

# Buying local for a fine, foodie Christmas!

*Penny Bunting* goes on the hunt for the best foodie gifts around.



EVERYBODY loves a treat at Christmas time, and locally-produced food and drink are some of the most environmentally-friendly gifts you can give.

One great place to start looking for foodie gifts is a local farmers' market. The second largest farmers' market in the UK is held at Bakewell's Agricultural Business Centre, with more than 75 stalls selling produce – most of which is produced within a 30-mile radius of Bakewell. The last market before Christmas is on December 17 – and it's an ideal opportunity to buy all you need for Christmas dinner too, with fresh, local meat and vegetables available.

There are also farmers' markets pre-Christmas at Wirksworth (December 3), Chesterfield (December 8), Matlock (December 17), and Buxton (December 23). For those who like to get their Christmas shopping sorted early, there'll also be an artisan market in Chesterfield on Sunday, November 27. Featuring 80 of the finest craftspeople, many local to Chesterfield or the Peak District, this is a chance to stock up on ethical and original crafts as well as foodie presents.

If you can't make it to a farmers' market, try Chatsworth Estate Farm Shop. Each year the Christmas marquee here has a

remarkable range of edible gifts, including festive chocolate, biscuits and preserves. Many of the products have been made locally, with plenty of produce fresh from the estate, and a selection of mouth-watering cakes and breads baked on site. Every day until December 23 there will be a chance to indulge in some free tastings in the marquee, with a different supplier each day offering samples – giving customers an opportunity to try products before buying.

Peak Ales are brewed on the Chatsworth Estate, and offer a delicious range of beers to choose from, including Swift Nick, a traditional bitter with fruit and hop flavours, and Chatsworth Gold, a golden beer made with honey. For a really special gift for the beer drinker in your life, how about a case of personalised beer bottles? Send in a name and a photo, and Peak Ales will create bespoke labels for bottles of Bakewell Best, Chatsworth Gold, Swift Nick or Noggin Filler. The deadline for orders is December 14 – see [www.peakales.co.uk](http://www.peakales.co.uk) for more details.



Hartington Cheese ([www.hartingtoncheeseshop.co.uk](http://www.hartingtoncheeseshop.co.uk)) has a selection of super cheese hampers that make wonderful gifts. The Derbyshire Cheese Hamper contains four cheeses made in the Hartington Creamery – a small-scale cheese factory in a group of converted barns in the parish. The hamper comes with two boxes of Mondovino Crackers, made in Ashbourne. Or choose a Cheese Board Hamper – an acacia wooden cheese board with three waxed tuckles of mature and flavoured Cheddar, along with a cheese knife.

Know someone who loves shoes and loves chocolate? A shoe made of chocolate could be the ideal gift – and Chocolate By Design ([www.chocolate-by-design.co.uk](http://www.chocolate-by-design.co.uk)) make a selection of edible designer shoes at their Packer Row premises in Chesterfield. They also create hand crafted chocolate truffles and a wide range of novelty chocolates including dogs, pigs, snowmen and a chocolate Tardis.

For a delicious twist on classic mulled wine, Lindsay's Still Room ([www.lindsaystillroom.co.uk](http://www.lindsaystillroom.co.uk)) produces a white wine version, blended with peach and pear juice and all the usual Christmas spices. Lindsay's Still Room specialises in producing quality drinks using local ingredients whenever possible, and the range includes traditional red mulled wine and award-winning mulled port, infused with orange, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. Look out for them at the Christmas Fine Food Fair at Calke Abbey, Ticknall on December 18. ■

# Home-made festive treats

IF you have enough time, home-made food gifts are fun to make – and jars of jam or boxes of homemade sweets and chocolates are usually well-received by loved ones. Many children love to cook too – so it's a fun way to keep the kids busy in the run up to the big day.

Melting chocolate – dark, milk or white – to create sweets is one of the quickest and easiest ways to make a delicious gift. For best results when melting chocolate, break into pieces and place in a heatproof bowl over a saucepan of gently simmering water, stirring occasionally. Or, for ease, you can melt plain chocolate in a small non-stick saucepan over the lowest possible heat, stirring continuously to prevent burning.

For quick and simple chocolate treats coat cubes of marzipan, chunks of crystallised ginger, whole almonds or maraschino cherries in melted chocolate. Place on a baking sheet lined with non-stick baking paper to set.

A silicone ice cube tray is a useful piece of kit when making chocolates. Mix melted chocolate with finely chopped dried apricots, mini marshmallows, honeycomb pieces or fudge chunks, pour into the tray and leave to set.

Making Florentines is a good way to use up small quantities of dried fruit and nuts left over from baking the Christmas cake – but they can be fiddly to make. Using silicone cupcake cases makes the job much easier – and these crisp, buttery treats make a lovely gift. ■



## Chunky chocolate Florentines

(Makes around 20)

### INGREDIENTS

100g butter  
100g caster sugar  
100g flaked almonds  
50g glace cherries, quartered  
30g raisins  
30g sunflower seeds  
200g plain chocolate

### METHOD

Place silicone cupcake cases in a bun tin. Melt the butter in a saucepan over a low heat. Add the sugar and heat gently, stirring, until dissolved, then bring to the boil. Remove from the heat and add the

fruit, nuts and seeds. Mix well. Put two teaspoons of mixture into each silicone cupcake case, then bake at 180°C for 10-12 minutes, until the biscuits begin to turn golden brown at the edges.

Allow to cool completely, then carefully ease the biscuits from the cases and put to one side. Wash and dry the cupcake cases. Melt the chocolate and pour a little into the base of each cupcake case. Leave for a couple of minutes to cool slightly, then gently press a biscuit into each case. Allow to cool and set, then remove each one gently from its case. Arrange the Florentines in a pretty box, tin or jar and give as a gift – or enjoy them for yourself! ■



Eddie Kilty, the new head chef at The Peak Edge Hotel.

## New head chef at award-winning hotel

ONE of the region's leading hotels has a new head chef. The Peak Edge Hotel, which includes the Red Lion Pub and Bistro, has welcomed Eddie Kilty, aged 30, who was previously head chef at a two AA rosette venue in the Lake District.

Eddie is bringing a wealth of experience to Peak Edge, having worked in restaurants throughout Liverpool and Cumbria. He said: "I am delighted to have joined the team at Peak Edge. It is a fantastic venue and I am already inspired by

the hotel's beautiful surroundings.

"I am a fan of Simon Rogan, who runs the Michelin-starred L'Enclume restaurant in the Lake District, and I take inspiration from his philosophies. It is my ambition to make our food offering very sustainable and to grow up to 80 per cent of our produce at Peak Edge," he added.

At the recent Chesterfield Food & Drink Awards ceremony, The Red Lion Pub and Bistro took the Gastro Pub of the Year title for the second year running. ■