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9



This year's trends include this gorgeous take on traditional Christmas colours, with bows, bows and more bows to bring it up to date!

KIRSTIE DUHIG, EDITOR



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Sprinkle a little festive magic!

Welcome to your wonderfully festive December issue, filled with all the inspiration you need for a fantastic Christmas. The festivities start here! So pop on your favourite holiday tunes, pour yourself a glass of fizz and dive into the issue! First up, we're serving you

this year's sparkliest decorating schemes with four

different looks to choose from (p9). Next stop is an **enchanted seasonal welcome, with wow-factor lighting and decor ideas** for your porch, doorscape, hallway and guest bedroom (**p18**). Our Christmas story continues with this issue's stunning real homes – all dressed up for the season. From **cover star Jessica's charming country-style new-build (p26)** to **Dale's modern-rustic Victorian house (p40)** and Christmas superfan **Sarah's maximalist family home with no less than four trees (p50)** – you'll love getting to know our homeowners.

Of course, it wouldn't be Christmas without a festive feast – source of much joy and, for the cooks, often more than a little seasonal stress! This year, whether you're hosting or helping, we asked the experts for their best tips for entertaining like a pro. **Dame Mary Berry, Jamie Oliver, Nadia Sawalha and a host of celebs, top chefs and party planners** have all shared their expertise (**p83**). Interior stylist Laurie shows **how to create a showstopping tablescape** in a few simple steps (**p90**) and for a calmer kitchen on the big day, we're thrilled to present our **three-course make-ahead Christmas menu** with Channel 4's *Batch From Scratch* cooking expert Suzanne Mulholland (**p103**)! Talking of planning, this year's **brilliant gift guide (p61)** will help you tick off your list, and if you love Christmas crafting, we have **12 thoughtful presents to make, too (p77).**

Wishing you a very merry Christmas!

Kirstie

PS. Don't miss it

The next issue of *HomeStyle* is on sale 9th December

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100s of
festive
buys!



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Deck the tree *FOR LESS*

We challenged our style editor, Hannah, to create two brand-new Christmas tree looks – each for less than £40!



This topper is a reassuringly classic shape – it's so ready to be personalised with paint-marker stripes.

Red star Christmas tree topper, £3, B&Q

I love small decorations – they're little gems which reward close attention.

Wooden ornaments for hanging, £4 for 18, Flying Tiger Copenhagen



This bargain bundle includes all the hottest trends this Christmas – flocked details, retro stripes and the all-important bows!

Shatterproof Christmas baubles in Red & Green mix stripe, £16 for 50, Next

**TOTAL
£39.89**

Timeless treasures

This look focuses on traditional details, but I've made sure to give it a modern twist, too. The familiar red and green colour scheme is freshened up with touches of pale blue and soft pink, the tinsel has had an eco-friendly update, and I've found a way to skip my least favourite tradition – untangling the lights!

These remote-controlled candles are the perfect combo of heritage style and modern convenience.

Clip-on LED candle Christmas tree lights in White, £5, Argos



Onion-shaped baubles always add a sense of glamour, and I love the trending burgundy colour.

Christmas glass droplet in Plum, £1.39, The Range

These tiny trees look great in plain white but, if I'm feeling crafty, I'll use tester pots to paint them in barely-there shades of pink and blue.

Mini hanging clay trees, £3 for 4, Hobbycraft



I bought these for my tree last year! The set has been updated for this Christmas with silver pinecones, too.

Vinterfint glass baubles, £5 for 20, IKEA



Bells are one of this year's micro trends and I love how star shaped cut-outs tie in with the rest of the scheme.

Multicolour floristry bells, £2.99 for 3, Wilko

The gold details on these delightfully wonky stars make them feel super special.

Embroidered star hanging decorations, £6 for 3, Habitat

A black topper gives a dramatically chic flourish to an otherwise rustic tree.

Nordic Spirit metal star tree topper in Black, £1.99, Home Bargains

Woodland wonders

**TOTAL
£39.77**

This scheme is heavily inspired by calming, Scandi looks. I've added a bit of sparkle – it is Christmas after all – and used trending copper tones to bring warmth and richness. My favourite thing about this look is that you can easily create your own decorations to add fullness to the tree. Use foliage and other foraged finds from the garden, tied into small bunches with wire.

I can't resist adding extra shimmer with lights that have a wire cable.

50 Warm White LED Star copper wire string lights, £5, George Home

I like to hide white decorations in the thickest parts of the tree as it helps to add definition.

Mistletoe Cottage White antique baubles, £3.99 for 6, Homebase

This pocket-friendly pack creates a brilliant base for building up this look.

Bronze baubles, £3.50 for 12, Matalan

Combining textures, like prickly pinecones and soft velvet ribbon, is a neat designer trick for making a tree look full.

Starry night bells and pinecones decoration, £2.50, B&M

I'd add wire to these cones and arrange them so that they stay upright, just like on a real tree!

Pinecone embellishments, £2 for 12, The Works

I love paper decorations for adding a bit of handmade charm.

Star ornament, £1.80, Sostrene Grene

Garlands are the speediest way to decorate your tree – they're much quicker to arrange than multiple baubles.

Paper Christmas tree garland, £10, M&S



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Home for Christmas

The best part of Christmas? Decorating your home of course! Now all you need to do is choose which of this year's gorgeous looks to plump for

HANNAH TRIBE, STYLE EDITOR



This year's trends are exactly what we all want for Christmas. We're excited to see our old, familiar decorations but, we're after a bit of novelty, too. These looks are brimming with nostalgia, but each one has its own special twist to make it feel new for now



14
GILDED
GLAMOUR



16
STARRY
NIGHTS



10
FRESH &
FROSTED



12
PLUM
PUDDING

Fresh & frosted

This magical look is full of natural wonder for a scheme that combines seasonal sparkle with chalet chic



Christmas Ski scene borg **cushion**, £12;
extra large White **glass tree**, £30; slub pom
pom edge **cushion** in Natural, £12; boucle
throw in Natural, £15, all George Home





Bubble faux fur **cushion** in Cream, £10; Aspen **cushion** in Dark Mink, £10; mistletoe kisses faux fur **cushion**, £8; snowflake faux fur **throw**, £15, all B&M

3 SECRETS TO THIS SCHEME

SNUGGLE UP

Sink into softness by starting your new look with cosy throws and blankets. Pick thick, textured styles, like boucle knits and faux fur for maximum fluffiness. Mirror these fleecy pieces with velvety foliage, like lamb's ear.

MAKE IT BRIGHT

See off the coldness of brilliant white with the Scandi secret to creating light spaces. Choose pale shades with hints of ochre and brown, these will make your space look open and bright, but they'll still feel welcoming.

ADD A POP OF LILAC

Lift the look with a surprising accent shade. Lilac might feel more suited to spring, but a touch of this crystalline colour will update this classic theme for this year. Use it sparingly so that it doesn't lose its impact. Try lilac ribbons for wrapping presents or use lilac candles at the table.



Style idea
Use rechargeable lighting to brighten up dark corners



Artificial eucalyptus stems, £2.68 each; artificial branch with cones, £2.68 each; Gold decorative cone, £1.98; porcelain tree in Off White, £2.24, all Søstrene Grene



1 Cut out star metal **tree topper** in Silver, £20, John Lewis & Partners 2 Twisted **candle**, £2, Flying Tiger Copenhagen 3 Cream LED house **ornament**, £8, Matalan 4 2cm-wide satin **ribbon** in Light Orchid, £2 for 15m, Hobbycraft 5 Stråla wood LED **candelabra**, £17, IKEA 6 So'Home 45cm pre-lit frosted **wreath** with lambs ear, £34.99, La Redoute 7 Ceramic decorative **Christmas trees**, £12 for 2, Kaleidoscope 8 Polar bear tufted **cushion cover**, £14, Furn. 9 Classic 45cm **snowflake fan** in Natural, £6, Studio THIE 10 Natural nutcracker Christmas **baubles**, £15 for 6, Next 11 Frosted sage leaf Christmas **garland**, £9.99, Homescapes 12 Pibesten ceramic Christmas **baubles**, £2 each, JYSK



3 SECRETS TO THIS SCHEME

PUT A BOW ON IT

There's no escaping bows this year! We've seen them popping up everywhere, from topping trees to adorning door handles. The great news is that they're an almost effortless DIY, too. Choose double-faced or velvet ribbon for a luxurious look.



TEALY NICE

While this look has all the things you might expect from a classic Christmas theme, the colours have been brought up to date. Instead of opting for forest green and tomato red, look out for juicy shades of plum to combine with teal and emerald.

FORAGE FOR FOLIAGE

Pick up evergreens to give your theme life. Even if you prefer to have a faux tree, it's easy to make space for real foliage elsewhere. Add holly, ivy and fir to artificial wreaths, make small bunches to hang on mirrors and lay them across the mantelpiece. It's a quick way to add festive scent and interest.



Allysia **bed frame**, from £499; soft washed standard **pillowcases** in Olive, £12 for 2; heritage **duvet cover set**, from £20; Lenon **cushions** in Fuchsia and Olive, £7 each; embroidered flowers **wrapping paper**, £3 for 12m; pinecone extra-large **decoration**, £3; Hare table **lamp**, £38, all Dunelm



Bayswood luxury bow and bell **wreath**, £20, luxury 1.8m **garland**, £15, traditional **bow**, £1.50, traditional **Nutcracker**, medium, £10, all Tesco



Style idea

Find a stylish, foldable tree skirt for easy storage after Christmas

1 Fancy skiing mouse felt **decoration**, £13, Sass & Belle 2 Big Green **velvet bow**, £2, Flying Tiger Copenhagen 3 Winter charm **Gold bell** with velvet bow top, £2.49, Home Bargains 4 Luxe rose and berry **wreath**, £35, Habitat 5 Assorted glass **baubles** in Red, £25 for 20, John Lewis & Partners 6 Medium tartan present **decoration**, £5, Primark 7 Modgunn glass **Christmas tree**, £5, JYSK 8 Red alphabet **sack**, £9, B&M 9 Small red berry pick, £1, Hobbycraft 10 Room fragrance set in Christmas tree, £19.99, H&M Home 11 Green velvet **Christmas tree skirt** with bow detail, £25.99, Very 12 Box with ribbon in Pine Green, from £3.48, Søstrene Grene



Plum pudding

Put a twist on a traditional look with an updated colour palette and this year's hottest motifs



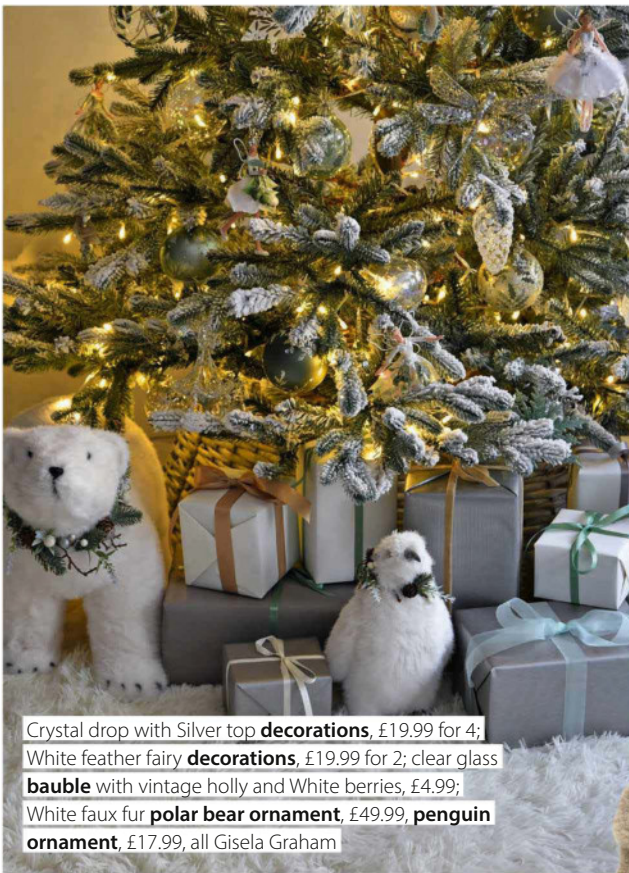
6ft pre-lit Christmas tree, £50; Christmas tree decorations, from 50p; Red present stocking, £5; Noel sign, £4; ceramic house ornaments, £4 each; novelty Santa mug, £4; Santa Christmas Eve board, £5; small nutcracker ornament, £8, all Nutmeg at Morrisons

Gilded glamour

Get a glow on with a luxurious scheme made modern
with daring mixed metallics for maximum impact



Paper stars, £12.99 for 3; 28cm paper tree LED decoration, £11.99; beaded micro light stag, £39.99; LED ceramic house, £12.99; Christmas baubles in Dark Pink, £4.99 for 12; Osby star lights, £44.99 for 3; paper ball LED string lights, £9.99; star glass bottle LED string lights, £14.99; 50cm pre-lit White berry Christmas wreath, £49.99; 1.5m pre-lit eucalyptus and White berry Christmas garland, £39.99; fairy light orbs, £39.99 for 3; pre-lit snowy Christmas trees, from £18.99 each; glass Christmas tree LED table decoration, £12.99; glass pinecone LED string lights, £14.99; glitter pinecone Christmas decorations in Dark Pink and Blue, both £4.99 for 6; velvet Christmas baubles in Green, £4.99 for 2; painted Christmas baubles, £4.99 for 2; beaded Silver star micro LED Christmas tree topper, £9.99; 20m micro bead Christmas tree wire light, £79.99; TruGlow Ivory LED taper candles with remote control, £24.99 for 4, Ivory chapel candles, £44.99 for 3, Ivory LED pillar candles, £24.99 for 3, all Lights4fun



Crystal drop with Silver top **decorations**, £19.99 for 4; White feather fairy **decorations**, £19.99 for 2; clear glass **bauble** with vintage holly and White berries, £4.99; White faux fur **polar bear ornament**, £49.99, **penguin ornament**, £17.99, all Gisela Graham

3 SECRETS TO THIS SCHEME

GO FOR GOLD

Throw out the old decorating rules to get the most out of this hot trend. This sensational look gets its charm from a glittering display of diverse metals. Silver, gold and copper all get their chance to shine, so the overall effect is beautifully balanced.

SHINE ON

Combine pieces that glisten in different ways – from the no-holds-barred sparkle of tinsel to the subtle shimmer of pearls. This will give you a richly layered look that won't feel overwhelmingly bright or dazzling.

SPACE TO RELAX

When you've had your fill of sparkle, turn to blocks of subtle colour to provide an elegant backdrop for this look. Cream, taupe and grey will quietly enhance the shades in your metallics. Use them over large areas, like wrapping paper, bedding and cushions to make the glitter stand out even further.



Fluffy star **decorations**, £2.50 for 6; **decorations** in Neutral, £15 for 100; Rose the Fairy **decoration**, £3.50; boucle reindeer **decoration**, £3.50; mice **decoration**, £3.50; icy pearl **decoration**, £2.50; lustre White **decoration**, £2.50, all Tesco



Style idea

Choose a wreath in a single shade for a high impact look

- 1 Silver beaded **tree decoration**, £4, The White Company 2 2025 engagement ring **decoration**, £8, Accessorize 3 Coupe embellished tree **decoration**, £7.99, H&M Home 4 Decorative **nutcracker** in Gold, £4.29, Søstrene Grene 5 Bronze marble **baubles**, £5 for 4, Matalan 6 Taupe faux fur **stocking**, £6, B&M 7 Sparkly Christmas wreath **decoration**, from £39.99, Zara Home 8 Silver beaded snowflake **tree topper**, £16, Dibor 9 The Edit Christmas Juliette **cushion**, £35, Primark 10 Silver tinsel tree room **decoration**, £12, M&S 11 Small **jar candles**, £12 for 3, Habitat 12 Metallic glass **light up orbs**, £30 for 3, Next



3 SECRETS TO THIS SCHEME

SHADES OF TWILIGHT

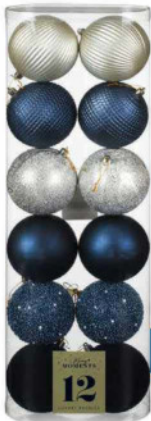
Choose a trio of blues to build your look from. Start with a deep navy to use as your shadow shade, then a rich denim for a mid-tone and icy blue as a highlight. This will help your scheme to stay balanced, and keep things interesting, even though you're only using one colour.

TEMPTING TEXTURES

Mix and match different materials for a layered look. Paper, faux fur and glass will each provide a different, intriguing feel for your space, and the relationship between them will give your scheme a designer touch.

TWINKLE TWINKLE

Stars are your hero motif for this trend – and they're easy to find at Christmas! Make sure the effect is dynamic by combining lots of different sized designs. From supersized origami stars to tiny sparkling gems – and everything in between.



Brushed cotton winter scene
double duvet set, £18; Cosy Season
cushion, £10; sherpa throw, £10,
all Nutmeg at Morrisons



TruGlow LED mini votive candles, £24.99
for 6, pillar candle trio, £24.99; stag's
head micro LED garland, £12.99; sparkly
star decoration, £6.99, all Lights4fun

Style idea

This cushion is not just for Christmas, it'll look fab on NYE, too

1 Stråla lampshade in White lace, from £5, IKEA 2 Luxe glitter star and moon bauble, £5.50, Sass & Belle 3 Small Ivory faux fur bow with clip, £6, Dunelm 4 Embellished initial decoration in Teal, £8, Accessorize 5 Ratnam baubles in Indigo, £25 for 4, Nkuku 6 Navy Christmas half wreath, £15, Matalan 7 Merry Moments luxury baubles, £8 for 12, B&M 8 Gold moons and stars Navy Christmas sack, £12, Habitat 9 North Pole Hideaway candle, mini, £3.99, Yankee Candle 10 Shatterproof faux fur baubles, £15 for 4, John Lewis & Partners 11 Catherine Lansfield Sparkle cushion in Blue, £15, Debenhams 12 Silver glass star decorations, £5 for 6, Argos

Starry nights

Follow that star! Go all-in with this traditional motif for a celestial scheme that feels oh-so-contemporary



Natural faux fur star Christmas **tree topper**, £12; borg light up **star wreath**, £30; borg star and tree shaped **baubles**, £14 for 6; shatterproof **bauble set** in Blue and Cream mix, £16 for 50; paper snowflake **baubles**, £12 for 9; paper snowflake **decorations**, £15 for 3; light up house **bauble**, £8; 3m **wrapping paper set** in Navy, £8 for 3; Kraft snowmen extra-wide **wrapping paper**, £7 for 10m; cream borg **tree skirt**, £40, all Next

A Christmas story

Create a magical experience filled with sparkle and cheer from the moment your guests arrive



Create the wow factor

Transforming your home into a festive wonderland starts with the front door. A simple, pre-lit wreath will bring understated festive styling – teaming it with an archway that wraps around your entrance will take your doorscape to the next level! For a modern look, a bauble arch in classic red, gold and green with a mix of matt and shiny finishes introduces a bold Christmas story that sets the tone perfectly for the decor that awaits inside.

25cm baubles in Gold, Green, Red, all £15 for 2; 20cm baubles in Red, £12 for 3; festive pre-lit wreath, £25; Christmas parcel coir door mat, £6, all B&M

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Add rustic style

Decorate your front door with understated touches to tell the tale of a carefully curated, homespun Christmas.

Dress a small Christmas tree at the front door with a few hanging decorations, echoing the colours and style of those inside. Placing a new door mat with a festive design or slogan is an easy and affordable switch-up. If your garland isn't quite long enough to wrap around the doorway, consider hanging it down just one side, like this one. Update the look of the garland for 2025 with ribbons tied into bows in your colour scheme.



Rattan base **eucalyptus wreath**, £20; jute **light-up star**, £12; Merry Christmas **step mat**, £4; 4ft faux moss **base tree**, £39, all Dunelm

Festive welcome



Pre-lit Christmas **wreath**, £69.95, Sparkle Lighting



Studley rattan **LED star**, 35cm £29.99, Lights4fun



Green **LED lantern**, £4.44, Søstrene Grene



Coir Christmas trees **door mat**, £8.99, Homescapes



'Give your guests a warm welcome right from the get-go by decorating your front door or outside space. It doesn't have to take a lot of time either – hanging a wreath and putting down a Christmas door mat is always a good start and, of course, fairy lights are a must. If you don't have time to spend hanging them, opt for a few freestanding designs instead, such as light-up reindeer or cone trees. For those that do have more time, then a small potted fir tree with fairy lights is always a lovely sight.'

Laurie Davidson, interior stylist, @lifeofaninteriorstylist

Laurie is a professional interior stylist and content creator, adding a sprinkle of style one space at a time. She has styled for numerous top brands and magazines and also turns her hand to creative projects and craft workshops.

Reach for the stars

With the days getting shorter and the nights drawing in, lighting plays a big part in decorating our homes both inside and out. Create a beautiful display in the front garden, porch or doorway using outdoor lighting featuring classic Christmas motifs. Use stars, tree shapes, light-up rattan reindeer and cluster lights wrapped around the doorway to create a magical ambience. Complete the look by framing your entrance with lanterns filled with battery-operated candles and pre-lit miniature Christmas trees.



LED reindeer, £29.99; **LED tree arch**, £49.99; **hanging lights** in Tree and Star, £4.99 each; **LED lantern**, £14.99; **potted tree**, £14.99, all Home Bargains



Set the scene

Regardless of the space you have available around your front door, you can always make it feel festive and welcoming. Ensure the pathway and door is well lit with carefully placed lanterns to illuminate the way. Make the most of the season's greenery and add miniature Christmas trees in galvanised pots at the front door or along the path amongst the lanterns for an instant festive feel. Embrace the oversized trend and include a large wreath either hung on the door, the wall or above the porch. To keep it traditional, buy or make a mixed foliage wreath, then add a few bows in red satin ribbon for a chic nod to the festivities.



Deddington Antique Brass **tapered lantern**, from £12; Merlot **pillar candles**, from £6; **rustic tree in pot**, from £29, all The Cotswold Company



Fir with Red berries and snowy cones **garland**, £49.99, Gisela Graham



Satin bow
Christmas
garland,
£19.99, Very



Red Festive
Spice **diffuser**,
£5, Matalan



Champagne bauble and
leaf **garland**, £35; metal
bell decoration, £20, both
John Lewis & Partners



Green 3ft **paper
tree**, £35; White
4.5ft **paper tree**,
£60, both Next

✦ Beautify the banisters

The staircase is the perfect opportunity to get creative, turning an often-overlooked part of the home into a showstopper that will impress any guest as they step inside. Dressing the banister also helps to guide the eye up the stairs, continuing your Christmas story for those making use of a guest bedroom beyond! For classic, elegant styling choose a full garland, with real or faux foliage, and incorporate metallic accents, such as baubles, berries, pinecones and leaves, to bring a sense of opulence to your decor. If it's safe to do so, wind your garland up the handrail leaving a section trailing down the front. Alternatively, leave the handrail uncovered and wind around the spindles instead.



✦ Make it paper perfect

Once guests have been greeted by your magical outside decor, ensure the hallway continues the festivities with a fabulous display. If space permits, these freestanding paper trees bring a modern take to the season. Whether you group them together or use one on its own, place oversized baubles and gift-wrapped boxes at the base for a fun flourish.



'Play with scale – the bigger, the better! Think supersized wreaths, outsized bows, or a stack of 'presents' made from wrapped cardboard boxes to make your hallway feel like a life-sized Christmas card. We also love a candy cane scheme, using oversized styrofoam candy canes and wrapping the banisters in red and white striped ribbon for a fun effect both kids and adults will love.'

Maxine and Gemma, interior stylists and hosts of the *How to Home* podcast, @howtohome.podcast

Professional interior stylists, **Maxine Brady** and **Gemma Gear's** *How to Home* Podcast covers everything to do with interiors and home design. They share their expert advice so that you can create your dream home!



Enhance the welcome

Stockings aren't just for the fireplace! Hang one or two along the side of the staircase among garlands and fairy lights and add some faux wrapped gift bags to complete the look. Decorate console tables or hallway shelving with pretty ornaments and candles fragranced with scents of the season to transport guests into a festive wonderland that appeals to all of their senses.

Giant honeycomb string light **garland**, £28, Meri Meri

Mixed fir cone/berry **garland**, £44.99; Red and Cream **stocking** with tree, £11.99; wooden Santa tractor **ornament**, £11.99; Red glass moulded **candlesticks**, from £5.99; New England Trees scented **candle**, £7.49; clear glass **nightlight** with Green trees, £9.99; resin/fabric fairy tree **decorations**, £29.99 for 3; wooden hen **decorations**, £8.99 for 2; wooden cow **decorations**, £8.99 for 2; wooden tractor **decorations**, £8.99 for 2; wooden Santa with parcels **decoration**, £4.49; matt Red robin and trees glass **bauble**, £5.99, all Gisela Graham

Go for glorious garlands

The hallway is a great space to play with your decorating scheme – the generous ceiling height above the staircase is the perfect place to string garlands and hang paper decorations. If you're looking for an alternative way to dress the banister, consider paper honeycomb shapes: from stars and snowflakes, to balls and light bulbs, they add instant colour with a playful touch. Pair the paper decorations with swathes of ribbon in complementary hues, looped around the banisters for an extra flourish.



Red **bauble cluster**, £4.99, Dobbies

On Trend **Winter bouquet with chocolates**, £49, Interflora

Amber glass 21cm **LED Christmas tree**, £16.99, ValueLights





Red & White Santa
stripe Christmas
reversible **duvet cover**
and **pillowcase set**,
from £15, Next



The Fuzzy
Duck Winter
Wonderland
Luxury pamper
present **gift**
set, £12,
Baylis & Harding



KEPLIN cosy
hot water
bottle with
plush cover,
£5.99, Amazon



Emma
Bridgewater
Christmas Joy
small tin
tray, £5,
Kitchentins.com

Add festive linens

If you're hosting guests overnight, take some time to give your guest bedroom (or your guests' sleeping nook!) a seasonal spruce up too. Continuing the style or colour theme from the front porch, through the hallway and up to the guest room will show care and attention that is sure to make your guests feel special. An easy switch-up is to change the bed linen for a cosy festive design. The Christmas colour palette and seasonal motifs will instantly lift a room giving overnight guests the warmest of welcomes.

Choose all-season details

For modern festive vibes, you can't go wrong with striped bedding in a classic colourway – like this ruffled pink and red set, which you can continue to use outside the festive season. Use a limited colour palette to add coordinating decorative touches with tabletop trees, a flourish of foliage on mirrors or artwork, and a wreath hung above the bed. Your display will look classy, contemporary and oh-so chic.



Silver tinsel Christmas tree **room**
decoration, £12; printed stripe
ruffle **bed set**, from £35;
contrast fringe **cushion**, £22.50;
fair isle **cushion**, £19.50; bow
cushion, £19.50; velvet **bow**
decoration, £18, all M&S

Switch up the bathroom

Whether your guests will be using the downstairs cloakroom or the family bathroom during their stay, give these spaces a little festive flair to complete the Christmas story around your home. Swapping your usual towels for ones with a fun, festive design makes for an easy and affordable update, while a matching bath mat and soap dispenser will complete the look. Finish with a scented candle and room diffuser in a festive fragrance.



Winter Charm Robin duvet set, from £19.99; Tom Kitchin acacia serving tray, £6.99, mugs, £2.99 each, all Home Bargains

Keep it cosy

Make your guests feel at home with a few extra details. A tea tray in the bedroom with everything they need to make themselves a hot drink, or a carafe of water and a glass will save them hunting around the kitchen at night. A basket with toiletries and a candle with a warming fragrance, and even a chocolate on their pillow makes a lovely touch. Pop extra blankets on the bed and spare pillows nearby to ensure they stay warm and comfortable throughout their stay.



