

DESIGNER CHRISTMAS

ALL WRAPPED UP

What makes a perfect festive celebration? Interiors experts, tastemakers and craftspeople offer up their tips and reveal their own plans for a truly special Christmas

FEATURE **EMMA J PAGE** ILLUSTRATIONS **DIETER BRAUN**



JUSTIN VAN BREDA
Interior designer, j-v-b.com.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING IDEAS

I like to use bunches of rose hips, berries and spruce tied with ribbon. If the tree is a little sparse around the base, huge gift-wrapped boxes placed at its foot are great gap fillers. When it comes to dressing the Christmas table, it's a case of more is more. Mine

features plenty of candles, silverware and flowers, and I also decorate it with sculpture, books and urns.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA Philip Morrow, morrowsoutfitters.com, has reopened his great-grandfather's business, making the best socks ever for men. For women, I think beautifully scented drawer liners make a wonderfully old-fashioned gift.

DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION There is nothing better than being at home in Gloucestershire. It involves a traditional English Christmas with a real fire, walks and masses of food. Otherwise, our family farm in my native South Africa is a great alternative and a different experience; there's touch rugby on the beach, picnics and long walks.

PERFECT CHRISTMAS LUNCH To make the most of the day, we don't eat until around 5pm. We have salmon and scrambled eggs for breakfast, there is afternoon tea and the Queen's speech, and then the festive meal.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT I adore the ceramic egg tray and the wonderful cheeseboards from Waterlane Collection, waterlanecollection.com.



SOPHIE CONRAN Designer, sophieconran.com.

DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION I love to be at home in the countryside. Delicious aromas waft out of the kitchen and fill the house and there is always a mishap, like the dog stealing the sausages, but that's what makes the occasion.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA For those I know well, I take their passion as inspiration, whether gardening, cooking or a particular sport. Otherwise, a scented candle is a good option. They always come beautifully packaged, and they are a small luxury that everyone enjoys receiving.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING IDEA Fairy lights are perfect for the tree, but I also put them down the middle of the table, along the mantelpiece and around the bed. That way the bedroom feels lovely and festive when the children come in on Christmas morning with their stockings.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH I used to live in Australia where Christmas lunch is traditionally a barbecue, which is really fun, followed by trifle for pudding.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT A little hamper or a basket filled with homemade treats makes a thoughtful and personal present. I like to give granola in jars, mince pies, sloe gin, marmalade and chocolate truffles or spiced oils and chilli paste.

AMY SOMERVILLE

Interior designer, amysomerville.com.



PERFECT PLAYLIST Festive hits by James Brown, Ella Fitzgerald, Etta James and Bing Crosby are top of the list.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA I usually like to give handmade knives by Laguiole, made-in-laguiole.co.uk. They are very beautiful and can be monogrammed too.

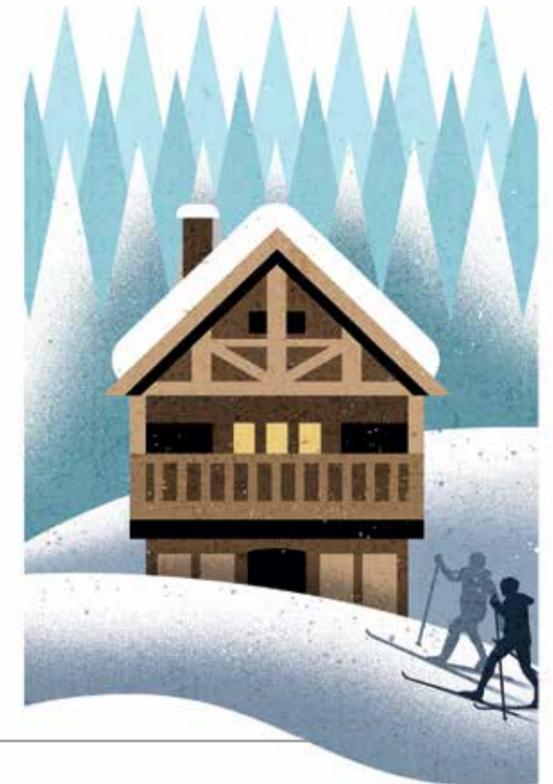
DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION

