

Let's eat

Getting festive

By Hannah Freeman

Christmas seems to get earlier and earlier every year. For those who adore the festive season it allows more scope to plan and prepare for the big day itself and for those not so keen another month of festive misery before we can 'get it over with'.

Our household enjoys Christmas a great deal – it's an opportunity to continue traditions, get together with family, eat, drink and be merry and in Monmouthshire we have everything at our culinary fingertips.

Entertaining in the lead up to Christmas can seem a chore but it doesn't have to be complicated; huge pots of slow-simmering stew with good bread are as welcome in the winter months as a perfectly planned fine dining experience, and there is something lovely about informality at Christmas.

We make vats of mulled Monmouthshire cider, spiced with honey, cinnamon and vanilla, and serve it in pottery mugs for our guests to enjoy wherever they please.

Sometimes I'll slow roast a shoulder of pork in local perry with a little sage until it forms pulled pork to be tucked into soft white buns with a generous spoon of homemade crab apple relish (the product of earlier autumnal foraging).

Puddings can be simple too; often, a platter of dried fruits, dark chocolate sherds or a cheese board filled with local cheeses and a stack of oatcakes is just perfect.

I'll often make large batches of chocolate truffles for those occasions when people pop around unexpectedly; it's always nice to offer a coffee and a homemade treat (and mince pies do get decidedly boring).

My Christmas lunch is always locally sourced but sometimes it's hard to pick from the huge number of local producers although it always rather impresses the guests if you can offer some 'field to fork' info. Taking the children out to buy the various components makes for hours of Christmassy fun especially if they can present something at the feast which they 'made themselves'. And finally, when everything's over there's a definite excuse pop open a bottle of Monmouthshire's Ancre Hill sparkling wine and relax.

In season: brassicas, mussels, Jerusalem artichokes, pumpkin, celeriac, partridge, venison, sea bass and cranberry

Why not try: Ordering a local organic Monmouthshire turkey from the Holt-Wilson's farm near Raglan. This family are extremely passionate about their flock and have been supplying the county for 25 years. www.monmouthshireturkeys.co.uk 01291 691988

Why not visit: Square Farm in Mitchel Troy and order one of their fab veg boxes, all locally grown and seasonal, delivery on a Wednesday, most veg is picked that morning. co.uk 01600 496906

Why not dine at: #7 Church Street, Monmouth. Having been awarded 2AA Rosettes since opening in February, it sits firmly in the 'Best of Monmouthshire' category. www.numbersevenchurchstreet.co.uk 01600 712600



Anthony Barnes, chef at St Pierre, a Marriott hotel and golf club near Chepstow, shares his recipes designed to use up left over food from Christmas

day for the ultimate Boxing Day 'no effort' dinner party or posh lunch – when your head is sore and pockets are bare you can eat like a king at Christmas!



PULLED TURKEY, CRANBERRY & ROAST POTATO HASH SOFT DUCK EGG & KALE

INGREDIENTS

Cooked turkey legs - pulled (Left over from Christmas day)
Roast potatoes, diced (left over from Christmas day)
1 small onion, sliced
2 cloves of garlic finely chopped
Sprig of Parsley chopped
4 duck eggs or hen eggs
Unsalted Butter - 20g for cooking
Rapeseed oil - 10ml for cooking
Cranberry sauce - 4 tsp
Kale - 250g

METHOD

Heat a large non-stick frying pan large enough to fit everything in as this is your serving dish, just place it in the middle of the table once done and dive in.
Add oil to the pan, add onion and fry for two mins – a little colour is a good thing. Then add kale and cook for a further two mins.
Add the leftover turkey, potatoes and garlic and heat for a further two to three mins.
Add the chopped parsley, mix through and spread out the mixture evenly in the pan.
Crack your eggs into four corners and fry for a further two to three mins.
Allow to rest on the stove for a few minutes to set the eggs and let the flavours 'get to know each other'.
Dot some cranberry sauce randomly over the mixture and serve!