Woven baskets, £7 for 2; reed diffuser, £5; large glass candle, £5; matches in bottle, £3.50; pre-lit wreath with red berries, £30; Christmas soap dispensers in Reindeer, Gingerbread and Santa, £3.50 each; Christmas bath ducks in Reindeer and Santa, £2 each; Gold mirror, £6; Nordic over bath rack, £12; Gingerbread man mug, £3; Christmas bath buddies toys, £3 for 4; Gingerbread hand towel, £4; Retreat bath sheets in White, £12 each; cotton top basket, £8; Christmas hand towel, £4; gingerbread bath mat, £7, all B&M

Brushed cotton Folk Tales double duvet set, £18, Nutmeg Home at Morrisons



Silver Birch mini carafe and glass set, £32, Emma Britton



'I really enjoy hosting Christmas at home, and love thinking about all the little details I can add to make it feel extra special.

When we have guests staying over, I want them to feel as welcome and comfortable as possible, and that means cosy bed linen, throws and cushions. To make it feel extra festive, I'll add a knitted stocking to the end of the bed and a festive knitted cushion or two. I'll also grab a spare set of fairy lights and drape it around the headboard. Christmas spice-scented candles, like cinnamon or gingerbread, will help enhance the festive feel.'

Emma Fishman, stylist, @emmafishman_stylist

As an interior stylist, designer and Airbnb host, **Emma** is passionate about transforming rooms into cosy, inviting spaces full of personality and comfort.



SAVE 20% AT GISELA GRAHAM

Transform your home this Christmas with a bit of magic from Gisela Graham – and take 20% off with this special discount

As a very special gift for the season of joy, we've teamed up with our friends at Gisela Graham to offer you 20% off the entire range at shop.giselagraham.co.uk!

Famous for truly enchanting Christmas decor, Gisela Graham has hundreds of sumptuous goodies on the website, from baubles to wreaths, and everything in between. And for the trendsetters among you, be sure to linger in the Nostalgia collection – the vintage-feel theme, with its traditional motifs

and plenty of red, gold and green, is set to be 2025's hottest festive look.

This year, we're also excited about Gisela Graham's first-ever collectable tableware range. Every Christmas, from now on, there will be a new design in the collection, all made to be mixed and matched beautifully with previous years' pieces. This first set is the whimsically illustrated 'Santa & Tree', and you can select from a host of items including plates, jugs, glasses and table linen. Happy shopping!



Tableware range, from £7.49 for a side plate



Nostalgia Santa & Tree dinner plate, £10.99



Red & Gold ornate disc, £5.99



Green velvet ogee, £5.99



Nostalgia Santa & Tree cake tin, £12.99



Red velvet bows, £4.99 for 2

TO REDEEM

Simply use the code **YHSXGGL20** to save 20% online at shop.giselagraham.co.uk. Don't delay! Offer ends 12th December 2025

TERMS AND CONDITIONS
 1 This offer is open to adults aged 18 and over and exclusively to readers of *HomeStyle* and *Your Home* magazines. 2 This offer is valid from 00:01 on 11th November 2025 to 23:59 on 12th December 2025. Orders outside this period will not be eligible for a discount. 3 To qualify for the 20% discount, readers must order via shop.giselagraham.co.uk using the discount code YHSXGGL20. 4 The discount code is only valid at shop.giselagraham.co.uk. Offer valid only on full price items. The offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer codes. 5 Offer is available in the UK Mainland only. 6 Shipping fees apply on all orders, or as specified on shop.giselagraham.co.uk at the time of purchase, and the discount is not applicable to the cost of delivery.

Reader homes

Be inspired by this month's gorgeous real homes, packed with stunning ideas to steal!



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SEASONAL STATEMENT

Sarah brings her maximalist style to the festive season

VICKY LEIGH, HOMES EDITOR



Fancy seeing your home here?

Send a snap of yourself in your favourite room to Vicky at homestyle@ourmedia.co.uk.



26

ALL IS CALM

Jessica's home hosts a cosy, country-style Christmas



40

BIG & BOLD

Now in her first house, Dale loves decorating to the max

PLUS shop their looks

36



49

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آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی دکوراسیون داخلی

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CHARACTERFUL NEW-BUILD

OUR COSY HOME IS FULL OF Christmas charm

It took three years of hard work to transform **Jessica Cunningham's** unfinished new-build into a warm and welcoming family home where she loves to host during the festive season

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی دکوراسیون داخلی

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Jessica loves to decorate for Christmas and blends traditional touches with a cosy lived-in feel. 'One of the first places I decorate is the mantelpiece. I change the theme every year, so it always feels fresh and special,' she says

Style idea

← Add period character to plain walls with panelling



My story

We were drawn to the location close to both of our families, in an area that we both knew and had grown up in. Situated on a quiet country road, it was exactly the peaceful countryside setting we both wanted. The house was essentially a shell when we bought it! What it lacked in finish, it made up for in potential. It was the perfect project for us, a place to put our stamp on and make our own. We did as much of the work as we could ourselves, and it took us three years before we could move in!

We had to completely clear the back of the house, which was buried under a huge amount of debris and weeds, so you couldn't even see the back garden. Inside, things had been started but not finished, so everything needed doing. We had to do second-fix electrics and plumbing, we had no kitchen or flooring, and we didn't even have any stairs!

Now, it's so rewarding to see all the hard work shine through. We're so grateful to our families for all their help, especially my father, whose support has been invaluable. It isn't finished as it's ever-evolving – and we're still loving bringing our vision for each room to life.



Welcome to my home

A BIT ABOUT ME

I'm Jessica Cunningham, a nurse. I live here with my husband, Colm, our son, who's three, and our poodle, Gloria. I share more of my home on Instagram @peoniesandpoodles.

WHERE I LIVE

Our home is a four-bedroom, detached new-build in County Cork, built in 2007. We moved here in 2019.

WHAT I WANTED TO CHANGE

The house was half finished and needed a lot of work to make it liveable. It also needed character, so that was my challenge.

HOW I MADE IT MY OWN

I gave the house a cosy farmhouse style, choosing soft colours, panelling, and florals, to make every room feel warm, lived-in, and full of charm.

MY FAVOURITE PART

I love the kitchen, it's such a bright space and gets natural daylight throughout the day. There's nothing better than adding a bunch of flowers to the island and relaxing with a cup of tea.



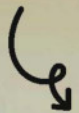
Feature Penny Crawford-Collins Photos Philip Lauterbach



make
this
bow tree
topper
p34

Style idea

Layer cushions
and throws to
add interest
to a simple
colour scheme



Living room

'This room was a white box when we moved in. We painted the walls in Slipper Satin by Farrow & Ball to make it feel warmer, and we fitted a wood-burning stove for extra cosiness in the winter. To add visual interest and character we panelled one wall, and to make it more of a feature, we painted it in Farrow & Ball's Mizzle for contrast. I took my time to select the perfect style and colour of the sofas, which I found in DFS. I knew I wanted an oversized pouffe that would suit the room, so I got a local interiors shop to make one to my dimensions and had it covered in William Morris Strawberry Thief fabric.'



'We often play
Christmas music
on the vinyl record
player which sits
on the sideboard
from Harvey Norman',
says Jessica

Jessica has added an oversized bow to her Christmas tree this year to make it look extra special. She teamed her pretty pink sofa with pale blue footstools from Søstrene Grene



Every room feels cohesive and considered and they all work together beautifully

↓ Pink poinsettia Christmas wreath, 45cm, £22.99, Homescapes



STEAL MY STYLE

Get Jessica's calm and cosy home style with these buys



↓ Pink gingerbread house incense cone burner, £9.99, The Range

↑ Chloe vintage style jug, £25.99, The Wisteria Tree



← Birdie bobbin table lamp in Powder Blue with Blue stripe shade, £51.99, ValueLights



↑ Candy Canes ½ pint mug, £26, Emma Bridgewater



'I love fresh foliage and flowers and I always dot them around the house, especially at Christmas,' says Jessica, who also likes to mix and match patterns. The throw is from Blarney Woollen Mills and the sofa came from DFS

Kitchen

'We were set on a timeless, traditional-style kitchen. We actually lived without a proper kitchen for six months until we'd saved enough money for something we really wanted. I planned it to be extremely practical and functional, so there's plenty of workspace and storage. The kitchen worktops, central island, and plate rack all came from Cash & Carry Kitchens. I didn't want everything to be the same colour so I opted for Dead Salmon, Skimming Stone, London Clay and Setting Plaster for the cabinets, and Castle Gray for the island unit, all by Farrow & Ball.'

Hosting Christmas dinner has become a cherished tradition since we moved in here

shop
Sugar plum
pastels
p36



'The kitchen is the perfect size for entertaining, particularly during the festive season,' says Jessica. 'We love a traditional Christmas with all the trimmings.' The bar stools came from Zara Home



EXPERT ADVICE

How to choose contrasting colours for internal doors

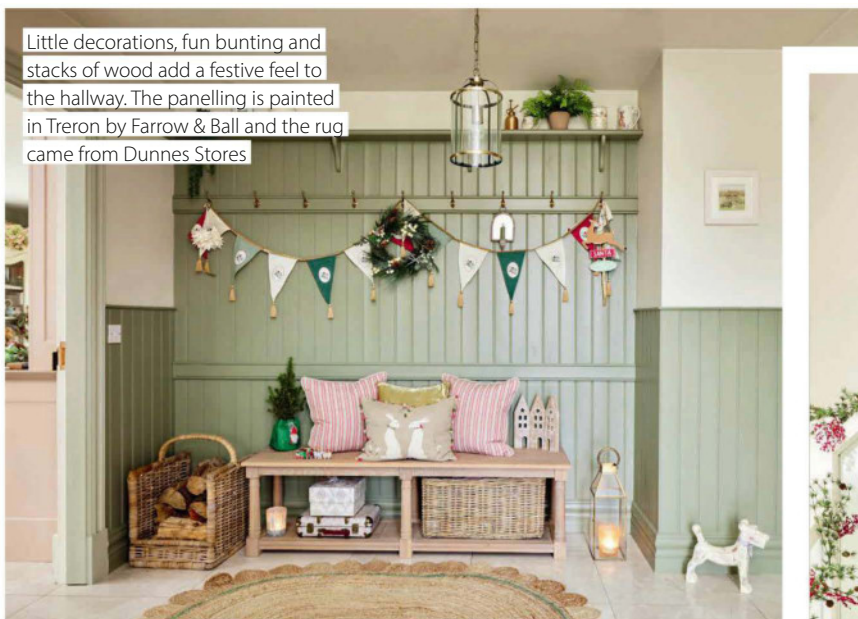
Here are six things to consider before buying your paint and picking up a brush

- Take inspiration from your furnishings and accessories to decide on the colours. Experiment with sample pots to see how the colours looks at different times of the day before making your final choices.
- Consider the hardware and how the finish will work with the paint colours. Metals like brass are warm-toned while chrome is cool, so consider whether you want them to complement or contrast.
- Use consistent colours to enhance the sense of space and create a cohesive, effortless flow through different rooms and hallways.
 - Think about the visual impact – a contrasting-coloured door will stand out, so make sure you want that emphasis. You can also choose different shades for each side of a door, to suit the palette of each room or space it belongs to.
- Consider matching door colours to the room's purpose, for example, neutrals for a calming bedroom or bright shades for a fun playroom.
- For added impact and visual interest, create a two-tone effect by painting the door's surrounding trim in a different but complementary colour.

The large kitchen table, from Next, provides the perfect place for the family to gather and celebrate. 'I love to make centrepieces and use fresh greenery and candles to make the table look really festive and magical,' says Jessica. The cream chairs are from Laura Ashley and the coloured chairs are from Top Drawer



'I always dress the cooker hood and cupboard and have decorations dotted around,' says Jessica



Little decorations, fun bunting and stacks of wood add a festive feel to the hallway. The panelling is painted in Treron by Farrow & Ball and the rug came from Dunnes Stores



'I found the garland in a local florist's and it's the ideal decoration for the banister', says Jessica. The deer painting is from Quinn Russell Art and the cabinet is from Laura Ashley

Hallway

'We changed the hallway into a warm and welcoming space by adding high panelling on the main wall and low panels on the side walls. We fitted hooks so there's plenty of space to hang hats and coats. I found a bench in Neptune that was the perfect size and added baskets to it, so we have somewhere to store shoes. To keep it light and bright, and for a lovely flow, we continued the floor tiles from the kitchen into the hall. The finishing touch was the high shelf along the top of the panelling, which is perfect for plants and accessories.'



'I love to decorate Christmas trees so I even have one in my bedroom!' says Jessica. 'The twinkling lights and the tea lights add so much atmosphere to the room'



'To add a pop of extra colour, I painted the door to the en-suite and the skirting in Mizzle by Farrow & Ball', says Jessica. The mirror is decorated with a garland from The Range

Main bedroom

'I love florals and was keen to bring them into our bedroom. I was thinking of a floral wallpaper but couldn't find anything that would suit the room, then was lucky to find the curtains in Laura Ashley which were exactly what I wanted. I kept the walls neutral so it feels elegant and unfussy, and just introduced a bit more pattern with my bedding from Next and Helen Turkington. I like to layer the bed so it looks really inviting.'

Jessica's son's room is simply furnished with a cot, wardrobe and changing unit from Mamas & Papas



Boy's room

'I went for a neutral look for this room as I wanted it to be restful. It's not your typical blue room for a boy, and I knew I didn't want loads of bright colours as it wouldn't fit with my colour scheme in the rest of the house. I added panelling in here too, painted in Mizzle by Farrow & Ball, and wallpapered above with Mini Hares wallpaper in Duck Egg and Cream by Peony & Sage.'



TURN TO p36 to shop Jessica's pretty look →

'I put up a small tree in my son's room and dot little Santas and decorations around so there's an essence of Christmas in here too,' says Jessica. The shelf was made by a local carpenter



Bathroom

'I chose a freestanding bath with a really old-fashioned look, something that would create an interesting focal point. I painted it in Berington Blue by Farrow & Ball, and to add more personality, I teamed it with patterned floor tiles. To finish the room and continue with my overall theme, I opted for panelling on the lower part of the walls, painted in Farrow & Ball's Potted Shrimp, and went with a brilliant white on the walls above. I searched for a traditional-style basin, and this one was just what I was looking for, with a practical towel rail too.'



What I Learned

- Be patient and take your time with decision-making, especially when it comes to big purchases. Get samples, create moodboards, and really explore your options to ensure you create a home you love and are proud of.
- Focus on flow. I designed the house as a whole, rather than treating each room individually, and thought carefully about my paint choices. It was important that every space connects to and complements the next.
- Don't choose furniture and decor just because it's on-trend. Invest in well-made, timeless pieces that you know will stand the test of time.

Bow tree topper

Swap the traditional star for an on-trend festive bow, like **Jessica's**

Choose one statement bow, like Jessica, or make some mini ones to hang as decorations, too



YOU WILL NEED

- 1.3m of at least 1.4m-wide striped cotton fabric
- 2.4m of 90cm-wide medium-weight fusible interfacing
- 1.2m of 90cm-wide wadding
- iron
- dressmaker's scissors
- tape measure
- tailor's chalk
- sewing machine
- thread
- pins or sewing clips
- needle

INSTRUCTIONS

1 From the striped fabric, cut two 120 x 40cm rectangles, two 120 x 30cm rectangles and a 120 x 8cm strip. From the interfacing, cut two 120 x 40cm rectangles, and two 120 x 30cm rectangles. From the wadding, cut two 120 x 40cm rectangles.

2 Use an iron to bond the rectangles of fusible interfacing to the wrong side of the corresponding fabric rectangles, to give the fabric more structure.

3 Lay a piece of wadding on your work surface and place one of the larger interfaced fabric rectangles on top with the right side (RS) facing up. Place the other large interfaced fabric rectangle on top RS facing down. Place the last wadding rectangle on top. Line up the edges of all the pieces. Pin or clip them together. Sew a 1.5cm seam along both long sides to join all the layers together.

4 Turn the rectangle right side out. Fold the padded rectangle in half with the raw, unstitched ends meeting together. Pin the ends and stitch together with a 1.5cm seam. Once sewn, trim away any excess fabric from the raw ends. Turn the fabric tube inside out so the seam you've just sewn is at the centre on the inside of the tube.

5 Take the remaining two fabric rectangles and lay them horizontally on top of each other RS facing. Working from the left-hand bottom corner, use tailor's chalk to draw a diagonal line from the point of

the bottom corner that ends 15cm in from the left-hand top corner. Repeat this on the right-hand side, to create a trapezoid shape. Cut along these lines.

6 Stitch the two layers of fabric together around the perimeter using a 1.5cm seam, leaving a 10cm gap at the shorter top edge unstitched. Once you've finished stitching, snip away the excess fabric from the corners and turn the fabric right sides out through the unstitched opening. Press, then slipstitch the opening closed using a needle and thread.

7 Take the long thin strip of fabric and press the short ends over to the wrong side by 1cm. Next, press the rectangle in half lengthways. Unfold it, then fold the two long edges in to meet up at the central crease line and press into place. Fold the fabric in half lengthways once more, so all the raw edges are enclosed, then top stitch along the folded edges using a 0.5cm seam allowance.

8 To construct the bow, take the trapezoid piece and pinch it in the centre so it looks like the 'tails' of a bow. Take the padded rectangle and pinch at the centre to make a bow shape. Place this at the top of the pinched trapezoid piece. Use the thin strip of fabric to secure the two pieces together by tying it around the front of the two pieces and knotting it at the back. Use the ends of the fabric strip to tie the bow to the top of your tree.

TOP TIP

You could use a biased binding for the strip so you don't have to do all the folding





Time to redesign?

A kitchen upgrade doesn't need to be complicated when you have expert help

The kitchen is your home's hardest-working room. It's where you cook and eat, work, entertain, and it's where homework gets done. With so much going on, a redesign can feel daunting. Enter Howdens, the UK's number one trade kitchen supplier.

Your kitchen, sorted!

Once you decide to upgrade, questions arise. How do you make the most of the space? Which style? What colour? How will it all fit? Don't hit the panic button! Inspiration is close at hand.

First, find a trusted local tradesperson to understand what's possible. Then head to your local Howdens Depot or Expo showroom, or try the Kitchen Style Finder online. With kitchens ranging from best-on-budget to luxury, you'll find plenty of choice.

Next, Howdens' free design service takes over. After a home visit, your expert designer will create a 3D plan tailored to your lifestyle, space, and budget. That's exactly what content creator Cheryl did when she decided to replace her family's 20-year-old kitchen.

'Designing a kitchen that works is really hard!' she says. 'I wanted a breakfast cupboard, a full-size fridge-freezer, and a clean, uncluttered look. The larders were also a must-have!'

Cheryl chose Frome, Howdens' newest and most contemporary Shaker kitchen. Its narrow frame, shallow panel and smooth finish gave her the pared-back style she wanted. Frome can be easily customised and Cheryl loves the bespoke bifold breakfast cupboard that helps her cope with busy school mornings.

Service that matters

As a trade-only business, you'll need a tradesperson to buy from Howdens. However, your local depot team can help you find one if needed. The result? A perfect fit, backed by a 25-year cabinet guarantee. And because everything is available from local stock, your fitter can always get what they need even when plans change, so the work can carry on without delay.

'There's no way we could have achieved this level of detail without our fitters,' says Cheryl – who's delighted with her Frome kitchen.



To discover more about Howdens and Cheryl's kitchen, and to book a free home survey and design consultation visit [Howdens.com](https://www.howdens.com)

Sugarplum pastels

Pair soft colours with farmhouse-style furniture to recreate **Jessica's** cosy country look



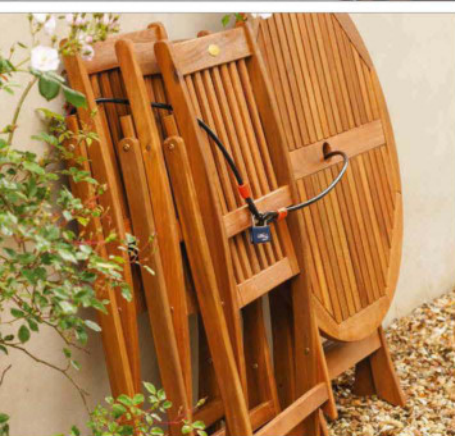
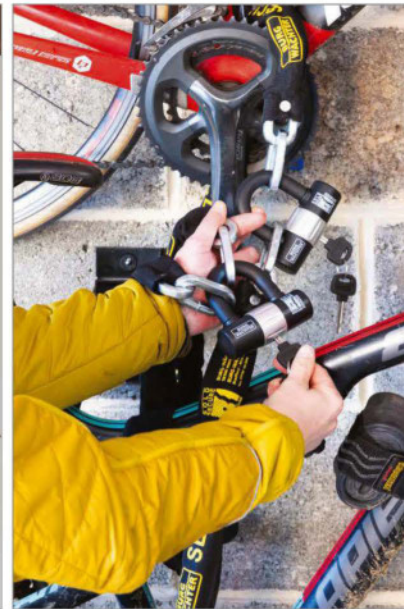
- 1 Gingerbread stars with Pastel snowflakes **hanging decorations**, £7.99 for 3, Gisela Graham 2 Campden Dusky Pink drum **lampshade**, 20cm, £30, Harrison Cropper 3 Pink sugarplum fairy light up angel **tree topper**, £21.25, Not On The High Street 4 Sugarplum fun print **cushion**, £12.99, Tenovus Cancer Care 5 Extra large pastel **Nutcracker decoration**, £20, M&S 6 Kingham **spindle chair** in Natural Oak, from £90, Oak Furnitureland 7 Pale Pink floral woodblock quilted **bedspread**, from £70, Next 8 The Freedom round **footstool** in Meadow Plain Duck Egg, £249, DFS 9 Chester glass **display cabinet** in Classic Cream, £799, The Cotswold Company 10 Large Pink lustre **tree**, £12.50, Matalan 11 Matilda scallop border indoor outdoor handwoven **rug** in Sage Green, from £159.99, daals 12 Sugar wonderland **baubles**, £7.99 for 70, The Range



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MODERN RUSTIC MAKEOVER

I FINALLY HAVE SPACE SO I GO big at Christmas!

After swapping a flat for a Victorian house, **Dale Ashelford** goes all out with festive decor to complement her cohesive green colour scheme

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Welcome to my home

A BIT ABOUT ME

I'm Dale Ashelford, 33, @greenbankcottage, a PR manager, and I live here with my partner.

WHERE I LIVE

Our home is a three-bedroom semi-detached Victorian house just outside Glasgow in North Lanarkshire, which we bought in November 2023.

WHAT I WANTED TO CHANGE

As a novice DIYer, I didn't want a place that needed a lot of building work, but I was happy to get stuck in reinstating the charm and character that had been ripped out of this house.

HOW I MADE IT MY OWN

I kept to a simple palette of soft neutrals and muted greens and then restored the natural beauty of the house by replacing Victorian fireplaces, adding panelling and choosing natural wood furniture and accessories.

MY FAVOURITE PART

It genuinely depends on the weather – I love the dining room when it's sunny because we fling the doors open and bring the outside in. But equally our bedroom has become the relaxed retreat I wanted, and even the guest room is a cosy space to sit and read with a hot chocolate.

I knew a small Christmas tree would look lost in the space, so we went high



'I'm all for a bargain, but the second I saw this reclaimed wood coffee table from Still & Bloom, I knew I wouldn't find anything better. It was my one splurge purchase but it's such a beautiful, classic design I can't imagine ever getting rid of it,' says Dale

My story

It took two years to find the perfect place to buy together, but when we walked in here, we knew it was the one. It was a military operation moving in, but within 24 hours of getting the keys we'd unpacked! We came from a flat so we didn't have much furniture, arriving with only our bed and the sofa, so the first task was furnishing the house.

We scoured Facebook Marketplace and local charity shops, sourcing a beautiful carved wardrobe and classic metal bed frame for

the guest room, and the perfect table and bench for the dining area.

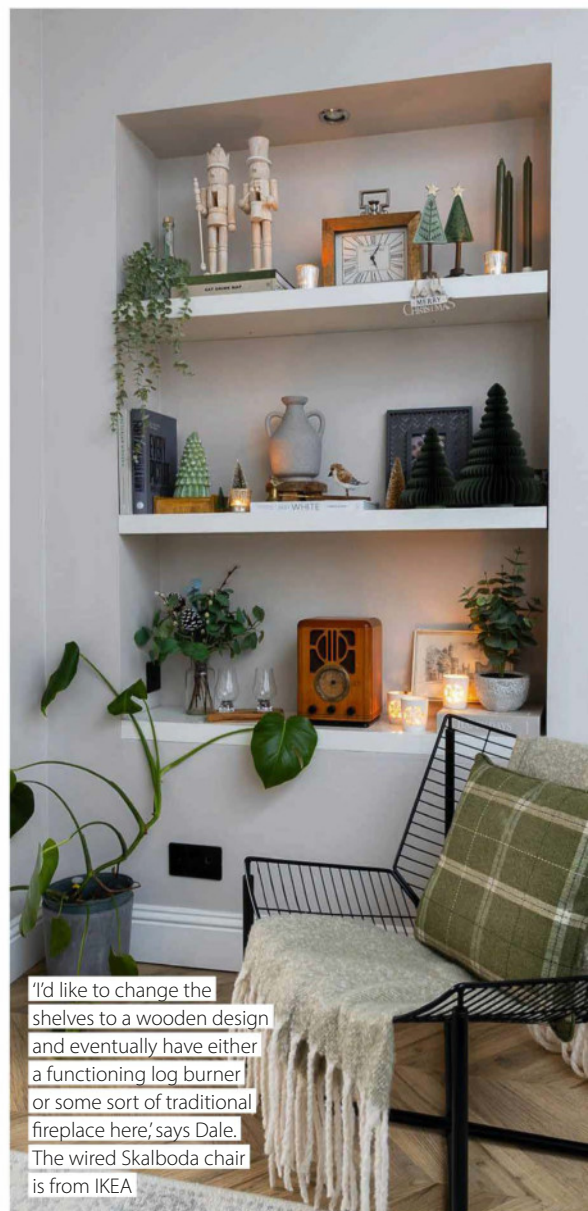
As inexperienced DIYers, we were lucky there wasn't anything awful that needed updating or replacing. However, there also wasn't a huge amount of character, so our focus was adding personality and charm. We reinstalled the Victorian fireplaces, attached panelling to the walls and beams to the bedroom ceiling, and then started injecting gentle colour. I love green, so I've used it in some form in every room, either as wall colour, bedding or simply with plants in corners. The green also works perfectly at Christmas – it feels so festive!



Feature and styling Lisa Moses Photos Matt Antrobus



'The two green and black prints are digital downloads from Ema Paraschiv Art, an Etsy artist,' says Dale. 'They're the same design but I hung one upside down because I couldn't find a set that I liked'



'I'd like to change the shelves to a wooden design and eventually have either a functioning log burner or some sort of traditional fireplace here,' says Dale. The wired Skalboda chair is from IKEA

Living area

'It was tricky figuring out how to zone the open-plan space while keeping it cohesive, and I wasn't initially convinced that our L-shaped sofa would work. However, once it was in position it created a natural divide, which I've enhanced by using a cosy, large area rug. The fake chimney breast was installed by the previous owners, and we'll replace the modern fireplace at some point. For now, I use the shelves purely for display purposes as, although a home needs to be functional and work well, I also believe it's important for each space to look beautiful and welcoming. I made the fun Nutcracker soldiers out of a piece of wooden board and then painted the design on top. They were meant to go either side of the front door, but when we propped them up against the wall, they looked so fun that we left them!'



make
this
Nutcracker
decoration
p48

'Making the Nutcrackers was such a fun project. I had the wood cut at B&Q and then painted the faces and uniforms on,' says Dale. The two armchairs are from Dunelm and the oversized wall clock is from Oak Furnitureland

Kitchen

'Within months of moving in, the flat roof above the kitchen failed after back-to-back storms and we had water streaming down the wall. After fixing the problem, I painted over the water damage with a muted beige colour to soften the stark white units and warm up the space, but when money is less of a concern, I hope to pitch the roof and install skylights. The layout of the kitchen is exactly as we inherited it but the design works really well. Having the hob facing into the room means that whoever is cooking can be part of the conversation when guests come over, and the sink facing the garden gives a pretty view. Although not a natural breakfast bar, putting the high stools here gives us an informal spot to sit and enjoy toast and coffee if we don't feel like sitting at the dining table.'

