

Don't it just drive you *mad...*

As we are nearing a certain holiday (yes, you all know which one!) I feel the need to say that what drives me mad is that Christmas seems to start earlier each year. Before I am inundated by a plethora of emails denouncing me as Scrooge and a veritable Humbug, let me just clarify. I love Christmas and everything that goes along with the joyful festive season. Decorating the tree lovingly and hanging outside lights, trying to get loved ones something special that I know they really want, not something that gets returned on Boxing Day, shoved in a cupboard or worse yet brought out only when the giver visits. Writing an endless list of people I need to send Christmas cards to, while trying desperately not to forget anyone and mailing them on time. The endless wonderful food and drink, which, as I am sure many of you will agree, is a time for pure indulgence. Where for once in the year calorie counting and scrutinising the fat, carbs, sugar, salt and e-number contents just goes out the window. In the past I have enrolled in all the usual festivities, midnight mass and Christmas carolling around the village to raise money for charity, while downing mince pies and mulled wine. So I am definitely not anti-Christmas, I don't even make derogatory comments (well, not many) when my Nan insists on putting her 5ft inflatable snowman in her front garden!

But why does Christmas seem to start so early? It seems to creep along earlier each year. I heard over the radio that one pub had put their Christmas tree up in September, the same month I heard the first Christmas Carol drift over the radio to my incredulous ears. Television adverts seem to go in to overdrive and it's nothing

but a constant stream of items that are offered in such a way, as to make you wonder how you ever got by without them. I also think it is quite shameless how children's products are shown excessively during children's programmes, putting unjustifiable pressure on parents to spend small fortunes. Crackers, decorations and advent calendars were in full swing by October and my friend Elaine had finished all her Christmas shopping by the end of October. Although in comparison, I have heard of people buying all of next years Christmas gifts in the January sales, certainly sensible in terms of bargains, but does it not expunge the very magic out of Christmas?

I feel that Christmas is truly on its way when I go late night shopping (in December) when it is cold and I have warm peanuts from the outside stalls and the Christmas lights are all ablaze. Although I must admit to a mild feeling of envy for those who have wrapped up and finished by mid December. I am usually running around like a lunatic on Christmas Eve day, trying to get last minute bits and pieces and my usual downfall is to end up trawling around several shops, trying to find the perfect wrapping paper! (Yes, very sad) although I think the rushing adds to the Christmas buzz for me. So, however you pull your Christmas Day together, whether you are already finished or just starting like myself. I would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and I look forward to hearing from you for the New Year edition.

Please email me about everything and anything that drives you mad at victoria@stables5.wanadoo.co.uk
Victoria Ladmore