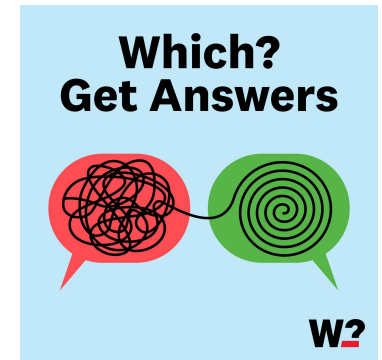


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How to have a stress-free Christmas

Unknown Speaker 0:02

Hello and welcome. I'm Grace Forell. I'm Harry kind, and this is get answers for living your best consumer life. When life gives you questions,

Unknown Speaker 0:12

which get answers. It's December, we are in full Christmas panic. So this week, we're going to help you sort your life out and get organised ahead of the holiday season, we'll be bringing you the most popular gifts for this year and where to buy them. So that's your Christmas shopping sorted, and we'll be pulling back the curtain on our own which taste tests so that you know which supermarket is selling the tastiest festive food. Harry, you asked me in the last episode, whether I started my Christmas shopping and I had to admit on air that I hadn't bought a single thing. I'm going to admit on air right now that I still haven't bought a single present Shea I know what about you they're heavy. How far have you got with it? I think I've probably done all of my Christmas shopping in that I'm not really getting anyone anything this year. With my my partner and I were buying a house which means we have no money. And I would feel bad about borrowing any money from my parents only to then spend it on gifts back to them. We I did just put in an order for a load of food that's gone past its best before date on a website that I use. So I've got a load of out of date chocolate, which I will be giving to people so yeah, it all in one bulk order.

Unknown Speaker 1:27

Well, we will be getting to gift a little bit later on in the show. But first, I am very excited to welcome an expert in organisation. It's Nicola Lewis, founder of this girl can organise the hugely successful Instagram and Tiktok channel. If you want to know the best way to dry your clothes, pack a lunch box or spring clean your home. Nicola is your lady. Hello. Hello. Thank you for having me, guys. We're very excited. We're so excited to have you on Nicola. Honestly, I need your help big time at the moment. Of course. Well, I think with Christmas, it's like my favourite topic. I mean, I embrace all seasons. But I think because Christmas brings so much joy to me and I've had lots of fabulous Christmas and I've got a birthday on Christmas Eve. I'm just like a little bouncing Christmas elf and I just absolutely love it. So I can't wait to share loads of advice for you all. So can we start just by hearing a little bit more about you? Have you always been really organised? Yes, I suppose. So. I think I grew up with very organised parents. And I think when you're a child and a teenager, you don't really realise it's only on reflection on some of the things growing up. It was obviously something I enjoyed doing, like keeping my room tidy. I mean, I was that dream child. I used to love labelling things like I had a ruler and it had Nicolas ruler labelled on it. Like I don't know who was gonna go and take that from me. But I think I was inspired by my surroundings so that it allowed me to focus on what I wanted in my bedroom. So yeah, right from the word doc, I think

Unknown Speaker 3:10

I had a very brief period as a teenager where I was really into the poro books, got convinced that I should have poro level neatness, which basically involves putting stuff at right angles. It lasted six months. I've never been organised since so I really need to check your channel out. And I mean, there's there's no more chaotic time for most people than Christmas.

Unknown Speaker 3:29

And Nicola, I know you've got like a seven week countdown planner, don't you? Yes, so I'd love to hear about that. But I wondered if you could condense it into three weeks because we are now three weeks from Christmas. So if there are people listening, and people like myself, who have not done a thing to prepare for Christmas, and we've got three weeks, what should we do? And which order? Should we do it all in? Okay, well, it's a great question. And I think with Christmas, I feel like there's so much to think about, write a list. Okay, whatever is going on in your head that you traditionally go to do get that down, okay. And then we can then work it out and do it like a tear system coming down, you can kind of determine when you need to order your food or when you need to think about laying the table. Just a little tip here. I lay my Christmas table at the beginning of December. And here's why. Because I feel that the Christmas table just looks like utter joy. And also I'm adding little bits and pieces to it. But actually when we all get to sit down there have an evening to have dinner. It's just wonderful. Now I know a lot of people have to work from their tables in their kitchens or dining rooms. But if you have an opportunity even just to do a little arrangement in the middle with a couple of candles, it's amazing. So when it comes to wrapping and just a little tip here, I split, two different wrapping papers. So

