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Looking for that winning gift? There's no better place for one-of-a-kind finds than San Francisco's most charming shopping district

BY SAMANTHA SCHOECH
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALEX FARNUM

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN you wouldn't park your car in Hayes Valley. Now you can't. Over the past decade or so, the formerly seedy blocks between City Hall and the Western Addition have been transformed. The freeway overpass disappeared, giving way to high-end design shops and bastions of urban fashion. Yes, you can buy a \$6,000 custom sofa here, but the neighborhood still maintains a low-key, local-friendly vibe while being one of the must-go shopping corridors in the city. Here are a few of our favorite stores.



Miette

This button-cute bakery feels vaguely old-fashioned—if the past was filled with floral wallpaper and colorful French confections in rows of neat apothecary jars. Troughs are jammed with old-school chocolate bars, Italian hard candies, and giant swirl lollipops. The homemade *fleur de sel* caramels are to die for on their own but even better covered in Valrhona chocolate. **STOCKING-STUFFER:** The *fleur de sel* truffles, of course, \$20/box of 9. 449 Octavia St.; miette.com



Reliquary

New and vintage treasures with an Americana vibe take over this boutiquey curiosity shop. Among them are classic bandanas, turquoise jewelry on leather cords, and antlers and animal skulls, with Japanese powder perfume thrown in for good measure. **STOCKING-STUFFER:** New Mexican incense holder shaped like an adobe house, \$14. 537 Octavia St.; 415/431-4000. >46D



Lotus Bleu

With its kaleidoscope of colors and textures, Lotus Bleu somehow remains a clash-free zone. Indian print bedding, '50s wallpaper, and metallic rugs mingle in unexpected harmony. You might even feel tempted to move into this pattern-happy home decor shop. **STOCKING-STUFFER:** Bright felt napkin rings, \$8/pair. 325 Hayes St.; lotusbleudesign.com

