

# Food & Drink

## From heavy metal to Nigella's jugs

### BRENDAN BITES

Stuck for pressie ideas for our favourite foodie? Here are some hints from the man himself



AT THIS time of year, many of you will be wanting to send me tokens of your love. Rather than having you going out spending a fortune on stuff I don't want, I thought I'd share my Christmas Wish List with you.

I'll be wanting a coffee machine for the office. No point in scrimping here, so you might as well make it the Gaggia Digital Synchrony (€884), which will, at the press of a button, grind my beans and make me an espresso, an Americano or even a latte or a cappuccino with the marvellous milk-frothing attachment.

Not all of you will want to spend that much, so I'd also

like a Kitchenaid food processor (€459 for the Artisan model shown), which is quite simply the king of processors and even looks regal and comfortably "old school".

I'd like a good Le Creuset skillet and a Le Creuset non-stick pan too.

The skillet is a heavy metal male cooking fantasy item, the equivalent of an indoor barbecue and perfect for getting that flame-grilled look on big steaks. Best of all, a woman can barely lift this baby so it'll be proof of my domination in meat cooking.

The non-stick is the best non-stick pan ever. My old one changed my life, but now it's time for a new and bigger one.

I'd like one of those

Screwpull corkscrews as well. You may think it crazy to spend €115 on a corkscrew, but this is a design classic and wonderful feat of modern engineering. And in an age when they drink wine even on *Coronation Street*, I need some conspicuous wine item to set me apart from the mob.

I'd like a few pieces of Nigella Lawson's range of cookware, too. I love her salt pig, a citrus juicer (€16), or maybe a pair of her jugs (€24), and perhaps the walnut chopping board if you're feeling generous. All of the above are available at Brown Thomas.

Food wise I'm not a big hamper fan, but there are one or two that I like. Sheridan's cheesemongers do a nice hamper for anything from €32 up.

Better still would be a nice hamper of Italian goodies from Antico Podere da Casa Nuova. Fergus MacCabe may be a red-haired plastic Paddy, but he and his neighbours in Tuscany do great produce straight from

the farm. Fergus will be at Leopardstown Market next Friday and on Tuesday week. The hampers come in lovely hand-carved boxes; you pick the size of box you want, and then pick and mix what goodies you want to put in them — which ensures a "no duds" hamper.

If you're feeling cheap you could just get me a bottle of Fergus's Casa Nuova Olive Oil, which is available from most good delis. I've had it up to here with bottles of wine right now, and a good bottle of oil is always welcome.

I don't need any more books right now either, but if I did I'd be looking for Nigel Slater's *Real Fast Food* as a stocking filler — and as the only cookbook a man needs. I'd also take Darina's *Ballymaloe Cookery Course*, which also has everything you could need in one cookbook.

Happy shopping.

brendanbites@unison.independent.ie

Brendan O'Connor



GIFTED: Brendan O'Connor with a selection of his Christmas present suggestions. Photo: Tony Gavin

### VINO VERITAS

PENFOLD'S Grange has for decades been acknowledged as Australia's greatest red wine. Today, any list of the world's top 10 wines would include Grange. It is also a collectors' item, with prices to match, and ideally it should not be drunk until it is at least 10 years old.

Opportunities to taste Grange are obviously limited, and it's all on allocation by Findlater's to the retail outlet, McCabe's tell me they sell around two cases a year, and On the Grapevine, Dalkey, sold all its two-and-a-half cases of the 1998 vintage to one customer at €230 a bottle.

There's still some '97 around at about €200, as well as earlier vintages, but the reputation of the '98 has gone before it and demand is strong. We tasted the '97 with Penfold's chief winemaker Peter Gago and, magnificent though it is, it is unquestionably overshadowed by the '98.

Made from shiraz, with a tiny dash of cabernet sauvignon (three per cent in '98), this is a classic, a thrilling wine of power, structure, complexity and great character, still young, with noticeable tannins, but drinking surprisingly well. Peter Gago says it will last 40 years. (Other

stockists include O'Donovan's, Cork; Londis, Malahide; Supervalu, Midleton and Graiguenamanagh; Sweeney's, Dorset Street, Dublin; O'Keefe's, Kilkenny; Centra, Washington Street, Cork.)

Penfold's Bin 389 is a cabernet/shiraz blend matured for

13 months in American oak, and while it is big and bold, with hints of pepper and spice and a great finish, it's also balanced and not overwhelmingly oaky (€28.50; some of the same outlets, plus O'Brien's; Tesco, Merrion; Galway Wine Company; Morton's, Ranelagh; Egan's, Dro-

gheda; Brechin Watchorn, Dunville Ave., D6).

How about a plunge back to earth? Fetzter is one of California's most innovative producers with a wide range, including the organic Bonterra wines.