Unknown Speaker 5:00

So one child has one thing the other child has another. So one might have red one might have gold. That's a good idea. And he just keeps it really, really easy. And I'm doing it as I'm going along, if that makes sense. Yeah, cuz I find that I'll do all my wrapping. I'm really bad. And I leave it to like Christmas Eve, but I'll wrap everything in the same paper. And then if a gift tag falls off, you've got no idea who it's for no. So this will really help you. For different members of the family, just use one theme of wrapping paper per family member. And it just keeps things so easy. And another thing I do is if it's for gifts for other people, get them out of the house as soon as possible. So if they're gifties, I wrap them and then I just make sure I go either to visit them or I schedule just to drop off the presents someone else's problem. Absolutely.

Unknown Speaker 5:54

Well, let's talk now about Christmas food. I've been asking everyone this week whether they've ever had a disaster in the kitchen on Christmas Day. We put a call out for this on the witch conversation Facebook group, and we got so many responses. I'm gonna read a few of them now. Some of the particularly good ones. So this is CT. They say I bought my first house and cook Christmas lunch for my mother and a friend. I served everything on my new dining table and was delighted to be hostess and cook for the day. The turkey was lovely and brown on the outside. But when I carved it, it was raw inside and I had left the giblets in a plastic bag inside. We went vegetarian that year. That is devastating. From Allison here, my oven packed up with a turkey half cooked inside and had to break it up and microwave the bits. Funnily enough wasn't the same at all. Awful. Janice says she forgot to take the turkey out of the freezer in time spent most of Christmas Day defrosting it and buckets of water while we ate all the trimmings. By the time we cook the turkey it was late and we were all stuffed from eating the rest of the dinner. I hope turkeys more trouble than it's worth made seems to be the cause of both people travelled. Well, at least she could do like Christmas turkey sandwiches for days. And I suppose the next day and leftovers, which is always handy. Well, look, please keep your Christmas dinner disasters coming in. We appreciate every single one. You can find us on social at which UK or by typing which conversation into Facebook. Now on the subject of Christmas food, this is something that we take very seriously at which Harry, you've been digging into this right? Yeah, I got to talk to the lucky person in charge of our Christmas taste tests.

Unknown Speaker 7:39

Right, I am here with Becky Becky, what do you do in which? So I'm a senior researcher writer in the product testing team, and I look after taste tests. What a thing to look after some people get vacuum cleaners and you get a taste test. That must be a lot of fun. Yeah, it's great. I absolutely love it. And it's really nice because we do all kinds of taste tests. And I mean, this year has been particularly busy with our Christmas taste tests. We've done everything from mince pies and Christmas puddings to smoked salmon and champagne. So it's been really great. And when are you doing this? And presumably it's it's

not just before Christmas knows that we actually start planning this months in advance. So while everyone else is kind of enjoying the sunshine, having barbecues, like we're planning our Christmas taste test all the way back in like July. It's a bit of a strange one. But ya know, it's great. We have to I mean, there's so much work involved, like lots of prep from pooling in the samples to organising the logistics, recruiting the panels, it takes a long time. So it's safe to say this keeps us busy for a few months. And then the panel, what does that involve on the actual taste testing itself? So we recruit a panel of experts for each taste tests. So for example, our mince pie taste test, we had a panel of pastry chefs and baking experts. We even had a few well known faces from the Great British Bake Off. You can see it Yeah, again. Exactly. So we asked them to taste all the products blind so they don't know which brands they're trying and then score them and then they discuss them at the end and decide on which products are going to be best buys. And most importantly, what were the best month buys. So we tested 10 supermarket o label mince pies this year, and Co Op and Tesco were our standout Best Buys. And our experts actually rated them better than more expensive options from the likes of m&s and Waitrose. So definitely worth getting your hands on some of those if you can. You better look at Waitrose and m&s Co Op and Tesco are coming for you. That is really good. What are you actually looking for in a good mince pie. So our experts said that for mince pies it's really important that the pastry is rich, buttery, well baked and that the filling is fruity flavours and well spiced. And how do you kind of him per mince pie? How do you get it to go from just a cold bland

