



Christmas... *all wrapped up*

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Desperately trying to pass seriously slow tourists on Buchanan Street on Christmas Eve, or merely inhaling the not so yuletide aroma of wet umbrellas on the jam packed underground; just don't go there - to town that is. Instead, here is our guide to everything you need for the festive season right here in the winter wonderland of the West End.

I can't deny it, I love Christmas. I am one of those annoying peeps who can't wait to get the tree up on the 1st of December. In my head I'm living in the final scene of 'White Christmas' where the Christmas tree has candy canes and candles, snow falls silently as good neighbours wave from their horse drawn sleighs. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with wearing a Santa-themed red velvet ball gown whilst doing the housework.

Granted, in reality the candles have to be LED for health and safety, I have to make do with my dog Lucy in a reindeer headband instead of the horse and well, the velvet ball gown? Primark do a rather fabulous line in novelty Christmas jumpers. Never the less, I feel Bing would be proud...

So to get in the festive mood, here is the Westender's gift to you; a guide to sprinkling some Christmas cheer.

For The Christmas Home

Christmas first and foremost is about togetherness and having your home as Hygge as possible is a priority. First stop in achieving this is the West End wonderland that is the Licorice Tree Christmas shop.

Down stairs in the Great Western Road venue is an Aladdin's cave of festive finds. The Christmas shop has decorations and gifts for every theme. Silver fine glass baubles blend with glass Christmas tree candle holders. Stunning snow globes with Scotty dogs and Labradors in the snow sit alongside a fabulous tartan selection of baubles – pipers, highland cows – perfect for sending to loved ones abroad. And as far as gifts go, there are some stunning champagne flutes available – diamante, gold or silver. Why not go the whole hog and opt for a Christmas themed bottle stopper? Licorice Tree has it covered as far as Christmas decorations go – even stocking a snowflake handwash dispenser for the bathroom. Now that's dedication.

Along on Cresswell Lane, Nancy Smillie also has some lovely touches to complement your home. In particular the beautiful dried

fruit and wicker garlands and wreaths: round, heart-shaped, or in lengths, give a lovely natural appeal to a festive home. In the same vein, the boutique is also stocking many wooden and felt tree ornaments, super trendy and very homely. With a choice of lovely stained glass angel and Christmas tree votive holders, there are some nice optional Christmas themes at the Cresswell Lane shop.

And for something a little more traditional, Shearer's Candles on Byres Road stock an incredible amount of options to have your home smelling of yuletide yumminess. For gifts, the Highland range are beautifully packaged and have some stunning scents – Hogmanay, Red Red Rose and Ae Fond Kiss – evocative of the scents of Scotland. To get your home smelling like a full on pot pourri of all things crimbo, there are aromas such as cranberry and ginger, orange and pomegranate, frankincense and myrrh and cinnamon spice, all available in candles and home fragrance sprays. With a full range of Christmas stock still to arrive, make a trip to the Byres Road store. ▶





The Thought Really Will Count

For thoughtful, unique gifts for all the family, there are some fabulous little boutiques on our doorstep. Spirito in Broomhill have a fabulous range of personalised gifts for him, her, young and old. Gifts that can be personalised range from oak keep sake boxes to cheeseboards and cufflinks. It's a really nice way of making a thoughtful unique gift that extra bit special. The Crow Road store also has some stunning jewellery, unusual fragrances and the gift that no woman can resist – some beautiful candles. Along the road in Hyndland, Cassiopeia, that

stalwart of gift boutiques, stocks some really interesting items from all around the globe. Always a strong supporter of local artists, there are some great present ideas, with a good selection for the boys. The Cath Waters ceramic collection are striking – mugs, coasters, but so much more than that. The Culinary Concepts Huntsman range is to die for; a collection of beautiful wooden items embellished with silver stag detail. Without doubt, you won't leave Cassiopeia empty handed.

Festive Food and Drink Gifts

Trying to think of gifts that aren't run of the mill can be quite a chore. Let's face it, these days if we like something, we often buy it for ourselves. So what do you get the loved one who has everything? A gift from Eusebi that's what! This fabulous Italian deli and eatery on Gibson Street has some great creative Christmas gifts available. For the woman who has everything why not go for 'Mama's Night Off', a hamper of delights wrapped in Eusebi's own retro gift boxes. Inside, find the deli's home-made panettone as well as an exquisite bottle of Capriana Bellini imported all the way from Harry's Bar in Venice. Not to leave the guys out, 'Dad's Night On' gift box includes Eusebi's own olive oil, tomato sugo and pasta – everything he needs to get dinner going! But to ease his pain, the Eusebi team have also added their specially imported Labi craft beer, the only outlet for the Italian brand in the UK. And for a really fabulous gift, why



not buy the Labi gift box? With a range of four craft beers to choose from, a bottle of your choice comes in a stunning presentation box with two Labi fine craft ale glasses. If it were my choice however, I don't think you can ever go wrong with a Coffee Lover's Gift Box: Derocci beans, with a mini panettone and a gorgeous Eusebi espresso cup. I can smell the aroma from here...

For something a little stronger and gorgeously packaged, Demijohn on Byres Road is a Christmas staple in terms of gifts. Sloe gins, ginger wine, bramble scotch whisky liqueur...perfect tipples for night caps by the fire. In terms of gift ideas, the Demijohn team have great gift sets of stacking bottles, be they gin, vodka or even specialist vinegars such as Tayberry and Damson, available in sets of three or five.

For a seriously opulent gift, why not opt for the Demijohn Drinks Chest – a gorgeous oak chest containing ten glasses and six small bottles of artisan liqueurs of your choice. There is also an option of smaller stacked bottles in oak presentation cases.



Festivities commence at Valhalla's Goat



Try before you buy at Mellis Cheesemonger

And For Afters...

Christmas isn't Christmas without getting the cheeseboard out. And the annual event of queuing outside Mellis Cheesemonger in the days leading up to Christmas has more of a 'Blitz comradeship' atmosphere than any usual migraine inducing pre-Christmas queue. Pray tell the reason? Why there is free food and great service to be had! Is there any better shopping experience than tasting cheese, getting some advice about cheese... then tasting some more cheese? I think not! As usual the staff at Mellis will be delighted to advise you and this year they are putting together basic cheese boards which you can then add to for 6, 8 or 10 guests. And with the enormous array of crackers, chutneys, salamis and cured meats available, where will there be room for the actual Christmas dinner?

Finally, popping across the road to Valhalla's Goat, the staff will be delighted to discuss your wine, champers or spirit requirements. The staff at the Great Western Road shop have a wealth of expertise and can advise you based on your menu. In terms of gifts, the number of specialist rums and in particular gins available will ensure you aren't stuck for choice. The team stock smaller specialist producers of wines and spirits too so it's nice to be supporting the little guys.

Some unique ideas to get you started – without ever having to venture beyond St George's Cross! I'm off to don a rather jovial flashing snowman jumper to do the ironing. Well it is November the 20th after all... ■