

PREMIER  
FOODS

# UNWRAPPING FESTIVE Flavour



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The festive season remains one of the most significant and potentially most rewarding times of the year for hospitality operators. From Christmas Day bookings to impromptu get-togethers, it offers not only a surge in footfall, but also a chance to create lasting memories for guests that can drive loyalty well into the New Year.

Unwrapping Festive Flavour: Trends, Traditions and Touches is designed to help operators tap into the motivations, behaviours and expectations that shape how consumers choose to dine out during the Christmas period. Almost one in five of our respondents plan to eat out on Christmas Day alone – and many more looking to celebrate in the lead-up to the 25th – the opportunities are clear. But so are the expectations.

### 3 CLEAR THEMES EMERGE FROM THE RESEARCH:



#### TRENDS

Festive dining is primarily driven by a desire to spend quality time with loved ones, soak up the seasonal atmosphere, and enjoy limited-time menus. With many consumers beginning their planning in November, early menu launches, and pre-booked packages can help operators capture interest and streamline experiences.



#### TRADITION

Turkey and gravy top the poll for traditional flavours, highlighting the importance of maintaining familiar favourites. Besides the Christmas classics, there is also growing interest, particularly among younger diners, in menus that blend heritage with creativity. Significantly, 61% of diners look for menus that highlight branded ingredients, demonstrating the value of trusted names in conveying quality and boosting menu appeal.



#### TOUCHES

Quality menus and standout service are vital, with menu quality a deciding factor for most diners. 97% of those who dine out in December said the role of chefs is at least somewhat important in making a festive meal out more memorable.

Whether you're refining your Christmas menu, planning festive experiences or looking for insights to boost bookings, this report is a toolkit for operators ready to stand out, inspire, and deliver memorable seasonal experiences.

#### METHODOLOGY

We interviewed 2,000 UK adults (aged 18+) who dine out in December. Research was conducted via OnePoll, between 3 – 8 October 2025.



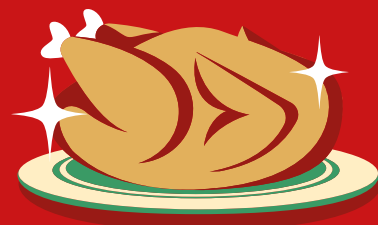
Let's unwrap the data – and the potential – together.





97%

Say the role of chefs is important in making a festive meal out memorable.



88%

Say the quality of the menu would help them decide where to eat out.



36%

Go out to enjoy seasonal menus.

45%

Prefer traditional flavours when eating out during the festive season.

## Trends: MOTIVATIONS, TIMINGS & PREFERENCES



## THE BIG DAY

Almost  
**1 in 5**

Of our respondents plan to dine out this Christmas Day

...with  
**13%**

Still to book a restaurant

Another  
**13%**

Would like to, but are still undecided about whether they will eat out

38%

Dine out at Christmas to make the most of the festive atmosphere.

12

## STATS OF CHRISTMAS



Meet the expert  
**LOUISE WAGSTAFFE**  
*Culinary Advisor*

Louise is a culinary entrepreneur and seasoned chef, with three decades of experience in the food industry.

She is currently Chef-Director at Delicious By Design and she also works with Premier Foods as senior culinary advisor. In 2021, Louise was named one of 44 Culinary Heroes by the Craft Guild of Chefs for her extraordinary work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There's nothing quite like the end of the year to bring people together in a jovial setting. From after work drinks and nibbles to full-on parties or family reunions around the dinner table, there is plenty of scope for festive celebrations in the run-up to Christmas.

Our research reveals that spending time with friends and family is the biggest motivation for people to dine out during the festive season (63%), followed by making the most of the festive atmosphere (38%) and enjoying seasonal menus (36%). A quarter of consumers who eat out in December (25%) do so to avoid the stress of cooking during the festive season.

Planning is important to consumers, though it's worth noting that there are plenty of last-minute organisers. The most popular month to start planning eating out during the festive season is November (31%) followed by December (18%), October (15%), September (6%), July/August (2%) and January to June (1%). With almost 50% still to plan in the seven weeks up to Christmas, there is scope to build bookings and promote menus.

The festive period lends itself to treating – and seeking out special meals and moments. In fact, 44% of consumers who choose to eat out in December are prepared to spend more on a meal than at other times of the year.