Unknown Speaker 10:00

supermarket circle to something that's actually quite, you know, satisfying and looks good to eat, say something our expert has mentioned is that a lot of the mince pies that you buy from supermarkets are a little bit underbaked So what you can do is heat them up in the oven just for a few minutes before serving and that really crisps the pastry and gives you that lovely golden colour very nice compared to what I often do which is over microwave them, leaving them soggy and boiling hot on the inside so I just destroy the roof of my mouth every single year. I do not learn anything else that you should be eating with mince pies I know a lot of people got into eating Stilton with mince pies. Yeah, I have heard of that one actually choosing mince pies odd combination, but apparently it works. I'm gonna give it a try. We'll have to give it a try on the show. See if we survive. I mean to wash out the taste of Stilton and mince pies. Presumably you'll be wanting a little bit of Shamoun we taste champagne. We do. Yes. We tested supermarket own label champagnes against Verve Kiko this year. And we actually found two Best Buy's both supermarket own labels both costing less than 25 pounds from Co Op and Aldi very nice and who was taste testing those. So that was our panel of four wine experts and wine experts people with actual developed palates not you know, they've drunk loaded Lambrini. They know what they want. Yeah, exactly. They do this as a profession.

Unknown Speaker 11:25

Actually, presumably a lot of just spitting out. Yeah, they do. The spittoons are not a pleasant part of the tasting.

Unknown Speaker 11:35

And neither is cleaning them.

Unknown Speaker 11:37

That wasn't in the job description. Which must know how to clean a spittoon thank you so much Becky for for helping us out with our Christmas food. Thank you. I loved what she was saying about mince pies and blue cheese because that is actually something that I eat every year. Yeah, I have tried it and it's really good. Very nice. It's I have to just nuke him in the microwave and put brandy butter on top that can get me through. The problem is you end up with like pretty much every day for January there will be like the mince pie backup pudding, which gets a little bit tiresome, but to be honest, I actually just like them cold. I really don't I don't mind them. I could eat them all through the year every day. I love mince pies. Now, Christmas food is of course big business. According to a report by Boucher code stock code at UK

it's expected that 7.6 9 billion or 290 pounds per household will be spent on Christmas food and drink and off this spend 41 pounds 30 is expected to go on the Christmas dinner. But how do the supermarket's come up with new ideas to keep us spending each year? Well, we've sent producer Rob to find out just that. So we'll have arrived here in Barcia the rains coming down, but I'm in the middle of one of the UK biggest industrial estates. And what's special about this place is it's all dedicated to one of the UK biggest supermarkets. And the reason I'm here to find out more about our favourite festive food. So I'm gonna go inside and I'm gonna get out of the car. And the next time you hear from me, I'll be with someone who can hopefully tell us a bit more

Unknown Speaker 13:21

Hello, I'm well torn. I'm the senior brand development chef for Waitrose. So well, an incredible job title. What does it mean? What does it mean? It means that I get to help create some of the most award winning products that find themselves on customer shelves throughout the year, but especially at Christmas, and you're here in the presentation suite of the Food Innovation Studio at Waitrose HQ in retinol. And this is where every single Waitrose product gets thought about gets conceived gets developed and gets launched from obviously we're talking about Christmas you've already mentioned, you know, a big part of your role year in year out is to come up with some of the incredible products that people see on their shelves. How do those ideas start for you? Is that I don't know. You're at home, you brushing your teeth. Oh, those two flavours will go together. Let's draw make that happen. Give us a window into that world. Do you know that's a really good analogy because innovation and inspiration comes from all different aspects of life. We don't just sit, you know, in restaurants or sit and read food magazines, we're looking at what's happening in the fashion world, what's happening in sport, what's happening in anything because inspiration and innovation comes from all aspects of life. And that's what keeps it always changing. It's never we never stay the same. We tend to work potentially 18 to 24 months out. So we are talking about Christmas 2023 Today, Christmas 24 We're already starting to taste Christmas 25 We're starting to put some blank sheets of paper together with some random funky ideas. We're constantly thinking about what

