

# Christmas Survival Guide



Linda Booth, Founder, Just For Tummies

## Surviving the Christmas feast – without the tummy trouble

For me, Christmas is all about the feasting. Of course sharing the love with my nearest and dearest is also what makes the festive season so special, but as anyone with any kind of digestive or gut disorder will know, all that rich grub and extra alcohol can wreak havoc on our digestive systems.

Symptoms including bloating, wind, diarrhoea, constipation, abdominal cramps and acid reflux are often brought on, or worsened, by a range of 'triggers', not to mention an IBS or diverticular flare-up! Christmas, wonderful as it is, is teeming with these potential triggers.

But fear not, we have put together this Guide so that, with a few tweaks and a little bit of planning, you can still have your Christmas cake – and not spend the next 24 hours wishing you hadn't eaten it!

We have also included a delicious [Low FODMAP Christmas Stuffing recipe](#) and a recipe for [Almond Gluten-Free Mince Pies](#) that just melt in your mouth. Christmas just isn't Christmas without stuffing and mince pies, but we don't want these treats leaving us with an uncomfortable bloated tum and embarrassing trips to the loo halfway through the festivities either.



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You will also find information about our [Christmas Survival Kit](#) that contains carefully selected tummy-friendly supplements to help you eat, drink and be merry, just click the button below.

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Tis the season for  
good food and great  
digestion

## Triggers to avoid

- Gluten
- Excess dairy
- Excess red meat
- Artificial sweeteners
- Coffee, tea, alcohol, carbonated drinks
- High FODMAP foods such as cauliflower cheese (more on high FODMAP festive foods below)

## Tips to reduce the risk of a flare-up

- **Ensure you eat regular meals**, including breakfast, throughout the festive season, as this prevents over-eating at meal times
- **Eat slowly and resist the temptation to over-eat** as this puts strain on the digestive system. Have a small portion of your meal to start with.



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- **Prevent dehydration** – keep a jug of lemon and mint-infused water in the fridge
- **Avoid excess caffeine** which dehydrates the bowel
- **Ensure adequate fibre is consumed** – aim for 30g per day, but drink plenty of water to prevent the fibre getting stuck!
- **Maintain your fruit and vegetable intake** – at least, 2 types of fruit and 5 veg
- **Ensure adequate magnesium intake** via supplementation to avoid constipation. [Better You](#) offers an extensive line of magnesium products designed for transdermal (through-the-skin) absorption, which can be gentler on the gut and convenient during a busy season. Epsom salts baths are also very good to help top up levels of magnesium, as well as being super relaxing at this, sometimes, stressful time of the year.
- **Ensure food is properly digested** by taking one of our [Digestive Enzymes tablets](#) with each meal
- **Chew your food thoroughly** – aim for 20 chews per bite, until the food is like a paste before you swallow. Remember that your stomach doesn't have teeth!
- **Avoid drinking liquids at meal times**, instead have a drink 30 minutes before or after you have eaten

## Epsom Salts - the overlooked miracle worker!

Having an Epsom Salt bath is something I do when I am fighting a virus, in need of a detox, or just in the mood for a bit of a health spa treat at home! It's fantastic for stress relief, soothing joint pain and sore muscles, and improving sleep. Instead of bath products full of artificial ingredients that may irritate your skin, simply put a good mugful of Epsom Salts in your bath and add a few drops of lavender oil.

My favourite mix is 8 drops of lavender and 8 drops of ylang ylang oil – heaven! (Handy tip – avoid buying your Epsom Salts from the chemist or supermarket; you can get them at a fraction of the price from Ebay as organic Bittersaltz.)



## Potential risk factors and tips on how to reduce them

- **Gluten** – you can buy gluten-free gravy granules, gluten-free stuffing mix, gluten-free Yorkshire puddings, gluten-free Christmas puddings. In fact, you can buy just about any of the Christmas food in a gluten-free variety.
- **Excess dairy** – if you are having cheese, try to stick to goat's cheese, or explore the dairy-free ranges. Dairy is very inflammatory on the digestive system.
- **Excess red meat** – if you do eat it, try to find grass-fed meat which is less inflammatory
- **Artificial sweeteners and refined sugars** – while they seem like a guilt-free choice, artificial sweeteners can upset your gut bacteria and increase bloating, making it harder for your digestive system to cope with indulgent meals
- **Coffee and tea** – try to stick to decaf varieties or herbal teas
- **Carbonated drinks** – these just add too much gas to the system. Use lemon/mint/cucumber in your water instead.
- **Alcohol** is an irritant to gut so limit this where possible. Sticking to clear spirits is best. Also, alternate alcoholic drinks with a soft drink or water to reduce overall alcohol intake.
- **Avoid high FODMAP foods** if you are sensitive to them. This means thinking of alternatives to have with your Christmas dinner (see list of what to avoid).





