

Sochi: Gifts from the Gateway to the Caucasus

The best gifts to bring home from Sochi.

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Legion-Media

Sochi's souvenir game is strong, especially when it comes to food and drink. Don't forget to pick up a few bottles of something tasty so you can relive your trip when you return home.

Olympics

The face of this seaside resort city was changed forever when the Olympics came in 2014, and the memory of the games is still dominant in the city. Even if you've forgotten the images of Leopard, Polar Bear and Hare, the blandly named Olympic mascots, Sochi certainly hasn't and you can still come across Olympic memorabilia.

Markets

You will definitely want to take a trip to the central market, one of the most vibrant in the country, where merchants come from the surrounding regions of Russia as well as the Caucasus to hawk their wares.

Teas

Due to its southern climate, Sochi is home to a number of plants that cannot be found anywhere else in Russia. In addition to palm trees, you can find Krasnodar tea, which is harvested near Sochi. It was the northernmost tea in the world until 2012, when 10 tons were harvested in Cornwall. Also, the Caucasus is home to a number of delicious herbal teas, mixtures of which (according to those who sell them) can cure almost any illness.

For a sweet tooth

You can also find a number of sweets at the market. What you might take for a string of sausages is actually a Georgian sweet called churchkhela. It consists of nuts on a string which have been covered in thickened grape juice and dried. The most traditional ones (and the best) are a reddish brown color. The large tan-colored bricks are a sweet called halva, which also make a great gift. Halva can be made from sesame, sunflower or peanut, so try a few before buying a kilo.

Some like it hot

Food in Russia's south is spicier than in the north, and Sochi locals buy their spices at the market by the bagful. Follow your nose here, and you'll be sure to come across something that will make your next meal delicious. At the same spice stands, you can often spot jars filled with a red sauce; more likely than not, this sauce is adjika, a spicy dip made from chilis. It is excellent on meat, and the spicier varieties can hold their own against sriracha.

Juicy fruit

Walking through the market, it's hard to take your eyes off the glistening fruits that sit in huge piles on every vendor's stand. Indeed, Caucasian fruits are unmatched for their sweetness and juiciness. Taking back fresh fruit is not always feasible (or legal), but dried fruit makes a great gift. One specialty is dried persimmons, which you can buy on a string. As a bonus, you can hang them in your kitchen to recreate the Sochi market vibe in your house (until they're gone, that is).

Wine

The region in which Sochi is located, Krasnodar Krai, is home to much of Russia's budding wine industry. While vineyards were long neglected or harvested for low-quality, high-yield wines during the Soviet era, winemakers have recently started to adopt modern European methods, and quality has improved markedly. You can find some of the region's best bottles at CORKs.

Or something stronger

For something stronger, bring back a bottle of chacha. This festive-sounding drink lives up to its name, and has been the downfall of many a tourist in Sochi. This Georgian brandy is made from grapes and has an alcohol content as high as 65%. You can also find it at the market, or any wine store.

Getting there

Central Market

Moskovskaya Ulitsa, 22

CORKs

Navaginskaya Ulitsa, 7/3 corksbar.ru +7 (900) 252 1077

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