

Christmas is traditionally a time of excess, so how can one try and minimise the most damaging aspects of excess whilst still having a good time? A lot of it means simply going back to an earlier time before we were all so dependent on plastic.

Christmas Card Craziness:

I know it seems Scrooge-like but hundreds of thousands of trees are felled every year to meet the demands of Christmas cards many of which cannot be recycled due to glitter and metallic ink. To say nothing of the energy, carbon footprint and single use packaging used to produce them. Could you find an alternative greeting, or could you send fewer?



Christmas Trees – buy or rent?:

Sustainable Christmas trees bought from a local farmer help the rural economy and can later be mulched for gardening. Environmentally-friendly rented Christmas trees are living trees, absorbing carbon dioxide and emitting oxygen. Grown locally during the year, they are potted with a root-ball just for Christmas enabling them to be returned and replanted.



Presents:

Plastic free gifts or experiences. Help the planet, give packets of seeds, trees and plants. Choose non nylon clothes, vintage, second hand. Look for eco-friendly gifts like guppy bags, reusable water bottles and coffee cups, or Fairtrade consumables, coffee, chocolate, spices. How many adults actually need more things? Think about giving an experience, a membership or a charity donation in their name.



Christmas Decorations:

Search plastic-free xmas decorations online. Take a walk in the country and pick greenery – holly with berries, ivy, fir, yew, twigs to spray white or silver, pine cones. Or use star anise and cinnamon sticks tied with ribbon, and dried orange slices.



Entertaining & Parties: There may not be a lot this year but even so, real glasses, cutlery and crockery are best. Choose wine bottles with corks and cans of beer in boxes not with plastic rings. Some paper plates and cups are coated with a layer of plastic, look for compostable versions or bamboo plates. Ready-made canapés have particularly large amounts of plastic packaging. Recycle, don't bin.



Charity Shops:

In a finite world it doesn't make sense endlessly to consume new things. Charity shops are a good source of bargains to re-purpose and re-home, and good for children's toys which also avoids all the plastic packaging of new toys. If buying new look for goods made from recycled plastic and good quality toys which can go back into the charity shop in their turn.



Keeping it in the Family:

Have fun, save money and get a gift you actually want with a friends and family Secret Santa. Put names in a hat along with a hint of what you would like.

Wrapping Paper & Gift Tags:

The UK throws away enough wrapping paper to circle the globe nine times every Christmas. Avoid metallic papers and glitter – if it can't be 'scrunched' it can't be recycled. Be creative, use brown paper or fabric. Make tags from last year's Christmas cards. Give the sticky tape a holiday, use string, raffia, wool or non plastic ribbon, and save pretty ribbons for next year.



Children's Presents: Harder to avoid plastic here, Christmas is filled with brightly-coloured plastic toys. Buy books, clothes and experiences, plus maybe a small, good quality plastic toy from a charity shop to fill the plastic 'void'. Search online for high quality, sustainable ideas. They may cost a bit more than the cheap disposable option, but passed on and used again and again they will cost the planet less.





Christmas Food:

Buy locally and loose to avoid packaging. Take plenty of bags when you go shopping and also your own containers for meat, fish and cheese. Writing a list makes sure you don't overbuy, saves money and prevents food waste. Plan for your left overs – can they be frozen or used for another meal? Use beeswax wraps or store in your collection of permanent plastic tubs.



Support Local Shops:

and avoid car miles. Hopefully they will be open in December, and they can use the business especially this year:

- Edible Culture • Barley Mow
- Oxfam • Macknades • Mighty Fine Things • Apotheca
- Top Hat & Tales • All Stitched Up • The Yarn Dispensary
- Shepherd Neame Shop • Faversham Society Bookshop & Fleur de Lis • Creek Creative • Charity & Antique Shops



Excess & Waste:

A YouGov survey found that more than half of UK adults get at least one unwanted gift at Christmas. Imagine if this £740 million we ill-advisedly spend on these was given to charities.

Every year in the UK approximately 7 million tonnes of food are wasted. During the Christmas period alone 2 million turkeys, 5 million Christmas puddings, and 74 million mince pies get disposed of while still edible, causing almost 270,000 tonnes of food waste in total.



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