New on the market, Fetzter Pacific Bay Merlot 2002, with

25 per cent cabernet, is an uncomplicated red of great appeal, showing lovely soft fruit, and not a hint of oak — plus a surprising, unobtrusive 14 per cent alcohol. Sheer delight at an amazing €7.99 (In Superquinn; Dunnes Stores; Supervalu; Molloy's.)

Ronan Farren

## All I want for Christmas . . .

### TABLE TALK

Gift vouchers, gourmet hampers and short breaks — yes, please, says Lucinda O'Sullivan

ALONG with every other woman in the land, I suppose, what I would like to see on Christmas morning would be the Naked Chef on my doorstep.

In fact, any chef — naked or otherwise — will do, as long as he has a bird of the feathered variety on his plate and an army of little bearers behind him — so I could sit upstairs all day drinking champagne with the guests while he slaves down in the basement.

Those willing to pay for the privilege will have caterers like Kirsty Argyle and Julie Shields of Sandfire Food Co (tel: 01-2352337/ 086 3611564) to stuff their turkey for them, but I will be staggering up and down the stairs along with the rest of you. I could perhaps be mollified on the day with a very nice fat gift voucher under the tree, promising me a weekend away or a top-notch night out.

The ultimate restaurant gift voucher would be for Dublin's two-starred *Michelin* establishment, Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud on Merrion Street. Sixty euro would buy the excellent value lunch —

two courses plus coffee and petit fours — but if one wants to spend more, the table d'hôte dinner is €79 with a bottle of wine about €35.

Dubliners always think of escaping to the country, but Dublin has so much to do and see, and if I lived outside the Pale I would want my better half to really do it in style, and bring me to Dublin for the sales or even a couple of nights pre-Christmas to the five-star Merrion Hotel. It's a blissful place to stay.

I'd eat in the Cellar restaurant on one night and try chef Ed Cooney's game menu. Two nights bed & breakfast plus one dinner, with bottle of house wine and champagne on arrival, for their December/January promotion is €347.50 per person sharing.

Everything is close by. Within a five-minute walk you have the hip Bang restaurant on Merrion Row, owned by Christian and Simon Stokes. It's a young, cool place.

The Pearl Brasserie, in a basement right beside the hotel, offers excellent French food and is reasonably priced — for Dublin anyway.

Drop into the Horseshoe Bar at the Shelbourne for a drink, and a peep at the movers and shakers and the gossips on the town, and then go down to La Mere Zou in another basement on St Stephen's Green — more French food in a buzzy atmosphere, and good lunchtime specials.

Around the corner in Dawson Street is Bleu Bistro — one of the capital's "in" spots — good food and not as expensive as chef Eamonn O'Reilly's mainline One Pico restaurant in Molesworth Place — a gift voucher for which would also go down well.

The Radisson St Helen's on the Stillorgan Road is another good base for a Dublin break, with two excellent in-house restaurants — the formal Le Panto and the Italian Talavera restaurant. Two nights B&B, and one dinner in the Talavera with a welcome cocktail costs €167.50 per person sharing in January.

I could warm to that all right. During the day I'd take trips out to Blackrock, Glashule and Dalkey, Howth and Malahide instead of trawling round the city. There are lots of lovely interesting and varied shops, and lots of restaurants in each place as well — Wright's Brasserie, Valparaiso, Wongs, Rasam, FXB's, Jaipur, and a new Italian in Dalkey called Benito's.

January and February are pretty deadly months, and the thought of finding a couple of weekend break vouchers in Santa's stocking would give me something to look forward to at the end of February (many of the destination hotels close for January and early February to recharge their batteries and revamp).

The Park hotel in Kenmare has just opened its state-of-the-art, luxurious Destination Samas Spa, and as the hotel

promises that you will be re-born following a visit, it is obviously the place for me. I've been listening to His Lordship rehearsing his Christmas party piece, "Nobody loves a fairy when she's 40." I am finally getting the message, and maybe I will come back from Kenmare as 39!

I wouldn't complain about a voucher from Sheen Falls either, and dinner in its lovely Cascade restaurant.

If you can't rise to either of these exalted heights, two luxurious country houses in Kenmare are Sallyport and Shelbourne Lodge. Go and do the lunch in Jam and dinner at The Lime Tree or Bruce Mulcahy's funky restaurant on Henry Street. D'Arcy's, too, is worth a visit.

Two excellent and reasonably priced B&Bs are Ceannmara and Seashore Farm Guest House, both with lovely vistas. Dinner at Jim McCarthy's The Chart House in Dingle, wouldn't go astray either. Lots of lovely seafood and Kerry lamb, and Jim is a sublime host.

If I fancied something hip, maybe I'd opt for a weekend at uber cool TENSq hotel to the rear of City Hall in Belfast, and do the sales up there. I might even go to The Edge's Bank Gallery restaurant on the Laganbank Road and try the food of chef Donal Keane, formerly of Sheen Falls.