Elsewhere, just over two fifths (41%) are more likely to eat out with a group during the festive season than at other times of the year. 27% like to try somewhere new to eat out during December, and there is scope for festive dining to continue beyond Christmas Day, with more than a fifth (22%) saying they would prefer to eat out at New Year than on Christmas Day.

25- to 34-year-olds are most likely to dine out this Christmas (36%) compared to only 6% for 55 to 64 years and 9% of the over 65s.

Source: OnePoll survey of 2,000 UK adults who dine out in December, conducted 3-8 October 2025.

84%

Believe hospitality staff can make or break a festive dining experience.

61%

Like to see a menu that highlights popular branded ingredients such as

gravy,

custard

or stuffing.

25%

Dine out at Christmas to avoid the stress of cooking.

19%

Plan to eat out on Christmas Day.

63%

Dine out at Christmas to spend time with friends and family.



62%

Most associate turkey and gravy with Christmas dinner.

69%

Believe hospitality staff are the true heroes of Christmas.



Expert advice  
**LOUISE WAGSTAFFE SAYS:**

*"Pre-booked packages take the guess work out of Christmas gatherings for both families and businesses. Consider including drinks options within the package to help add value and keep costs transparent."*

*"Attention to detail at the enquiry stage can also help take some of the stress away. Try to respond to enquiries in a timely manner and double check both orders and allergy information. Email confirmations also help with larger groups or family gatherings that feature multiple generations."*

*"As some diners are still to book their Christmas meals, consider ramping up social media presence to share what's on offer at your venue."*

Source: OnePoll survey of 2,000 UK adults who dine out in December, conducted 3-8 October 2025.





Expert advice  
**LOUISE WAGSTAFFE SAYS:**

*“Tradition is important to festive diners and therefore should remain at the heart of the menu. It’s a special time of year that evokes nostalgia and means spending time with family and friends amid familiar and comforting tastes. Turkey and gravy are key serves and it’s also worth noting that consumers like to see popular brands on the menu. Both Bisto and Oxo bring a trusted brand element to gravy, whether you’re making it using granules, bouillon or with stock.*

*“While tradition is key, it’s worth noting there is an appetite for a modern twist, especially among younger diners. There is potential here to drive festive sales into different day parts and occasions by using popular Christmas flavours in more contemporary dishes. Paxo Sage & Onion stuffing is a great addition to a Christmas dinner wrap – or a festive Scotch egg with cranberry. For a sweet treat, mincemeat crumble is a neat twist on the traditional mince pie, especially when it comes with Bird’s cinnamon custard.”*  
(Recipes start on page 9.)



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Credit: SolStock

## Tradition DEFINING CHRISTMAS DINING



**62%**  
Of Christmas diners most associate turkey and gravy with Christmas dinner.

In true testament to tradition, turkey with gravy is the festive food most associated with a Christmas dinner according to 62% of December diners. This is followed by pigs in blankets (43%), Christmas pudding (35%) and roast potatoes (34%). Meanwhile, the Yorkshire pudding debate continues, with only 5% of consumers aged over 65 rating them as the food they most associate with a Christmas dinner, compared to 19% of 18- to 24-year-olds.

Some 88% of December diners say the quality of the menu would help them decide where to eat out in December.

Atmosphere is what makes the festive season feel most magical for 26% of December diners, followed by having traditional Christmas food (21%), seasonal decorations (13%) and seasonal drinks and treats (8%).

Tradition reigns among festive feasters, with 45% of consumers who dine out in December preferring traditional flavours, while 11% would like a modern twist and 35% would prefer a combination of both. 25- to 34-year-olds are the most adventurous age group looking for modern twists to their Christmas dinner (18%) compared to just 5% aged 65 and over.



Source: OnePoll survey of 2,000 UK adults who dine out in December, conducted 3-8 October 2025.

## Touches WHAT MAKES FESTIVE DINING SPECIAL



**46%**  
Of consumers think chocolates at the end of a meal most make festive menus at a pub or restaurant feel extra special.

It doesn't take a big budget to create a welcoming atmosphere and according to our survey, the small touches that consumers think would most make festive menus at a pub or restaurant feel extra special are festive chocolates at the end of the meal (46%), a complimentary drink (43%), seasonal ingredients (42%), festive cocktails (37%) and shaped desserts (35%). These relatively simple gestures show a venue has gone the extra mile to make diners feel that little bit more festive.

