



# hanover healthfoods

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DECEMBER 2013 ISSUE

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painful  
joints?**  
Green-lipped  
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40 Hanover Street  
Edinburgh EH2 2DR  
0131-225 4291  
info@hanoverhealth.co.uk

## Coping With Christmas



if nothing else. Oily fish like salmon are nourishing and contain Omega-3 and Vitamin D which can improve mood.

Yummy desserts are fraught. High sugar and fatty foods impair liver function which can have a knock-on effect on bowel health. All you can practically do is minimise. Share a dessert with a friend, look towards berries and avoid too much cream. If you have a post-meal coffee go for decaff as it will keep stop your cravings for yet more calories going crazy.

December is a tricky month, full of temptations and sparkle. It can easily be a pocket-emptying, waist-band stretching time. Here are a few suggestions as how to survive.

**Eat Wisely** The opportunities to over-consume over the festive season can be too much. Typical seasonal meals are generally high in calories, fat and sugar. It is possible to cut back without clipping your wings too much. Some traditional foods are actually pretty healthy. Turkey, for example, is a lean meat which is rich in the amino acid Tryptophan which helps make mood-boosting serotonin. Brussels sprouts are a cruciferous vegetable which boost liver function. Cranberries on their own are really rich in anti-oxidants and contain chemicals which help urinary health, but the sugar which is needed to make them palatable isn't helpful. You can easily make your own cranberry sauce using **Xylitol**, a natural sugar which is low-cal and helps keep yeast infections at bay.

When your umpteenth 'Christmas' dinner appears on your plate make sure that you fill up on vegetables. If you spy something on offer which falls into the 'wholesome-wholefood-fibre rich' category grab it. If the vegetarian option looks tempting give that a go, for variety

**Alcohol** is more omnipresent at the average Christmas than Christianity. Doctors constantly caution against binge-drinking, for very good reasons. A continuous onslaught of booze can weaken the liver and alter it's abilities to break down alcohol and fats. This is made worse if your typical morning after routine encompasses a fistful of paracetamol which harms the liver and disrupts your good tummy bugs.

If you do have two or three social engagements a week in December, and you would like to enjoy a drink with friends, limit your drinking to just those evenings and give your liver 4-5 days off a week so it can return to normal. I'm not advocating binge-drinking here, just trying to introduce the concept of mindful pacing...

Many drinks contain large amounts of sugar and this causes cravings and mood swings. Sugar is stored as fat, something you may come to regret mid-January. Where you have the choice, space out your drinks with the odd glass of fizzy water and choose lower calorie options like a good red wine. If you are bringing a bottle then Beetroot Juice or Norfolk Punch can make you look less like a social leper.

*(continued overleaf)*

## DEFINING:DIY Gifts

For many people this Christmas looks like it will be as tight as many have known, declining real wages, high fuel prices and multinational companies sucking the lifeblood out of our high streets. But you can fight back this Christmas! Two messages – buy as many gifts as you can from independent stores like us, Real Foods, Napier's, Earthy, or Neal's Yard, and what you don't buy – make with love!

This Christmas we have some excellent **gift-packs** from Dr Hauschka and Weleda with prices ranging from £6.95 to £90. Dr Hauschka have also supplied gift boxes so you can build your own beautiful present, whatever your budget is.

**Himalaya fair-trade, natural wax candles** come in lovely little boxes and are priced at £7. The (natural) fragrances are Frangipani, Lotus, Spicy Mandarin and Vanilla Blossom. Buy a set of three for a £18!

But nothing says 'I love you' or 'I care' like a handmade present. Essential oils can be blended by the most useless amateur into something very special indeed. You can make your own blend (we can supply the ideas depending on who you are blending for) for massage oil, bath salts or a creamy oat bath.

**Oat Bath Blend** 5 drops of essential oils per cup of well-ground porridge oats. This will give a creamy and fragrant bath which is particularly good for eczema.

**Bath Salts Blend** 5 drops of oils per cup of Epsom Salts or Dead Sea salts. Softens the bath water and is simply luxurious.

**Massage Oils Blend** 5 drops per 15ml of almond oil.



Favourite oils are Lavender, Ylang Ylang, Jasmine, Geranium, citrus oils like Mandarin, or seasonal specials like Myrrh and Frankincense. Just ask us for any advice you need. Present them all in recycled jars with your message on the label.

**Make Your Own Chocolate!** So, so easy! Melt 70g Raw Cacao Butter (we keep it) in a dish over hot water then stir in 50g Raw Cacao Powder and add Agave Syrup or Coconut Sugar for sweetness. It should all dissolve very easily. Then the creative magic can really start...

You can now add anything you want – Cacao nibs, ground coffee, chopped nuts or fruit (my favourites are pistachios and apricots), peppermint, rose or citrus oils, crushed rose peppercorns, chilli flakes, salt. Blend everything thoroughly and pop them into an ice-cube tray to chill in the fridge. They are so easy to make and so delicious that you will wonder what all the fuss was about! And your friends will love you back.



**Milk Thistle** is renowned for improving liver function and reducing hangovers. Mercifully it is also very good for helping fat digestion too so it is a win-win. There is no point taking Milk Thistle at 7.13am the morning after. You need to take it before you go out and again when you get back in. If December is party-party-party then you should probably start taking it now. Coconut Water is a superb rehydrator and can be drunk liberally the day after. Sweet (but low in sugars), easy to drink, high in electrolytes it is the perfect natural hangover bevvv. Emergen-C sachets have always been popular too. They contain 1g of Vitamin C as well as B-vits and electrolytes.

The overall message is commonsense. There is no point denying yourself unless you have to for other reasons, and feelings of guilt are really counter-productive. However, a bit of moderation, balancing your diet across a day or week, and forward-planning can reduce problems with your digestion, your mood, stress levels and give you less work to do come the New Year.

**Natural remedies** can play a role too. One of the best is **Digestisan** by A.Vogel. It is a complex of Artichoke which stimulates the flow of bile (taking nasties away) from the liver which then stimulates normal bowel movements. It is also bitter which means that if it is taken in a small amount of water and held in the mouth before a larger meal it stimulates the stomach juices to help you break down food better. A few of us in the shop have used it at Christmas and found it massively improves indigestion. Another alternative is to take digestive enzyme tablets with big meals.

For those who find December just too much the Arctic herb **Rhodiola** may help them through, as it does traditional people in Siberia. It helps the body balance stress and boosts mood. If you are dreading that trip to that awkward family member over Christmas then taking **Theanine** will help reduce anxiety and keep your mind on the ball. The serene calmness and focus it provides can be a lot better than upsetting someone and telling them after three too many drams what you really think of that hideous festive onesie they bought you from Primark.

But whatever you do, make sure you enjoy yourself, and try to make someone else smile this December. Life is too short!

*John, Diploma in Health Food Retail*