

IT'S CHRISTMAS DIGESTIBLES

WORDS BY CAROLINE HENNESSY

Food *glorious* food

If any your family or friends is a food lover, this is the time of year to encourage their obsession – and ensure that you benefit a little too

Looking for a luxurious, decadent gift without spending too much money? Dublin's newest chocolate shop **Cocoa Atelier**, managed by Sheena Dignam (right) has just the thing with its rows of delectable Irish-made chocolates and jewel-coloured macaroons, jars of rich chocolate ganache and chic square bars. Its Christmas range includes limited edition festive macaroons, edible chocolate trees and even a box made of chocolate and filled with truffles. This is edible luxury at its very best, all wrapped up in snazzy little boxes and stylish black bags. Cocoa Atelier, 30 Drury St, Dublin 2, 01-6753616



If you're looking for a last-minute chocolate present, download a Golden Ticket voucher from London's **Chocolate Ecstasy Tours**. These friendly half-day and evening walking tours stop off at plenty of the city's high-end chocolatiers, with, depending on the tour chosen, hot chocolates, demonstrations, chocolate



A really great culinary oil is essential in any kitchen. For the true taste of southern Italy, try **Colletta Olivieri Extra Virgin Olive Oil**, which is imported from Italy by producer Lino Olivieri. The

Smoked salmon is a traditional gift at Christmas. Make sure you get the very best from **Burren Smokehouse**, in Lisdoonvarna, Co Clare. It has a strong reputation for sustainable production: all its fish is sourced from Irish waters before being smoked in Co Clare. Its website, stocked with everything from its own produce to local fruit tipples from Wine of the Glen, is a one-stop-shop for Christmas present buying. Taste your way through five different smoked fish in the Doolin Fisherman's Platter, ring the changes with its spiced hot smoked salmon, or mix it up with a fairtrade hamper.

Lisdoonvarna, Co Clare, 065-7074432, burrensmokehouse.ie



Would you like to put a sausage in someone's stocking? Or how about 10kg of fresh, traditional-breed pork? This meat is produced at **Oldfarm** in north Tipperary by Margaret and Alfie, who raise their happy Saddleback and Landrace pigs outdoors. The free-range pork and bacon is sold in relaxed boxes, which

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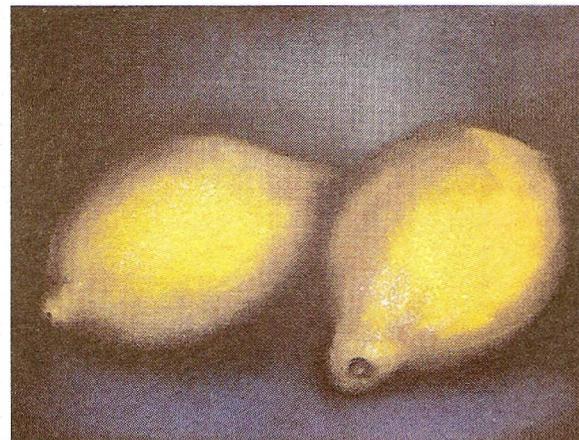
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From Gan Gluten's cakes and tarts to Bad Boy banana ketchup (below, made by Jennylynd James, left), Glenilen's superb yoghurts and cheesecakes to Mella's toothsome fudge, **LocalMarkets.ie** will deliver the perfect shopping basket of gifts to any door in the Cork area. With the Farmgate, On the Pig's Back and Bubble Brothers also on board, it's like a virtual trip to the English Market – without having to drag anything home. LocalMarkets.ie, 087-9151767, localmarkets.ie

When the frenzy of The Dinner is over, it's just not Christmas without a new cookbook or two to curl up on the couch with. Treat yourself to a pre-Christmas copy of Annie Rigg's **Gifts from the Kitchen** (£14.99, Ryland, Peters and Small) to kick off some present making: think sea-salted caramels, wholegrain honey mustard and spiced cranberry jelly. Nigella Lawson's magnificent and weighty **Kitchen** (Chatto & Windus, £26) will keep the recipient going all through the festive season, Jamie Oliver has plenty of quick ideas in **30-Minute Meals** (Penguin, £26) and, if they intend on having friends or family over, Rachel Allen's **Entertaining at Home** (Collins, £25) has plenty of ideas.

