

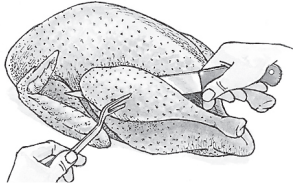
JOHN TAYLOR

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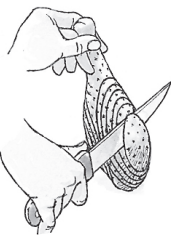
Ensure that someone at the table knows how to carve

Turkey

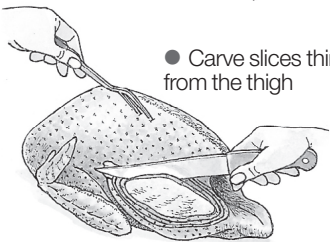
● Cut the drumsticks from the sides of the body (but leave the thigh)



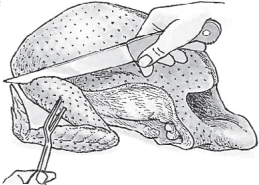
● Tackle the drumsticks by holding the knuckle in one hand and slicing downwards. Rotate the drumstick to take off all the meat



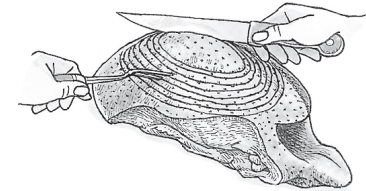
● Carve slices thinly from the thigh



● Cut away the wings and set them to one side



● Finally, carve the breast meat using long, thin, downward slicing on both sides of the bird

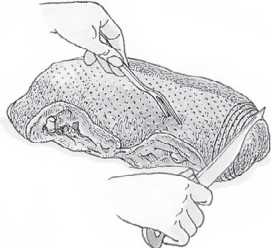


Goose

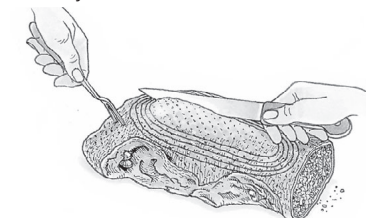
● Carve the legs from the body of the bird, cutting at the point where the thigh joins the body

● Remove both wing joints and set to one side

● If the goose is stuffed (from the neck end), cut thick slices across the neck end – there won't be many



● Finally, cut thickish slices of breast along the length of the bird with a relatively flat knife



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Bake

For some, it is already too late. The traditional Christmas cake should have been made about a month ago to give time to feed it (with alcohol). There are, however, plenty of alternatives out there. Our recipe (see right) was created for a new cookbook from the Fairtrade company Divine, hence its title *Divine: Heavenly Chocolate Recipes with a Heart* by Linda Collister (Absolute Press, £19.99). The ingredients cost less than £30 (including the dark rum), while the decoration, as seen here, costs about £15 – cinnamon sticks are 50p each.

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Stick on a DVD – for the children

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

The boy wizard is back. With Harry and Dumbledore's warning about the return of the evil Lord Voldemort ignored, a sinister bureaucrat takes control of Hogwarts. Everything you could want from a Potter movie is here, although it is now far too dark and violent for the really little ones.

Lazytown – Go Go Lazytown

The Icelandic children's phenomenon comes to DVD. Over-achieving athletic do-gooder Sportacus encourages the Lazytown kids to be active rather than sitting at home playing computer games, much to Rotten Robbie's annoyance. Great fun.

My Neighbour Totoro

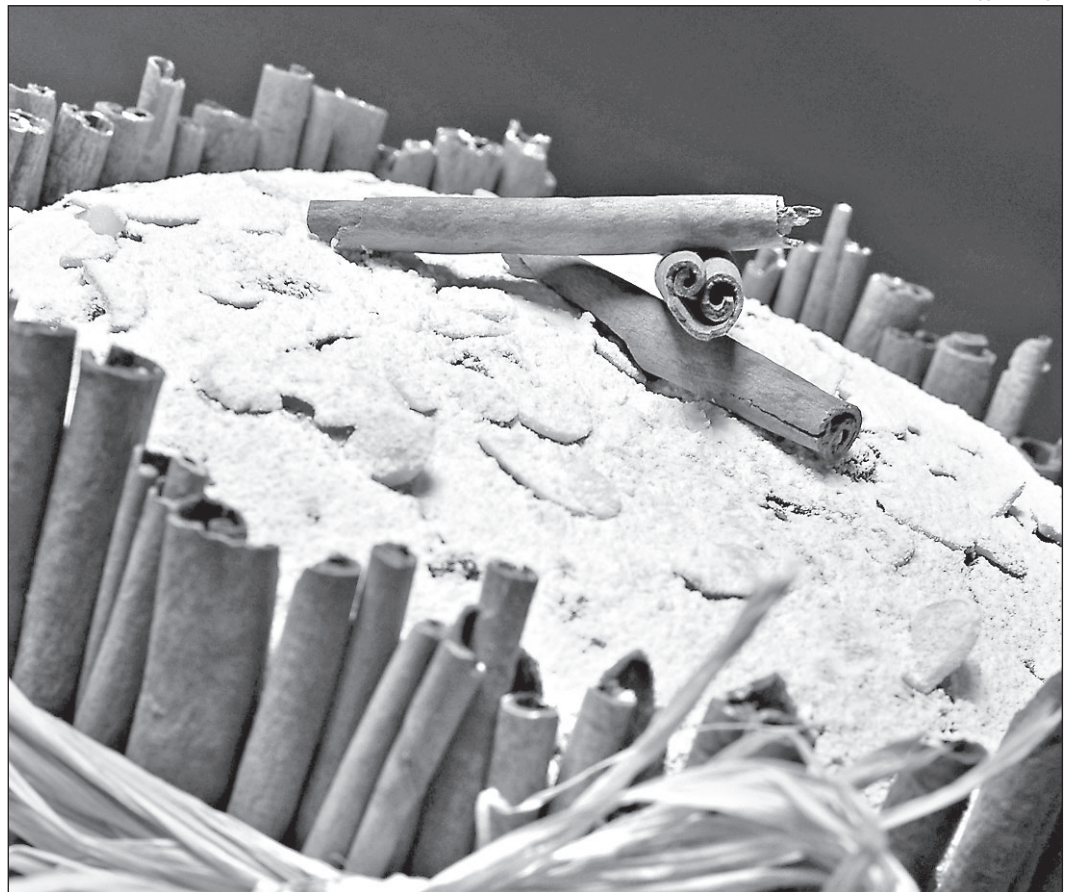
An absolutely magical animation from Hayao Miyazaki, the visionary director behind *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke*. Sisters Satsuki and Mei move with their father to the countryside to be nearer to their ill mother. Initially unsure about their new environment, they soon encounter all manner of strange and bewitching creatures. Unforgettable.

