

# WORD OF MOUTH

## *festive food*

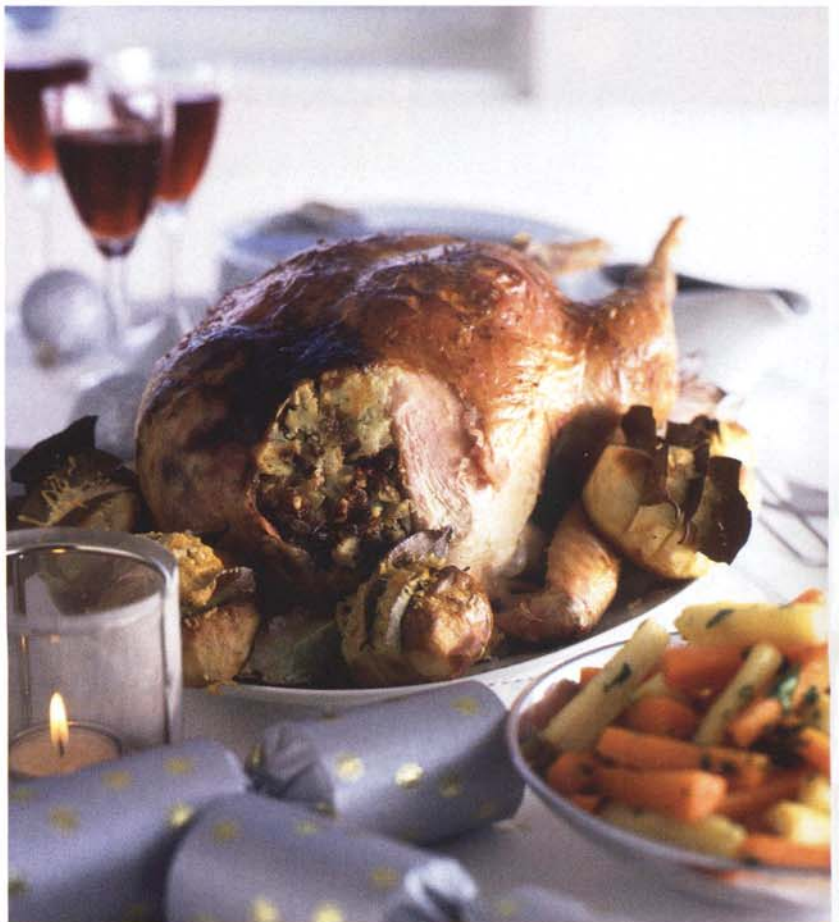
### SMOKING HOT

Instant starters, smoked fish combine health with hedonism. If in doubt, try saying it in French.

● **With their apricot-hued** organic, peat-smoked salmon, the Hebridean Smokehouse pulls off the trick of balancing gentle aroma and flavour with a firm, luscious but not oily texture. Avoiding a heavy smoke, it just hints at islands, heather and Celtic mists (01876 580209; [www.hebrideansmokehouse.com](http://www.hebrideansmokehouse.com)).

● **Sensuous smoked sturgeon** makes brilliant Russian-inspired canapés served with blinis and vodka shots. Wear all the fab, fake bling you can lay your hands on and enjoy the food of the Tsars (020 8221 3939; [www.formanandfield.com](http://www.formanandfield.com)).

● **The river Nidd** in the Yorkshire Dales provides both the fish and smokehouse location for Bleiker's award-winning Smoked Nidderdale Trout Fillets. Cured and gently cold-smoked over Yorkshire oak, the subtle, delicious fish is a tried-and-tested crowd-pleaser – and makes great pâté mixed with cream cheese (01423 711411; [www.bleikers.co.uk](http://www.bleikers.co.uk)).



### A GOOD ROASTING

Christmas dinner is the high spot, but the holiday period goes on....and on....and everyone needs feeding. Satisfy the visiting hordes with:

- **The usual bird** or an extraordinary, not-quite-a-dozen-for-the-price-of-one, 12-bird 'True Love Roast' from Heal Farm Sensational Food for a sensational centrepiece. The easy-to-slice roast, layered with fresh, natural stuffings, gives 125-plus servings, perfect for a large gathering – or even the office party – and comes muslin-wrapped in a hamper with baking tin and meat thermometer (01769 574341; [www.healfarm.co.uk](http://www.healfarm.co.uk)).
- **Atholl Glens** is a co-operative of eight farms in Highland Perthshire rearing organic beef and lamb in open fields where they are looked after by highly experienced stockmen. Beef is matured on the bone for at least 21 days, lamb for two weeks, and the meat is vac-packed and blast-frozen. Try one of the set-price selection boxes or make up your own from stir-fry strips to rib roast (01796 481482; [www.athollglens.co.uk](http://www.athollglens.co.uk)).

### A BOAR FIT FOR A BANQUET

A wild boar roast for Christmas would add a medieval touch to the festive table. The Real Boar Company in Wiltshire raises its animals in natural mixed woodland where the boar forage for food that includes acorns, fungi, cherries and other spoils. If you don't want to go the whole hog, you can choose from a variety of portions. Also try the salami, made with a pleasing touch of red wine. All the Tudor table needs then is a glass of mead and a joker in a silly hat – oh, that's the brother-in-law (07889 154002; [www.therealboar.co.uk](http://www.therealboar.co.uk)).

### SEASONAL STAND-BYS

- **The cheat's Christmas** stocking will include Joshua's Hazelnut and Courgette Bake for when the spotty sprog springs the new girlfriend on you and, hey, she's veggie! Made with courgettes grown in Ottery St Mary for the well-known West Country wholefood haven, serve with a spicy tomato ratatouille (01404 815473; [www.joshuasharveststore.co.uk/shop](http://www.joshuasharveststore.co.uk/shop)).
- **Time's run out** and you've forgotten to make the stuffing. Merchant Gourmet's Chestnut Stuffing with Couscous and Herbs will make a big impression – and not just on the turkey. Buy online at [www.merchant-gourmet.com](http://www.merchant-gourmet.com).



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