Dale has leant into the industrial feel of the kitchen by complementing the black hanging lights with the wire bar stools from Dunelm, and the black-edged blind from Blinds 2go

I love finding a bargain and most of our furniture is secondhand

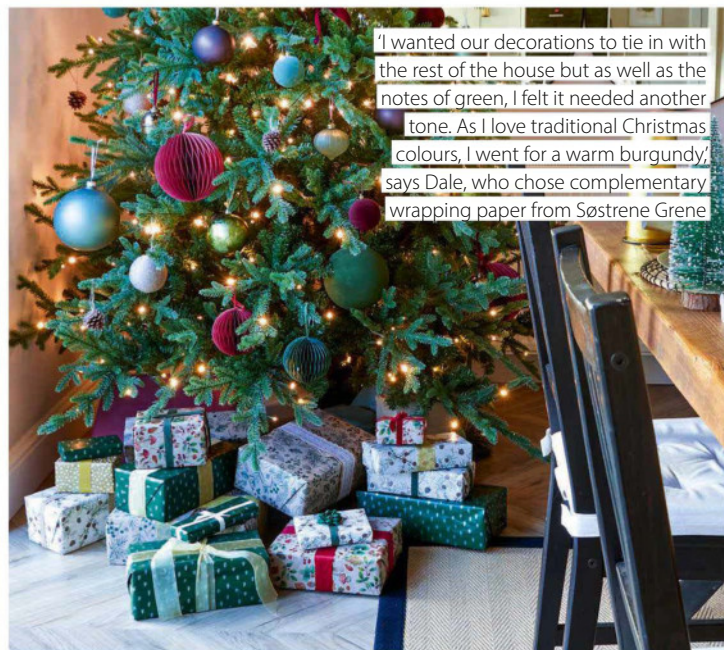
Leaning these Christmas prints, from Desenio, against the splashback is an easy way to inject some festive fun into the functional space

The horseshoe design of the kitchen allows for plenty of storage and worktop space

Dining area

'Moving from a small flat to this house, I didn't appreciate the difference in proportions of the rooms. A lot of our accessories looked really miniature on the walls, so I had to source products that worked with the high ceilings and large rooms. The mirror is actually three individual pieces, but I saw the set up in IKEA and knew it would look great on this wall. The same applied when we were getting the Christmas tree. I knew a small one would look lost, so we bought this seven-footer from B&Q. I wanted to add rustic touches to the house to balance the modern elements and managed to source the beautiful table and bench from Facebook Marketplace the week before we were due to move in.'

'I love finding a bargain and most of our furniture is secondhand. I even managed to source the dining chairs for free online, but it is a case of constantly looking,' says Dale. The rug is from Dunelm



'I wanted our decorations to tie in with the rest of the house but as well as the notes of green, I felt it needed another tone. As I love traditional Christmas colours, I went for a warm burgundy,' says Dale, who chose complementary wrapping paper from Søstrene Grene



shop
Seasonal
greens
p49



EXPERT ADVICE

How to add faux beams to a ceiling

Inspired by Dale's period-style ceiling?

Here are a few practical considerations

- High-density polyurethane foam is the most common material used for faux ceiling beams. It's lightweight, durable and gives the look of real wood without the cost or heavy weight.
- Think about scale and proportion. Use narrower beams for low ceilings to prevent the room feeling cramped, while wider beams will create a dramatic statement in rooms with high ceilings. A common range is three to six feet apart, depending on the width of your chosen beams.
- Before you start, check your ceiling surface is smooth and structurally sound and make good any imperfections.
- Plan your layout carefully. Use a chalk line or painter's tape to mark the exact position of each beam, thinking about the spacing between them and the direction you want them to run. You'll also need to factor in the positioning of your lighting, and any smoke alarms.
- Secure the faux beams to ceiling joists for maximum stability. Use a stud finder to locate the joists and mark them with a pencil, then use mounting blocks to attach the beams to the ceiling. Apply caulk to fill screw holes or gaps, if necessary.
- Wear safety goggles and gloves when cutting or drilling, and make sure to use a sturdy ladder for working overhead.

'I think my generation has replaced grey with green as the new neutral as it's a lot warmer and adds more character,' says Dale, who chose Dulux Heritage paint in Drab for the panelling. The bedside lamps were from B&Q

Style idea

Use a picture ledge to create seasonal displays without putting nails in the wall



Main bedroom

'After reinstating the Victorian fireplace, adding panelling felt like an obvious way to inject extra interest into the room. I chose the three-quarter height with a shelf along the top as it's such a stylish way to display pretty accessories.

But rather than measuring and cutting individual batons, we bought sheets of pre-made board from Wickes, which were far easier to attach, though cutting around the plug sockets was a challenge. I was mindful of using the 'fifth wall' as an extra surface to decorate so added faux beams to the ceiling, creating a unique feature. Although they wouldn't have been in the room originally, we aren't too precious about historical accuracy and love the warmth and texture they add. Painting the walls a soft latte shade, and the panelling green, added the colour the room needed while sticking to the relaxed look I was after.'

'The bedside tables came from Facebook Marketplace and just needed new black handles to complement the bed frame,' says Dale. The Let It Snow sign is from Plywood Studio

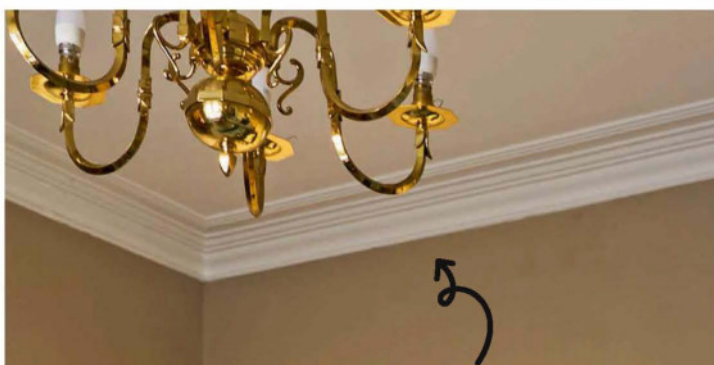
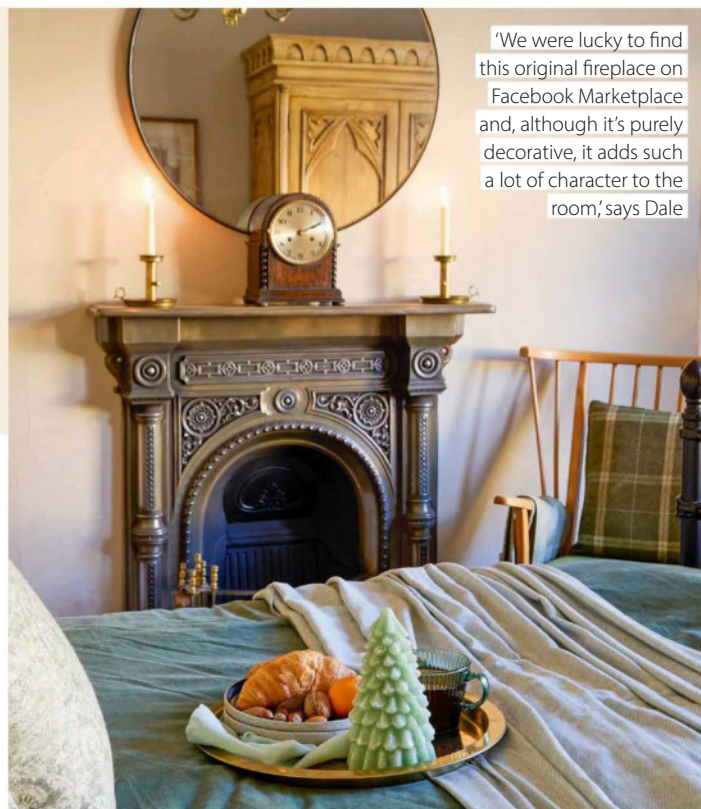


Guest bedroom

'When we first moved in, some plasterboard on the chimney breast needed replacing so we took the opportunity to install a Victorian fireplace, though we underestimated how heavy it was and trying to get it through the house was a challenge. It was originally orange and covered in rust, so I spent days returning it to its former glory.

We watched a lot of videos online to give us a guide on the best way to fit it, but it was worth the effort as it's created a beautiful focal point. The original magnolia walls felt outdated and I wanted to give them a budget refresh. Luckily, I found a tiny tin of Crown's On The Rocks in the shed which has more caramel tones, and as it has a similar base colour, I only needed one coat to cover the room.'

'We were lucky to find this original fireplace on Facebook Marketplace and, although it's purely decorative, it adds such a lot of character to the room,' says Dale



Style idea

Choose covings to complement the scale of a room



'We didn't want the hassle or expense of getting an electrician in, so we chose these wall-mounted plug-in lights from Dunelm, and the cable running down adds a feature element,' explains Dale

Bathroom

'We haven't done anything to the bathroom yet, but I'd really like to change it. It feels too cold and industrial, so I want to give it a complete overhaul. The design is impractical as there's no ventilation and the windows open inwards, so can't open properly because of the blind and the position of the tap, which has been fitted too high up. There's also a towel rail directly behind the door so it can't be opened properly. Long term, I'd love to create a Victorian look with some modern twists by installing a bath and converting an old chest of drawers into a vanity unit. I'd also like to have traditional-style brass taps to add a touch of luxe to the space, but it's a big project so we need to save and plan first.'

Our focus was reinstating the lost charm in the house, so we replaced fireplaces, added panelling to the walls, and attached faux beams to the ceiling.



What I Learned

- Make life easy by choosing pre-cut sheets of panelling ready to stick straight onto the wall. We'd never done panelling before and found this solution quick, cheap and simple to install.
- Look for secondhand items before buying something new. Nearly everything in our home is preloved. Not only is it sustainable, the chances are you'll find a unique, quality piece of furniture or accessory, at a bargain price.
- Give DIY a go. Painting walls, attaching panelling, and installing decorative fireplaces are achievable with a bit of patience – and an instructional video or two!



The cool industrial style of the bathroom doesn't suit Dale's taste, so her plan is to give it an update in keeping with the period of the house by replacing the shower with a Victorian-style bath

TURN OVER
to shop Dale's rustic look →

STEAL MY STYLE

Get Dale's restful and serene home style with these buys



Nutcracker decoration

Go big with your seasonal decor, like **Dale** has done, with these oversized festive figures



TOP TIP

OSB is an engineered wood made from compressed layers of wood strands

Complement the rest of your festive scheme by choosing a coordinating colour for your Nutcracker



YOU WILL NEED

● 9 x 606 x 1829mm sheet of general purpose OSB 3 ● tape measure ● pencil ● jigsaw ● sandpaper ● selection of leftover paints or tester pots ● paintbrush ● artist's paintbrush ● hot glue gun and glue sticks ● gold metallic paint ● 6 plastic bottle tops ● 1.5m gold braid ● 16 x 4 x 1000mm pine half round beading ● A3 stiffened felt sheet in Black ● A4 stiffened felt sheet in White ● scissors

INSTRUCTIONS

1 To make the base for the Nutcracker figure, cut a 40 x 150cm rectangle of OSB. For the gold adornment on the hat, cut a piece of OSB measuring 20 x 12cm at the top, tapering to 9cm at the bottom. Sand any rough edges.

2 Lay the rectangle of OSB on your work surface and, using a tape measure and pencil, mark a horizontal line across the rectangle 25cm up from the base for the boot area, then another 50cm up from the base for the legs of the Nutcracker. Draw a third horizontal line 100cm up from the base for the body, and a fourth line 125cm up from the base for the face of the Nutcracker. The area above this line will be the hat.

3 With your selection of leftover paints or tester pots, paint the basic boot, trouser, coat, face and hat areas onto the OSB using a paintbrush.

4 Allow the paint to dry then, using white paint and an artist's brush, add the details to the boots, trousers and coat, along with a cross-shaped sash on the coat.

5 Apply two coats of gold paint to the hat embellishment, allowing it to dry between coats. Then, attach it to the centre top of the hat using a hot glue gun, so it sits halfway above the top of the hat.

6 Apply two coats of gold paint to the bottle tops and allow to dry. Cut three 30cm lengths of gold braid and attach two to the coat and one to the hat using a hot glue gun, curving them as shown. Use hot glue to attach the gold bottle tops over the ends of the gold braid.

7 Use a jigsaw to cut two 40cm lengths of wooden beading and a 5cm length of beading. Sand the edges smooth. Paint one 40cm length of beading gold, and the second 40cm length black. Paint the 5cm length of beading the same colour you used to paint the face of your Nutcracker.

8 Use a hot glue gun to attach the black beading horizontally across the top of the boots and the gold beading horizontally across the bottom of the hat. Attach the 5cm length of beading vertically in the centre of the face area as a nose.

9 Finally, cut the eyebrows, pupils, beard and moustache pieces from black stiffened felt and the eyes from white stiffened felt. Attach them to the face using a hot glue gun. Your finished Nutcracker is now ready to be propped into position against the wall.



SHOP THE LOOK

Relaxed rustic

Combine warm woods with green accessories for a sophisticated scheme like **Dale's**, then add gold details to make it festive



- 1 Olive leaves embossed **bauble**, £1.50, Dunelm 2 Gallery Cream & Green forest trees print effect Christmas **cushion**, £15, B&Q 3 Velvet Christmas **stocking** in Forest Green, £24, Idyll Home 4 Debossed Christmas tree stoneware **mug** in Green, £7, John Lewis & Partners 5 Collins arched 4-door oak **display cabinet**, £350, Habitat 6 Habitat Bastian velvet **dining chair** in Green, £120, Argos 7 Green Christmas tree shaped **candles**, £12.50 for 2, Talking Tables 8 Mistletoe **print**, from £11.95, Desenio 9 Woodland Sage pleat and wood **table lamp**, £199, Heal's 10 Winter forest wool **blanket**, £120, J.J. Textile 11 Hiba 1-drawer **bedside table**, £149.99, La Redoute



Welcome to my home

A BIT ABOUT ME

I'm Sarah Jackson, 41, a stay-at-home mum, @panelsandpicturerails, and I live with my husband Kristian, 35, a retail project manager, and our two children, Will, 11, and Flo, five.

WHERE I LIVE

Our home is a late Edwardian four-bedroom detached house in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, and we moved here in September 2017.

WHAT I WANTED TO CHANGE

The hallway was brimming with original features and I wanted to inject that charm into the rest of the house, while giving every space a touch of our fun family personality.

HOW I MADE IT MY OWN

After initially making a few mistakes, I leant into the period of the house and went for a traditional-style kitchen and bathroom, chose rich paint colours, and filled the rooms with quirky finds I've sourced over the years.

MY FAVOURITE PART

It has to be the kitchen. I didn't love the first iteration but had to live with it for four years, but now I've finally got my dream kitchen and didn't have to spend a fortune replacing it.

'It takes about a week to decorate the house for Christmas, as every room has a festive touch in it. My parents always went the extra mile to make Christmas amazing, and Kristian loves Christmas as much as I do, so we both enjoy making our home feel festive,' says Sarah



Style idea

Add cushions in a mix of colours, patterns and textures for contrast

My story

I didn't like the style of this house when I saw it online and, as it was over budget, I scrolled past, but I kept seeing it and being drawn back to the listing. We went for a viewing and the moment I stepped into the impressive hallway I immediately envisaged one of my many Christmas trees there! But the bathroom floor was so wonky it felt like being on a boat and we were worried there might be subsidence. Thankfully, the surveyor explained it was due to the drains and not a big problem.

We swiftly gave the bathroom a period makeover, changing the layout to include a freestanding bath and the high-level cistern, all sourced from eBay. The dining room and kitchen were separate, so we saved for a year and then knocked through to create a sociable family kitchen-diner.

We did all the work ourselves, apart from the plumbing and electrics, painting each room in striking colours and filling our home with unusual accessories thanks to my love of hunting for secondhand finds. That was the fun bit, and although I didn't like this house initially, now I love it!





COLOURFUL PERIOD PROPERTY

WHEN IT COMES TO SEASONAL DECOR I don't hold back!

Using her love of all things quirky, **Sarah Jackson** has created a maximalist family home that comes into its own at Christmas, the family's favourite time of year

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STEAL MY STYLE

Get Sarah's bright and bold home style with these brilliant buys

↓ Eleanor Bowmer fabulously festive **jug**, £24, Anthropologie



↓ Leopard Love **tea towel**, £12, Rockett St George



↑ Red and White stripe Christmas bauble lidded **pot**, £5, George Home

→ Neon Red **hohoho** sign, £20, B&Q



Living room

'Our previous home was a period property so initially I wanted to ring the changes and go for a modern feel here. I decorated this room with white geometric wallpaper and instantly disliked it, realising rich tones and dark colours suit the house better. So, I changed the look after a year, using a dupe of Selvedge from Farrow & Ball, which gives the room a cosy feel. We replaced a skinny gas fire with this wooden design that complements the proportions of the room. Kristian added the panelling, the built-in storage and shelves in the alcoves, which gives me plenty of display space, as well as storage for the children's toys. The living room originally had a regular door but because the hall is so big we decided to install glass folding doors, so that when they're open we can make full use of the space for parties.'



'The first thing I contemplated was where the Christmas trees would go!' says Sarah. 'The living room tree is always the biggest and boldest and has baubles from when Kristian and I were young. Now we're adding baubles the children have made, which makes it even more special'

'The deep blue velvet sofa, from Distinctive Chesterfields, adds a sumptuousness to the room, but it's also family friendly as it's so easy to wipe clean,' says Sarah. 'We got the three neon ducks from a shop that was closing down and I mounted them on foliage tiles from IKEA, threading through some extra ferns to fill it out'



EXPERT ADVICE

How to turn your mantel into a seasonal centrepiece

Bring a festive touch to any room with these simple styling tricks, like Sarah

- Start by choosing your overall theme and consider how the colour palette of the display will complement your Christmas tree to help create a cohesive look.
- Clear and clean your mantel, giving yourself a blank canvas to work with, and begin by laying a festive garland along the shelf. This could trail down either side of the fireplace, or, like Sarah, you could choose an asymmetrical look and drape the greenery down one side.
- Weave in fairy lights for a magical glow, making sure to hide the battery pack. Prop up wooden or metal stars and tree decorations against the chimney breast for added depth. Layer in candles at different heights to inject visual interest. LEDs are safer and mean you don't need to worry about a fire hazard.
- Enhance the arrangement with baubles, miniature bottle-brush trees, pinecones, or any ornaments you love, securing them with florist's wire if needed.

- Complete the look with stockings draped over the mantel, and place a few gift-wrapped boxes or lanterns at the hearth for extra charm. If you don't have a working fireplace, fill it with candles or pine cones to complete your look.

Safety first

If you have a working fireplace, ensure you secure your decorations away from heat or flames and only place items in front of the hearth if it's safe to do so.



'The hallway acts as an extra seating area and installing the connecting glass doors was a game changer,' says Sarah. 'When they're open to the living room it creates an overflow space for when we have parties'

Hallway

'The panelled wall and plate rail are original to the house and were a real selling point, so I colour-drenched the walls and woodwork in Old White by Farrow & Ball and use the hooks to hang beautiful accessories to make a feature of it. I wanted to treat the large space like another room rather than a walkway, so we gave the stairs and banister a bold makeover by painting them black, which adds to the wow factor when people step through the door. We laid a traditional runner with rods and chose a rug in the same design to add cohesion to the look. We needed somewhere to hide our shoes, so Kristian made the wooden storage bench out of leftover scaffold boards which I stained a rich mahogany colour, and he attached hairpin legs sourced off eBay.'



make this metallic wreath p60

Sarah's seasonal decor begins at the front door and gives a festive welcome into the hallway

'It's hard to believe that behind the paint and wood of the units there's a white, handleless gloss kitchen,' says Sarah. 'Kristian upcycled the cabinets to give the look of an expensive kitchen on what I call a beer budget! He even chamfered the edges for a high-end finish'



'Attaching panelling above the upstands was a spur-of-the-moment decision and adds to the traditional feel of the new space, complemented with the brass knobs and cup handles, from B&Q,' says Sarah

Kitchen

'I initially painted the 80s beech wood cupboards grey, and the floral brown tiles sage green, and put wood-effect linoleum down as a short-term glow-up. When we finally had the funds, I chose white gloss flat-fronted doors from Wickes and immediately regretted it, but had to live with it as we couldn't justify or afford to change them. Then, for my 40th birthday, four years later, rather than have a party, I asked Kristian to transform it into my dream Shaker-style kitchen. He glued wooden strips onto the doors, added architrave and skirting to the top and bottom to give a bespoke, fitted look, then painted all the cabinets in Funky Dora by Frenchie. I finished the look by adding brass hardware and the statement brass tap.'



Dining area

'We don't sit in front of the TV to eat, as we like to sit round the table and chat about our day while having dinner, so a dedicated dining area was important to us.

When we were planning the layout of the new, knocked-through space, we realised that this area would be too small to fit the kitchen, but was perfect for our large dining table and the dresser, which I bought on Facebook Marketplace for £50. I painted it the same colour as the kitchen cabinets to create visual flow between the two spaces.

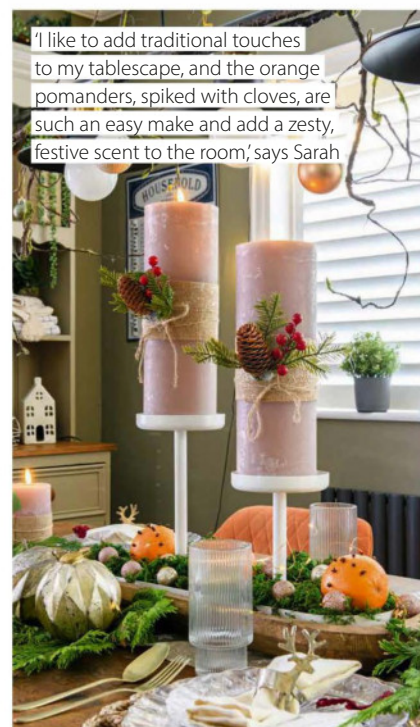
Each year, I decorate the top of the dresser with the branches from an old Christmas tree that I cut up, and some fairy lights. Real shutters were on my wishlist but new ones are so expensive, so I managed to source these off eBay for £20 and Kristian cut them down to fit.'



Fresh greenery is an easy way to add seasonal colour to your dining table, and using different types will add varied texture and visual interest



'I love decorating seasonally and the rise-and-fall pulley lamp gives me another opportunity to add some natural elements. I simply attach foraged branches using invisible twine, and then hang lightweight baubles from it,' says Sarah



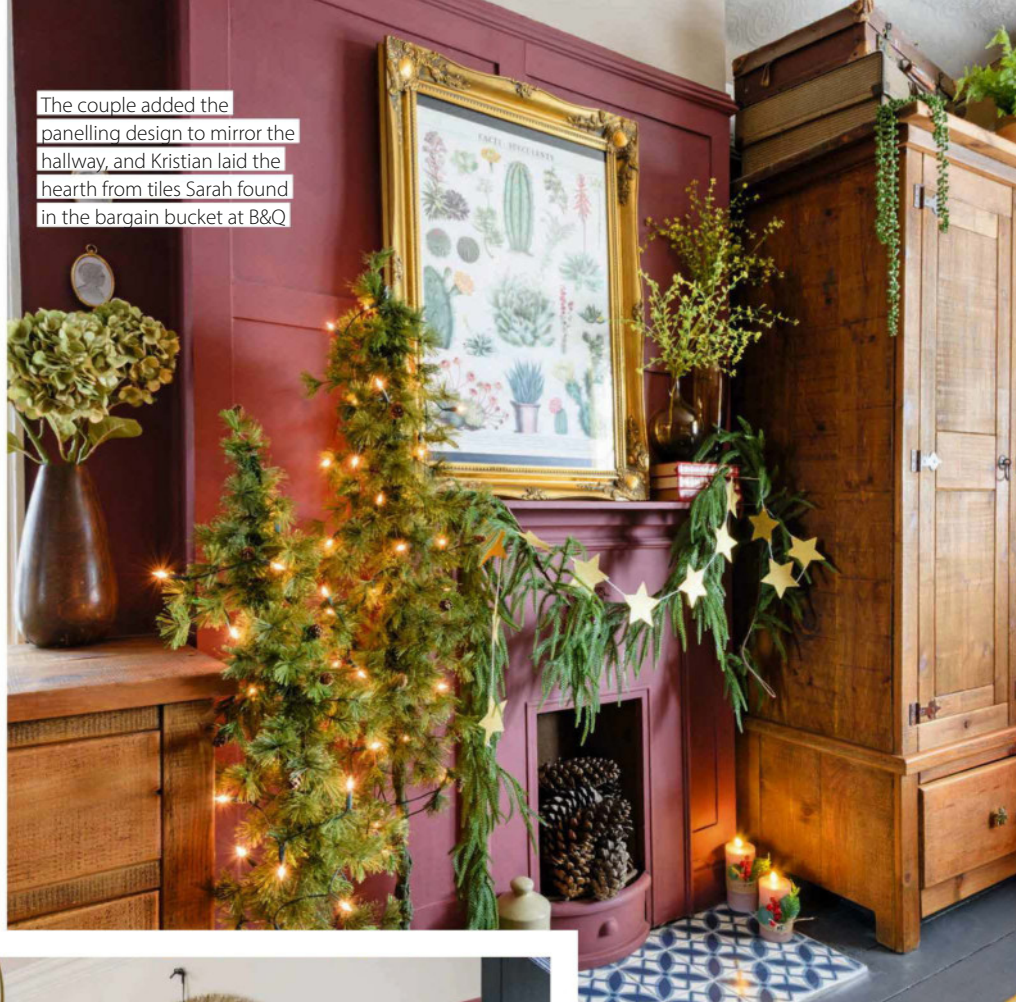
'I like to add traditional touches to my tablescape, and the orange pomanders, spiked with cloves, are such an easy make and add a zesty, festive scent to the room,' says Sarah

It takes about a week to decorate the house as every room has a touch of Christmas in it, which I love

Main bedroom

'This room originally had so many built-in wardrobes that it felt like being in a small caravan, so we ripped them all out and sold them on Facebook Marketplace, replacing them with beautiful, real wood freestanding pieces. I wanted to source two fireplaces that were the same, one for in here and one for Flo's room, so they felt like they'd always been here. It took a while of non-stop looking to find a matching pair as I'm always trying to be budget savvy, but I finally managed to get these for £20. I originally painted this room green, but Kristian hated it! He loves red, so after hunting for the right shade, as I wanted a berry colour rather than anything too bright, I landed on Winter Cherry by Crown. I initially thought it might be too dark but the richness adds such a cosy, cocooning effect.'

The couple added the panelling design to mirror the hallway, and Kristian laid the hearth from tiles Sarah found in the bargain bucket at B&Q



'We bought the unusual four-poster bed from Hall of Pine over a decade ago, and it's really stood the test of time because we still love it. Kristian drilled holes through the posts so that we could attach the plug-in lights while hiding the flex,' says Sarah

By choosing to hang an ornate chandelier, from BHS, in the bathroom, Sarah has created a luxurious atmosphere while adding a touch of the unexpected



'The bedside tables were my best bargain at only £10 from Facebook Marketplace. They were black and gold so I painted them with leftover paint from the ceiling, which adds to the flow of the room,' says Sarah



Flo's room

'I wanted to create a magical room for Flo, and, although I never usually use wallpaper as I can't commit to a pattern long enough, when I stumbled across the beautiful woodland design I knew it was perfect for animal-crazy Flo. I originally intended to cover the whole wall behind the bed but at the last minute I decided to paper the chimney breast as well, only to find I didn't have quite enough wallpaper! I didn't want to buy another roll, so Kristian put moulding behind the bed to free up just enough paper to do the chimney, and I painted the panelling in Mink by Wickes. The white ceiling didn't work with the bold colours of the wallpaper, so I painted it a rich green using Botany Bay by Crown, to balance the look. The final element was painting the cute scallop effect, using a plate as a stencil.'