Shrek the Third

Although it may not reach the peaks of genius of the first two films, this is still smart enough to keep the grown-ups amused while the little ones howl with delight at the continuing antics of Shrek, Fiona and trusty sidekicks Donkey and Puss in Boots. When King Harold falls ill, Shrek is seen as the natural heir to the kingdom. However, he'd prefer to stay in his beloved swamp...

High School Musical 2

What list would be complete without some mention of this year's sensation? Yes, the sequel is upon us as Troy, Gabrielle and the rest of the gang get work at Sharpay's country club. Sharpay has her sights set firmly on Troy and has a devious plan to steal him away from Gabrielle. You won't get what all the fuss is about but the kids are sure to love it.



Deliciously different Christmas cake

Ingredients

- 250g plain flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- a pinch of salt
- 50g ground almonds
- 175g unsalted butter, soft
- 175g light muscovado sugar
- 4 large free range eggs, at room temperature
- 4 tablespoons dark rum
- 300g mixed dried fruit and peel
- 100g whole blanched almonds, toasted and roughly chopped
- 2 x 100g bars Divine dark chocolate, broken into squares
- 250g readymade marzipan
- 2 tablespoons flaked almonds
- icing sugar for dusting

23cm-round deep cake tin or springclip tin, greased and lined

Method

- Heat oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4
- Sift flour with baking powder and salt into a bowl. Stir in the ground almonds and set aside until needed. Put the soft butter and sugar into the bowl of a food mixer and, using the whisk attachment, beat until the mixture looks soft and creamy.
- Break the eggs into another bowl and beat with a

fork, just to break them up, and then gradually beat them into the butter mixture, beating well after each addition. Add 1 tbsp of the flour mixture with each of the last 2 portions of egg to prevent separating.

■ Remove bowl from mixer and add rest of flour mixture. Using a metal spoon, fold in the flour until almost combined and then add the rum and mixed dried fruit and peel and stir in gently. Add the almonds and chocolate squares and mix thoroughly. Spoon half of the cake mixture into the tin and spread evenly.

■ Knead the marzipan for a few seconds just to soften it, then roll it out into a disc to fit into the tin. Set the disc on top of the cake mixture and press down gently to push out any air bubbles. Spoon the rest of the mixture on top and spread evenly. Make a shallow hollow in the centre, this will ensure the cake rises evenly. Sprinkly with the flaked almonds.

■ Bake in the heated oven for 30 minutes, and then reduce the oven temperature to 170C/325F/Gas 3 and bake for a further 1¼-1½ hours until golden, and a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake down to the marzipan layer comes out clean. If it comes out a bit sticky bake another 5 minutes then test again (though it is hard to avoid both the marzipan and lumps of chocolate when testing).

■ Remove cake from oven; leave to cool completely on a wire cooling rack. Turn out, remove lining paper, wrap in fresh paper and leave for 3-4 days before cutting. Dust with icing sugar just before serving.

■ Store in an airtight container. Best eaten within 3 weeks.

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Give yourself some quiet time

While the washing up is being done – by someone else – and as the new consumer durables are being thrashed within an inch of their useful lives, some old-fashioned quiet time should help you survive the festivities. Here are some books to keep in a secluded nook to get you through: *A Child's Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas, *The Night Before Christmas* by Clement C Moore and, of course, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. Try Dickens's series of Christmas stories – *The Chimes*, *Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life* and *Haunted Man* – for a real Victorian Christmas hit. UA Fanthorpe is a wonderful poet whose book *Christmas Poems* contains verse that will make you feel both uplifted and sane.

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And don't forget the thank-yous

If you have the front, try the following. Write a round-robin thank you on the computer with the greeting "Dear Aunt/Uncle/Cousin/Grand-dad/Grandma [delete as appropriate]"; follow it with "Thank you for your comic book/MP3/Halo 3/slippers/socks/warm coat/cuddly toy [delete as appropriate], Lots of love ...". It's been known. It may mean that presents are a little thin on the ground next year, but at least it's a thank-you. The acknowledgement of gifts seems to have gone out of fashion as quickly as the use of decent grammar. It's worth encouraging the young ones to send thank-yous and even to be creative with them. Perhaps they could follow a good example – you.

Did you know?

The Parker family of Wiltshire lays claim to owning the world's oldest artificial Christmas tree, bought in 1886 and still put up every year