And it's not just about what's on the table or in the glass. 84% of consumers who eat out in December believe hospitality staff can make or break a festive dining experience and 69% believe hospitality staff are the true heroes of Christmas. Almost every December diner we surveyed (97%) said the role of chefs is important in making a festive meal out more memorable, with 26% saying it was the most important role and over half (51%) saying it was very important.

When it comes to selecting the right venue, recommendations from friends or family are the most popular way to find places to eat out during the festive season (60%), followed by looking at restaurant websites (38%), walking past and seeing the menu (32%), online reviews (29%) and social media posts or ads (25%). Additionally, 17% always check a restaurant's social media channels before booking.

There's also scope for taking festive memories back home. Consumers would be most interested in learning how chefs make their signature dishes through tips on how to recreate elements of the dish at home (20%), step-by-step recipe cards or downloads (20%), pop-up events or tastings where they can try the dishes (19%), behind-the-scenes videos from the kitchen (19%) and ingredient spotlights showing what makes the dish special (17%).



Expert advice  
**LOUISE WAGSTAFFE SAYS:**

*“From an initial email or phone interaction to a warm welcome and an extra touch such as a Christmas chocolate, consumers are interested in the whole experience. And it’s clear that both front-of-house and the kitchen play an important role.*

*“Sharing tips for making special dishes is a great way to showcase your venue and make diners feel like they are part of your world. This could be as simple as sharing tips on how to make the perfect gravy or how to make a Christmas pie with leftovers. Custard with Christmas pudding is another essential – and can easily go wrong. There’s scope to offer some culinary inspiration here, too, with the addition of cream to chilled custard, creating a delicious custard cream. Using popular brands can help consumers transport these dishes into their own kitchens, while adding quality assurance. Offering these simple tips via social media is also a great way to showcase both your venue and your culinary talent.”*





# Meet THE CHRISTMAS LINE-UP



## BISTO

From bouillon paste and gravy granules for meat and poultry, to vegan or reduced salt options, Bisto is great for gravy as well as soups and broths.



## OXO

Tasty chicken, beef or vegetable stock cubes that simply dissolve in hot water and bring depth of flavour.



## PAXO

Paxo Sage & Onion Stuffing Mix: A Christmas favourite – easy to prepare stuffing mix that can be made with water or mixed with other ingredients for a personalised finish.



## BIRD'S AND AMBROSIA

Iconic custards, ready-made or in Bird's powder form.

# 1

## BISTO ROOT VEGETABLE BROTH WITH GREMOLATA OIL

Prep:	10 minutes
Cook:	20 minutes
Serves:	10
Allergens:	Celery



A flavourful packed broth finished with lemon, garlic and parsley oil.



## INGREDIENTS

- 400g carrots, diced
- 400g parsnips, diced
- 300g swede, diced
- 200g leeks, sliced
- 2l boiling water
- 50g Bisto Bouillon Vegetable Paste
- 50ml olive oil
- Black pepper

### For gremolata oil:

- 50ml olive oil
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 10g fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, grated

## METHOD

In a large pan, add carrots, parsnips, swede, and cover with the water. Bring to the boil. Add the Bisto Vegetable Bouillon Paste and bring to a simmer for 5 minutes then add the leeks and simmer for a further 10 minutes, season with ground pepper.

To make the gremolata oil. Mix the olive oil, lemon zest, parsley, and garlic. Allow to infuse before serving.

To serve, ladle broth with the vegetables into bowls and drizzle with gremolata oil to finish.



**TIP** This is great serve with warm rolls.

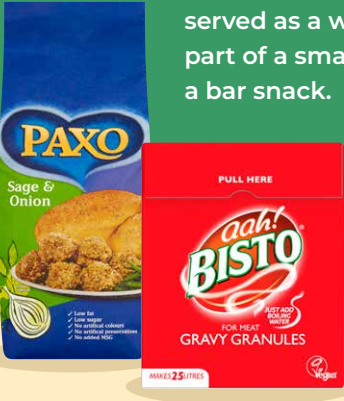


# 2

## PAXO FESTIVE SCOTCH EGG WITH CRANBERRY & BISTO GRAVY

Prep:	10 minutes
Cook:	20 minutes
Serves:	10
Allergens:	Cereals containing gluten
May contain:	Milk, Celery

This festive scotch egg is great served as a warm starter, as part of a small plates offer or a bar snack.



