

Have yourself a very thrifty Christmas

Cut down on the angst of rising Christmas costs - but avoid being a Scrooge - by setting yourself a festive budget and sticking to it!

4 ways to reduce the cost of Christmas

In the months leading up to Christmas there's a lot to think about and lots to be bought! The average shopper will be thinking about presents for family and friends, as well as food, drink and entertainment for the festive season.

Whilst making our Christmas purchases, most of us will be aiming to get the best value for our money, therefore this guide aims to give you four key ways to reduce the cost of your Christmas shopping.



1. Better browsing

Anyone looking to save on food or gift bills should certainly be viewing the internet as their new best friend.

1 Shop online



Many retail outlets and food chains now keep their websites fully updated with their latest offers – something that not only adds to your convenience, but allows you to plan your spend more carefully. Logging on to your preferred supermarket's website and buying things online will let you take advantage of any offers whilst shopping without temptations.

2 Make a list



If you do prefer to visit the store in person, you can still save pounds by making a list first and putting the blinkers on as you navigate the aisles, to ensure you're not tempted by buy-one-get-one-free displays, and other offers in-store.

3 Compare prices



Check comparison websites to make sure you're getting the best deal on your shopping.

The website www.mysupermarket.co.uk is an excellent resource for those looking to compare prices at all the major food and drink retailers. Just type in the food type or brand that you're interested in and this site will show you the best prices – as well as the deadlines for any offers. A portion planner will also help you to plan the numbers.

2. Making another meal of it

You can easily cut down on the Boxing Day groan factor by transforming Christmas turkey into a tasty curry or soup, or whipping up some tasty nibbles with leftover cheeses and baked ham.

"Nobody likes to see good food go to waste, and in these budget-conscious times we should always be thinking up innovative ways to help meals stretch a little further" says Clare Moran, co-founder of *My Secret Kitchen* (www.mysecretkitchen.co.uk).

3. It's the thought that counts

If you're looking to make a saving on your gift spend, homemade presents are a great way to maximise your budget – and bring a far more personal touch to the act of giving.

Take inspiration

- Why not visit your local market for recipe ideas; you could whip up a batch of homemade jams, olive oils or chutney. Presented in a nice container, these are sure to go down a treat as presents for friends and family.

DIY hampers

- Hampers also make a wonderful gift, and DIY versions are always much cheaper than shop-bought versions – and they're also fun to prepare. Nice treats to include are chocolate, wine, real ale, fudge and shortbread.

Personal gifts

- We all love opening a present knowing that the person who's given us the gift has really thought about what we like. This is what gifts should be about – no amount of money can buy that feeling.

Donate to charity

- If you've been given any gifts that you're not too keen on keeping, contact your favourite charity – you'll find most very willing to take them off your hands.

4. Going green

Forking out on expensive wrapping paper can seem like a real waste when it's just ripped off and thrown in the bin. Instead, wrap gifts in coloured tissue paper, which the recipient can then use the following Christmas if it doesn't get too damaged. You can also re-use wrapping paper you've received with gifts by shredding it and using it to line the base of any presents.

Also, remember to recycle your Christmas trees for mulch – many local authorities and garden centres across the country now have Christmas tree collection points. Better still, buy a replantable tree that can be placed in the garden or kept in a pot for future Christmases!



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