

Make Mom Smile This Mother's Day--No Wrapping Required

[Meghan Casserly](#), 05.04.10, 05:10 PM EDT

Ditch the flowers and the chocolates this Mother's Day and instead give her an experience she won't forget.



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Now, once again, it's Mother's Day. The [National Retail Federation](#) lists the holiday, established in 1914, as the second highest gift-spending holiday in the U.S., with an estimated \$14.6 billion spent each year.

But not all mothers want conventional gifts such as flowers and jewelry. ForbesWoman conducted an informal survey last year, and when we asked women what they wanted for Mother's Day, the [resounding response](#) was to spend time with their loved ones.

Leslie Rotenberg, an executive at PBS, says she'd "love to spend Mother's Day planting flowers with my daughters, followed by dinner made by my husband. The best gift of all would be more time with my family."

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"People rarely remember a gift for years and years, but an experience creates memories that truly can last a lifetime." says Ian Landy, and founder of [Excitations](#), a Washington, D.C., based company

that sells experienced-based gifts such as swimming with sharks and race-car driving lessons. Landy's firm, which counts Mother's Day as the third biggest gifting holiday after Christmas and Father's Day, aims to create memories that suit all manner of tastes and lifestyles ranging from gourmet food and wine tastings to skydiving. "For Mother's Day we're seeing a lot of gifting of picnics and vineyard visits," he says. "They're a great gift for children to give their mothers as they're affordable and can be enjoyed as a group."

Spa services and salon experiences are also a big category for Mother's Day. The National Retail Federation estimates that \$933 million will be spent on relaxation and beautification this May. Pepper Pastor, owner of [Pepper Pastor Salon](#) in New York City, says that in addition to an uptick in gift certificates for moms--which tend to be purchased by sons and husbands--she's seeing more mothers and daughters sharing an afternoon of pampering. "Some of our clients bring their mothers in for makeup lessons on Mother's Day and sometimes both mother and daughter will end up getting a blowout and [makeup] applications before a big Mother's Day brunch," Pastor explains.

This season, Pastor's team has come up with two mother and daughter beauty treatments: "The Dutchess"--a chocolate-themed, deep conditioning hair and skin treatment package complete with champagne and chocolates to snack on--and "The Empress"--a nod to the Russian Amber hair products used and the caviar snack tray included with the package.

For mothers like Melissa Borst, senior vice president and general manager of PNC Merchant Services in Pittsburgh, a clean house and time with her family is her ultimate Mother's Day gift. If this fits the bill, surprise your mom with a visit from [The Maids](#), which offers one-time full house cleanings starting at \$150 an hour.

Whether it's a clean house, a day at a spa or a [wine tasting](#), experience gifts can stay with the recipient much longer than a bouquet of flowers or a box of chocolates. Says Excitations' Landy, "If it creates a lasting memory, it's money well spent."

<http://www.forbes.com/2010/05/04/mothers-day-gift-experience-shopping-forbes-woman-time-spa.html>