But a foodie will always love something just a little more obscure. Go back to the source with the handsome **At Elizabeth David's Table** (Michael Joseph, £25), an illustrated collection of her greatest hits or get ahead of the curve with rising star Stevie Parle's tales of conversation and curry in **My Kitchen – Real Food from Near and Far** (Quadrille, £14.99). For real reading, get your hands on Josceline Dimbleby's **Orchard in the Oasis** (Quadrille, £25), an evocative memoir of a life in food. Don't miss the late Clement Freud's recently reissued **Freud on Food** (Black Swan, £8.99) for plenty of attitude and a particular sensibility that is a real antidote to Christmas excess.



How about food you can hang on your walls? A limited edition fine-art print is a perfect addition to any kitchen. Dublin's **Graphic Studio Gallery** has a selection of food-related images (including dreamy fruit from Robert Russell, left) as do places such as **Belfast Print Workshop** (fish and fruit collographs by Ivan Frew, James Millar's linoprints) and the **Original Print Gallery** (Jean Bardon's vegetable garden etchings). Unframed prints can start from as little as €100 and can be posted anywhere in the world.

Graphic Studio Gallery, Temple Bar, Dublin 2, 01-6798021, graphicstudiodublin.com.
Belfast Print Workshop, 30-42 Waring Street, 00-44-28-90231323, belfastprintworkshop.org.uk.
Original Print Gallery, 086-1781771, originalprint.ie,

Good Food Ireland has Christmas vouchers that can be used at any of its 260 members throughout Ireland. Cash them in at a Michelin-star restaurant, a luxury hotel or cookery school, even at a local café, pub or shop. Vouchers are available online from €50. Good Food Ireland, 053-9158693, goodfoodireland.ie

A cake stand is just the thing for displaying home baking or hastily fairy cakes. **Me Auld China** makes two- and three-tier stands using vintage china plates. If you know someone with long-loved but little-used crockery, they can also pimp your plates to give them a new lease of life. This is shabby chic at its most reusably cool. Catch Me Auld China at craft markets around Dublin or find them online. meauldchina.com

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Dinner to your door

Christmas may be coming, but if you have no interest in trudging around the shops there are simpler ways of sorting out the Christmas dinner

Meat the makers

James Whelan Butchers, based in Clonmel, Co Tipperary offers Christmas hampers in a variety of sizes, starting from €109. The fresh-meat hampers include turkey and ham, stuffing and a couple of bottles of wine, and the makings of a Christmas morning fry up, with Crowe's Farm sausages, rashers and Inch House black pudding. Every turkey comes with a timer. James Whelan also offers cooked meat hampers. All can be delivered anywhere in Ireland up to December 23rd. Tel: 052-6182477, jameswhelanbutchers.com

Sparks from Marks

Marks & Spencer offers the full traditional Christmas dinner. Everything is available to

order: smoked salmon starter, prepared vegetables, luxury pudding and Christmas mini cupcakes. There are turkeys and hams aplenty but you could also go for an unusual four-bird roast (a stuffed duck inside a chicken inside a turkey inside a goose). All you have to do is take note of the cooking times. Brochures available in M&S stores now. Order in advance to collect between December 22nd-24th.

Deliverance

Take the shopping out of the equation with Christmas Made Easy. This company will make and deliver a five-course feast of fine artisan products, including a bronze turkey or free-range goose, its award-winning cranberry sauce, a home-made plum pudding and Irish farmhouse cheese. From about €40 per head. Order by December 6th. Lough Egish, Castleblayney, Co Monaghan, 041-9813837, christasmadeeasy.ie.

Now for something a little different

If you're trying to move away from tradition,



Neil and Hazel McFadden of Christmas Made Easy

Superquinn stocks quail alongside its usual festive favourites. Simply wrap with prosciutto, roast with prepared vegetables, and serve with some ready to go mash and gravy.

A perfectly elegant dinner for two, and all available to order online. Superquinn will deliver until December 23rd. Check superquinn.ie for areas covered.