'I've always put trees in the children's bedrooms to add the magic of Christmas, and I decorate Flo's tree with fun giant sweets,' says Sarah

TURN OVER
to shop Sarah's vibrant look →



Bathroom

'The initial layout didn't work well so we kept the toilet where it was and repositioned the bath to where the sink had been. I wanted that to be the star of the show, as soon as you open the door, rather than seeing the sink. I sourced the white plastic bath from eBay for only £200 and painted it in Black Jack by Frenchic to add a touch of drama. We wanted to add some pattern to the room and I spotted these perfect tiles, from the Ledbury range, in the sale at Walls and Floors. Kristian added MDF strips behind the bath with a picture rail above, and I painted the room in Weathered Plank by Valspar. We finished off the look by hanging the beautiful raw-edge shelf from B&Q with Victorian-style brackets.'

What I Learned

- Be patient. I don't have the budget to buy everything I'd like new, but once I have an idea in my head I know, with a bit of time and effort, I'll be able to find what I want from eBay or Facebook Marketplace.
- Paint dupes aren't always a good idea. I've used quite a few in our house, and although they all look great, they don't always match the original colour.
- Go with your gut. I know I love a vintage look so trying to achieve a modern scheme was never going to work, but sometimes it's ok to make mistakes while trying something new as you never know, it could be fabulous.



SHOP THE LOOK

Merry and bright

Embrace the joy of the season with cheerful colours, playful accessories and splashes of gold to recreate **Sarah's** maximalist style



- 1 DejaReve Swan in Gold poster, from £7.95, Posterlounge 2 Christmas scented candle in Gold metallic toned jar, £4.50, Primark 3 Laura Ashley Elwick 6-light textured glass and Antique Brass pendant, £360, dār lighting 4 Gold Christmas tree napkin ring, £6.95, The Wisteria Tree 5 Embroidered leopard cushion, from £40, Industrious Decor 6 Regency 3-seater sofa in Plum boutique velvet, £999, DFS 7 Felt cat in jumper hanging decoration, £5; felt candy cane toucan hanging decoration, £5; felt sledging zebra hanging decoration, £5, all Habitat 8 Gold finish drinks trolley with tempered Black glass shelves, £271.99, B&Q 9 Yvonne Ellen giraffe cocktail shaker, £25, John Lewis & Partners 10 Vinterfint bauble wreath, £17, IKEA 11 Poinsettia picks in Emerald Green, £3.99, and Pale Gold and Glitter, £4.49, both Gisela Graham



gathered.

Discover your next craft project



Explore fresh project ideas for all your favourite crafts with the **website** for makers everywhere. Discover easy-to-follow patterns and tutorials for crochet, knitting, sewing, quilting, papercraft and stitching, and learn new skills from experts you can trust.

www.gathered.how



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MAKE THE LOOK

Metallic wreath

Make a festive first impression with a glamorous door decoration, like **Sarah's**



YOU WILL NEED

- dust sheet
- selection of faux foliage stems
- rose gold spray paint
- spray adhesive
- biodegradable gold glitter
- florist's stub wire
- sharp scissors
- grapevine wreath base
- wire cutters

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Before you start work, protect your work surface with a dust sheet, and ideally work outside or in a well-ventilated room. Lay the sprigs of faux foliage on your work surface and apply two coats of rose gold spray paint, working in slow, sweeping strokes and allowing the paint to dry thoroughly between coats.
- 2 Next, lightly apply a thin mist of spray adhesive over the painted foliage. Dust a layer of gold glitter over the foliage so it sticks to the adhesive. Allow the adhesive to dry, then carefully shake the foliage to remove any excess glitter.
- 3 Take a few stems of painted foliage in your hand and wrap the ends together using a piece of florist's stub wire, leaving about 8cm of wire free to attach the foliage to the wreath.
- 4 Use sharp scissors to trim the ends of the stems so the bunch of foliage is roughly the same length as that of your hand.
- 5 Place the first bunch of foliage in the centre of a grapevine wreath with the stems against the wreath base and the foliage facing outwards, away from the wreath. Wrap the ends of the stub wire around the wreath base and twist the ends together at the back of the wreath to hold the foliage bunch securely in place. Use wire cutters to trim away any excess wire.
- 6 Lay the next bunch of foliage on the wreath so the foliage of the second bunch covers the stems of the first bunch. Continue working all the way around the wreath, attaching all the bunches in this overlapping fashion. Ensure all the bunches are facing in the same direction for a neat overall effect.
- 7 Finally, attach a loop of stub wire to the top back of the wreath to hang it.

TOP TIP

You can use any colour of metallic spray paint to create this look, like gold, silver or even copper, just choose your favourite to complement your scheme



The 12 gifts of CHRISTMAS

Our experts have each chosen their 12 perfect presents to treat everyone on your list, from interiors lovers to foodies and travel fans



12 days of Christmas Country
Animals decorations, £43,
Wrendale Designs

For those who really love their home (and buttered toast).

Pink and Red heart **butter dish**, £35, Rockett St George



Ideal for friends who love to entertain – with a subtle flirty motif!

Embroidered mistletoe **napkins**, £16.50 for 4, Cox & Cox



Decorative as well as functional – these would look gorgeous on kitchen shelving.
70s Ceramics **coffee mugs** in Serendipity, £31.90 for 4, Folk Interiors

Gifts for HOMEBODIES

Help them hibernate with these fab finds

Hannah is HomeStyle's Style Editor – there's nothing she doesn't know about trends and savvy shopping



WALK ON THE WILD SIDE!

This show-stopping **cushion** makes a wild statement for maximalist friends and family.
Wild Cat leopard print Pink & Mustard **cushion**, from £45, Bean & Bemble



Cute and fun, this is sure to raise a smile!
Gold **lamp**, £19.99, Homesense



They'll need somewhere to store all those delicious festive treats!
Nutcracker **storage jar** with bow, £14.99, Tenovus Cancer Care

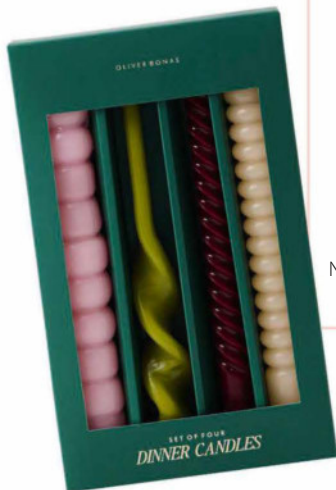


The watercolour style of this printed table runner will bring a bit of whimsy to the table.

Berry branch **runner**, £15, Walton & Co



This finish works with so many schemes – a very versatile gift!
Rustic Silver wooden **photo frame**, £18, Click Style



Swoonworthy candles any host will love.
Winter twirls & swirls **candles**, £16.50 for 4, Oliver Bonas



Add to the festive glow with this stylish sign – it looks great on a bookcase or mantel.
All is Calm and Bright **light Christmas decoration**, £35.99, Very



A bargain and so on-trend!
Ball-edged **bowl** in Cream, £9.99, The Range



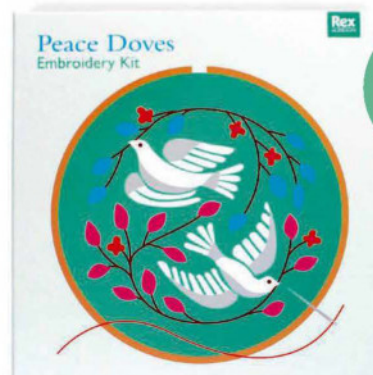
Jewel-tone, plush soft furnishings are always welcome!
Geometric velvet **throw** in Green, from £16.50, Homescapes

HOME STYLE LOVES!



3D card **craft playset** in Animal Automobiles, £8.95, Rex London

Whether your gift is for a keen crafter or a beginner, we have something for everyone



A SWEET KEEPSAKE TO MAKE

Give them the gift of a new craft skill!

Embroidery kit in Peace Dove, £8.95, Rex London



Happy wall decor with a modern art feel to it.

Orange beaded happy face **wall art**, £29.50, Oliver Bonas

Keep the kids busy at the dinner table on the big day.

Christmas colour in **activity tablecloth**, £15, Meri Meri



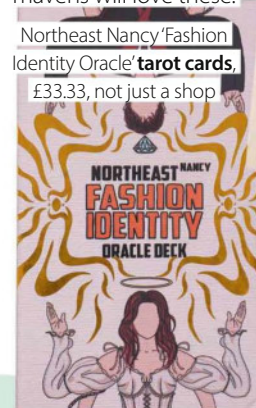
Ink & Bloom's range of planners have lots of gorgeous patterns to choose from.

A5 undated **weekly planner** in Abstract Pattern, £23.95, Ink & Bloom



Blend tarot-style intuition with fashion advice! Style mavens will love these.

Northeast Nancy Fashion Identity Oracle **tarot cards**, £33.33, not just a shop



Great prompts for artists, whether they're in a creative rut or just love experimenting.

Mindzen smART DICE **drawing & painting game**, currently £14.99, Amazon



Gifts for CREATIVE TYPES

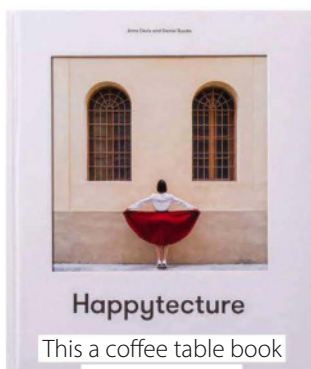
Made from recycled stationery waste in collaboration with Brothers Make, this is a clever eco product and it writes beautifully too.

The Wren – Write Off infinitely **refillable pen**, from £35, Tom's Studio



A portion of sales of Hundred House coffee go towards its Art + Industry programme – and this packaging is so cool!

Hundred House **specialty coffee**, £18.99, Selfridges

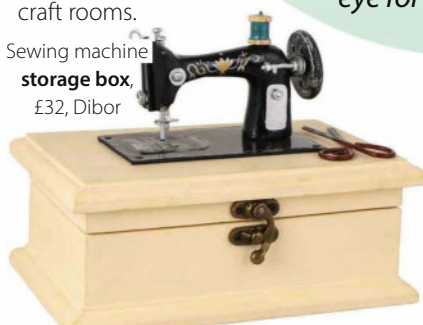


This a coffee table book to raise a smile.

Happytecture by Anna Devís and Daniel Rueda (£30, Thames & Hudson)

Sewists will love this decorative box – it's ideal for craft rooms.

Sewing machine **storage box**, £32, Dibor



Whether they're artists or appreciate beautiful things, we have the ideal gift

Tricia is HomeStyle's Creative Design Lead, our go-to for all things gorgeous with a keen eye for an artistic gift



Great fun for art lovers.

Chatty Feet Famous Modern Artists **socks collection**, £33, not just a shop



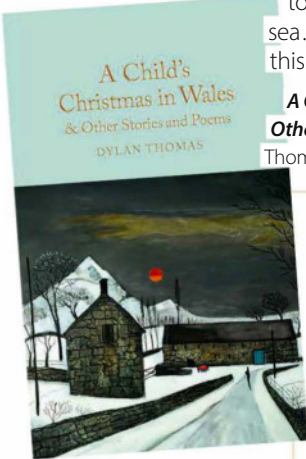
All the world's a stage! This sign brings classic Hollywood to the scheme.

Movie Theatre **sign**, from £32.50, TheMetalPrintCompany.etsy.com



"All the Christmases roll down towards the two-tongued sea..." Treat a literary friend to this special gift edition classic.

A Child's Christmas in Wales & Other Stories and Poems by Dylan Thomas, £10.99, The Welsh Gift Shop



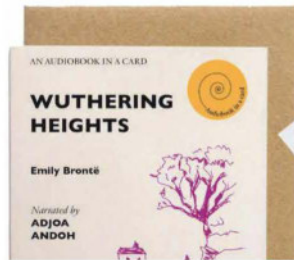
For die-hard Devil Wears Prada fans. We can't wait for the sequel!

Miranda P inspired Christmas **tree decoration**, £25, Rockett St George



Get excited for Emerald Fennell's movie adaptation next year with this audiobook read by Adjoa Andoh.

Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë
audiobook in a card, £12.99,
Audiobook in a Card



This best-seller is a shoe-in for Wicked fans.

The Wizard of Oz
Red slippers tabletop
vase, £30, Menkind



THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Mark the year the David Bowie Centre opened at V&A East Storehouse with this tee.

David Bowie Heroes contact sheet **t-shirt**, £35, V&A Shop



An utterly genius idea for avid readers.

Just One More Chapter **cushion** with book pocket, £12.99, Tenovus Cancer Care



Add a touch of rebelliousness and fun to a music lover's sideboard.

Rock On hand **ornament**, £12, Joe Browns



Featuring Romeo and Juliet as King and Queen of Hearts, of course! Beautiful illustration by Adam Simpson.

Shakespeare **playing cards**, £12.99, Laurence King

Gifts for CULTURE LOVERS

A slice of the high life via music, art and stage-themed gifts

Vicky is HomeStyle's Commissioning Editor, huge musicals fan and regular theatre-goer.



Grab your ticket to Christmas present success with these star buys,



The perfect place for them to keep treasured gig ticket stubs.

Awesome mix cassette tape **storage tin**, £9.95, Rockett St George

Set up delivery of a new novel from the Golden Age of crime to your friend or family member's door every month, with other mystery surprises too!

British Library Crime Classics **subscription**, £12.50, The British Library Shop



Answer that popular question with some of these embroidered napkins. Would you invite Elvis, Mandela, Taylor...?

Fantasy dinner guest **napkin**, £17.50, Initially London



These are so delicious because they're made with fresh cream. A real treat for chocoholics.

Cornish Dream chocolates, £8, Russell & Atwell



On-trend stripes make these twice as nice...

Stripe resin salad servers, £29.50, Oliver Bonas

In Colombia, these are used to serve homemade Aji, or hot sauce. Handmade from the local black clay.

Chamba **sauceboat**, £25, CasaLatina



Introduce coffee fans to a whole new preparation ritual with this kit.

Aerobie **AeroPress**, £39.99, H.R.Higgins

Gifts for FOODIES

It's time to feast! Show your good taste with these great gifts

Lucy is a freelance editor and HomeStyle's resident recipes writer – she's our go-to for all things good taste!

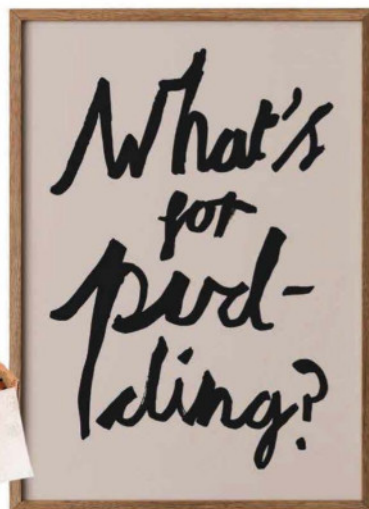


Have they met their matcha yet? Gift this on-trend set.

Chouseki Matcha **gift set**, £35, Sous Chef

Make Christmas morning magical with a curated hamper.

Festive Wine Lovers **hamper**, £26.99, Prestige Hampers



The question on everyone's lips...

What's for Pudding? **print** in Stone & Charcoal, from £34.99, Burnt Peach



A gorgeous gift for anyone who likes the finer things.

Muraglia **extra virgin olive oil** in a hand painted polpo bottle, £39.95, Carluccio's



Star bakers will love this game-changing rolling pin (and you'll likely reap the rewards!).

Staub **rolling pin**, £29.95, Zwilling

A match made in Christmas heaven! Cheddar cheese and Graham's port in one mouthful.

Ruby Mist **cheddar**, £5.50, Snowdonia Cheese Co



Bring a little festive flourish to the Christmas table.

Etched Christmas holly mango wood **chopping board**, £20.99, Homescapes



Handmade in Shropshire for over 30 years, DukesHill know a thing or two about good puds!

Very Special **Christmas pudding**, £15.50, DukesHill



WE ALL LIKE FIGGY PUDDING!



HOMESTYLE
LOVES!

Fancy collars make Christmas special for pets too.

Leather **cat collars** in Ivory, £29, Pawsome Couture



This cat condo
will look the
part in your
living room.

PawHut **cat tree**,
£34.99, Wayfair

This would look great on the
utility counter, or by the door
for after walks.

Paws Off speckle **pet treat jar**,
£23.50, Oliver Bonas



Make playtime
Christmas-themed.

Ropee long legs Kendall the
Christmas tree **dog toy**,
£9.99, Dobbies

Gifts for FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS

It's raining gifts for cats and dogs

*Mel is Editor of our sister
magazine Your Home
and cat and dog mum
to Lil and Lyra.*



Waterproof, fun and great for
dog walking. Wear around your
waist or across your chest.

Sticky Lemon envelope **fanny pack** in
Zissou Blue, £22.50, Folk Interiors



Choose from a selection
of breeds for a very
special gift.

Jack Russell **hanging
decoration**, £14.99,
Adams & Mack

Only the most fashionable
pups on our walks!

Rufus & Rosie active
lightweight **dog coat** in
Khaki, £9.99, Jolleys



Make their bed super
cosy and fun this season.

Gallery White sausage dog fleece
throw, £10, B&Q

A simple design
that won't look
out of place.

Helsinki The Ball
Grey **cat scratch
post**, £39.99,
Lords & Labradors



Catch those muddy paws and feet in style.

Door mat in Dog Park, £16.95, Rex London

Available in a range of colours
to tie-in with your decor.

Personalised Spaniel **water bowl**
in Mint Green, from £40, Habulouis



Only the best
treats for
your bestie.

Green & Wild's Luv
Heart **dog treats**,
£3.55, Charley Chau



TIME FOR
A TREAT



Travel in style with this beautiful wash bag.

Organic cotton **wash bag** in Lilac, £38, Yonder

Great for hikers and nature-lovers.
K&F Concept **monocular**, currently priced at £35.99, Amazon



A smart, hard-case cabin bag is a practical option for those who like to avoid hold suitcases.

Replicating **cabin luggage** in Charcoal, £40, it Luggage



They won't forget their toothbrush with this sweet case.

ES Studio **toothbrush travel pouch** in Red Floral Tile print, £12, not just a shop



ENJOY A FESTIVE WALK

The original and best!

Origin packable **waterproof jacket** in Ocean, £37.50, Mac in a Sac

Just as useful for keeping your gear dry on a hike as it is carrying wet swimwear.

Tide 30L recycled **dry bag** in Black, £34.95, Passenger



Join the cool kids (at a much lower price point).

1.2L **drinking cup** with handle in Petrol Blue, £16.95, Rex London

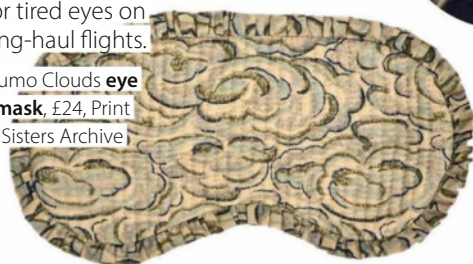
Great hiking socks with added luxury.

Men's Alpaca **knee socks** in Charcoal and Olive, £38 each, Samantha Holmes



For tired eyes on long-haul flights.

Kumo Clouds **eye mask**, £24, Print Sisters Archive



Gifts for ADVENTURERS

Practical gifts for those on the go

Rachel is a travel writer and HomeStyle's Operations Editor – she loves all kinds of adventures – near and far!

Timeless tan suits everyone!

Rosanna Clare leather **passport holder** in Tan, £40, not just a shop



HOMESTYLE LOVES!

Just as useful for adventures closer to home – and especially for days at the beach if you have kids!

Foldable **camping trolley** in Black, £40, Online Home Shop



This is a versatile option if they often take food on the road.

Akinod Bento and insulated **lunch bag** in White & Terracotta, £29.95, Berry Useful

Have their initials embroidered on a brand new gym bag.

Organic cotton **duffle bag** in Navy, £40, Initially London



These trainers are super cool whether they're sporty or not!

Graceland **trainers** in Red, £22.99, Deichmann



BECOME A LION OR LIONESS



Time for a kick about! Great price, too.

Children's football **clock**, £4, B&M



A nostalgic choice for keen skiers and snowboarders.

Zermatt skiing **poster print**, from £14.95, The Northern Line

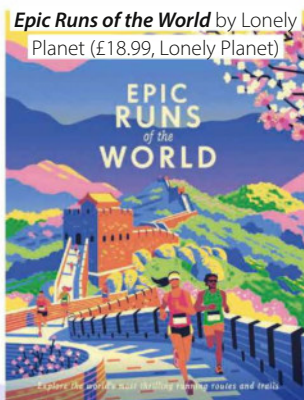
Elevate their daily cuppa with a personalised mug.

Personalised football boots ½ pint **mug**, from £27, Emma Bridgewater



Inspire marathon-runners and trail-blitzers with this complete guide.

Epic Runs of the World by Lonely Planet (£18.99, Lonely Planet)



Lightweight and fast drying – excellent for swimming, whether in the pool, lake or sea.

Zennor hammam **towel** in Turquoise and Grey, £30, Ebb Flow Cornwall

A bargain find for seasoned cyclists.

Borgen **cycling sunglasses** with changeable lenses in Black, £8.44, Sue Ryder Online Shop



Gifts for SPORTS FANS

We've got the lowdown on the best buys for the athletic types in your life

Megan is HomeStyle's Production Editor, korfbal champ and our sporting pro.

2025 has been an immense year of sport! Celebrate their team's successes this Christmas!



This gourmet chocolate from the gorgeous city of Bath is a hole in one.

Chocolate golf balls, £12, Choc on Choc



We're guessing the Venn diagram of Lego and basketball is well and truly crossed!

Nike **dunk trickshot set**, £34.99, LEGO

HOMESTYLE LOVES!



Limber up for loads of fun on Christmas day.

Table tennis set, £12.95, Rex London



Are they a mean bowler? Or a brilliant batter? Celebrate their talent with this vintage ball.

Personalised vintage leather **cricket ball**, from £27, Monster Sporting Gifts

Formulated for a good night's sleep.
Apply the roller to pulse points.

Dreams & Sleep **beauty gift duo set**,
£12.50, Oliver Bonas



It's all in the details – if they have
all the products, give them some
handy accessories instead.

Kitsch extra wide **spa headband** in
Dusty Rose, £8.50, Kiyo Beauty



♥
**HOMESTYLE
LOVES!**



Indulge them a little with the
softest cashmere eye mask.

Cashmere **eye mask** in Light
Melange Grey, £34.95, Plum & Ivory

Gifts for BEAUTY BUFFS

Make them feel special with gifts
to inspire a home spa day

*Parvin is HomeStyle's
Creative Designer – she
knows her ceramides from
her peptides!*

Inspired by in-clinic
treatments, this ritual
revives the skin's
renewal cycle.

Multi-action peptide **facial
starter**, £24, Skinporter



An Age Defy+ cleanser and
Vitamin C serum – formulated
especially for mature skin.

All is Radiant luxury **gift set**,
£29, Green People

A great gift
for beauty
fans going
travelling,
these reusable
eco pots
are 100%
plastic-free.

Pot 'Em Up
refillable **travel
beauty pots**,
£19.95, Donna
May London



Let them lounge in style.

Snuggle Up **thermal bathrobe** in Dusky Pink,
from £37, Richard Haworth



Such cool
packaging for
this spa-like
aromatherapy kit.
You simply place
one inside the
shower out of the
flow of water and
let it slowly dissolve.

Level Wellbeing
shower steamers in
Relaxing, £12, Smug

Copper and tin
facilitate detoxification
and cool the skin.

Kanza **face wand**,
£22, Fushi



Salon vibes
at home.

**Nail prep
set**, £36,
Manicurist Paris

Skin treatments
come and go,
but the clay
face mask
remains! This
one is great.

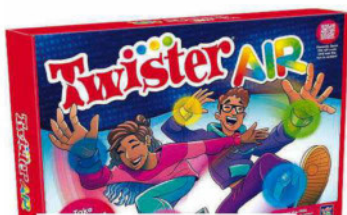
Dead sea minerals
clay mask, £14.95,
Shaloh Skincare



**TUTORIAL-
READY
TOWELS**

Fun and flirty, and
embroidered just for them.

Make-up towel set with
monogrammed headband,
£25, Initially London



The game you know and love now for the digital age!

Hasbro **Twister Air**, currently priced at £10.48, Amazon



There's something inherently Christmassy about Julia Donaldson stories!

Gruffalo **crackers**, £19.99 for 6, Gisela Graham



Guaranteed laughs! Cards Against Humanity family edition **party game**, £29.99, Smyths Toys Superstore



Really ramp up the magic.

Santa Stop Here **sign**, £3.50, Flying Tiger Copenhagen

Gifts for FAMILY FUN

Gather to eat, play games and laugh the day away

Lara is HomeStyle's Christmas Editor and boy mum of two – so she knows a thing or two about keeping the family amused!



A little Christmas baking is non-negotiable!

Santa & Reindeer Christmas **cookie cutters**, £12, Meri Meri



Stretch their words skills with this fun game.

Big Potato P for Pizza **game**, £13, Argos

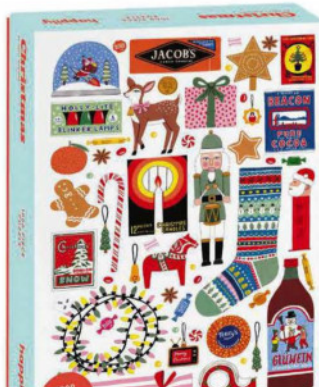
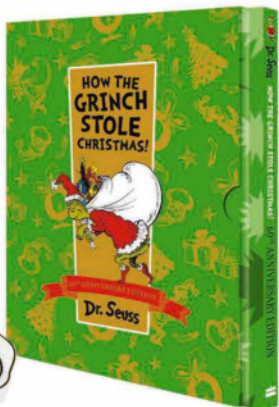


You can't go wrong with LEGO.

Personalised Happy Christmas family **bauble**, £35, Fab Bricks

A fine choice for story time.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas! slipcase edition **book**, £19.09, Debenhams



While away a holiday afternoon together solving this puzzle.

Christmas 1,000 piece **jigsaw puzzle**, £16.99, Happily Puzzles

Something for everyone!

Christmas **chocolate box**, £35, Cadburys Gifts Direct



Feel part of the clan in these PJs.

Matching personalised tartan **pyjamas**, from £14.99 for children's sizes, from £23.99 for adult sizes, Print My Tops



Santa deserves some special presentation.

Eleanor Bowmer Fabulously Festive **Christmas Eve plate**, £25, John Lewis & Partners

Twinkly, jingly magic for the kids.

Wonderland **music box**, £10, April & White



HOMESTYLE LOVES!



Never lose those keys again!

ColorCoral Apple air tag holder **keyring** in Light Blue, currently priced at £3.97, Amazon

A bar of soap is a quintessential stocking filler and this feels luxurious and special.

Calm Lavender & Chamomile natural **soap bar**, £11, ARRAN Sense of Scotland



Winter woollies are always welcome.

Bobbie **bobble hat** in Blue Pink Daisy, £11.99, Lighthouse Clothing



Some fashion fun for the special day.

Candy cane dangle **earrings**, £4.99, Tenovus Cancer Care



Upgrade the drinks trolley with this handy gift.

Silver elk **wine bottle stopper**, currently priced at £4.99, Amazon



If you're on a budget, these gifts are all £12 and under!

Christmas is the best time for nostalgia – the kids will love this old-school toy.