Unknown Speaker 15:00

what's next? What are we going to be looking at in the next year? How do we do that is the is the question that we often get asked. And a lot of it is around a blank sheet of paper, and the Food Innovation team that's been going for nearly 20 years, and not all of us have been here. 2020 years, I've been here for just over 12 years, but we sit down with a blank sheet of paper, Christmas is always going to be Christmas, there's always going to be a turkey, there's always gonna be mince pies always going to be a Christmas pudding. And it's about how we add nuances of difference to make it exciting to make it new to give customers that extra little bit of something good. So we use AI to be able to track any sort of electronic food data. So whether that's a blog, a restaurant menu, a foodies Festival, and what is that AI looking at? Is that looking at, you know, the frequency of specific words in blogs or on social media posts, what kind of things like looking at anything and everything? So for example, we could type in a terasse, for example. Now that's kind of a almost a bit summary. But we could then go okay, this is what's happening with Charleston, Sydney, this is what's happening with choice in in LA, how frequent is it appearing on menus? Is it a trend that is growing? Is it a trend that is declining? Is it a trend that's mature, it's a bit of playtime at the beginning. And actually, in those moments where it doesn't quite work is the moment that we learn what we need to change next time. And I was involved in competitions quite early on in my career. And it's always about the times that you don't win that you learn the most. So when a dish doesn't quite work, that's the moment that we go, are if we change that process, or we change that or we up that flavour, we're gonna get a better dish. You know, you can't have a Christmas chat without mince pie. So you've got that lovely, kind of almost golden and the smell as well on there as well. It's all about the smell. Christmas food is such a multi sensory experience. Yes, it can be stressful, but boy, can it be heartwarming, because as soon as you smell that you're like, oh, it's Christmas while I'm here. Obviously someone with your expertise. I want to get your tips and your advice for anyone who's listening to this who doesn't want to be super stressed on Christmas Day and the build up to

Christmas, maybe his friends come around for Christmas Eve, Boxing Day buffet, whatever it might be, what would you say is kind of the best advice you can give to to make sure that you get the chance to enjoy yourself. Okay, three words, prep, prep, prep, I used to do quite a bit of teaching cookery schools. And I used to say to my students, I used to say, imagine that you're on the telly cooking live in front of a camera, because you never see them rushing about, you know, if they're making their pastry, the flowers already way down in a bowl. The sugar is way down in the Kilner jar, so they just have to take the Kilner jar out, and it's all ready to go. And what you see there is that you don't see them flapping or stressing. Well, it's been so brilliant to to be here with you to talk Christmas and to find out more about what you do. And obviously I'm gonna finish our chat now by finishing this mince pie so thank you Happy Christmas. Can I just draw attention to the fact that they plan 18 To 24 months in advance for Christmas? Yeah, that's impressive. And also you know what if something happens in that period where it's terrible to eat almonds or something or like some scandal comes out about gingerbread houses or something they really are

Unknown Speaker 18:26

they get cancelled so I quite like the organisation of that to be fair, that's just planning in advance that's a big tick there so recognises game

Unknown Speaker 18:38

I did love his tip about imagining your a TV chef when you're prepping dinner that having your all your ingredients measured out and ready to hand that is a really good idea. Well thank you to produce a Rob for his report. amser will torrent from Waitrose there for lifting the lid on this billion pound industry. Well, it's time for us to move on to gift buying now after this

Unknown Speaker 19:05

welcome back to the Get Answers podcast as we arm you with the best advice to help you prep for the holiday season. Professional organiser Nicola Lewis, better known as this girl can organise is here with us. Nicola, we've talked a little bit about gift buying, but who do you find it hardest to buy for and your family? I would probably now say my parents, mainly because they have everything. And they don't like clutter in their home and they very much like what they like so I tend to now get them experiences. I feel like they much would prefer to go and do something that they wouldn't treat themselves to. Whether it's an overnight stay in a hotel afternoon tea somewhere nice, like a little mini road trip or a train trip or something like that. I always believe you should definitely ask what people would lie

