

## Larrikin Cookin'

Tag: Consuming Christmas  
Author: Pat Miller  
Word count: 542  
Date: November 17 2017  
Deadline: 1700hrs November 17 2017

Here's to a thoroughly modern Christmas.

The season is beset with traditions that don't necessarily translate well into the Australian twenty-first century. Snow motifs seem very odd unless they're stuck on your air conditioner.

There is an art to giving presents. Author George Monbiot in a 2012 essay put it well:

But many of the products we buy, especially for Christmas, cannot become obsolescent.

The term implies a loss of utility, but they had no utility in the first place. An electronic drum-machine t-shirt; a Darth Vader talking piggy bank; an ear-shaped i-phone case; an individual beer can chiller; an electronic wine breather; a sonic screwdriver remote control; bacon toothpaste; a dancing dog: no one is expected to use them, or even look at them, after Christmas Day. They are designed to elicit thanks, perhaps a snigger or two, and then be thrown away.

Can we not throw money away on junk this Christmas please? Traditional present-giving involved making practical objects or food. The modern solution is to go back to that.

Kissing under the mistletoe was banned in Reformation England, deemed immoral because of all the slightly lumpy fun it caused. Mistletoe was replaced by holly to represent Christ's crown of thorns and its red berries the blood. How cheery and romantic! Can we be modern and just have a quiet (age appropriate, mutually consenting please) snog?

Don't forget to replace your Christmas cards with Christmas social media 'likes'. So special. So personal. Like disposable presents, disposable emotions don't mean anything. Take a little food, visit your friend. Sit on a verandah and tell stories.

Modern women and Christmas stockings are a really bad fit. St Nicholas was prone to dishing out bags of gold. Feeling sorry for a poor family whose three daughters had no dowries, old Nick threw a couple of bags through the window and one down the chimney for good measure where it was caught by a daughter's stocking hung to dry. Retailers' "stocking stuffers," instead of being cheap junk, could be really expensive. Resist the stocking stuffer. Resist dowries.

But don't resist the urge to cook for family and friends. Cold poached freshwater perch is always a hit, the recipe inspired by a friend who has turned over his in-ground swimming pool to breeding these tasty little elves.

Catch a few freshwater bass, humanely kill, gut and scale them. Make a court boullion (fancy name for an easy stock) - with 1 litre of water, the juice of four limes (or lemons), whole peppercorns, a couple of peeled chopped carrots, a good pinch of salt and bay leaves. Bring your stock to the boil, slide the fish in and simmer (so the surface of the stock is just moving) for 20 minutes then turn it off. Leave the fish in the stock until cool, then lift them out carefully, remove the skin, carefully lift off the fillets and remove the bones. Turn the fish over and do the other side.

Reduce about 150ml of the court boullion to a sticky sauce, allow to cool and serve with the fish, salad greens and a glass of something nice.

Regardless of your belief system or the hype around Christmas, spend it with people you love.

Happy Christmas.

Pat Miller <http://patmiller.net.au>