### INGREDIENTS

- 10 medium eggs (for boiling)
- 2 medium eggs (for egg wash)
- 300g sausage meat
- 400g minced turkey
- 300g Paxo Sage & Onion Stuffing Mix, prepared
- 200g Paxo Sage & Onion Stuffing Mix, for coating
- 200g flour
- Oil for deep frying
- 200g cranberry sauce
- 50g Bisto Gravy Granules for Meat
- 500ml boiling water
- Fresh micro herbs to garnish



### METHOD

- Soft-boil 10 eggs (6 mins), chill in iced water, peel.
- Mix the sausage meat and minced turkey with 300g prepared Paxo Sage and Onion Stuffing, wrap around eggs.
- Coat in flour, egg wash, dry Paxo Sage and Onion Stuffing Mix.
- Deep fry at 170°C for 6 minutes until cooked through.
- Add the Bisto Gravy Granules for Meat to the boiling water and whisk. Stir through half of the cranberry sauce.
- Serve the warm scotch egg on a bed of the cranberry gravy with extra cranberry sauce and a jug of gravy. Garnish with micro herbs.



**TIP** This is great as a starter or a bar snack.

# 3

## PAXO CHRISTMAS DINNER WRAP WITH BISTO GRAVY DIP

Prep:	5 minutes
Cook:	N/A
Serves:	10
Allergens:	Cereals containing gluten, Soya
May contain:	Milk, Celery

A top option for grab-and-go or a bar snack. All the flavours of a Christmas roast in a wrap. Great to offer extra stuffing balls or pigs in blankets as sides.



### INGREDIENTS

- 10 large flour tortillas
- 300g cranberry sauce, divided
- 1.5kg roast turkey slices, hot
- 20 pigs in blankets, hot
- 300g Paxo Sage & Onion Stuffing Mix, prepared and cooked as per on packet instruction, hot
- 400g roasted carrots, hot
- 400g cooked and shredded Brussels sprouts
- 1l prepared Bisto gravy granules for meat



### METHOD

- Warm the tortillas.
- Spread each tortilla with 1 tbsp of cranberry sauce. Then fill with the hot Paxo Sage & Onion Stuffing, turkey, pigs in blankets, roast carrots and shredded sprouts and finish with a drizzle of gravy.
- Roll tight and slice in half.
- Add the remaining cranberry sauce to the gravy, stir through and serve on the side in a pot.



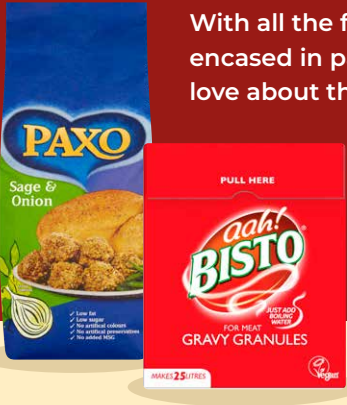
**TIP** This hot festive wrap is a great addition to a grab and go or casual menu, you can mix up the meats and serve with selection of seasonal vegetables.



# 4

## BISTO CHRISTMAS DINNER PIE WITH BISTO GRAVY

Prep:	15 minutes
Cook:	40 minutes
Serves:	10
Allergens:	Cereals containing gluten, Eggs
May contain:	Milk, Celery



With all the flavours of Christmas encased in pastry, what's not to love about this seasonal pie?



### INGREDIENTS

- 1kg shortcrust pastry
- 500g prepared Paxo Sage & Onion stuffing mix
- 400g puff pastry
- 800g roast turkey meat, diced
- 400g cooked carrots, diced
- 400g Brussels sprouts, halved
- 400g cooked parsnips, diced
- 20 pigs in blankets
- 75g Bisto Gravy Granules
- 1l boiling water
- 1 egg for egg-wash

### METHOD

- Roll out the shortcrust pastry and line 10 pie dishes.
- Place 1 tbsp of Paxo Sage & Onion Stuffing Mix in the base, then top with diced turkey, carrots, sprouts, parsnips, pigs in blankets and remaining stuffing,
- Make the Bisto gravy with boiling water, pour a little into each pie.
- Roll out the puff pastry and top each pie with pastry lid. Brush with egg-wash and score.
- Bake at 180°C, 350°F gas mark 4, for 35–40 minutes until golden.
- Serve with seasonal vegetables and remaining Bisto gravy.