Kaleidoscope in Road Trip, £3.95, Rex London



BRING ON THE NOSTALGIA

Gifts for STOCKING FILLERS

Little treats for one and all, and nothing over £12!

Kirstie is HomeStyle's Editor, DIY and interiors addict and a pro-bargain hunter!

The beautiful packaging features botanical illustrations from Kew's archives.

Magnolia and Pear **hand cream**, £12, Royal Botanic Garden Kew Shop



A saviour for chapped cold-weather lips.

The Ordinary squalane amino acids **lip balm**, £8.50, John Lewis & Partners



Everyone loves dinosaurs!

Jolly Anchiceratops wood **decorations**, £6.99 for 2, Gisela Graham

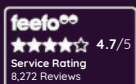
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7 easy steps to a stress-free Christmas

It's the most wonderful time of the year, but Christmas can often bring associated tensions, from money concerns to family disagreements. We asked 7 pros for their expert advice on managing common festive worries, so you can celebrate without the stress...



AVOID OVERSPENDING

Ebony Cropper is a money-saving expert at Money Wellness, helping consumers take control of their finances with practical, achievable advice.



'The festive season can be a minefield for overspending. Between presents, food, Christmas decorations, parties, and unexpected treats, it's easy for budgets to spiral. Add social pressure, sales, and last-minute emergencies, and the stress can mount quickly.

The key to enjoying Christmas without financial worry is planning like a pro. Break your spending into categories, such as presents, food and drink, decorations, experiences, and charitable giving. Assign a realistic budget to each, then track every pound you spend. Using a free online budgeting tool, or even your phone, can prevent nasty surprises and keep you in control.

Think creatively about savings. Secret Santa or group gifting cuts costs, and vouchers for experiences, like the local cinema, theatre, or attractions, make thoughtful gifts without breaking the bank. Buying non-perishables early can lock in lower prices, and checking loyalty points, cashback schemes, or supermarket club offers can reduce grocery and present bills. Take stock of items you already have at home before buying new and compare bulk deals versus single items. Larger packs can sometimes work out cheaper. Simple touches or reusing decorations from previous years can feel just as festive as buying everything new.

Finally, set aside a small 'Christmas buffer' to avoid relying on credit cards or buy now pay later (BNPL). With a structured approach, careful tracking, and clever saving strategies, you can get through the season without financial stress and avoid January regrets.'

Plan like a pro to avoid overspending at Christmas



2 PREVENT FAMILY FALL-OUTS

Amy Bojanowski-Bubb

is a BACP-registered psychotherapist and counsellor in private practice, with a focus on self-compassion, intergenerational patterns, and supporting people to build healthier relationships.



'The festive season can bring as much stress as it does joy, particularly when it comes to family dynamics. Old disagreements can resurface, long-standing tensions may feel magnified, and differences in opinion – whether political, lifestyle, or parenting-related – can create friction. Add in the pressure of travel, financial strain, alcohol-fuelled conversations, or simply the overwhelm of too much 'togetherness', and it's no wonder that many people dread family gatherings as much as they look forward to them.

Christmas is so often painted as a time of joy, family closeness, and love. But the reality can be very different. In my therapy work, I see how much this season can amplify unspoken resentments, long-standing patterns, and family roles. Generational differences in how children should be parented can spark frustration between parents and grandparents. Grief or absence can feel more acute when the world seems to be celebrating.

Here are practical ways to navigate this:

★ **Set boundaries:** Say no to invitations that drain you, have an 'exit plan' for tricky situations, or limit the length of family visits.

★ **Create new traditions:** If old ones feel hard, try something small – a Christmas Eve walk, a meal you enjoy, or time with chosen family.

★ **Plan breaks:** Step outside, call a friend, or pause when gatherings are overwhelming.

★ **Name feelings:** Journaling or even saying to yourself 'this is hard' helps stop emotions from building unspoken pressure.

With clients, I help them prepare by exploring what they're anticipating, identifying triggers, and practising ways to respond rather than react. Sometimes we role-play tricky conversations or create a coping plan they can use when things feel intense.'



Spending time with extended family can be intense at Christmas

Stock up on a few extra 'generic' gifts in case you receive an unexpected present

3

AVOID GIFTING MISSTEPS

Etiquette consultant **Jo Bryant** worked at Debrett's, the arbiters of British etiquette, for over 10 years and has edited 15 books on etiquette and modern manners.



'Gift wishlists are a good idea for children and younger people when they can be genuinely useful pointers to what someone might like, and avoid duplication of gifts. For adults, they should be approached with caution and depend on the gift-giving culture within a family or group.

Always give a gift of an appropriate value for the relationship. For example, a family member, loved one or close friend should receive something of greater value than say a work colleague.

Gift cards are great for teenagers and young people who can be hard to buy for, and are preferable to giving straight money too – adding some thought and a personal touch to the process. It is a good idea to stock up on a few generic 'reserve' gifts, perfect for an emergency when you receive an unexpected Christmas present.

If you receive a present you don't like, then you must still act with gratitude and delight! The gift-giver has taken time to think about the gift for you, spent money on you and carefully wrapped and given it to you, all with the very best of intentions. Whether you love or hate the gift you have received, always take the time to say thank you properly.

We have all received something that is not suitable for us but would be loved by someone else, however re-gifting can be a dangerous game. Think carefully before you do it and run through some essential checks: the recipient must have no connection to the original giver, the item must be in shop-new pristine condition and the gift should be suitable for the recipient rather than re-gifting something you don't want that will just do.'

4 AVERT DINNER DISASTERS

Mimi Morley is senior recipe development manager at HelloFresh, and helps to elevate the cooking and mealtime experiences of thousands of families across the UK.



★ Worried about cooking the turkey?

'Check the turkey by stabbing the thickest part of the thigh and making sure the juices that come out run clear. You could also invest in a meat thermometer to put your mind at ease: stab the same part of the turkey and ensure it comes up to 75°C.'

★ Struggling with timings?

'The main thing to remember when cooking Christmas dinner is that most dishes can be reheated – not everything needs to be cooked at the same time – especially if you're cooking for 20 people in one oven! If you get your veg cooked in the morning, you can give them a blast at the end. Then the oven is free to cook your turkey. Roast the potatoes while the turkey's resting!'

★ Forgotten an ingredient?

'Honestly, no one is going to care if you forgot to buy a specific thing for a specific stuffing recipe you saw on Instagram... just don't tell them! Even if you forget the turkey, everyone likes the trimmings more anyway.'

★ Unexpected vegan or 'free-from' guest?

'Don't panic... just tell them which bits they can eat, it's too late to make them a whole separate meal with all the elements!'

★ Roast potatoes not crisping up?

'You'll find that roast potatoes take longer on Christmas Day, there are more of them and the oven's full, so make sure you plan a good amount of time into your cooking schedule. I allow 90 minutes. Leave them to keep cooking if they're not done – people will wait and the turkey will rest, don't panic!'



For a hassle-free Christmas dinner experience this year, HelloFresh offers a Christmas box with all the trimmings and ingredients ready to go



Plan your
Christmas journeys
well in advance

5 BANISH TRAVEL TRAUMA

Monica Stott is a travel blogger at *The Travel Hack*, where she shares budget-friendly weekend breaks.

'If you're travelling in the UK during the Christmas period, my number one piece of advice is to book everything well in advance, from accommodation and trains to activities and dinner reservations. Book everything as early as you possibly can, even if it feels weird booking a festive meal months ahead! If you're self catering, don't forget to pre-book a food delivery so you won't need to traipse out for Christmas goodies.

When it comes to travelling, do it as early as you can, whether that means a few days before the festive rush or as early in the morning as you can possibly manage. If you're leaving early, then the roads will be quieter and there are fewer delays, cancellations and crowds on public transport. Train cancellations are infamous around Christmastime due to bad weather and they tend to build up through the day so those morning trains are a safer bet.

Christmas trains can be hectic and stressful so you'll definitely want to book a seat and I'd recommend packing lightly if you absolutely have to take a peak time train. It's hard enough getting yourself on the train, never mind a giant suitcase filled with gifts!

When it comes to winter weather, plan for the worst and hope for the best! We're pretty safe assuming the weather will be cold, wet and windy so plan your trip around this. Waterproof changing robes and wellies might be your best friend for cosy festive walks and don't forget to pack a deck of cards and download some family games you can cast to the TV.

Follow Monica on Insta @thetravelhack or check out her blog at thetravelhack.com.

SOLVE SOFA BED BLUES

Nicky Emlick is creative director at *Sofa.com*, bringing her bold and personalised take on interiors to the brand.



'The festive season can bring unexpected sleep challenges, especially when it comes to playing host or giving up your bed for guests. Between uncomfortable beds, blow-up beds and lumpy sofa beds, the lack of proper back support and the sheer exhaustion of holiday celebrations, a bad night's sleep can seem inevitable. But with a little forward planning, it doesn't have to be.

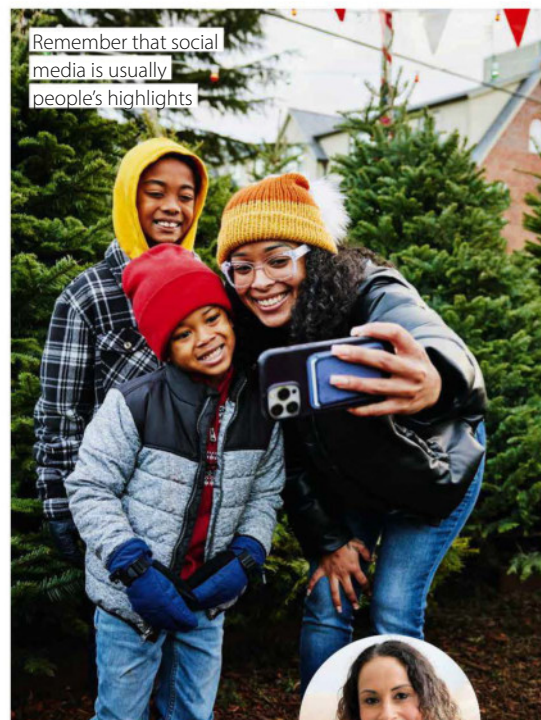
When it comes to hosting over the festive season, a sofa bed can be your secret weapon. The best ones don't shout about their dual purpose; instead, they slip seamlessly into your living room, looking every bit as stylish as a regular sofa. Look for designs that make the transition from sofa to bed smooth and stress-free. Also, pay close attention to the mattress – a sprung design will offer far more support than foam alone.

Of course, not everyone is in a position to invest in a new sofa before the holidays, but there are plenty of simple ways to boost comfort. A mattress topper can breathe new life into an existing sofa bed, while layering up with a plush duvet and soft sheets makes even a temporary bed feel more considered. Encourage guests to bring their own pillow as familiarity can work wonders when it comes to getting quality rest in a new environment.

And if you're the one heading away, think ahead if you have a bad back or struggle to sleep in unfamiliar settings. Packing your own pillow, a lumbar cushion or a compact travel mattress could be the difference between waking up feeling refreshed or sore.'



Aissa loveseat
sofa bed, from
£1,180, Sofa.com



Remember that social
media is usually
people's highlights

7 SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Natasha Page is a BACP-accredited psychotherapist, self-development and business coach, author, and creator of *My Little Therapy Box*.

'The festive season is often portrayed through advertisements and social media influencers as a time of magic, with perfectly prepared dinners, homes, and happy families in Christmas pyjamas. These images are appealing, but they also create an unrealistic standard that places pressure on people to recreate what they see in the media. However, striving for this 'perfection' too often comes at a cost, leading to stress, exhaustion and even resentment. It can also affect those around you, as loved ones feel the tension.

One way to lower the risk of festive burnout is to allow yourself not to be perfect, and focus on what truly matters to you this festive season. So, ask yourself what feeling you wish to nurture this Christmas. Do you want to be stressed and anxious, or would you prefer to be calmer and more composed? Consider what truly counts: is it a spotless house or the joy and connection with family members? Instead of taking on everything alone, start to delegate tasks to others, such as asking them to bring a dish or host, rather than doing it all yourself.

Perhaps it's about doing things differently this year. For example, our family, with three sets of grandchildren, finds that being all together can be too hectic and stressful, so we opt to have a buffet the night before Christmas rather than a full-scale Christmas dinner. Checking in with yourself and allowing space to breathe and pause is crucial – focus on how you can make your own Christmas a little more balanced.'

HomeStyle Christmas



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A handmade Christmas

Get creative and tick off your gift list with these 12 thoroughly festive ideas you can make in an evening

↓ Refreshing room spray

Cleaning experts Purdy & Figg worked with their in-house aromatherapist Margaret Karlinski to create this divine spritz

METHOD

This easy-to-make spray is a lovely way for your loved ones to refresh a room, revive a piece of clothing without having to launder it, or make their own drawer and shelf liners. Combine 250ml ethanol (94.5%), which, unlike rubbing alcohol, has no smell – with 1 teaspoon of either lavender or geranium essential oil or a mixture of both, and pour the blend into a clean, dry 250ml glass spray bottle (available from purdyandfigg.com). Let your recipient know they should spray liberally upwards and towards the centre of rooms or directly on to sheets, towels, beds, carpets, bathroom mats and clothes. A few spritzes from 15cm distance or more will avoid marks on light fabrics. The spray is almost colourless, so won't stain. It keeps for one year.



Clever Cleaning by Purdy Rubin & Charlotte Figg is published by New River Books

↑ Matisse-inspired Christmas bowls

Turn plain wooden bowls into colourful Christmas serving dishes

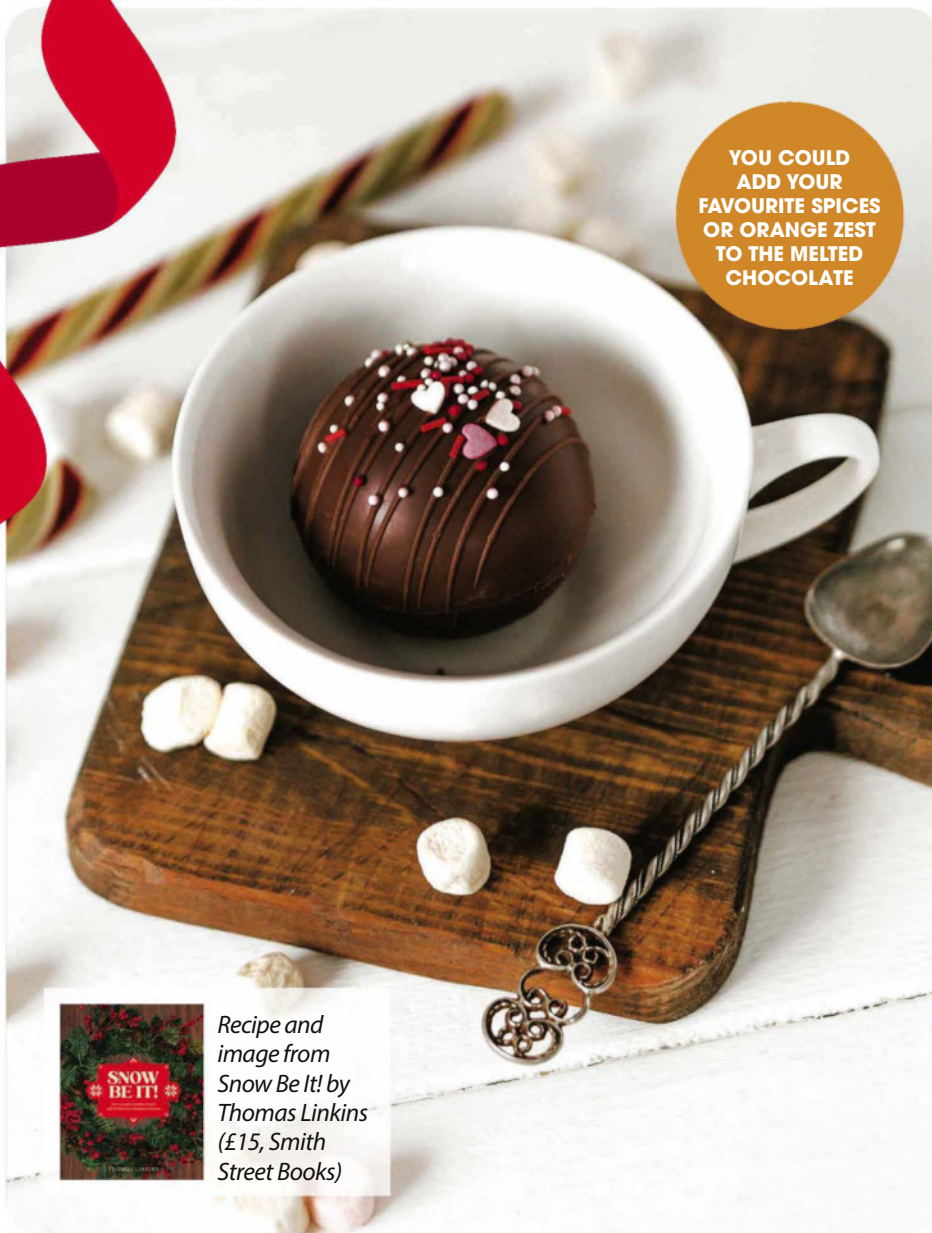
METHOD

Ensure your wooden bowls are clean and dry. Paint each bowl in two base coats of your chosen Annie Sloan Chalk Paint. Once dry, download Annie's templates

at anniesloan.com/inspiration-all, and use the colour palette shown to inspire your decorative pattern painting. For these designs, Annie used five main Chalk Paint colours: Tyrian Plum, Florence, Capri Pink, Original and a 50:50 mix of Capri Pink and Original. She added highlights in Arles and Antibes Green and a touch of Metal Leaf in Imitation Gold. Seal your design with a coat of Chalk Paint Matt Lacquer.

Project by Annie Sloan, anniesloan.com





YOU COULD
ADD YOUR
FAVOURITE SPICES
OR ORANGE ZEST
TO THE MELTED
CHOCOLATE



Recipe and
image from
Snow Be It! by
Thomas Linkins
(£15, Smith
Street Books)

↑ Hot chocolate bombs

Treat their tastebuds with a delicious spectacle! Simply drop one of these chocolate orbs into a mug of hot milk and enjoy the cocoa explosion

MAKES 3

INGREDIENTS

• 170g (6oz) chocolate chips • 40g (½ cup) cocoa powder • 140g (⅔ cup) granulated sugar • pinch of salt • 25g (½ cup) mini marshmallows • sprinkles, to decorate

Equipment

• 5-7cm (2-2¾in) diameter spherical silicone moulds • pastry brush

METHOD

1 First, make the hot chocolate powder by placing the cocoa powder, granulated sugar and salt in a container with a lid and shaking to combine. Set aside. Set out three paper cupcake liners in a cupcake tray.

2 Half fill a medium saucepan with water and bring to a simmer over a low heat. Place a

heatproof bowl over the pan of simmering water. Add the chocolate chips to the bowl and allow to melt, stirring frequently.

3 Using a tea towel or oven mitt (as the bowl will be hot), carefully remove the bowl from the heat once the chocolate is melted and smooth. Keep the pan on a low simmer – you'll need it later to assemble the bombs.

4 Using the pastry brush, evenly coat six silicone moulds with melted chocolate. Place them in the freezer for 10 minutes, or until set.

5 Carefully remove three of the chocolate domes from the moulds and place them hollow-side up into the paper cupcake liners. Place 2 tablespoons of hot chocolate powder and a third of the marshmallows into each dome – adjust the quantity of the marshmallows to the size of your domes.

6 Remove an empty chocolate dome half from the mould and gently dip its edge in the melted chocolate, then carefully press it onto a filled dome half to make a sphere. Repeat with the other two empty dome halves.

7 Use any leftover melted chocolate mixture and sprinkles to decorate. Place the three spheres into the fridge to chill and set. To serve, place a chocolate bomb into a mug, pour over a cup of warm milk and enjoy.

↓ Salt-dough decorations

Homemade salt-dough decorations are a heartfelt and personal Christmas gift your recipients can add to their tree. They're fun to make with kids, too!

INGREDIENTS

• 225g (1½ cups) plain (all purpose) flour • 150g (½ cup) table salt • 4 tsp vegetable oil • 170ml (⅔ cup) chilled water

Equipment

• baking paper • rolling pin • Christmas-themed cookie cutters • skewer • baking tray • watercolours and brushes • glitter (optional) • twine or ribbon • scissors

METHOD

1 To make the dough, preheat the oven to 120°C/gas mark ½. Mix the flour, salt, oil, and water in a bowl until mostly combined, then knead with your hands until the dough comes together. Form the dough into a ball and gently flatten it. Place it between two sheets of baking paper and use the rolling pin to make it into a rectangle about 7mm (¼in) thick. Remove the top layer of baking paper.

2 Cut out your shapes with the cookie cutters, then remove the excess dough – you can roll this out again to make more decorations. Make a hole in the top of each shape with the skewer – this is where you will tie the string, so allow for some shrinkage. If you'd like, you can now engrave your recipient's name or initials into each decoration. Transfer the shapes on the baking paper to a tray and place in the oven. Bake for 2½ hours or until firm and fully dry. Remove from the oven. Resist temptation – you must let the decorations cool completely before the next step!

3 Use watercolours to paint your decorations. Let the first layer of paint dry before applying a second coat to secure the colour. If you are using glitter, apply it to wet paint so that it sticks. Wait until they are completely dry before threading twine or ribbon through the holes.

From *Snow Be It!* by Thomas Linkins
(£15, Smith Street Books)



↓ Whipped brown butter

Make your own butter mixes for herby blends that are amazing with fresh bread – the perfect gift for foodie friends!

INGREDIENTS

- cold water ● ice cubes ● 125g (4½oz) unsalted butter

METHOD

- 1 Fill a large bowl half full of water and ice. Set aside.
- 2 Melt 125g (4½oz) unsalted butter in a small saucepan over a medium heat and let it bubble and sizzle for about 5 minutes, until it starts to foam and turns a deep brown,

swirling the pan occasionally to monitor the colour and heat.

3 Place a bowl in the iced water. Pour the browned butter into it, then start whisking vigorously and keep going. It will seem like nothing is happening at first, but the butter will suddenly lighten in colour and thicken to a creamy consistency. Remove the bowl from the ice bath as soon as – or even just before – it starts to thicken or it will totally solidify. Shape the mixture using a butter tray. Refrigerate overnight or until you're ready to gift.

COOK'S TIP

This butter is perfect for fresh bread or grilled meats – it turns ordinary dishes into something special and sophisticated, elevating your meals!



CREATE PERFECT
GARLIC BUTTER BY
ADDING ROASTED
GARLIC, LEMON
JUICE AND
PARSLEY TO
YOUR MIX



From Bon App!
by Isabelle Dunn
(£30, Smith
Street Books).
Photography by
Alan Benson

→ Wax melts

Wax melts are a wonderful gift, and a great way to add a lovely scent at home

YOU WILL NEED

- soy wax pellets ● dried petals, such as rose and lavender ● silicone ice cube tray ● candle fragrance of your choice

METHOD

- 1 Heat the soy wax in an old saucepan to melt it down into a liquid – see the tip (right) to work out how much wax you need. Add a few dried petals into the melted wax.
- 2 Leave the wax to cool but keep stirring so it doesn't set. This is important: if you pour the boiling wax directly into moulds they will melt.

3 Add a few drops of candle fragrance to your liquid wax – this will also help to cool the mixture down.

4 Pour the wax into the moulds and add extra petals into each of the squares. Ensure the petals are covered with wax. Leave to set and harden before removing from the mould. Your wax melts are now ready to gift.

TOP TIP

To calculate how much wax you need, fill your ice cube tray with water then pour into a measuring jug and make a note of the quantity in ml. Multiply this by 0.8 (as wax is less dense than water) and this will give you the quantity of wax you need in grams. For example, if your tray holds 100ml water, you'll need 80g wax.

Project by Becki Clark for Hobbycraft,
hobbycraft.co.uk



↑ Chocolate spoons

Imagine a spoon that melts away as you stir your hot drink, transforming it into a deliciously gooey delight

INGREDIENTS

- chopped nuts ● marshmallows ● dehydrated berries ● toffee bits ● 80g dark chocolate ● 30g milk or white chocolate

METHOD

- 1 Set out chopped nuts, marshmallows, dehydrated berries and toffee bits in small bowls. Line a baking tray with baking paper and collect 8-12 wooden spoons that you can use for dipping.
- 2 Place around 80g of dark chocolate in a heatproof bowl. Microwave in 30-second bursts, stirring after each, until completely melted and smooth. Dip each spoon into the melted chocolate, letting the excess drip off before laying it on the baking tray.
- 3 Melt around 30g of milk or white chocolate and use this to drizzle over the chocolate-coated spoons for a contrasting effect. Before the chocolate sets, sprinkle your chosen toppings onto the spoons, pressing lightly to adhere. Refrigerate for about 30 minutes, until the chocolate is fully set. Wrap them up as cute little gifts tied with a ribbon.

From Bon App! by Isabelle Dunn (£30, Smith Street Books). Photography by Alan Benson



↓ Hygge wool bag

This thoughtful gift is easy to make and will give comfort and joy throughout the season and beyond. Adapt the contents to suit your recipient – include spices, soaps, or whatever they will enjoy

YOU WILL NEED

- old woollen blanket • gingham fabric
- scissors • sewing machine • Red embroidery thread • new pair of wool socks (for the recipient) • long candles • tealights
- baker's twine • small sock for decoration
- silver jingle bells • needle and sewing thread • small covered matchbox

METHOD

1 Cut two 30 x 30cm (12 x 12in) squares of fabric from the woollen blanket. Cut two 20 x 20cm (8 x 8in) squares of gingham fabric.

2 Place the two blanket squares right sides together and, with a 1cm (½in) seam allowance, machine stitch around three sides of the square. (This blanket was already finished with blanket stitch but you can add your own along the top edge with red embroidery thread if you like.)

3 Repeat with the gingham squares to make a gingham bag. Turn over a small double hem to the wrong side and machine stitch around the top of the bag. Turn both bags the right way out.

4 Put the long candles inside the wool socks and fill the gingham bag with the tealights. Tie the gingham bag shut with a length of baker's twine and add a bell.

5 Hand sew the small sock and a small bell onto the wool bag, to decorate.

6 Place the filled socks and gingham bag inside the wool bag and tie the wool bag closed with baker's twine and another bell. Finish by putting a pretty covered matchbox into the small sock.



Project from
Scandinavian Christmas Crafts
by Chris Myers
(£14.99, CICO Books).
Photography by Caroline
Arber © CICO Books

→ Rosemary and chilli-infused vinegar

Your loved one can use this delicious vinegar to make dressings, tomato sauces, deglaze dishes or to make quick pickles

INGREDIENTS

- 2 dried rosemary sprigs • 6 small dried red chillies, such as tiny, hot Zimbabwe Bird chillies • 500ml good-quality wine vinegar or sherry vinegar • 2 garlic cloves, unpeeled, pierced several times using a cocktail stick or sharp knife

METHOD

1 If you need to dry your rosemary and chillies, the simplest way to do this is to put them on a baking sheet in an oven preheated to 70°C/

gas mark ¼. Leave the door slightly ajar to allow the moisture to evaporate from the chillies and herbs. The rosemary and chillies should maintain a little flexibility after drying – if they are completely desiccated, they will fall to pieces in the vinegar. Drying them means that the only moisture left in them will be the flavour-rich oils that we want in the vinegar.

2 Sterilise 2 x 250ml bottles with tight seals. In a large saucepan, heat the vinegar over a medium heat until it just begins to boil, then add the chillies and garlic. Reduce the heat and gently simmer for 5 minutes.

3 Push one rosemary sprig into each bottle. Divide the chillies and garlic evenly between the bottles and immediately pour the hot vinegar in, leaving at least a 2cm (¾in) air gap at the top. Seal tightly and shake. Allow to cool naturally and put in a cool, dark place to infuse for at least 2 weeks or preferably up to 2 months. Turn bottles regularly to aid infusion.



