 basket from **Bundle of Convenience**. This one had real snob appeal, with its fancy European baby soaps and shampoos. It also included Huggies diapers, disposable changing pads and even a glow-in-the-dark pacifier. But we weren't impressed with the shipping charge: \$20.

For a personal touch, the basket from **Jus-Born** came with the baby's name hand-painted on a plastic bottle, a bib and a photo album, among other things. But at \$79.95, this one seemed expensive

**Everything but the baby:** This diaper bag from **Cornucopia** came with a bib, a burping towel, a brush and comb set, a bottle—and a very soft, machine-washable toy lamb.



for the quality of the items. Some of the choices were odd: Does anybody really need a personalized disposable diaper? We also weren't charmed by the credit-card squeeze toy that was included in this basket.

The basket we received from **Laurel & Co.** was also disappointing. The price—\$30—was very fair for the items we received: three Gerber "Onesies" (T-shirts that cover the diaper and snap between the legs), a bib, two bottles and

## STORE/PRICE/PHONE

**Cornucopia**

\$95.95  
800-977-4712  
(www.cornucopia.ca)

## QUALITY

**Best Overall.** Items were useful and appropriately cute.

## SHIPPING COST/TIME

\$11.95. We ordered online and weren't given an estimated arrival time. It arrived in four days.

## RETURN POLICY

No stated policy. Company said it would replace damaged items and give credit to anyone who wasn't satisfied with the gift.

## TELEPHONE ATTITUDE

We conducted the whole transaction over the Internet in a matter of minutes.

## COMMENTS

Too bad they chose to pack the basket in tiny Styrofoam pieces. The last thing a new parent needs is to have to clean up that stuff.

**Ishtot**

\$56.95  
888-417-4748  
(www.ishtot.com)

**Best Value.** Great presentation for some not-so-pleasant but practical supplies, including a thermometer, Tylenol for infants, and outlet protectors.

\$7.50. Five to seven business days; ours arrived in three.

The company guarantees satisfaction or your money back. Defective or broken items are replaced free.

Courteous.

You may be tagged as a real worry-wart for sending this one.

**Jus-Born**

\$79.95  
800-JUS-BORN  
(www.jusborn.com)

Just OK. If these items weren't personalized, they wouldn't be very impressive.

\$10.95. One to four business days; ours arrived in two.

The company says since it can't resell personalized items, it won't take them back. It will accept requests for substitutions at the time that the order is placed.

Efficient.

We would only send this to parents who really love to see their baby's name everywhere.

**Laurel & Co.**

\$30  
888-320-9128  
(www.laurelco.com)

The cane basket was too big, although the items inside were fine.

\$6. Two to three business days. Ours arrived in two.

The owner said she would take anything back.

Friendly.

This is a one-woman operation. We just wish she had warned us how empty the basket would look. We would have opted for one of her higher-priced offerings.

**Bundle of Convenience**

\$60  
888-777-5053  
(www.bundlebaby.com)

Upscale. For \$60, we got something that looked like we spent a lot more. Too bad the shipping cost was so high.

\$20. Three business days. Ours came in three.

No cash refunds. The company accepts anything back for catalog-credit only.

A tad snobbish but helpful.

The woman on the phone seemed disappointed when we weren't impressed with the names of the French shampoo and German soap included. But she was kind enough to explain their importance.

a rattle. But the cane basket they came in was way too big, and it was stuffed with paper shavings. We would have preferred a smaller basket, instead of giving the impression that we didn't want to spring for enough stuff to fill up this one.

Our favorite was the \$95.95 diaper bag, packed with baby goods, that we

ordered through **Cornucopia's** Web site. The bag was made of washable cotton and looked sturdy; on its own, it would have made a nice gift. But it came with extras like a bib, a burping towel, a brush-and-comb set, a bottle—and a very soft, machine-washable toy lamb. OK, we caved. You really have to send a baby something cutesy.

One thing surprised us: Most of the companies didn't state a formal return policy. Perhaps it's just the nature of their business—the buyers don't usually see what they've paid for, and the recipients, even if they don't like the basket, probably won't have the energy to return it.

—Rebecca Lowell