**TIP** Want a vegan alternative to turkey? Swap the turkey for lentils and the pigs in blankets with chestnuts.

# 5

## BIRD'S MINCEMEAT CRUMBLE TART WITH BIRD'S CINNAMON CUSTARD

Prep:	10 minutes
Cook:	25 minutes
Serves:	10
Allergens:	Cereals containing gluten
May contain:	Milk



A great dessert for Christmas and alternative to a mince pie. Cinnamon in the custard really does add a touch of Christmas spice.

### INGREDIENTS

- 800g shortcrust pastry
- 450g mincemeat
- 2 medium apples, peeled, diced finely
- 200g plain flour
- 100g butter, diced
- 100g demerara sugar
- For the cinnamon custard:
- 75g Bird's Custard Powder
- 75g caster sugar
- 800ml milk
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 cinnamon stick (optional, for infusion)
- 100ml double cream



**TIP** Why not make the shortcrust pastry base or crumble topping with mixes from McDougalls.

### METHOD

- Roll out the pastry and line a large tart tin, prick base, and chill for 20 minutes.
- Mix the mincemeat with the diced apples and spoon evenly into the tart case.
- Rub flour, butter, and sugar together until breadcrumb in texture. Scatter crumble over mincemeat filling.
- Place the tart into oven at 180°C, 350°F gas mark 4 for 25–30 minutes until golden and bubbling.
- To prepare the custard, warm 700ml of milk with the cinnamon stick, infuse for 5 minutes, strain.
- Mix the Bird's Custard Powder and sugar with the remaining 100ml cold milk to make a smooth paste. Whisk the paste into hot milk, return to pan, cook until thickened. Stir through the ground cinnamon and double cream for richness.
- Slice tart, plate up warm. Pour over the cinnamon custard or serve in a jug on the side. Garnish with a dusting of icing sugar.



# 6

## MULLED WINTER PAVLOVA WITH BIRD'S CUSTARD CREAM

Prep:	10 minutes
Cook:	20 minutes
Serves:	10
Allergens:	Eggs, Milk, Sulphites



Bird's Custard Powder is a great base for hot or cold desserts; we have folded the prepared custard through fresh cream to enhance the flavour.

### INGREDIENTS

- 10 meringue nests
- 50g Bird's Custard Powder
- 50g sugar
- 400ml milk
- 200ml double cream
- 500g mixed fruits (plums, pears, figs)
- 500ml red wine
- 200g sugar (for mulled fruits)
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 star anise



### METHOD

- Make the custard with Bird's Custard Powder. Mix the custard powder with 50g sugar, and 50ml milk to form a paste. Bring rest of the milk to the boil, then add the paste and whisk, stirring for 2 minutes as it thickens. Then leave to cool fully.
- Whip cream then fold into the cold custard, store in the fridge until needed.
- Place the red wine in a pan, add 200g sugar and the cinnamon and star anise. Bring to a simmer.
- Add the fruits and poach for 15 minutes or until tender. Then leave them in the liqueur to cool.
- When the fruit is cool remove, then reduce the poaching liquid.
- Spoon custard cream onto nests, slice the fruits and top. Drizzle with mulled wine reduction.



**TIP** This dessert is great with any poached seasonal fruit.

## Five key takeaways FOR A STANDOUT FESTIVE SEASON



### 2 CELEBRATE TRADITION, WITH A TWIST

Classic flavours such as turkey and gravy remain central to festive dining, but there's growing appetite, especially among younger diners, for menus that creatively blend nostalgia with innovation. Offer both to appeal across generations.

### 4 SMALL TOUCHES MAKE A BIG IMPACT

From festive chocolates to complimentary drinks, it's often the little extras that turn a good experience into a memorable one. These low-cost touches show care and create positive word-of-mouth.

### 1 IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CAPTURE DEMAND

With many guests planning festive outings in November and December, continuing to promote your Christmas menu and packages could help give you an edge when it comes to planning. Pre-booked options not only drive early revenue but also reduce last-minute pressure for both staff and customers.

### 3 PUT MENU QUALITY FRONT AND CENTRE

A standout festive menu is a major decision driver for diners – 88% say it influences their choice of venue. Featuring trusted branded ingredients like Bisto, Paxo and Bird's can help reinforce quality and boost appeal.

### 5 PEOPLE POWER THE EXPERIENCE

Staff are the heart of the festive dining experience, and 84% of diners say service can make or break it. Recognising chefs and front-of-house teams, and investing in training and morale, can help create lasting impressions.



Source: OnePoll survey of 2,000 UK adults who dine out in December, conducted 3-8 October 2025.





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