Home in Marylebone. The day includes a very long and loud Christmas lunch with extended family of all ages and waves of present-opening throughout the day. After the celebrations, we recover at our tiny Alpine chalet in Verbier, which can only be reached on foot or by snowmobile. Many hot holiday alternatives are discussed each year, but the mountains always win out.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS I'd love a silk or cashmere scarf from Faliero Sarti, falierosarti.com.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH Lunch at Sushisamba, sushisamba.com, at the top of the Heron Tower in London would be great. It feels as though you have travelled somewhere exotic and far away, and it is always festive.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT Carl Auböck brass objects (available at Sigmar, sigmarlondon.com) always make very unique presents.



BRIDIE HALL Interior designer, bridiehall.com.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH As I'm from New Zealand, it would have to be a barbecue, featuring a stuffed fillet of beef and lots of grilled vegetables.

DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION A couple of years ago, I went to the most beautiful resort called The Sarojin, sarojin.com, in Khao Lak, Thailand. I would love to revisit that holiday as it would offer perfect weather, Christmas lunch and carols on the beach, plus spa treatments everyday.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT I like to give something edible. Making salted caramels at Christmas is a favourite activity, as it feels really festive. I love to find creative ways to package them beautifully.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING IDEA Use copious amounts of greenery and candlelight. I plunder ivy from the garden, stud satsumas with cloves and place candles everywhere. That's when I wish it could be Christmas every day.

PERFECT PLAYLIST It has to be Christmas carols by a brass band.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA I like to give one of the Alphabet brush pots I stock, pentreath-hall.com, featuring the recipient's initial. It never fails to raise a smile.





ABIGAIL AHERN

Writer and stylist, abigailahern.com.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING IDEA When time is short, copious amounts of fairy lights and candles always do the trick. I love clusters of tea lights in metallic or glass holders. Consider wintry flowers and foliage, too, including mossy branches, catkins, mistletoe, berries and bunches of herbs from the garden. It's a look I love so much that we've created heaps of faux foliage for our new flower collection.

DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION It would be somewhere warm. Soho Beach House Miami is the coolest hotel, offering delicious food and fabulous ocean views. Heavenly.

PERFECT PLAYLIST Jazz and lounge music is my festive soundtrack, along with French radio station FIP.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS After a very busy year, some time off would be a treat. A log fire slowly burning in the grate and a good book would be ideal.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH I'm not the biggest lover of turkey. Sometimes, we like to cook Christmas lunch outside on our Big Green Egg barbecue, biggreenegg.co.uk. A huge sea bass roasted on fennel, followed by whiskies around the fire pit is perfect.



NAOMI PAUL

Product designer, naomipaul.co.uk.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

A few days off with good food and a stack of films like *Spirited Away* or anything by Studio Ghibli for some magic.

DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION My father comes from Germany and I can't think

of a better place to spend the season as it is celebrated so well. I would visit the Christmas markets, drink lots of mulled wine, eat *leckerle* (traditional biscuits), go ice-skating and stay in a log cabin in the Bavarian forest.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING IDEA As a child, my siblings and I would always go out the day before Christmas and collect as much holly and ivy as possible, covering every cupboard and window frame with it. It never fails to create a festive feel.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA Always something homemade. My husband is half Chinese-Malaysian and makes amazing five spice or fresh curry paste. Both last for months and are totally unique and useful gifts.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH My mother lives in Norfolk, famous for its delicious Black turkeys, but I'm also partial to roast duck, followed by spiced chocolate mousse and some freshly made chai tea.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT I love to give homemade mulled wine or cider. I use plenty of fresh orange juice infused with rose hip and hibiscus tea and a good dollop of honey.