Unknown Speaker 20:00

whether it's food vouchers or go to a restaurant or maybe babysitting, so they can go out for the night, you know, that's a gift in itself is time. So, yeah, it doesn't always have to be an actual physical item. Well, a little earlier on I met with which his very own faith Strickland, otherwise known as Mrs. Claus, such as her expertise when it comes to Christmas shopping. She has been scouring the market for the best value gifts of the moment. And we are so privileged to have her share her wisdom with us. I also asked her who she struggles to buy for. Do you know, every year I get older, it gets harder with my family and my partner because I think people now know what they want. So they invest in what they want, and yet sometimes harder to get those smaller gifts. I'm a real over thinker, and I can get a bit obsessed about thinking, is this a perfect gift? And actually forget a lot of the time is just the action or thought or just remembering to get someone something rather than

Unknown Speaker 21:01

what you dubbed as the perfect gift. So kind of everyone. Yeah, okay, well, it sounds like you're the right person for your job, then overthinking Christmas gifts. What would you say are the trending gifts for this year? So over summer, a few retailers released their list including Hamleys, John Lewis, and we saw some retro toys may come back. And you can see that in search trends as well. So the Furby, which was, I know really back when I was little, and I was not allowed on because it was too annoying. But in

terms of kind of new toys, the LOL dolls, how many has called that out in their Christmas list over the summer and said they were seeing a lot of trends around that. And also Gabby's dollhouse. Oh, my daughter is obsessed with Gabby stones house. Yeah, I hadn't heard about it until I started looking at trends. I don't have to read my own. But yeah, then I thought it was a Netflix serious. Yeah. And then, of course, because of the movie Barbies having a big resurgence. I mean, it's always been popular, I must say about Barbies. I picked up a massive hole, two big, massive bags of Barbie stuff for 15 pounds from Facebook marketplace. Back in the autumn, honestly, because people they have a clear route, and they get rid of so much stuff. That's an amazing condition. Honestly, 15 quid I got so much stuff probably worth hundreds. Yeah. And that's a really good point to look on Facebook marketplace, in particular, when people are doing a house clear, or perhaps their children are growing up a little bit more and aren't as interested in those toys. And can you tell us a bit about this research? I mean, how do you find all of these gift ideas? So for the gift guides, we have a real range of stuff, obviously, which is so known for its tested products. So we have a look at a lot of the test results and work out what do we think might be a good price. For something that's performed? Well, we also ask some of our experts. So with our kids gift guide, we asked some of the children that they're not in the office, but the parents in the office if their kids had any suggestions or anything they were looking out for, we also look at trends so you can look at search trends and see what people are googling. So for example, if I looked at Lego, I can see that it has been quite steady over the past five years. But it really is peaking one last Christmas but actually again now and I think that's because people are sort of going in from a wellness angle as in they have the adult sets, giving me ideas for some of the men in my life, you know, my brother in law and that kind of thing maybe Legos blades gave us Yeah, so on those kinds of cheaper items, they you know, sort of mentioned what were some of the best gifts you found that are under 10 pounds. Yeah, so actually we test quite a few gifts under 10 pounds and we have some really good results within their categories. So I'm going to wedding just before Christmas and one glass of bubbles on my lipstick has gone so we found a really great long lasting L'Oreal Paris Ruge signature matte liquid lipstick. I'm try saying that really quickly I wedding but that had great staying power. It's around five pounds. And I think you know, if you've got someone who is interested in makeup or wears a lot of red nippy, I think that's a great choice. We also from one of our taste test, the little Deluxe Irish cream did really well that's around eight pounds. And obviously it's similar to Bailey's and is always really popular at this time of year and can make a nice present if you're going to someone's house. What about stocking fillers? Have you got any ideas for sort of little little things for kids apart from chocolate coins in satsumas, which is what I always used to get in my stocking. Yes, so kind of going back to what we mentioned before within those large ranges, so LOL dolls Gabby's dollhouse, Tori's. If you look on some of the major retailers, especially at the moment, they're doing a lot of discounts. It's so competitive for buying toys, so you will see some discounts on that. You know, I saw one of those many LOL dolls for around a fiver we also saw stuff. If you look on the savings

Unknown Speaker 25:00

On pull some of the retailers, they have best seller categories and wishlist categories. Obviously take this was a bit of a pinch of salt. But you know, there's stuff like Play Doh for under five pounds even I've played.