## Examples of high FODMAP foods in Christmas dinners

- Cauliflower cheese and plain cauliflower
- Stuffing (contains onion, garlic and wheat)
- Savoy cabbage
- Onion (may be in some gravies)
- Anything containing wheat (Yorkshire puddings, bread sauce, stuffing)
- Large servings of broccoli can affect some people (avoid the stems and limit to 2 florets)
- Sausages (pigs in blankets)
- Chestnuts
- Brussel sprouts (limit to 2 sprouts)

## What you can swap foods out for

- Make your own [Low FODMAP Christmas Stuffing](#)
- Make your own [Almondy Gluten-Free Mince Pies](#)
- Make a crispy potato and root veg bake using dairy-free ingredients instead of cauliflower cheese
- Make homemade gravy using bone broth and gluten-free granules for thickening
- Make your own or buy gluten-free Yorkshire puddings
- Choose low FODMAP veg such as carrots, green beans, sautéed red cabbage, kale, potatoes, celeriac, parsnips

If you are following a low FODMAP diet, please be aware of the raisins/sultanas used in the mince pie recipe. Raisins are better tolerated than sultanas, and the quantity used must not exceed 1 tbsp, or reduce further if you feel it is necessary. Having the odd raisin will probably be OK, but eating them regularly, in larger quantities may cause aggravation.



## Other Christmas foods that you can find alternatives for

- **Christmas pudding** – you can get dairy and gluten-free alternatives in most supermarkets
- **Baileys** – try vegan almond milk Baileys
- **Mince pies** – available in gluten and dairy-free form or make your own. Don't forget our [Almond Gluten-Free Mince Pies recipe](#). Treat yourself to one of these per day; just make sure you take a Digestive Enzymes tablet beforehand.
- **Chocolates** – enjoy dark chocolates (chocolate with over 70% cocoa content tends to be dairy-free, but always double-check)
- **Custard** – if you buy the powder and make your own, then this is naturally gluten and dairy-free – just make it up as per the instructions but use oat or coconut milk instead
- **Buffet food** – you can get gluten-free canapés at most supermarkets in the fresh and frozen sections
- **Cheese and crackers** – you can get gluten-free crackers for cheese (we love Nairn's gluten-free cheese flavoured oat cakes) and lots of vegan cheeses now – this includes hard varieties and soft cheese. If you are able to tolerate some cheese then stick to goat's cheese as it is better tolerated. The dairy-free cream cheese made with almond milk by '[Nush](#)' is delicious and lovely spread onto crackers. Combine with cucumber slices for that refreshing addition.





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## Foods that help

- **Kimchi** – you could use this instead of chutney for a buffet
- **Sauerkraut** – add to buffet foods
- **Kombucha** – you could have one of these as an alcohol-free option but still feel like you are having a special and tasty drink – serve it in a wine glass!
- **Apple cider vinegar** to help increase digestion and stomach acid. Take one teaspoon in room temperature water before meals.
- **Bone broth** – use this in gravies or sauces as it is very nourishing on the gut. Try making a simple, light broth with vegetables, bone broth and ginger for lunch after a big day of eating – it is very cleansing after eating a large amount of festive food. You will find bone broth recipes in our extensive collection of [gluten-free, dairy-free and refined sugar-free recipes](#)
- **Water** – make sure you keep hydrated and flush your system out by drinking plenty of filtered water
- **Calming herbal teas** – chamomile, lemon balm, peppermint are all great choices, and of course our signature blend [Tummy Tea](#)
- **Ginger** – grate or slice and pop in a cup of hot water in the mornings
- [Milk Thistle tablets](#) – have a pot of these on hand to help the liver break down excesses of alcohol and food
- **Anti-inflammatory foods** – oily fish, walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds, turmeric, ginger



Relax, sip and restore  
digestive calm



## Christmas Survival Kit

Around Christmas time, we are always inundated with messages from people who want to enjoy Christmas, but are very nervous that what they eat and drink may cause them to have a digestive or gut flare-up.

We know how hard it can be at Christmas – it's the one time of year (along with summer holidays, for those lucky enough to get away) when we just want to enjoy all the festive food and drink with family and friends, without feeling like party-poopers. That's why we put together our [Christmas Survival Kit](#) – a combination of some of our most popular digestive and gut-supporting supplements: a pot of **Live Bacteria probiotic capsules**, a pot of **Digestive Enzymes tablets**, a pot of **Milk Thistle tablets**, and six of our hand-blended, soothing **Tummy Tea pyramid tea bags**.



All our supplements are made in the UK, vegan, and gluten-free, and the Kit includes an instruction booklet packed with hints and tips to help you enjoy the festive season without spending it on the loo!



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“My tummy was the best it has been for months.”

