

# The personal touch

The best Christmas presents are the ones you make yourself but if you don't have time, here are some that we made earlier. All available at the click of a mouse, these gifts have been handmade with painstaking care and skill over the course of days, weeks and even years in various corners of Britain.

Interviews by Sophie de Rosée. Photographs by Kitty Gale

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## **DAI DAVIES** Wooden homewares

Dai Davies lives in deepest west Wales and earns a living by making wooden bowls, spoons, ladles and other objects by hand in his open-air workshop 'up the field', from which he can see the sea. He has won hundreds of awards ('rosettes and silver cups') and his products are sold exclusively through *Blodwen*, an online artisan store selling Welsh textiles and homewares. 'I never learnt how to do this,' Davies, 63, says. 'It's just in me. I started making spoons when I was very young, probably about 10 years old.' He converted the garage next to his house into a showroom and shop that people hear about through word of mouth and from meeting him at country fairs. The wood-turning process is a lengthy one that requires patience and dedication. He buys windblown wood, sometimes entire six- or 10-ton trees, from nearby farms, and hauls them on a tractor and trailer up to his workshop, where he sets about making planks, keeping the better wood for turning and carving, and using the waste to heat his house. The best types of timber for wood-turning include oak, sycamore, beech, ash, laburnum, yew, monkey puzzle, hazel and holly. He painstakingly stacks up the wood to dry out in his workshop; a year for every inch, so a 5in-thick plank takes five years. 'It's possible to dry it faster in a kiln but all mine is done slowly because the older it is, the better it is. I store it all up in my shed under cover. It gets plenty of fresh air through it but no sun; that's the secret.' It takes him three hours to make a spoon and six hours to make a ladle. 'I'm very particular and everything's got to be right all the time. I could make one spoon in an hour but I'd rather take three hours to do a good one than make a rough one in an hour.' *Spoons, from £75; bowls, from £45 (01239-622828; blodwen.com)*