Unknown Speaker 25:13

And we recently just tested board games. And so you know, you get a board game, one of the top ones was monopoly deal. And I think at the moment, I've seen that for around four pounds. So it's the card version of the classic game, and it's really good fun. Are there any retailers that you'd recommend over others to get your Christmas shopping? Yes, I think in terms of toys, which money team actually just did a really great piece of research. They looked at 49 popular toys from, you know, birth to school age, and then filled up the trolleys and calculated the average price at major retailers. And actually Amazon was the cheapest at less than 26% than the most expensive retailer, which was the entertainer. And then also we found actually supermarkets can have great deals on toys. I saw one myself at Tesco for the Encanto house for 27 pounds, which was I think, cheaper by about seven pounds and other retailers. But you did

have to have a cup card. And also the other point if you're shopping at supermarkets are not going to have the same range and all the lines of toys they kind of get them in as and when as compared to Amazon which offers the full range more often than not. Yeah, well that's really good to know. Let's face it been a lifesaver. Thank you so much. And we can find all the gift guides you've mentioned on the witch website. Can we Yep, absolutely. We've got gift cards for kids him ha we've got cheap. We're going to do one for tech, keep an eye out and we'll keep refreshing them and bringing new ideas to them in the lead up to Christmas. Brilliant. Well, thank you so much. Thank you for having me.

Unknown Speaker 26:51

So she mentioned Lidl Deluxe Iris cream there we've actually got some in the studio Harry would you like glass? I will. I will collect backlog on that.

Unknown Speaker 27:03

Do you know what it's like? It's it's like cod. Do you want to have a go over? Like a good Foley like you get on some champagne?

Unknown Speaker 27:13

It's more gloopy. Yeah. I think this retails at about seven pounds compared to Bailey's which is more like 15 so it's so much cheaper and only scored one percentage less than proper Bailey's when we did our taste tests. Cheers, cheers. Nicola, I hope you've got something you're drinking at home that you can choose to just water sadly.

Unknown Speaker 27:35

Due to that, but I actually have the little Irish cream and it is gorgeous. It's absolutely gorgeous. So I am there with you is spirit.

Unknown Speaker 27:48

Well, look, it has been a mammoth episode today. I want to say a huge thank you to faith Strickland and to Becky Marcus, who we spoke to earlier on. And Nicola, thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with us. Where can we find more from you? Where you can find this girl can organise on Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube and I do have a book called Mind Over clutter issue fancy finding and getting more solutions for decluttering and organising. That sounds like a good Christmas present.

Unknown Speaker 28:20

Well, that is it for this episode of our new fortnightly Get Answers podcast, the new year is just around the corner. And we'd like you to get in touch with suggestions for the kinds of things you'd like us to get answers on. So send us an email at podcasts at which dot code at uk or give us a shout on our social channels at which UK and we would really appreciate it if you could give us a rating or even a review if you're feeling generous. If you want to make yourself more popular. You could even share this episode with friends and family who you think are a little bit disorganised and might find it useful. Harry, what are we up to next time? Right? Well, given our next episode is that just before Christmas, we'll be doing something a little bit different here on the podcast. We're gonna go back in time to find out how witch first came to be. We're going to be celebrating the life of Dorothy Goodman, one of the founding members of the organisation who died earlier this year. And we're going to be joined by which chief exec our boss Annabel halt. So if you have any questions that you'd like to ask her, then please do get in touch. Brilliant. Well, if you want more podcasts to listen to before then I highly recommend the witch money podcast for your personal finances. We've also got the best stories from which magazine narrated for you over on which shorts, just search wherever you're listening. Today's get answers was presented by me grace Pharrell, alongside Harry kind, produced and recorded by Rob Lilly and Angus Farquhar and edited by Eric Breyer, and thanks again to our wonderful guests, Nicola Lewis, as well as faith and Becky from the team here at which we'll see you next time. Goodbye