

FREE

THE COLCHESTER CIRCLE

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HOUSE PROUD

Come Dine With Me

Impress the guests with our
top festive tips

Though it fills our stomachs with joy when all is said and done, the thought of preparing a Christmas meal can fill a lot of us with dread. But fear not, help is at hand. We've contacted some trusty advisers to help you (and us!) make this year our most impressive one yet. Nigella, watch out!



The Cookery School at Braxted Park offers a whole range of different courses suitable for everyone, from complete beginners right up to budding master chefs. So, when we needed some timely tips to get our festive regime in order, help was at hand from William Grinstead, the latest chef to join the Cookery School.

For further information on The Cookery School at Braxted Park and the courses available please visit www.braxtedparkcooking.co.uk or call 01621 890300.

William's Top Tips

Prepare the day before:

Make Christmas Day less stressful by preparing your side dishes the day before. Carrots, swede and carrot mash and stuffing can all be prepared in advance. Roast potatoes and gravy are best made on the day. And instead of Brussels sprouts, gently steam some cabbage and serve with pan fried bacon lardons, children love this tasty alternative!

Cook and treat with care:

Organic vegetables and free-range birds will usually have more flavour. However, do not break the bank trying to buy all organic or free-range. If cooked and treated well, standard products also provide a fantastic result.

Serve a surprising starter:

Why not surprise your friends and family by serving canapés as a starter. This way, people can choose their favourites and ensure they have enough room for the main course. You can find a great selection of canapé recipes on the internet. My favourite is grilled stilton and sour dough rarebit with crispy pancetta, delicious!

Cook turkey breast and legs separately:

Turkey breasts and legs cook in different times, so if cooked together, the breast can be dry before the legs are fully cooked. Avoid this problem by asking your butcher to supply you with the breast and legs separately. Cook your turkey in the usual way, but when the juices in the breast run clear rest the breast meat while the legs remain in the oven.

Choose a wine to complement the flavours on your plate:

I recommend red wine with Christmas dinner. The Pinot noir grape is used to produce some of the most popular wines in the world and perfectly complements the rich flavours found in the food and gravy.

Merry Maids' Guide to a Stress Free Christmas

Sadly the kitchen where most of us end up at some point on Christmas day, whether it's preparing the dinner or clearing up the aftermath, avoiding the kitchen is almost impossible. So Merry Maids' advice is to be as prepared as possible.

- Clear out any old food from your fridge and freezer to make room for the festive treats you have in store. And take the opportunity to defrost the freezer before it gets too full.
- Don't leave it until the bird is due in the oven to drag the turkey-sized roasting dish out of a cupboard and find it caked in last year's grease. Use washing-up liquid or a cream cleaner to clean it, or for really tough burnt-on grime, clean as you would clean an oven.
- This goes for other once-a-year items too, so haul out the gravy boat, carafes, coffee makers, and cheeseboards now and give them a good wash.