LULU LYTLE

Interior designer, soane.co.uk.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA I like picking up classic books from John Sandoe, johnsandoe.com. Museum gift shops are also a great source of unusual presents.

DREAM CHRISTMAS

DESTINATION My parents' house in Worcestershire, where there are roaring log fires in every room and my childhood Christmas rituals can be resurrected, starting with the setting up of a beautiful crib, lovingly and finely made by my aunt and uncle.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS

I currently have my eye on a pair of 18th-century Italian daybeds in Christopher Butterworth's store, christopherbutterworth.com.

PERFECT PLAYLIST Handel's *Christmas Oratorio* on a loop; I never tire of it.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS

LUNCH There is simply no alternative. I am terribly sentimental and fond of family rituals, so collecting a turkey from the butcher and wrestling it into the oven is enormously comforting.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT I like to send something ahead of my arrival. A whole ham from The Country Victualler, thecountryvictualler.co.uk, would keep any foodie happy.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING

IDEA I would suggest giving up hope of everything being perfect and fill the house with very loose, natural decorations instead. I like to use foliage from the garden and huge planters filled with jasmine as well as large bowls of clementines, which all combine to create a fantastic scent. And, of course, as many candles as possible.



VANESSA BARNEBY

Fabric designer, barnebygates.com.

PERFECT PLAYLIST Thomas Tallis' choral music playing on Christmas morning reminds me of my childhood home in Hampshire.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS An Hermès Heure H white quartz watch with a brown leather strap has always been on my wish list – it's completely timeless; no pun intended.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING IDEA I always put white outdoor fairy lights in the apple trees at the front of our Hampshire cottage. They create instant festive magic and a warm welcome for visitors.

ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH Barbecued fish on the beach sounds rather appealing.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA I love to give photographs, whether in a beautiful frame or an album and my latest obsession is to encase presents in paper from Wrap Me, wrap.me. They make personalised wrapping paper from your own collection of photos. There's nothing more lovely than sharing a happy memory.

DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION

I've never been abroad at this time of year as we always have a typical English country Christmas at home with family. I would, however, love to go with my whole family to Mnemba Island off Tanzania, which I was lucky enough to visit on my honeymoon. I dream of returning one day.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT A Barneby Gates cushion always goes down well. One made up in our new Pineapple fabric would be particularly apt, as pineapples are supposed to be a symbol of hospitality.



LUKE EDWARD HALL

Interior designer, lukeedwardhall.com.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS I'd love a dachshund, which would be called Crispin. Ideally he'd arrive with a bright green leather collar and lead. Failing that, a vintage convertible sports car in custard yellow.

LAST-MINUTE DECORATING IDEA I love huge bunches of eucalyptus for their frosty green colour and scent. I also bring out bright gold dishes and plates for our Christmas party. Warm candlelight reflecting and bouncing around the room always makes me feel festive.

DREAM CHRISTMAS DESTINATION My partner's lovely old house in Edinburgh. It's always full of poodles, wine and festive cheer. The city is a magical place to spend Christmas; its historic streets take on a wonderful atmosphere in winter.

FAIL-SAFE GIFT IDEA Champagne and sloe gin always goes down a treat. **ALTERNATIVE CHRISTMAS LUNCH** I'm not sure that there could be such a thing, at least not in our household. I love everything about a traditional lunch, but my favourite part is the bread sauce. You can't beat the festive smell of cloves. I can't abide Christmas pudding though. I'd happily swap it for panna cotta.

IDEAL HOUSE GIFT Colourful candles for the dinner table and ginger biscuits – I make several batches in preparation for the season.

PERFECT PLAYLIST Plenty of carols and a few big brass-band numbers. I start extremely early. Christmas carols from King's College are on repeat from mid-November onwards. The *Home Alone* soundtrack is also a favourite. I always have time for Wham's *Last Christmas*, too; it's such a good, sad pop song.