“The Christmas Survival Kit was fantastic. My tummy was the best it has been for months. I was feeling apprehensive about the effect the rich food, extra drinking and late nights may have on my tummy, but the Live Bacteria probiotic capsules, Digestive Enzymes tablets, Milk Thistle tablets and Tummy Tea ‘pyramids’ were fantastic.



About to embark on the Charcoal cleanse as recommended by Linda. Thank you so much for helping me!”

—Alison

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## How to manage at parties

If it's your party, then it is a different story as you can control what food and drinks are available to you. However, if you are going to someone else's party, and they are not prone to IBS type flare-ups, then follow these tips:

- If you feel comfortable, inform the host about any intolerances that you have, but make sure you do this in plenty of time so that they can be prepared. You could offer to bring a few items that you can eat with you.
- If you do not feel comfortable informing the host, and you are worried about what food you will be able to eat, then you can always eat before you go, and take a dessert that is gut-friendly to enjoy with everyone, such as some gluten-free mince pies. Check out our [Almondy Gluten-Free Mince Pies recipe](#).



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- If you want to take some items to the party, then you could take some olives, crudités, gluten-free crackers, chicken skewers or a pre-cooked gluten-free pizza. The host will be grateful for the additional food and you will feel at ease knowing you can eat those foods.
- Take a little pot with some vegan, gluten-free [Digestive Enzymes tablets](#) in it so that you can have these when you eat.
- If you are planning to drink alcohol, take one [Milk Thistle tablet](#) before drinking, one before bed and one with breakfast the following morning.
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- If the party's at a restaurant, check the menu online beforehand or call ahead to see if they cater for special diets. Most places now offer separate gluten-free and vegan menus, and with a little notice, they can usually accommodate most requests.
- If you experience uncomfortable bloating, keep a pot of our vegan, gluten-free [Charcoal capsules](#) on hand, just in case. Take two capsules with a glass of plain water, and the gassy bloating should soon ease.

In our experience, when it comes to Christmas – especially if you have a delicate stomach – forewarned is forearmed. It's worth getting your supplement armoury ready, because to truly enjoy the festivities and not feel like the odd one out, we all need a little extra support.

## Managing stress in the run-up to Christmas

We all know how stressful the build-up to Christmas can be – from worrying about what to eat, to finding the right presents, and keeping up with all the parties (hopefully this Guide will help with that!).

- Plan ahead – making lists of gifts, meal ideas, and ingredients for the festive period can really help reduce stress
- Shop online early – ordering your food and gifts online lets you shop from the comfort of home and pre-book delivery dates that suit you – no crowds, no queues
- Get outside – don't stay cooped up indoors. A relaxing winter walk and some fresh air can work wonders if things start to feel overwhelming.



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- Spend wisely – limiting spending can ease financial pressures. Why not make some handmade gifts like gut-friendly granola, homemade rhubarb gin, bath bombs, brownie mix in a jar, or preserves? These thoughtful touches often mean the most.
- Take time for yourself – run a relaxing Epsom salts bath, add a few drops of lavender oil, and put a 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door for some well-earned peace.

We hope these tips help you enjoy your best festive season yet – with room for a few well-deserved treats! We're particularly partial to a few festive favourites like liqueur chocolates, stuffing, and mince pies. And when January comes around, we always make sure to book a colon hydrotherapy treatment to help reset the gut for the new year.

You can find a registered and regulated colon hydrotherapist here:

[colonic-association.org](http://colonic-association.org) or [colonic-association.net](http://colonic-association.net)





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Have thoughts or questions? Email us at: [feelgood@justfortummies.co.uk](mailto:feelgood@justfortummies.co.uk)

## Useful resources

- Check out our range of Just For Tummies supplements here, made in the UK to strict **Medicines Health Regulatory Agency guidelines, gluten-free and vegan\*\***, with no artificial fillers, binders and fillers:  
[www.justfortummies.co.uk/digestive-health-supplements](http://www.justfortummies.co.uk/digestive-health-supplements)
- Discover our collection of gluten-free, dairy-free and refined sugar-free recipes here: [www.justfortummies.co.uk/recipes](http://www.justfortummies.co.uk/recipes)
- Join the Tummy Talk Facebook group, our informative and supportive digestive and gut health community: [www.facebook.com/groups/tummytalk](http://www.facebook.com/groups/tummytalk)
- Discover our extensive collection of free guides, including our Constipation Guide, Diverticular Disease Guide, Vaginal and Urinary Health Guide, Menopause and Gut Health Guide, Acid Reflux/Heartburn Guide, IBS Guide, Bloating Guide and Probiotic Pessary Recipe:  
[www.justfortummies.co.uk/free-advice](http://www.justfortummies.co.uk/free-advice)

*\*\* exception – Omega 3 fish oil capsules, made from a sustainable source of anchovies and herrings, fished in the deep Pacific Ocean off the coast of Peru*