↑ Pinecone firelighters

These firelighters cost next-to-nothing and make wonderful presents

YOU WILL NEED

- assortment of small tins, moulds or shallow dishes • wax – use the ends of old candles or soy wax flakes • pinecones
- whole cloves • 60 x 23cm (24 x 9in) piece of hessian (burlap) fabric • string or twine
- double boiler • needle and sewing thread (or sewing machine and cotton)

METHOD

1 First, gather together your moulds and tins. Melt your wax slowly over a low heat and then pour a small amount into one of your tins. Immediately place a pinecone on top and sprinkle whole cloves around the pinecone. These give off a lovely scent when thrown into the fire.

2 Place the tins into the freezer for about an hour until the wax is completely solid. Remove from the freezer; the firelighters will then pop out of the moulds leaving no residue behind.

3 To turn these into a lovely gift, make a simple bag for them. Fold the piece of hessian in half, short end to short end, and stitch along each side seam, leaving a 1cm (½in) seam allowance. There's no need to hem the top as the frayed edge adds a rustic effect. Turn the bag right side out and fill it. Tie a piece of string or twine around a pinecone and use it to close the bag.

Project from *Scandinavian Christmas Crafts* by Chris Myers (£14.99, CICO Books). Photography by Caroline Arber © CICO Books



Recipe from
Hot Sauce
by Dan May
(£9.99, Ryland
Peterson & Small).
Photography by
Peter Cassidy
© Ryland Peters
& Small

↓ Pistachio meringues

Treat your friends and family to these melting mouthfuls of sweetness

MAKES 10 meringues, 1 x 200g jar

INGREDIENTS

For the meringues • 4 large egg whites
• pinch of cream of tartar • 110g caster sugar • 110g icing sugar • 3 tbsp chopped pistachios • ¼ tsp rose water (optional)
• 1 tsp grated orange zest

For the pistachio cream • 200g raw unsalted pistachios • 150g white chocolate, broken into pieces • 100ml double cream

METHOD

1 Line 2 large baking sheets with baking paper. Preheat oven to 140°C/120°C fan/gas mark 1.

2 Place the egg whites in a large bowl, add the cream of tartar and whisk until stiff peaks form. Add a spoonful of the caster sugar and whisk again. Continue to do this, a few spoonfuls at a time, whisking after each addition.

3 Now do the same with the icing sugar, working quickly so you don't lose volume and you end up with a stiff, shiny mixture.

4 Finally, whisk 2 tablespoons of the pistachios, the rose water and the orange zest into the meringue mixture quickly.

5 Spoon the mixture onto the prepared baking sheets, adding about 2 generous tablespoons per meringue. Sprinkle the tops with the remaining pistachios, reduce the oven temperature to 120°C/110°C fan/gas mark ½ and bake for 45 minutes. Leave the meringues in the oven until they are cold with the door ajar. Sandwich together with the pistachio cream, if liked.

PISTACHIO CREAM

1 Soak the pistachios in warm water for 20 minutes. Drain, then leave to cool.

2 Melt the white chocolate in a heatproof bowl over a pan of hot water, then leave to cool but not set.

3 Place the nuts, chocolate and cream in a food processor and blend until bright green, luscious and smooth. Use to fill the meringues, or decant into a sterilised jar and gift. Your recipient can store this in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.



↑ Candied peel

Sicilian candite is extremely diverse, with all sorts of fruits and flavours used – try this traditional recipe with citrus fruits

MAKES 200g

INGREDIENTS

• 1 orange • 1 lemon • 1 grapefruit • 350g caster/granulated sugar • 1 vanilla pod, split lengthways • 1 star anise • 1 cinnamon stick

METHOD

1 Using a sharp knife, cut the orange into four wedges and remove the flesh. Cut each piece of peel into three or four chunky strips. Repeat with the lemon and the grapefruit. Set aside the flesh to use in another dish.

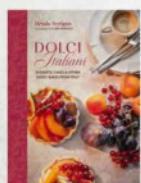
2 Place the peels into a saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Simmer for 10 minutes, then drain. Repeat this process twice more as it removes the bitterness. Drain the peels and set aside while you prepare the sugar syrup.

3 Tip the sugar into a heavy-based pan and add 350ml water. Add the vanilla, star anise and cinnamon. Place over a medium heat to dissolve the sugar, stirring occasionally.

4 Add the peels to the pan and boil steadily for about 40 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the peels become soft and translucent, and almost all of the syrup has been absorbed. Keep a close eye as it cooks as the syrup can easily burn.

5 Using tongs, remove the peels from the pan one at a time and lay on a sheet of baking paper in a single layer. Cover and leave to dry overnight. They should no longer be sticky. Store in a box or airtight container for up to 1 month.

Recipe from *Dolci Italiani* by Ursula Ferrigno (£22, Ryland Peters & Small).
Photography by Clare Winfield © Ryland Peters & Small



Recipe from *Dolci Italiani*
by Ursula Ferrigno (£22,
Ryland Peters & Small).
Photography by Clare
Winfield © Ryland Peters
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 Enekas.Academy

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Happy hosting

From the festive tablescape to roast dinner prep, our favourite celebrities and seasoned hoteliers share their tips for hosting a stress-free Christmas

Christmas Day, that one time of year guaranteed to bring family and friends together under one roof. But for those of us who are designated the role of hosting, the pressure of making sure everything is 'just so' can often feel a little stressful. That's why we've rounded up top tips from our favourite celebs, expert hoteliers and Christmas party planners to help you ditch the stress, wow your guests, and enjoy your day.



Whinnie's Merry
Medieval tablescape
was inspired by
romantasy novels

1

Hack your tablescape

'Impress Christmas guests with a striking yet simple and quick-to-accomplish table setting hack! Simply run a large garland of foliage down the centre and dress with items you have on hand, like baubles or fruit. This year, I'm inspired by romantasy novels and going for a medieval vibe, adding red berries and staggering pewter candlesticks throughout the garland. It's an easy way to elevate classic silverware into something magical without much time or effort!'

Whinnie Williams is an interior designer and trends forecaster for Balsam Hill, balsamhill.co.uk



Start prepping early

'The key to a stress-free Christmas is all in the planning. Batch cook, part-make meals and do desserts in advance so you can build an arsenal of deliciousness in your fridge or freezer, ready and raring to go. I start prepping in early December, stocking the freezer with my famous Get-Ahead Gravy, as well as mince pies, cakes, pastry cases, sausage rolls and cranberry sauce. Trust me, getting ahead will be the best Christmas present you ever give yourself!'

Jamie Oliver's Christmas series airs this winter on Channel 4



Photo Chris Terry



Christmas cranberry
sauce recipe from
jamieoliver.com

2

Photo David Loftus



Don't feel you have to make everything from scratch, especially sweet treats, which can be time-consuming to bake. We've got our eye on this panettone, which takes over 24 hours to make!

No.1 Hazelnut Crème **panettone**,
£20, Waitrose & Partners

3

Cheat the treats!

'For a full-on joyful Christmas, make a few dishes ahead or keep them warm in the oven on the day. Don't fear mixing it up with buy-in treats – my family LOVE pandoro, mince pies and everyone devours the cheese and biscuits! Dress your table with gathered-from-the-garden foliage – I grab loads from next door as it's my mum and dad's house! Fairy lights and crackers are also an easy, instant cheer-up for your table. Get cosy with Christmas eggnog, the best-ever carol playlist and a few EASY games. And finally, set up a drinks station so guests can help themselves while you flop in the sofa!'

Nadia Sawalha has a YouTube channel @sawalhaadderleys, along with VLOGMAS for every day in December



4

Ginger ice cream from
Mary 90 – My Very
Best Recipes by Mary
Berry (£28, BBC Books).
Photography by
Tara Fisher



Pre-make your pud

'Ginger ice cream is one of my go-to puddings for when people come around unexpectedly. You don't want to be scooping ice cream at the table, though. My trick is to prepare ahead by taking an ice cream scoop and making lots of balls, spreading them out on a baking tray or in a dish and putting them in the freezer. If there are only going to be a few of you and you've got plenty of room in the freezer, then you can even put the balls into dishes and put them like that in the freezer!'

Read **Mary Berry's** latest book *Mary 90 – My Very Best Recipes* (£28, BBC Books)

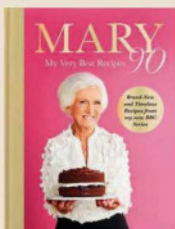


Photo Nicky Johnston

5

Ceramic gingerbread man
plate, medium, £19.99; ceramic
gingerbread snowflake plate, £9.99;
Xmas tree new bone china mug,
£7.49; gingerbread house paper
napkins, £3.49 for 20; clear glass
moulded candlestick, small, £4.99;
Dark Green taper dinner candle,
£7.49 for 4; Scandi trees stoneware
oval plate, £22.99; ceramic mini
jug with gingerbread man, £7.49;
gingerbread house scented candle
in pot, £7.49, all Gisela Graham



Plan your theme

'I'm a believer in pre-planning when it comes to creating a stress-free Christmas table. Ahead of time, decide on a colour scheme, choose linen, and gather items for the centrepiece, such as a runner, garland, lights and candlesticks. Then, on the day itself, a lot of the stress will evaporate, and it'll be a time for fun creativity. My last-minute hack is to tie a length of beautiful ribbon around each set of cutlery for the festive wow-factor.'

Gisela Graham, creative director of giselagraham.co.uk

1.5m pre lit eucalyptus & white berry
Christmas garland, £39.99; Glass
Christmas tree LED table decoration,
£12.99; TruGlow Ivory LED taper
candles with remote control, £24.99
for 4, pillar candle, 10cm, £7.99,
all Lights4fun

6

Keep it simple

'Make life easier for yourself by keeping your setting clean and minimal. I like a natural look, so I'll be using fir branches as the centrepiece, accented with fir cones. Down the middle of the table, I'll place a few gold tealights for a warm glow. The colour scheme will be green, white, and gold. I love white church candles, so these will be incorporated into the centrepiece to create a soft, elegant focal point. For each place setting, I plan to use white napkins tied with green and white ribbon, with a sprig of mistletoe tucked in.'

Jill Stein is an interior designer and co-founder of The Seafood Restaurant, Padstow



Photo James Ram

Shop *Saturday Kitchen* drinks
expert Oly Smith's best bubbly
recommendation, French
Crémant, at Sainsbury's, Tesco,
Waitrose and Ocado



7



Stash some fizz

'To maximise the jollity of festive feelings, keep some decent crowd-pleasing fizz in the fridge for when the neighbours drop round or just for an impromptu celebration. Hands down the best value this year is coming from French Crémant – sparkling wine made outside the Champagne region but using the same method. You can find top bottles for around a tenner to rival serious big brand bubbly. And to pair with light bites, it's hard to beat a few crunchy cheese straws!'

Read *Saturday Kitchen* drinks expert **Oly Smith's** new book – *WINE: Everything You Need To Know* (£16.99, Quadrille)

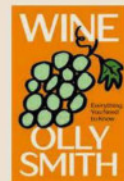


Photo Alun Callender



Use lighting to set the mood

'Keep it simple and stress-free by doing whatever makes you happy, it's Christmas! Lighting is everything for me – my new mini battery light is amazing because you can move it around the house wherever you need it. I love filling every glass container I can find with fairy lights and having wreaths everywhere. The tree is key, but for the table I use candles, like the new gold, silver or white ones, with pinecones, vintage baubles and some real or faux greenery down the centre. Then I change the napkins and glasses for Christmas and Boxing Day, depending on breakfast, lunch or dinner.'

Award-winning interior designer **Kelly Hoppen** has a new homeware range in collaboration with M&S

Applique **cushion**, £29.50; Christmas joy **candle**, large, £25; medium bend ceramic **vase**, £15; **accent chair**, £249; Silver Grey glass **baubles**, £22 for 20; nesting **coffee tables**, £199, all Kelly Hoppen x M&S



8

Say cheese!

'Nothing says Christmas quite like a cheeseboard. Conventional thinking says there should be diversity on a cheeseboard – that's why soft, hard and blue cheeses are often served together. But to keep things simple, serve one big hero wedge and pile on the accompaniments. Emmi's Kaltbach Le Gruyère is a great option because its sweet, nutty flavour is accessible, but there is plenty of depth and complexity. Pair with roasted pecans, cherry jam, dark chocolate and slices of panettone.'

Patrick McGuigan is a food journalist and author of two acclaimed cheese guides



Emmi's Kaltbach Le Gruyère is available at Waitrose, Ocado, and selected fine food retailers

10



Antiqued-style 3-tier metal **drinks trolley**, £175; Gold light-up **Christmas tree**, £50; organic **cocktail glass** with Gold rim, £19.95, all Rockett St George



Cocktail stations

'To truly savour the holiday season – without the stress – consider a few simple yet thoughtful strategies. Begin with proactive planning: organise your menu to include cold appetisers that require no last-minute prep. A self-serve bar station is always a welcome touch. Stock it well and prepare a signature cocktail in advance to set a festive tone. If possible, set your table the day before – this small detail can make a big difference on the day itself.'

Sam Ioannidis is the managing director at The Plaza, the hotel featured in the classic Christmas *Home Alone* films

Pink scalloped bubble lacquer **tray**, £15; Christmas cats fine china **plates**, £18 for 4; Pink fine china teapot & mug **tea for one set**, £22, espresso **cup & saucer**, £16 for 2; Gold berry **garland**, £25, all John Lewis & Partners



11

Create a coffee corner

'I always think the key to a stress-free Christmas is planning little 'stations' around the house so guests can help themselves. A breakfast and coffee corner keeps early risers happy, while a drinks table means you're not constantly playing hostess. I set the table the night before with crackers and a simple centrepiece so it's one less thing to think about. Most importantly, let go of perfection, Christmas is about laughter, love and togetherness.'

Katie Piper recently released her new children's book *Your Greatest Gift* (£9.99, Starshine Books)



Fill the freezer

'Christmas is pure magic for me – I even got married in December under a forest of fairy-lit trees, so hosting to me is all about easy joy. Drinks in hand as soon as guests step through the door sets the tone. I stash a freezer full of pre-made canapés for surprise visitors, go full sequins on the 25th, and pile the table high with sharing dishes. A killer playlist keeps spirits up, and when you're flagging, switch to slippers – guests take the hint when the host is cosy!'

Lotti Bruce is the brand and marketing director at renowned hotel and restaurant group The Pig



Photo Sam Grady

12



Keep canapés in the freezer in case of unexpected guests

Peel and pack

'Christmas Day is such a special and exciting one in our house and that's why it needs to be totally stress free to properly enjoy it. There are no wrapping presents on the day or running to the shop if something's been forgotten. With dinner, food is prepped the day before – potatoes parboiled, and vegetables peeled and some pre-packed. Breakfast is smoked trout blinis which are easy to put together and, in the evening, picky food that can be thrown in the oven. Oh, and dessert is a trifle from Marks & Spencer. I'm getting excited just writing this – Merry Christmas!'

Angellica Bell is a TV and radio presenter



13



Herby roast potatoes
image courtesy of
Tesco, realfood.tesco.com

Prep-ahead spuds

'Make sure you prepare your potatoes the day before rather than leaving it until the big day. For the tastiest spuds, boil your potatoes in heavily salted water the day before until just tender then shake to fluff the edges. Season while still hot, then chill overnight. On Christmas Day, simply roast in hot oil at 200°C, turning every 30 minutes for perfectly crispy spuds.'

Tom Earnshaw is the head chef at Michelin-starred restaurant, Bohemia, Jersey



Two delicious desserts
in one? Yes please!
Sticky toffee pudding
trifle, £15.50, M&S

14

15

Hand-painted stoneware Peas in a Pod **dip bowls & tray**, £32; artichoke **plate**, £11; beetroot **salt & pepper shakers**, £14; kale **serving platter**, £20; tomato **candle holder**, £8; cabbage **mini dip dishes**, £12 for 2; stoneware **small plates**, £14 for 4, all Deliciously Ella x John Lewis

Clear the Kitchen

'I try to have most of the cooking done before anyone arrives so I can actually be with my friends and family. I love surrounding the hero dishes with simple things that feel special but take no time at all. I'll fill the table with beautiful little bowls of my favourite condiments and a few lovely candles – I love our new tomato candle holders! I always try to get ahead, so we start dinner with a clear kitchen and an empty dishwasher, so it's easy to quietly load things away at the end of the night. It means no mountain of chaos when everyone leaves, and the space stays calm and inviting.'

Ella Mills has a new kitchen collection at Deliciously Ella x John Lewis



Chalk paint in Capri Pink and Tyrian Plum, both £26.95 for 1L, Annie Sloan

Set up the night before

'Save yourself time on Christmas morning by laying the table the night before. A tablecloth, napkins, and a few sprigs of greenery or pinecones make it look effortlessly festive. For place settings, just tie a handwritten tag with ribbon to a felt decoration, it's quick, easy, and personal. Add candles for instant atmosphere, then all that's left to do is enjoy the day with your guests.'

Sophie Allport is the designer and founder of homeware and lifestyle brand, sophieallport.com



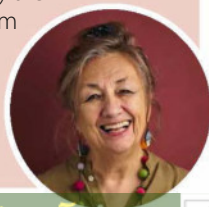
Cosy Christmas **tablecloth**, £80, **crackers**, £24 for 6, **candle**, £27; glass **tumblers**, £52 for 6, all Sophie Allport

17

Do it together

'My advice is to enlist your family for help at Christmas so not all the tasks fall on your shoulders. For instance, every year my grandchildren come round to my house, and we have an afternoon making decorations together then decorating the tree. It turns something which can feel like another chore on your Christmas to-do list into a wonderfully creative bonding experience. This year, we've been making Star, Leaf, Bird and Tree shaped decorations inspired by the cut-out shapes of Henri Matisse. They are easy shapes for little hands, and we are painting them in bright Chalk paint colours like Capri Pink and Tyrian Plum.'

Annie Sloan is an author, colour expert and inventor of Chalk paint at anniesloan.com



16

Plan a menu for the whole
Christmas period so you don't
have to conjure up any
last-minute meals

18

Be an early bird

'Menu planning happens the first weekend in December, with a glass of red wine in hand, and it's a proper three-day plan – from 24th December to Boxing Day. Being French, Christmas Eve dinner is as much of a centrepiece as Christmas Day. With family flying in from France, we make it collaborative: they bring oysters and escargot, while we take charge of the rest. The weekend before, I'm on 'Get-Ahead Gravy' (Jamie Oliver's recipe is my go-to), while my husband whips up garlic butter. Stuffing is made on Christmas Eve, and our Ocado order – scheduled for 23rd – ensures the fridge is full.'

Mathilde Maitre has been director of events at the famous Claridge's Hotel, London, for over 10 years, and is Maybourne's corporate director of group and event sales

Setting the festive
scene with Ode Studio

19

Make a shared playlist

'An Ode Christmas is all about the charm of Christmas chaos. Layer your old and new linens, scatter candles and mix glasses, plates and chairs! Don't overthink it – the mismatched look is where the magic lives. Set up a self-serve drinks station so you can be present. Why not a pear sangria mocktail? Just add the bottle of rum on the side for those who want a boozy option to enjoy. On the day, let everyone have a say in the music by adding their favourite Christmas songs to a shared playlist. True style comes from warmth, nostalgia and everyone gathered. That's how we do Christmas!'

Ode Studio is a female-led creative design studio which specialises in event curation, brand styling and creative direction

Moonlight Blue triple
tealight holder, £19, Dibor

20

Pick your florals

'Think about your festive theme well in advance of the day and, if you like the natural look, then make sure you gather all the foliage you need a day or two before. This year at The Savoy, we've gone for a Frosted Fair theme with foliage and elegant white flowers, adorned with sparkling elements. Think dining tables dressed in scented blue pine, eucalyptus, snowberry and frosted pinecones, topped with glistening white amaryllis and white roses dipped in snow and glitter.'

Belinda Bowles is creative floral design manager at The Savoy Hotel, London, which unveils its famed festive installation on 16th November

Keep the festive
spirit flowing

21

Santa's helpers

'Cook the main event early, rest it well and open a great bottle of wine so you can enjoy yourself too and enjoy time with your guests and loved ones. Give your family or guests little jobs to help alleviate stress, plus everyone likes to feel helpful or useful on the big day. Ask a couple of people to set up a cheeseboard and top up empty glasses when entertaining.'

Matt Fletcher is Chef Patron of The Great Central Pub by Matt Fletcher (The Landmark London)

Set a magical Christmas table

Pro stylist Laurie Davidson guides you through her steps to achieving a stunning seasonal tablescape

Set the scene for festive feasting the easy way with help from Laurie Davidson (@lifeofaninteriorstylist). We asked Laurie to spill her tablescaping secrets, from knowing where to start to how to add the finishing touches, and discovered that even the most complicated designs can be broken down into seven manageable steps. Here's how to get a showstopping look at home...

Red ticking cotton
tablecloth, £65,
napkins, £29 for 4, all
The Secret Linen Store



Velvet bow
decoration,
£18, M&S



Holly
Christmas
dinner
candle, £6,
Talking Tables

Seasonal scalloped
candle holders,
£20 for 2,
Joe Browns



Choose your theme

Your very first step (to be done well in advance) is to decide on the theme you'd like for your Christmas table this year. What colours would you like? Do you want it to feel traditional or modern, playful or minimal? Are you after something maximalist or with a more country-style vibe? Maybe you'd like to tie it in with the look of your Christmas decorations in other rooms? Take into consideration pieces you already have, whether it's table linen, crockery, cutlery or smaller decorations, to minimise what you need to buy.



Embroidered Noel script
cushion, £25, Cox & Cox

Set the foundation

Once you've chosen your theme, it's time to start building up the layers to create a full and interesting look. If you're hanging anything overhead, do this first. Then it's on to the tablecloth, and a table runner for extra colour and pattern – more is more when it comes to Christmas! Ensure your tablecloth fits your table nicely – you don't want it so long that guests are tripping over it, but if it's too short, it can feel skimpy. Choose (or sew!) a tablecloth that's roughly 40cm larger than your table on all sides. Give it a good iron or steam to rid it of any creases.

Next up are the placemats – fabric designs are great for bringing more colour and pattern in, while round or scalloped rattan options are a neat way to soften the look of a rectangular table.



Artificial winter
snow berry **garland**,
£6.99, Homescapes

Dusky Pink
magnolia
pre-lit
**Christmas
swag**, £39.99,
Very

Cosy Christmas
table runner,
from £34,
Sophie Allport



Enchanted Forest
tablecloth, £37,
Walton & Co



Fabulously Festive
Christmas tree
napkins, £40 for 4,
Eleanor Bowmer

If your table linen has heavy creases that are refusing to budge, try steaming them in situ. There are also crease releasing sprays, which you can spritz on to help to smooth out any wrinkles.



Green Scandi Christmas tree
light up **table runner**, from
£26; Christmas tree **side
plates**, £16 for 2, all Next



Nostalgia Santa & Tree **plate**,
£7.49, **dinner plate**, £10.99;
Nostalgia Tree **table runner**,
£14.99, all Gisela Graham

Build your centrepiece

Next comes the fun part – the centrepiece! Whether you choose to run a garland along the length of your table, or go with fresh flowers in small vases, the key is to make sure it has impact, while also checking that there's enough room for serveware. I like to use a faux garland, then add to it with sprigs of real eucalyptus, ivy and pinecones. A string of battery-operated micro lights is great for winding in, and you can just tuck the battery pack into the foliage at one end so it can't be seen. Add some candlesticks along the length of your centrepiece – I use a mix of different heights for interest and place them so they're not all in a straight line. Make sure they're stable, then pop in candles. LED dinner candles are ideal if you're worried that they may get knocked over.

4

Lay the place settings

Remember I mentioned layering earlier? Well, here's another chance to carry that out, this time through crockery. Lay side plates or bowls on top of your dinner plates and don't feel you have to stick to just one dinnerware set here either – you could use a mix of two and alternate them, which is ideal if you want to use an existing set. Then, decide how you'd like your napkins. Perhaps you'd like them neatly folded in between each side and dinner plate, or pulled through a napkin ring and placed on top? You could also try folding them in a fun Christmas shape for a novelty touch. Place crackers either of the side of plates, or have them sitting on top.



Maddox Christmas **stars**, from £10 each, Warm White **cutout stars**, £20 for 9, two-tone **teardrop baubles**, £12 for 3, two-tone **drop baubles**, £12 for 3; Ellwood **dining table**, £1,400, **dining bench**, £420; Fairlight rattan **dining chairs**, £350 for 2, all Garden Trading

Foliage **serving plate**, £5.50; bow 'Merry Christmas' **serving plate**, £7; scalloped **charger plates** in Green and Red, £2 each; velvet bow **napkin rings** in Green, £3 for 4; pre-lit red berry **garland**, £30, all B&M



5

Make it personal

Now it's time to make your guests feel special, with their own name card and even a special decoration at each place setting. Name cards don't have to be just on card either – you could attach them to pinecones, or write each person's name on a bauble. Another easy idea to make each seat feel unique is to print off little menus for everyone, or pop a Christmas chocolate on every plate and decorative element on the back of each chair. These little touches are what will bring your table to life and make guests feel as though you've really thought about them, adding to the magic of the day.

If you don't want harsh overhead lights on over your dining table, place a few floor lamps around the room for extra glow, along with portable lamps on your table. Candles and fairy lights also help your tablescape to sparkle.



Christmas **crackers**, £9.99, Homesense

Glass Christmas **baubles**, £8 for 4, Argos

Gold Christmas **tree napkin ring**, £6.95, The Wisteria Tree

Porcelain snowflake **dinner set**, £39 for 12 pieces, ProCook



Pink colour stem scallop **wine glasses**, £10 each; Pink confetti bow **tumblers**, £12 each; striped sweet **dish**, £14; confetti glass Christmas tree **table decoration**, £13; Gold metal bow **candle holders**, £15 each, all John Lewis & Partners

6



Red stripe **jug**, £29.99, Dobbies

Gold mono confetti **wine glass**, £6, Matalan

3D glitter motif **tumbler**, £3.50, B&M

Ceramic Christmas **serving spoons**, £3.50 for 2, Primark

Design low-level floral arrangements so you don't block your guests' view – bud vases are ideal. Add height with candlesticks, they're much thinner and easier to see around.

Polish up

When it comes to glassware and cutlery, ensure it's all gleaming by giving it a little rub down with a microfibre cloth, so it's super sparkly. You could lay cutlery out by each plate, fold it into a napkin pouch, or tie each set together with ribbon for an extra flourish. The same goes for glassware – maybe you'd like to add wine glass charms or tie a ribbon bow around each stem? For the cutlery, think about the colour – if you're incorporating a gold theme on your table, for instance, you may want to go with a gold set of cutlery to keep it cohesive.

Try it out

The last step is to check that everything works together, so sit in the chairs to check for elbow space, comfort and lines of sight – you want guests to be able to see each other over any foliage or candles. Ensure your centrepiece looks beautiful from all sides of the table and there's nothing that's going to be easily knocked over. If you'd like to bring serving dishes out for guests to help themselves, clear a few spots for those serving platters, or invest in a little trolley that can be rolled around with all the condiments and dishes on to keep the table clearer. Tweak until you're happy, then prepare for your guests to be wowed!



Laurie Davidson is an interior stylist, writer and content creator. She styles homes shoots for *HomeStyle*, and her work with interiors brands can be seen in magazines, on billboards and TV! @lifeofaninteriorstylist



7

Beatrice button-back **dining chairs** in Olive, £129 each; Xavi **dining table** in Dark Stained Oak, £599; Preston 3-light **ceiling light** in Natural, £55, all Dunelm

OUR KITCHEN IS PRACTICAL BUT packed with personality

Griselda Soames designed a family-friendly space that could be flexible for the future – and fabulously festive too!

