



HAVE A GREEN XMAS

Christmas is usually a splurging rather than a saving occasion, but a pinch of 'cheap cheer' can do wonders for your budget - and help our planet, too. You don't have to break the bank to keep alive the spirit of Christmas.

If green celebrations make you feel more like Scrooge than Santa, here are a few eco-friendly tips for a frugal but fabulous festive season.

☞ **Be a savvy shopper.** Set a limit to spending and stick to it. You might want to tell your children that there is, for instance, a ceiling of £40 for their main present. Buy gifts in advance to take advantage of promotions. Don't discount charity shops - they sell new gifts and fairtrade goodies, especially before Xmas. Or you can 'give the gift of time' - present a loved one with an IOU for babysitting, walking the dog, washing the car, etc.

☞ **Plan ahead for your festive food.** You don't have to eat turkey, so why not have a different menu? Alternative festive fare can be found at www.internationalrecipes.net/t/World_Christmas_Recipes/1. You can also make your own Christmas cake and ask your children to help you ice it.

☞ **Be creative with presents.** If you can sew, cook or make pretty objects/artwork, why not have a go? For instance, a basket of homemade preserves and chutneys could hit the spot with gourmet relatives and friends or why not make your own gift basket with toiletries or other items that appeal to a loved one? Quality gift baskets are pricey and it can be cheaper and more personal to make your own. For instance, you can make a basket for a gardening enthusiast with seeds, hand tools and gardening gloves - just look around the shops for ideas!



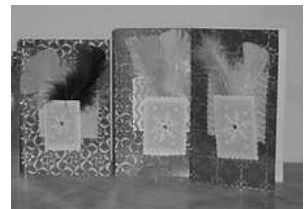
☞ **Make your own decorations.** If you start ahead, you can deck the halls with your own creations. Make iced gingerbread biscuits to hang, paper chains with recycled wrapping paper, hang small oranges studded with cloves... Using popcorn is fun, especially if you colour it with red and green dye. Thread the popped



kernels with string and hang the chains on the tree, along the banisters etc. Paper snowflakes look great, too. Cut out a circle of white paper, fold in half, then into three equal sections. Cut shapes of all kinds out of the folded edges, taking care not to cut across the whole snowflake. Hang snowflakes from walls, windows, etc. A delicious, simple idea is to wrap up chocolate biscuits and sweets in silver foil and hang them from the tree. For inspiration, visit www.lovelychristmas.co.uk/MakeYourOwnDecorations.html.

☞ **Be inclusive** Share the cost of Christmas lunch or dinner by gathering your relatives and friends. Each guest can provide a dish and drinks. If you're part of a big family, why not set up a Secret Santa scheme? This way you won't have to buy as many individual presents.

☞ **Save a tree** Cut the cost (to your purse and the environment) of cards by sending ecards or making your own with recycled materials - this will keep the children occupied for an afternoon or two!



More green Crimbo tips from the internet
<http://www.wasteonline.org.uk/resources/InformationSheets/ChristmasRecycling.htm>
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/Greenerlifeevents/DG_173293
http://www.ehow.com/how_4693054_help-environment-christmas.html