'It was important to get the internal elements and functionality of the kitchen right before considering the overall visual design of the space,' says Griselda



'The combined fridge-freezer is a great size,' says Griselda. 'It has a flexible drawer which can be a cooler or freezer'



About me

I'm Griselda Soames, 52, owner of boutique biscuit company, @enchantedbakes, and I live with my husband John, 51, who runs Echo14, a smart home technology business, and our two teenage daughters. Our home is a detached 1920s house in Twickenham.



Style idea

Choose a statement wallpaper then build a scheme around it



TOTAL
£14,612

BEFORE



My problem kitchen

Previously the kitchen didn't flow, the work area with the sink and dishwasher was very cramped, and it was bland with no personality. Also, the layout didn't take advantage of the lovely views to the garden, and it really wasn't working as a place to entertain, which I love to do.

How I made it work

We wanted to create a joyful space that

worked for us as a family. We had a Howdens kitchen installed in our old house and were impressed by the design process, service and value, so, after really considering the ergonomics, we went to them to fine tune our designs.

My favourite part

Standing at my hob, cooking and chatting to friends and family sitting at the bar, with the garden beyond.

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی دکوراسیون داخلی

We moved in 10 years ago, and we lived with the kitchen as it was for six years. There was definitely an advantage to using the space before committing to a complete redesign. We had to replace the folding doors fairly early on and they were pivotal in the design of the overall kitchen. We spent time considering how it would work in relation to the garden, and one of the key things we did was to put masking tape on the floor to work out how we used the space. My commercial kitchen was designed for maximum efficiency, and, as a keen cook at home, I prioritised getting the flow and storage right in our family kitchen before deciding on the aesthetics. The designer at Howdens helped us to visualise the space and perfect the layout, and we opted for classic Shaker-style cupboards which suit the period of the house.

I fell in love with the House of Hackney Zeus wallpaper and we decided to use it on a large feature wall. I picked out the blue and chose Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue to paint the other walls, which has worked really well to frame the kitchen. I brought in all the colour with wallpaper, paint and accessories, while the units and worktops are neutral so there's flexibility if we ever want to change the overall look.

Now, my kitchen brings me so much joy, especially at this time of year, and I love mirroring the colour scheme in my decorations.

'We wanted a wooden floor without the maintenance, so we opted for wood-effect tiles which are easy to clean and keep the whole kitchen looking fresh,' explains Griselda



'We considered closing this area off at one point, but it's worked well keeping it open as everything feels accessible,' says Griselda. 'It also made good sense to put our coffee and tea station here, with our supplies and cups stored below'

My shopping list

For similar, try Halesworth **kitchen** in Porcelain, POA, Howdens. Joeyan 300ml Blue vintage glass **goblets**, £25.26 for 4; Mainoshy Christmas paper **snowflake hanging decorations**, £11.99 for 16 pieces, both Amazon. Zeus **wallpaper** in Blush, £195 per roll, House of Hackney. Dead flat **emulsion** in Hague Blue, £79 for 2.5L, Farrow & Ball. Brunswick **tile** in Oak, £39.74 per sq m, Topps Tiles. Philippe Stark for Kartell Masters **chairs** in Grey, £227 each, John Lewis & Partners. For similar, try sunburst **mirror**, £209.99, La Redoute. For similar, try Kylie velvet **bar stools** in Blue, £199.99 for 2, daals. For similar, try Tori 6 Gold **chandelier**, £185.90, Lights.co.uk. Finlay and Noa Attractions in London III **print**, from £7.95, Posterlounge. Haden heritage traditional **kettle** in Turquoise, £52.99; **four-slice toaster** in Turquoise, £55.99, both Currys. Nicola Spring dipped **dinner plates** in Blue, £40 for 4; **side plates**, £24 for 4; Bormioli Rocco Pulsar **water glasses** in Purple, £14.99 for 6; Velaze Series Gold square handle stainless steel **cutlery set**, £42.86 for 24 pieces; Canora Grey **placemat set** in Gold, £34.99 for 18 pieces; The Seasonal Aisle **baubles** in Blue & Silver, £12.99 for 99, all Wayfair. Tall lighthouse **vase** in Blue, £60, Cornishware. European **fir tree**, 5.5ft, £599, Balsam Hill. White/Silver large **treetop fairy**, £22.99; crushed Pink glass **baubles**, £3.99 each; Blue clear glass **baubles**, £3.99 each; large Blue pearl **baubles**, £6.49 each; Navy Blue flock harlequin **baubles**, £4.99 each; White damask with glitter glass **baubles**, £3.99 each; clear mottled glass **baubles**, £5.99 each; Gold lustre glass **baubles**, £3.99 each; large Pink glass **tree ornaments**, £15.99 each; Dusky Pink taper **dinner candles**, £7.49 for 4; moulded **candlesticks** in Pastel Pink, £8.99 each; fluted Pink **candlesticks**, £10.99 each, all Gisela Graham.



Style advice

Three simple tricks
to try in your own home

1 Make an easy festive centrepiece

Create centrepieces in no time by placing a church candle in the middle of a clear-sided serving dish or bowl then placing baubles carefully around the candle. Using a faux candle means you can leave the arrangement twinkling while you get on with entertaining. 'I love to sprinkle festive touches all around the kitchen to make the whole space sparkle,' says Griselda.

2 Consider your layout

A peninsular can be used to section off open-plan areas and provide additional work surface and storage. 'Having a peninsular was central to our design as it allows us to be sociable while preparing food,' says Griselda. 'It also helps to define the dining area, and actually makes the room feel bigger.'

3 Maximise display space

Use deep windowsills or console tables to create display spaces, and intersperse existing items with baubles for a quick and easy way to add a festive touch. 'My kitchen accessories tie in with the overall colour scheme,' explains Griselda. 'At Christmas I add in decorations in the same colours, so everything works together.'

Style idea

Wood is ideal for a kitchen island as it can be painted if you ever want to update



Inglesham Whitewash oak **kitchen island**, £1,250, The Cotswold Company



12 Days of Christmas printed cotton **tea towel**, £7, Ulster Weavers



Fonda Satin Gold and glass 3-light **pendant**, £312, dār lighting



Snowflake **dishcloth** in Blue, £3.50, Jangneus



Cake pro aluminium cast decorative **bundt cake tin** in Gold, £12.99, Karaca



Gold Toast & Marmalade medium shallow **tin**, £11, Emma Bridgewater

GET THE LOOK

All that glitters

Go for gold, like **Griselda**, and add glamour to a hard-working room that takes centre stage at Christmas



GRISELDA

My kitchen brings me so much joy, especially at this time of year



Kylie velvet **bar stools** in Blue, £199.99 for 2, daals



Tillagd **serving utensil set**, £19 for 3 pieces, IKEA



Tinkisso **kitchen tap** in Gold, £147, Dowsing & Reynolds



Dorney herringbone oak veneer 6-seater **dining table**, £450, Habitat



Pink sugared snowmint **candle**, £4, Matalan



Accents Gold pyramid **kettle** in Navy, £79.99, 4-slice **toaster** in Navy, £79.99, both Morphy Richards



Gold star tealight **candle holder**, £4.99, Tenovus Cancer Care



Romy glaze stoneware **dinnerware set** in Pink, £80 for 12 pieces, John Lewis & Partners



Gold **measuring spoons**, £7, ProCook

Aurielle **tumbler** in Blue, from £4 each; Linares **wine glass** in Blue, from £7 each; Lakelyn water hyacinth round **placemat**, £6 each; Grey tree cotton **table runner**, £15; Parisian glass **dinner plate**, from £7 each, **side plate**, from £6 each; Bella perle glass **cake stand**, £25; Moonlight Blue round **tealight holder**, £22; Moonlight Christmas **garland**, £18, all Dibor



Sparkleware metallic Gold glass **Champagne flutes**, £24 for 4, KeiCo



Gingerbread house **serving dish**, £6, Flying Tiger Copenhagen



Gold Valencia **bar trolley**, £160, Next

3 OF A KIND... BAKING DISHES

Stoneware **oven dish**, £8.98, Søstrene Grene



Habitat Navy reactive stoneware **roaster**, £12, Argos



Bete rectangular Pink ceramic **oven dish**, £35, Oliver Bonas



Glass **baubles** in Blush Mix, £40 for 12, Cox & Cox



GORGEOUS SHIMMER EFFECT

Shimmering feather pattern Pink Rose Gold **wallpaper**, £15 per roll, I Want Wallpaper

Hearts design **colander** in Gold, £23.95, Orsina



SAVVY HOME SOLUTIONS

Your Christmas cleaning checklist

Getting ready for guests? Focus your efforts on the key areas they'll actually use, like the bathroom, kitchen, and main living spaces. Our checklist helps you prioritise what matters most and skip the rest, with time-saving tips to make cleaning quicker and less stressful. Whether you're expecting a crowd or just a couple of visitors, creating a tidy, welcoming home is easier than you think!



Soft underbed
storage box in Grey, £19,
Not a Boring Box



Stacking kitchen
storage baskets in
Green, from £2
each, Dunelm

Declutter key areas

Before you even pick up a mop or vacuum, start with a clear-out. Decluttering instantly makes your space feel tidier and more inviting, and it also creates room for Christmas gifts, decorations, and all the extras the season brings. Focus on the areas your guests will use the most, such as hallways, the kitchen and living room, guest bedrooms, and bathrooms. Use the storage space usually taken up by your decorations (like your loft or underbed storage) to temporarily store non-essential items. To prevent burnout, use the '15-minute timer' rule: focus on one small area, such as a drawer, shelf, or a section of your wardrobe, for just 15 minutes. You'll be surprised how much you can do in short bursts. You can also try sorting into four containers: Keep (you use it regularly); Donate (still good, but you don't use it); Bin (broken or unusable); Unsure (revisit). This will speed up the decluttering process.

Deep-clean essential kitchen gadgets

Christmas lunch often depends on the kitchen gadgets we use every day, so now's the time to make sure they're clean, working properly, and ready to perform under pressure. Start with the essentials: the kettle – descale it for better taste and faster boiling; the coffee machine – run a cleaning cycle or descale it if needed; the toaster – empty out crumbs that could be a fire hazard; the air fryer or slow cooker – if it's playing a part in your Christmas cooking. Wipe down your hob, microwave, and other small appliances too. To save time, clean as you go using a multipurpose cleaner – like baking soda paste or a degreasing spray – that works across multiple surfaces. For gadgets with removable parts, soak them in warm soapy water or a vinegar solution while you tackle other tasks. Use an old toothbrush to reach into buttons, vents, and seams – it's the quickest way to get into tricky areas.



VonShef Fika 6L air fryer in
Cream, £64.99, VonHaus



Elbow Grease
air fryer
cleaner, £1.29,
The Range

Vacuum and spot-clean carpets and sofas

Nothing freshens a home quite like clean floors and upholstery. Focus on high-traffic areas like the hallway, living room, and around the Christmas tree. If you have pets, this step is essential, as fur and odours can linger unnoticed by you, but your guests will pick up on them instantly! To save time and energy, invest in a small, handheld, rechargeable vacuum for the festive season. It's perfect for quick clean-ups – whether it's pet hair, crumbs, or dried mud – and much less disruptive than hauling out a full-sized vacuum while entertaining. For a deeper clean, try a fast-acting foam cleaner that lifts dirt from carpet, rug, and upholstery fibres. Many come in seasonal scents that add an extra festive touch. Don't forget the sofa cushions – give them a quick vacuum, fluff them up, and spot-clean any stains. A lint roller also works wonders on fabric-covered furniture, and a fresh-smelling fabric spray can instantly revive the space.



Airgo cordless
bagged vacuum
cleaner, £159.99,
Beldray



Zoflora carpet foam in
Frosted Berries and Bramble,
£3.49, Home Bargains

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی دکوراسیون داخلی

Mop hard floors in a flash

Hard floors tend to show every footprint and spill, especially in winter, when muddy boots and wet shoes are constantly coming and going. A spray-mop with a refillable cartridge is your best friend here. It's quicker and more convenient than the traditional mop-and-bucket routine, and great for fast clean-ups throughout the festive period. Fill it with a diluted all-purpose cleaner or a DIY mix (such as vinegar and water for tiles, plus a couple of drops of essential oil for a festive fragrance), then simply squeeze, spray and mop! Keep your spray-mop easily accessible in a hallway cupboard or utility room, so you can whisk it out and clean up unexpected messes as they happen. Focus on entryways, the kitchen, and bathroom floors, as these will see the most foot traffic from guests. And here's a tip to save even more time: mop in an 'S' pattern rather than in straight lines. This method pushes dirt forward and traps it, helping you to cover more ground quickly and avoid re-cleaning the same spots.



Vileda 1-2 spray mop, £25, Argos

Astonish floor cleaner in Winter Spice, £1.50, Tesco



Mrs Hinch's Alpine Escape Fairy Max Power washing up liquid, 730ml, £3.48, B&M

Clean and sort the fridge and freezer

With all the festive food prep on the horizon, a clean and organised fridge and freezer are essential. If your freezer needs defrosting, now's the perfect time – so you'll have plenty of room for party food, leftovers and desserts. Start by clearing out any expired items or half-used sauces you won't be using. Now move everything into cool bags or a laundry basket lined with ice packs, to keep items cold while you clean. This buys you time to do a proper job, without waste. Clean the shelves and drawers thoroughly using warm, soapy water, or a mix of vinegar and water for a natural option. Store food in airtight containers or freezer bags, and label with the contents and the freeze date. Group similar items together – like meats, side dishes, and desserts – so they're easy to find when the rush begins. To make the most of your freezer space, freeze bags flat and then store them upright like files – this keeps everything neat and easy to access. Finally, place older items at the front so they get used first, for a simple way to reduce waste.

Blitz bathrooms and cloakrooms

Bathrooms are high on your guest-ready checklist. Give all guest-accessible bathrooms and cloakrooms a quick but thorough clean, focusing on the essentials: the toilet, sink, mirror, and floor. Make sure you're stocked up with toilet paper, fresh hand towels, and refill any empty soap dispensers. To save time, use a leave-on bathroom foam or spray that clings to surfaces like sinks, taps, and tiles. Spray everything in one go, let it sit for 5-10 minutes, then simply wipe and rinse – no scrubbing needed. Another good idea is to keep microfibre cloths to hand – either under the sink or in a drawer – for daily 60-second spot-cleans. Always assign one cloth per task (e.g. blue for sinks, yellow for toilets) to avoid cross-contamination. For an even quicker win, use biodegradable anti-bacterial wipes to clean down surfaces quickly.



Stronger bathroom gloves, £3.30; Let It Shine On & On! microfibre cloths, £3.75 for 3, both Marigold

Zoflora multi-surface wipes in Frosted Berries and Bramble, £2.19, Home Bargains

Tidy guest bedrooms

If you're hosting overnight visitors, make them feel welcome with a fresh, tidy room. The day before they arrive, change the bed linen, fluff the pillows, and dust key surfaces such as bedside tables, shelves, the headboard, and windowsills. Vacuum the floor, clear away any clutter, and make space for your guests to unpack – if you're short on time, use a basket or tote to quickly gather up clutter and sort it later. Check for smudges on mirrors and handprints on doors, then wipe them down with a cloth and some multipurpose spray. Don't forget to empty the bin and tidy away any stray items like mugs, chargers, or books. Finally, open a window for a minute or spray a light, festive room spray to freshen the air, then add some thoughtful touches like a reading light or spare blanket. To make it easy to keep clean over Christmas, keep a small cleaning caddy in or near the bedroom with wipes, a duster, and a lint roller for quick refreshes anytime.



Mrs Hinch's Alpine Escape Flash dust magnet starter kit, £2.99 for 5 pieces, B&M



Probiotic odour and spot remover, £19.99, Clean Living



Luxury cotton bedspread in Rosehip, £225; velvet trimmed floral extra large bedspread in Green, £225, both The Cotswold Company

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آموزشگاه آنلاین بیست و پنج روزگی کریسمس

YOUR MAKE-AHEAD Festive menu

Dreaming of a stress-free Christmas in the kitchen? These recipes can all be made in advance and popped in the freezer or fridge, saving time on the big day. Plus, top tips for success from Channel 4's *Batch From Scratch* meal prep guru, Suzanne Mulholland



We've all been there – Christmas Day in the kitchen, with an impossible list of dishes to prepare before your guests arrive. However, with some careful planning, all that drama will be a ghost of Christmas past. There is lots you can prep in advance, transforming your festivities from chaos to calm.

Planning pro and prep-ahead queen, Suzanne Mulholland, aka The Batch Lady, explains the advantages of putting in the work now: 'It takes all the last-minute stress out of Christmas Day cooking. Everything has been prepped so all you have to do is cook the turkey and heat your prepped sides. It's also a great way of spreading the cost of Christmas food out rather than having a big food bill

just before Christmas Day. Plus, it allows you to spend time enjoying the day rather than spending it stressed in the kitchen!' she says.

When December arrives, plan what you'll serve for your festive lunch. As a rough guide, set aside time and budget each week to prep and freeze a dish, such as roasties, cranberry sauce and veg. As the 25th nears, make a more detailed plan of what you can do to save time. Make-ahead puddings such as our meringue

Spend time enjoying the day rather than spending it stressed in the kitchen!

wreath will keep for up to a week in an airtight container, ready to be finished on the day.

Follow our menu and take on The Batch Lady's advice for calmer Christmas cooking!



Suzanne Mulholland, aka The Batch Lady, is a family-cooking expert and meal prep whizz. She's the author of several Sunday Times bestselling recipe books and presents Channel 4's *Batch From Scratch* alongside Joe Swash. Her latest book, *The Batch Lady Saves Christmas* (£25, Ebury Press), is out now.

Feature Lucy Whyld Photo Getty Images



STARTERS

Easy blini

PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes

COOKING TIME 15 minutes

SERVES 30

INGREDIENTS

- 250g Greek-style yoghurt • 150g plain flour • 2 large eggs • 1 tsp baking powder • ½ tsp salt • 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, plus extra for greasing
- To serve** • crème fraîche (optional) • smoked salmon (optional)

METHOD

1 Whisk the yoghurt, flour, eggs, baking powder, salt and olive oil in a bowl until smooth with a drizzle consistency. If the batter is too thick, whisk in a bit more yoghurt.

2 Grease a large non-stick frying pan with olive oil over medium heat. Add a teaspoon of batter to the pan per blini, leaving enough space for them to rise. Cook for 2 minutes on each side until golden.

3 Serve warm with your choice of toppings, such as crème fraîche and smoked salmon.

MAKE AHEAD Store without toppings in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days or freeze for up to 1 month. Reheat before serving.



Recipe and image from *Bon App!* by Isabelle Dunn (£30, Smith Street Books). Photography by Alan Benson

The Batch Lady's pro tips

'I often like to serve a cold starter at Christmas as it means you don't need to heat anything up, especially if you have a smaller oven. I have a great smoked trout pâté recipe in my new book – it is so simple to make and means when you need it all you need to do is defrost it and then plate it up and you are good to go. Also, if you are catering for different dietaries, try to ensure that your starter will suit everyone to save you having to make multiple dishes, i.e. using dairy alternatives where needed.'

↓ Christmas soup

PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes

COOKING TIME 50 minutes

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

• 300g parsnips, peeled and cut into chunks • 300g carrots, cut into chunks • 300g butternut squash, cut into chunks • 2 onions, peeled and cut into quarters • 3 garlic cloves, skin on • 3 sprigs rosemary • 2 tbsp Borderfields Cold Pressed Rapeseed Oil • salt and pepper • 800ml hot vegetable stock, made with 1 stock cube • 50g Stilton, crumbled (or vegan alternative), plus extra to serve (optional) • natural (or plant-based) yoghurt or cream (optional) • paprika, to sprinkle (optional) • crusty bread, to serve

METHOD

1 Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6. Put the parsnips, carrots, butternut

squash and onion in a large roasting tray and add the garlic and rosemary. Drizzle over the oil and season. Stir well to combine, then roast in the oven for 45-50 minutes until tender.

2 Remove the roasting tray from the oven. Squash the garlic cloves with the back of a spoon and discard the skins. Stir the garlic purée through the vegetables.

3 Transfer the vegetables to a blender. Add the vegetable stock and Stilton. Blend until smooth.

4 Divide the soup between four bowls or mugs. Swirl through a little yoghurt and crumble over more Stilton, if liked. Season with black pepper and sprinkle with paprika, if using. Serve with crusty bread.

MAKE AHEAD To make ahead, make the soup to the end of step 3. Cool and freeze. When ready to use, defrost the soup and reheat gently until piping hot.

Recipe and image courtesy of Borderfields, borderfields.co.uk



↑ Chicken liver pâté

PREPARATION TIME

10 minutes, plus chilling

COOKING TIME 40 minutes

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

• 300g chicken livers • 1 small onion, finely chopped • 200g butter, cubed • a slug of brandy • 2-3 sprigs fresh thyme • 2 garlic cloves, crushed • 2 bacon rashers (streaky or back), roughly chopped

For the topping • 80g salted butter, melted or 80g redcurrant jelly, melted with 1 tsp water

METHOD

1 Preheat the oven to 150°C/130°C fan/gas mark 2.

2 Wash the livers and dry them on kitchen paper. Put them in a roasting tin with the chopped onion, butter, brandy, thyme, garlic and bacon and cover tightly with foil. Cook in the oven for 40 minutes.

3 Remove the foil and scrape the contents of the roasting tray into a food processor. Blitz until very smooth, then pass the mixture through a sieve into a bowl. Spoon into individual ramekins to about 1cm from the top and put them into the fridge to set for an hour.

4 Pour either melted butter or redcurrant jelly over the top of the pâté and put the ramekins back in the fridge for at least another hour before serving.

COOK'S TIP Serve with oatcakes or toast.

MAKE AHEAD The pâté will keep in the fridge for up to a week.



Recipe and image from *Gloagburn: Recipes from a Scottish Farm* by Alison Niven (£25, Kitchen Press, kitchenpress.co.uk)



Recipe and image
from *The Batch Lady
Saves Christmas* by
Suzanne Mulholland
(£25, Ebury Press).
Photography
by Andrew
Hayes-Watkins

MAINS

← Roast turkey with sage, Cheddar and chestnut stuffing

PREPARATION TIME 10-15 minutes

COOKING TIME 20 minutes per kg, plus 70 minutes for a turkey under 4kg; 20 minutes per kg, plus 90 minutes for a turkey over 4kg

SERVES 4kg turkey serves 8-10

INGREDIENTS

For the stuffing • 1 x 170g packet of dried sage and onion stuffing • 2 tbsp orange juice • 400g pork sausage meat • 70g grated Cheddar • 90g cooked chestnuts, finely diced
For the turkey • 1 x oven-ready turkey (bag of giblets removed if there is one) • 100g soft butter • 1 x 300g pack smoked streaky bacon rashers • salt and pepper

METHOD

1 For the stuffing, add the packet stuffing to a mixing bowl and pour over the amount of boiling water stated on the packet along with the orange juice. Leave to stand according to the packet instructions. Add the sausage meat, cheese and chestnuts and mix with your hands until they all come together. If making the stuffing in advance you can now freeze this – add to a large labelled freezer bag and freeze flat – or continue with the recipe below.

2 Place your turkey in a roasting tin, breast-side up.

3 Gently ease your fingers between the skin and the breast meat to lift the skin away from the breast, starting from the end nearest the cavity. Using your fingers, push the soft butter up under the skin, smoothing it from the outside to cover the breast. This will help the breast stay moist. Season all over with salt and pepper.

4 Take the stuffing and stuff it into the neck of the turkey at the opposite end to the cavity.

5 Lay the rashers of bacon diagonally across the breasts and legs. Cover with cling film and this will keep in the fridge for up to 2 days.

6 Remove the turkey from the fridge 1 hour before you're planning to cook to allow it to come up to room temperature. Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4. Place the turkey in the oven and cook for 20 minutes per kilogram, plus 90 minutes (for a turkey over 4kg), or 20 minutes per kilogram, plus 70 minutes (for a turkey under 4kg). Cover loosely with foil if the bacon starts to catch. Use a meat thermometer to ensure your turkey is cooked through – the internal temperature of the breast meat should be 75°C.

COOK'S TIP To cook the stuffing separately, preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4 and line a 900g loaf tin with greaseproof paper. Press the stuffing mixture into the tin and cook for 25-30 minutes until cooked through.



↑ Christmas Wellington with walnut pâté

PREPARATION TIME 30 minutes

COOKING TIME 1 hour

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

For the walnut pâté • 1 tbsp olive oil • 1 small onion, finely chopped • 2 garlic cloves, minced • 150g Opies pickled walnuts, finely chopped • 150g walnuts (raw or toasted) • 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves • 1 tbsp soy sauce or tamari • 2 tbsp breadcrumbs • salt and pepper, to taste
For the Wellington • 1 tbsp olive oil • 1 small onion, finely chopped • 1 garlic clove, minced • 200g mushrooms, finely chopped • 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves • 1 x sheet ready-rolled puff pastry (about 320g; use plant-based to make vegan) • flour, for dusting • 1 egg, beaten, to glaze (use plant-based milk to make vegan)

METHOD

1 Make the walnut pâté. Heat the olive oil in a pan, then sauté the onion and garlic until softened. Put them into a food processor, along with the pickled walnuts, walnuts, thyme, soy

sauce or tamari, and breadcrumbs. Pulse until finely chopped but still textured. Season with salt and pepper.

2 For the Wellington, in the same pan, heat the olive oil and sauté the onion, garlic, and mushrooms with thyme until all moisture evaporates and mixture is nicely browned. Let cool. Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6.

3 Roll out the puff pastry onto a floured surface. Spread the mushroom mixture evenly over the centre, leaving a border. Top with the walnut pâté. Fold the pastry over the filling to enclose completely, sealing edges with a little water. Trim any excess pastry.

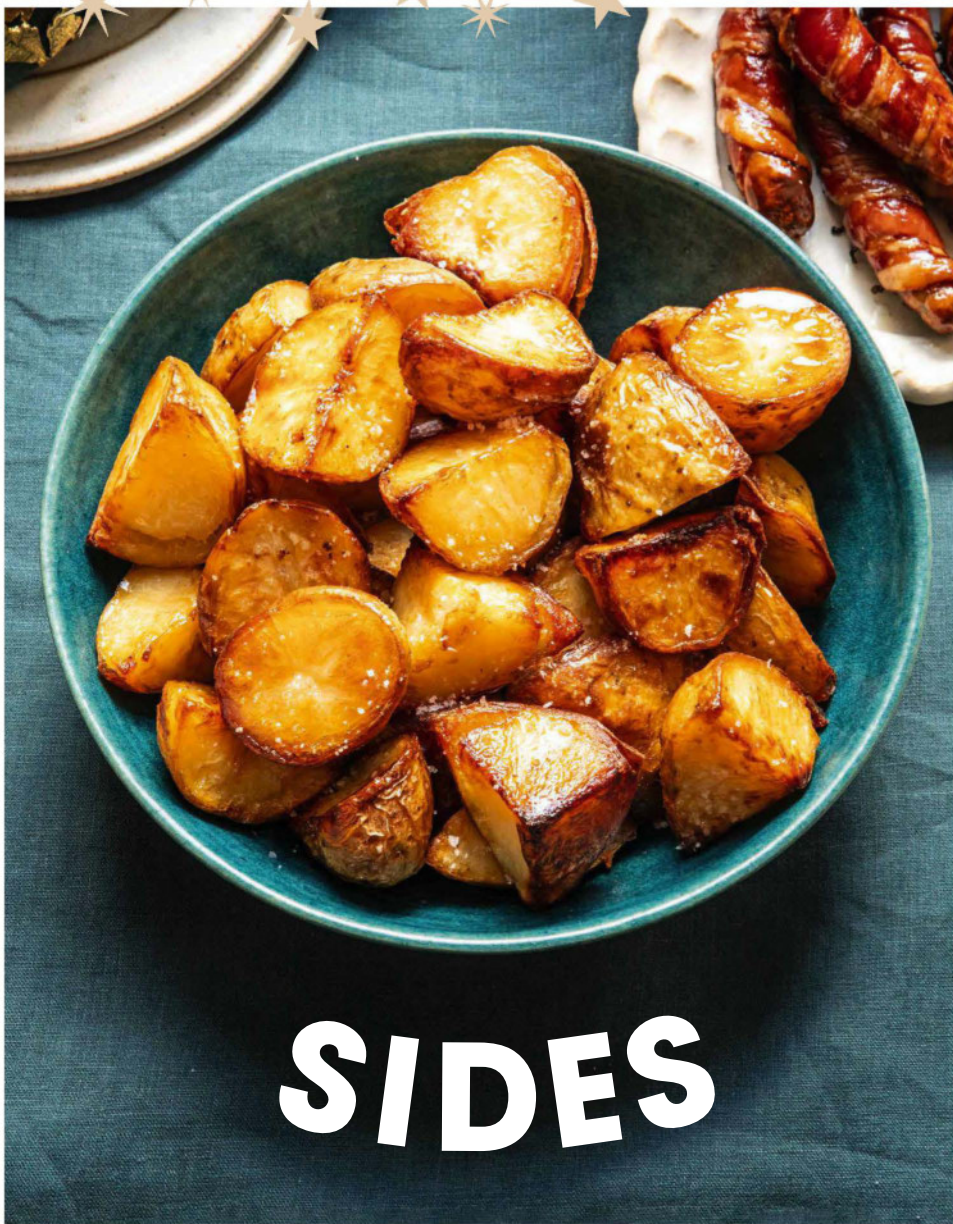
4 Place the Wellington seam-side down on a baking sheet lined with parchment. Brush with beaten egg or plant-based milk and bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden and crisp. Rest for 5 minutes before slicing.

MAKE AHEAD To make ahead and freeze, make the Wellington until end of step 3. Wrap the uncooked, assembled Wellington in foil and freeze. Defrost in the fridge overnight and bake the next day. Brush with beaten egg or plant-based milk and bake at 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6, following the instructions above.

Recipe and image courtesy of Opies, bennetttopie.com, @OpiesFoods

The Batch Lady's pro tips

'Prep your turkey ready for the oven on Christmas Eve or the day before. You can stuff it, lay over the bacon and cover with cling film and put it in the fridge. This means you can just pop it straight into the oven on Christmas morning! If you've got veggie or vegan guests coming, then you can get their main ready well in advance too. For example, a nut roast is a great one to have ready just to heat through.'



SIDES

↑ Roast potatoes

PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes
COOKING TIME 1 hour
SERVES 4-6

INGREDIENTS

• 1kg Maris Piper potatoes • 80g melted goose fat or 5 tbsp olive oil, if cooking for vegetarians or vegans • salt and pepper

METHOD

1 Slice the potatoes into quarters and add to a saucepan, cover with water and bring to the boil over a high heat. Cook for 6-7 minutes, then drain and return the potatoes to the saucepan to allow to steam dry.
2 Add the melted goose fat or olive oil to a tray, then tip in the hot potatoes. Turn to coat them well in the oil and season with salt and pepper.
3 Flash-freeze the tray of potatoes for 1 hour to allow them to get hard, then transfer them to a large, labelled freezer bag and freeze flat.

4 When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6. Place a baking tray in the oven for 3 minutes to heat. Carefully remove from the oven and add the frozen potatoes to the hot tray. Cook for 40-50 minutes until roasted and delicious. To cook in an air fryer, preheat the air fryer to 190°C. Add the frozen potatoes to the air fryer basket and cook for 30-35 minutes, shaking them every 10 minutes.

MAKE AHEAD If you want to be super organised, make these now. Roast potatoes keep in the freezer for up to 3 months!



Recipes and images from *The Batch Lady Saves Christmas* by Suzanne Mulholland (£25, Ebury Press). Photography by Andrew Hayes-Watkins

The Batch Lady's pro tips

'If you don't fancy batching everything or aren't a very confident cook, remember you can always buy a few cheats. Things like bread sauce and cranberry sauce from the shops are great, just heat through and decant into bowls – no one will know your secret! Another of my top tips is for gravy, I like to get mine made well in advance. I have a great make-in-advance gravy recipe using roasted chicken wings and veggies in my book. I hate making gravy on the day so being able to have my batched gravy ready just to heat through makes life so much easier.'

↓ Shredded sprouts with pancetta

PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes
COOKING TIME 15 minutes
SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

• 500g Brussels sprouts • 1 tbsp olive oil
• 150g pancetta lardons • ½ tsp ground nutmeg • 50g pine nuts • salt and pepper

METHOD

1 Remove and discard the outer leaves and stalks of the sprouts, then thinly slice them.
2 Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat, then add the lardons and cook until golden.
3 Add the shredded sprouts and cook for 3-4 minutes, then stir in the nutmeg and pine nuts. Remove from the heat and leave to cool. Add to a labelled freezer bag and freeze flat.
4 When ready to use, remove from the freezer and allow to fully defrost. Tip into a microwaveable bowl or a frying pan and heat through until piping hot.

COOK'S TIP To make it vegan, substitute the pancetta for chopped, cooked chestnuts.



↓ Carrot and parsnip dauphinoise

PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes
COOKING TIME 1 hour 20 minutes
SERVES 8

INGREDIENTS

• 20g unsalted butter • 500g fat carrots, peeled and sliced into 5-6mm pieces
 • 5 garlic cloves, thinly sliced • 5g fresh thyme, leaves picked (or 1½ tsp dried thyme) • 10g fresh sage, leaves picked, most finely chopped, a few reserved whole
 • 1½ tbsp plain flour • ½ vegetable stock cube, made up to 200ml • 400ml double cream • 500g parsnips, peeled and sliced into 5-6mm pieces • 30g grated pecorino

METHOD

1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C/gas mark 4. Melt the butter in a large, lidded saucepan over a medium heat. Add the carrots, garlic, thyme and herbs and fry for 2 minutes. Add 2 tbsp water, reduce the heat to medium-low, then cover and cook for 8 minutes.
2 Stir in the flour until the dustiness has disappeared, then gradually stir in the stock

and cream. Tip in the parsnips and bring everything to a gentle simmer. Cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, then season and remove from the heat. Transfer to a baking dish about 20 x 30cm, scraping the last of the sauce over the top.

3 Scatter with the cheese, then cover with a foil tent (peaking the foil in the centre so it doesn't stick to the top of the dauphinoise) and bake for 40 minutes.

4 If serving straightaway, increase the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6. Remove the foil, top with the whole reserved sage leaves and bake for another 20 minutes, until golden and bubbling and the veg is tender when pierced with a knife. Leave to rest for 10 minutes before serving.

MAKE AHEAD If making ahead, remove from the oven at the end of step 3 and set aside to cool completely. Freeze for up to 2 months. Defrost in the fridge for 24 hours, then bring to room temperature 1 hour before baking. Bake, covered, at 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6 for 15 minutes, then remove the foil, top with the sage and bake for another 20 minutes.

Recipe and image courtesy of Tesco Real Food, realfood.tesco.com



↑ Ultimate veggie gravy

PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes
COOKING TIME 1 hour 5 minutes
SERVES 8

INGREDIENTS

• 4 tbsp olive oil • 600g frozen vegetable base mix (carrots, onion, celery) • 4 garlic cloves, sliced • 10g fresh rosemary
 • 50g plain flour • 450ml vegetable stock
 • 2 tbsp wholegrain mustard

METHOD

1 Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the frozen vegetable base mix, the garlic and the fresh rosemary leaves. Cook, stirring until the water has evaporated.

2 Reduce the heat and cook gently for 20-30 minutes until golden. Stir in 3 tbsp olive oil, then add the plain flour; cook, stirring for 2-3 minutes.

3 Pour in the vegetable stock and 1 litre of boiling water. Bring to the boil, then simmer gently for 30 minutes until thickened, stirring occasionally and scraping up any bits stuck to the pan.

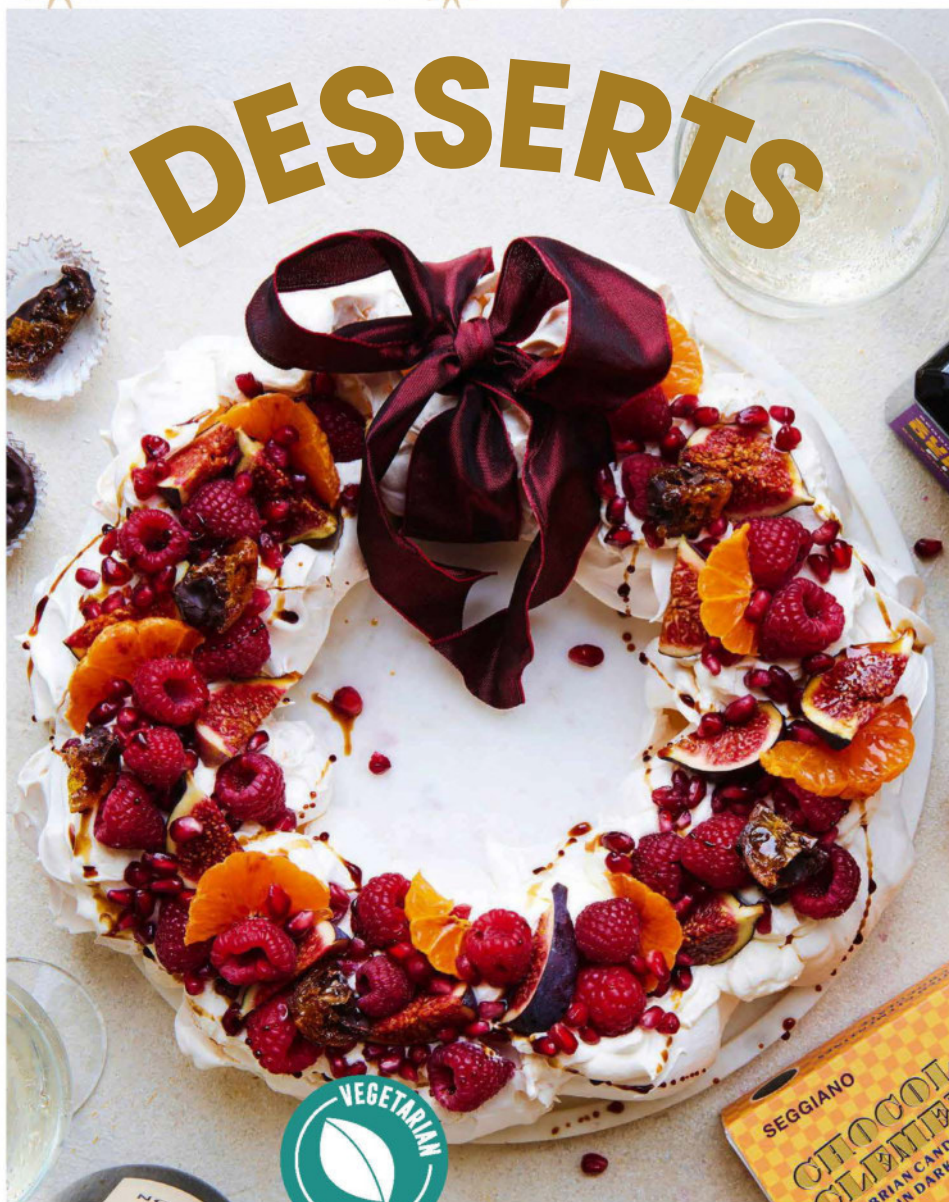
4 Pour through a sieve into another pan or serving jug. Stir through the mustard and season.

MAKE AHEAD Pour the gravy into a freezer-proof container. Cover and freeze for up to 3 months, or chill for up to 3 days. To serve, slowly reheat the defrosted gravy and bring to the boil.

Recipe and image courtesy of Tesco Real Food, realfood.tesco.com



DESSERTS



↑ Festive pavlova wreath

PREPARATION TIME

20 minutes, plus cooling

COOKING TIME 1 hour 30 minutes

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

• 6 medium egg whites • 330g caster sugar • 500ml double cream • selection of fresh fruit, including figs, raspberries, clementines and pomegranate seeds • chocolate coated clementines, chopped (optional) • Seggiano Super Dense Fig Balsamic Glaze, to serve

METHOD

1 Preheat oven to 150°C/130°C fan/gas mark 2. Line a large flat baking tray with non-stick baking paper and draw a 30cm-diameter circle in the centre.

2 Use an electric whisk or stand mixer to beat the egg whites to soft peaks. Add the sugar a spoonful at a time and whisk on maximum

speed until the egg whites are glossy and hold stiff peaks when the whisk is removed.

3 Spoon the meringue onto the baking paper in large spoonfuls using the circle as a guide to create a wreath shape. Use the back of a spoon to create some swirls and create a shallow indentation for the cream and fruit to sit in.

4 Reduce the oven to 140°C/120°C fan/gas mark 1 and bake for 1 hour 30 minutes. Once cooked, turn the oven off and leave the meringue inside until cooled completely.

5 To decorate, carefully peel off the baking paper and transfer the meringue to a serving plate. Softly whip the cream and spoon over the meringue. Top with your chosen fruit and chopped chocolate covered clementines, if using. Drizzle with the fig balsamic glaze, to finish.

MAKE AHEAD You can prepare the meringue base up to a week in advance. Leave it to cool, then store in an airtight container at room temperature. Add the decoration when ready to serve.

Recipe and image courtesy of Seggiano, seggiano.com

The Batch Lady's pro tips

'I like to serve a cold dessert on Christmas Day, something like a cheesecake. This way you don't have to reheat anything. If you have people that might like different desserts, I like to have one made in advance that I serve and a cheeky shop bought one. I'm not a big Christmas pudding fan but some of my family are; you can get brilliant ones in the shops so I always make sure to buy one to have in the cupboard for Christmas Day.'

↓ Mincemeat affogato

PREPARATION TIME

5 minutes, plus freezing

SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS

• 200g vanilla ice cream (use plant-based to make vegan) • 3 tbsp mincemeat (use plant-based to make vegan) • 1½ tbsp Camp Chicory & Coffee Essence

METHOD

1 Mix the ice cream with the mincemeat and place back in the freezer to freeze for a minimum of 20 minutes.

2 Using an ice cream scoop, divide the ice cream evenly between 2 small glasses or bowls.

3 Mix the coffee essence with 200ml boiling water and pour over the ice cream. Serve immediately, stirring the ice cream so it begins to melt a little.

COOK'S TIP Try adding 1 tbsp sherry or amaretto for an alcoholic version. Great served with biscotti.

MAKE AHEAD Mix the ice cream and mincemeat together and keep it in the freezer until needed. You could mix this up a few days in advance, scoop into freezer-safe serving glasses and store in the freezer until needed, ready to finish on the day.

Recipe and image courtesy of Camp Coffee, campcoffee.co.uk





Your prep questions answered

The Batch Lady gives us her final tips before we start our food prep

How far in advance of Christmas can you start prepping food for the day?

I tend to recommend that people start prepping around 2 months-6 weeks in advance of Christmas. This way you can just add the ingredients for one or two dishes to your usual weekly shopping list and get them batched that week when you have spare time. Then gradually you will add to your stock week on week and come Christmas you are ready to go! But equally, you can easily batch your festive food with a couple of weeks to go until Christmas, it's really about taking the stress away from the big day.

If freezer space is limited, what would you prioritise?

You can fit a lot more into the freezer than you would think. By freezing your batched sides like Brussels, roast potatoes, cranberry sauce flat in freezer bags you can stack them on top of each other like library books and before you know it, you've got the whole Christmas dinner in there! If space is very limited, I would recommend getting a fresh turkey rather than frozen; these are often large and harder to fit in if space is limited.



↑ Pistachio tiramisu

PREPARATION TIME 1 hour, plus chilling

COOKING TIME 15 minutes

SERVES 6

INGREDIENTS

For the sponge fingers • 6 eggs, separated
• 150g caster sugar • ½ tsp vanilla bean paste • 250g plain flour
For the coffee soak • 1 tbsp instant coffee
• 250ml water
For the pistachio layers • 500g mascarpone • 50ml pistachio liqueur
• 300g pistachio cream
To decorate • 75g pistachios, chopped

METHOD

- 1 Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4 and line three large baking trays with baking parchment. To make the sponge fingers, whisk the egg whites on a medium-high speed to soft peaks. Slowly add the caster sugar, whisking to incorporate after each addition, until stiff peaks form.
- 2 Add the egg yolks and vanilla and whisk to combine (this won't take long), then sift in the flour and whisk again, ensuring all the flour from the bottom is incorporated.
- 3 Spoon the mixture into a piping bag and cut a hole about 2.5cm wide, in the end. Pipe around 30 sponge fingers, roughly 10cm long, onto the lined baking trays, then bake for 12-14 minutes until golden. Leave to cool.
- 4 Once the sponge fingers have cooled, brew the coffee for the soak.

5 To make the pistachio layers, whisk the mascarpone until thick then add the pistachio liqueur and whisk again to combine.

6 Spread a third of the pistachio cream evenly across the bottom of a 2-litre serving dish. Dunk half of the sponge fingers in the coffee, one at a time, then lay them over the pistachio cream. Spoon half of the mascarpone over and even out with a spoon.

7 Top with another third of the pistachio cream then dunk the remaining sponge fingers in the coffee and arrange them in the dish. Spoon over the remaining mascarpone and again even out with a spoon, then finish with the final third of the pistachio cream.

8 Sprinkle over the pistachios, cover with cling film and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving.

COOK'S TIP If you're short on time, sub the homemade sponge for shop-bought ones.

MAKE AHEAD You can make this tiramisu two days ahead of time and store, covered, in the fridge until ready to serve.



Recipe and image from *Comfort Bakes* by George Hephner (£22, Yellow Kite)

I tend to recommend that people start prepping around 2 months - 6 weeks in advance of Christmas

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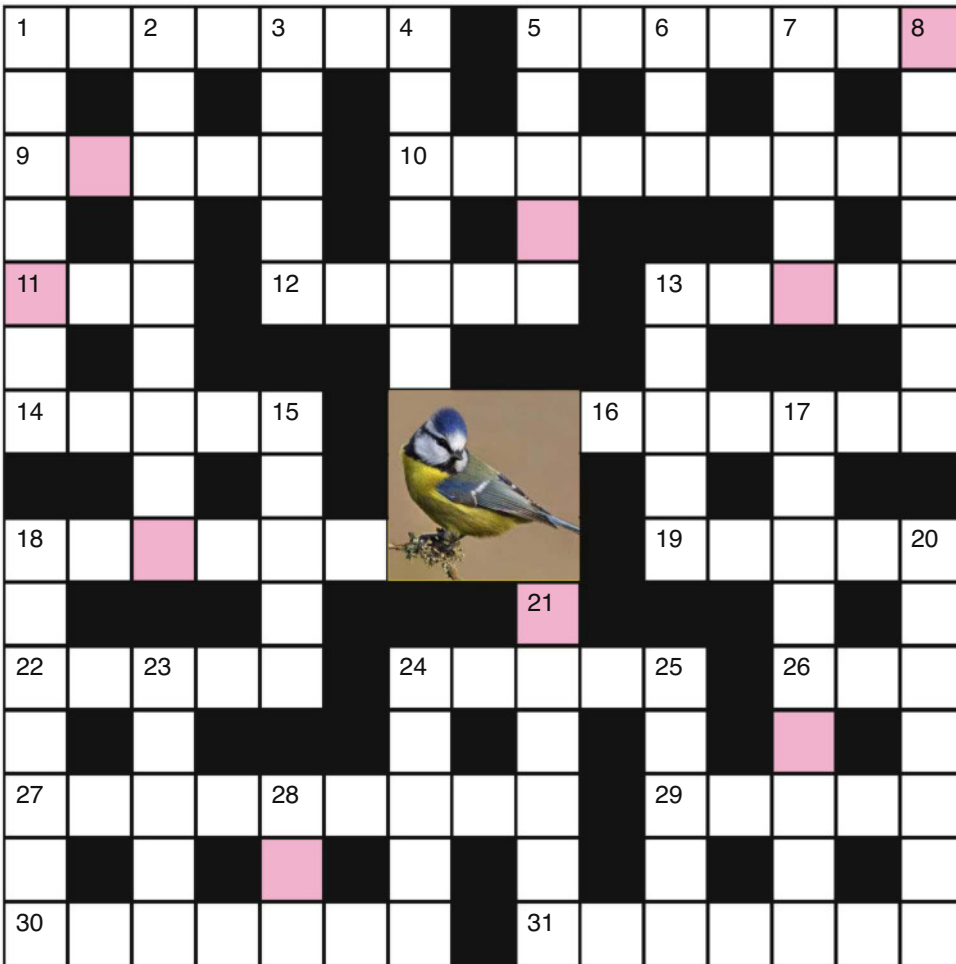
TEA BREAK *time*

Grab a cuppa and take a break from the festive planning with this month's crossword, sudoku and word scramble

**CHECK
HOW WELL
YOU DID** the
answers are
on page
115

CROSSWORD

Solve the clues then rearrange the letters in the shaded squares to find the mystery festive word (9)



ACROSS

- 1 Sports supporter (7)
- 5 Pirate's sword (7)
- 9 Correct (5)
- 10 Non-alcoholic mixed drinks (9)
- 11 Choose (3)
- 12 Wash with clean water (5)
- 13 Large concert venue (5)
- 14 Work hard (5)
- 16 Motivated (6)
- 18 Picturesque (6)
- 19 Pinny (5)
- 22 Fiction book (5)
- 24 Pig's nose (5)
- 26 Ventilate (3)
- 27 Classical dancer (9)
- 29 Innocent, unworldly (5)
- 30 Nature reserve in Scottish highlands (7)
- 31 Likely to collapse (7)

DOWN

- 1 Unit of length in horse racing (7)
- 2 Discuss, in order to reach agreement (9)
- 3 Private teacher (5)
- 4 Building material (6)
- 5 Ride a bike (5)
- 6 Blue bird, pictured (3)
- 7 Living (5)
- 8 Endure (7)
- 13 Large artery of the heart (5)
- 15 Test run (5)
- 17 Easily adapted (9)
- 18 Flood defence (7)
- 20 Childcare establishment (7)
- 21 Fluffy material, made of Angora goats' hair (6)
- 23 Worth (5)
- 24 Backbone (5)
- 25 Gin and -, aperitif (5)
- 28 And so on... (3)

SUDOKU

Fill the grid so each row, column and 3x3 box has numbers 1 to 9. Check your answers on page 115

		5		9		8		
	8				6	1		5
				1			9	
	6			2				1
3		1	9		8	7		6
8				3			5	
	9			6				
4		7	5				1	
		6		7		4		

WORD SCRAMBLE

How many different words can you make using this set of letters? (Hint, there are more than you think!)

T	H	W	K
M	V	O	A

HAVE A CUPPA WITH...

Sophie Allport

A decade on from her first Christmas collection, the designer and illustrator continues to be inspired by nature, the seasons, and life's little moments



Sophie is an illustrator and designer, who loves Christmas decor

Get a Sophie Allport mug when you subscribe p38



The Cosy Christmas range is available as gift wrapping too



Sophie's designs are inspired by the beautiful British countryside



Cosy Christmas bow, from £35

Cosy Christmas fabric Advent calendar, from £53

Cosy Christmas mug, from £16

Lincoln-born Sophie Allport knew from an early age that she wanted to do something creative, and after studying graphic design and illustration, she worked as a freelance illustrator. When she was invited to a country fair as a demonstrator and people were trying to buy her unfinished artwork, she decided she needed something to sell at the show. She made up some cards, and that's where it all began. She joined forces with her brother, Jem, and in 2007 launched her eponymous business selling homewares and accessories. From fond memories of her first Christmas collection in 2015 to sharing 2025's Cosy Christmas, Mistletoe and Red Gingham designs, Sophie tells *HomeStyle* about her festive favourites, her go-to decorating style, and why more is always more at this time of year.

What inspires your designs?

The British countryside is at the heart of everything I create. I'm inspired by nature, seasonal changes, and the little moments in life. My first design was the Busy Bee – my three boys were obsessed with insects, and I did a few sketches for them and that took off!

If you had to choose a favourite piece or design, what would it be?

It's always so difficult to choose just one, and it changes every season! Our new Cosy Christmas design is such a classic traditional Christmas scene, it brings back memories of hanging the stockings up by the fireplace, decorating the tree and sitting in the window. Of course, I've added a Sophie Allport twist to it as well. It captures the spirit of Christmas and has an emotional connection to it.

What was your first Christmas design?

Our first Christmas collection, Robin & Mistletoe, launched in 2015, and I still remember it so clearly. It featured a simple robin design and some festive mistletoe. Fast forward 10 years and we've launched our Mistletoe design for 2025; it's understated and elegant and really complements many interiors.

What do you love most about Christmas?

For me, it's all about spending time together, slowing down, being with loved ones, and making memories. I love all the cosy moments, the fire lit, mulled wine on the stove, watching

festive films and that anticipation of Christmas morning. It's also a time when my three boys are all home at the same time!

How do you decorate your home for the festive season? Does your style change each year?

I'm quite traditional – I love warm tones, greenery, twinkly lights, and decorations that come out year after year. I have a few I've collected over the years that have special meanings of their own. I do enjoy refreshing little things each season, but the heart of it stays the same. This year, I'm adding some personalised stockings to the collection.

Do you have a favourite festive look?

Cosy country style with texture and soft colour has always been my go-to, it suits my decor and home already. I'm loving bows at the moment, and have created some beautiful bows out of our new Christmas fabric, which I'll hang on my doors to add extra personality and texture.

What are your tips for festive decorating?

Don't feel like you need to decorate all at once. Take your time and enjoy the process. I love to pop on some Christmas music, pour a glass of mulled wine, and turn it into a family occasion. Scent plays such a big part too, lighting a festive candle instantly makes everything feel magical. And when it comes to decor, I always think more is more at Christmas! Adding plenty of greenery, whether it's faux or sprigs from the garden, really brings everything to life.

What's on your bedside table?

A dish for my glasses, which a good friend recently bought me, hand cream, a big bedside lamp, and a pile of books I'm working my way through. There's always a notepad and pen too, as you never know when inspiration will strike!

Do you have any predictions for next year?

I think we'll continue to see the charm of the outdoors brought into the home. There's a real appetite for nature-inspired nostalgia that feels both timeless and comforting, whether it's through print or greenery. Bows are here to stay too, adding a playful yet elegant touch, especially in new and unexpected colourways that bring a fresh look to tradition.

See Sophie's designs at sophieallport.com



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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

ACROSS: 1 Fanatic, 5 Cutlass, 9 Right, 10 Mocktails, 11 Opt, 12 Rinse, 13 Arena, 14 Graft, 16 Driven, 18 Scenic, 19 Apron, 22 Novel, 24 Snout, 26 Air, 27 Ballerina, 29 Naive, 30 Glencoe, 31 Rickety.

DOWN: 1 Furlong, 2 Negotiate, 3 Tutor, 4 Cement, 5 Cycle, 6 Tit, 7 Alive, 8 Sustain, 13 Aorta, 15 Trial, 17 Versatile, 18 Sandbag, 20 Nursery, 21 Mohair, 23 Value, 24 Spine, 25 Tonic, 28 Etc.

MYSTERY WORD: MISTLETOE

WORD SCRAMBLE

There are more than 50 well-known words – anything over 25 is excellent!

SUDOKU

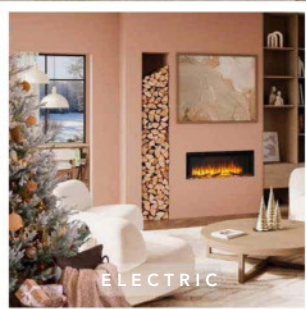
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9	8	2	7	4	6	1	3	5
6	4	3	8	1	5	2	9	7
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3	2	1	9	5	8	7	4	6
8	7	4	6	3	1	9	5	2
2	9	8	1	6	4	5	7	3
4	3	7	5	8	2	6	1	9
1	5	6	3	7	9	4	2	8

*Contents subject to change



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