Even better still, I could be whisked across to London to the Covent Garden Hotel — it,

too, is very cool but also friendly and ideally situated for the theatre, galleries and shopping. You can meet anyone from A-list celebs to vicars on hols in this lush-bedroomed hotel.

MY CHRISTMAS stocking could be filled with goodies from Terroirs of Donnybrook — a delicious shop filled with gourmet treats — that is, if I don't get the de luxe hamper.

For Terroirs, think Champagne Delamotte — rated 91/100 by Robert Parker, patés made by the Abbey of La Trappe in Normandy, foie gras d'oise with truffles (€59.50), and two vacuum-packed slices of foie gras sans the truffles at €15.

If you can't rise to Iranian Beluga at €175, they have Petrossian French Caviar at €66 which is proving very popular. And how about chocolate escargots (€8.50) or even chocolate potatoes (€8.70)?

My own ultimate wish list would include tickets for Britany Ferries' new boat, *Pont Aven*, operating from Cork to Roscoff from April 2004. This will not only cut the 14-hour sailing down to 11 hours, but the top-deck cabins will have balconies and terraces.

Now, if only Irish Ferries would buy its old boat, the *Val de Loire* — that's what I really want for Christmas!

Happy shopping.

lucindaos@eircom.net

## NEW WORLD WINERY OF THE YEAR

WINE ENTHUSIAST'S WINE AWARDS

For the creation of innovations like Montes Folly and the classic Montes Alpha M and a range of consistently high quality Reserve wines,

the Wine Enthusiast has honoured Montes in becoming

"a benchmark for excellence in Chile"

Aurelio Montes



MONTES PREMIUM WINES

THE AUTHENTIC WINE FLAVOURS OF CHILE

## The early bird is best for the festive fare

Brenda Costigan can cook while keeping time for her guests

THERE are umpteen ways to prepare and roast a turkey, but keeping the flesh moist is always a challenge. I simply roast the turkey in a tent of foil, opening at the end of cooking to brown. There should be plenty of room above the turkey to allow for steam to circulate.

Softened butter — well flavoured with crushed garlic, salt and freshly ground black pepper, mixed herbs and finely grated lemon rind — can be inserted between the skin and the flesh.

### COOKING TIMES

Ask your butcher the weight of your dressed turkey, then add it to the weight of your prepared stuffing. Give the turkey a good blast of heat at the start, so preheat the oven to 220°C, 425°F, gas 7. Cook the turkey at this temperature for

30-60 minutes, depending on the size. Then reduce the heat to 170°C, 325°F, gas 3 and continue cooking, allowing 20 minutes for every 450g (1lb). Don't be afraid to start the cooking early as the cooked turkey will keep well, covered with foil and a couple of large towels. The following times include the initial blast at the high temperature: 3.5kg-4.5kg (8lb-10lb), 3-3.5 hours; 4.5kg-6kg (10lb-14lb), 3-4 hours; 6kg-8kg (14lb-18lb), 4-4.5 hours; 8kg-9kg (18lb-20lb), 5 hours.

For the last half hour, raise the oven to 200°C, 400°F, gas 6, open the foil, pour off the cooking juices (keep for the gravy) and brown the turkey.

### TURKEY CROWN

Correctly speaking, a turkey crown is only the two breasts — the wings, legs and lower body are cut away. I like to

prepare a crown myself, leaving the wings in place.

### STUFFED BREAST

Cut a slit in each breast, stuff and roast. You will need:

One or two whole turkey breasts (boned, leave skin on)  
225g (8oz) lean rashers, chopped  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, crushed or chopped  
225g (8oz) mushrooms, chopped  
salt and ground black pepper  
pinches of nutmeg  
pinches of herbes de Provence  
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon peel  
1 egg, beaten

Fry the onion, garlic and the mushrooms until soft. Lift out with a perforated spoon and buzz in a food processor, then transfer to a bowl. Next, fry (or grill) the rashers. When cooked, buzz them in the food processor too and add to the bowl with the remaining



FESTIVE: Roast stuffed turkey breast. Photo: Tony Gavin

stuffing ingredients; mix. Weigh the stuffing mix. (Enough for two).

Cut a deep pocket into the biggest part of each breast and stuff. Use wooden cocktail sticks to pin pocket closed.

Place each breast in a large piece of foil. Sprinkle a little olive oil over the turkey and season well with salt, pepper and herbs. Close the foil securely over and roast in the

preheated oven. (210°C, 425°F, Gas 7) Cook for about 30 minutes. Reduce heat to 180°C, 350°F, Gas 4 and continue. Allow 30 minutes cooking for every 450g/1lb of prepared breast. (Test it). So for two breasts each weighing 1400g/3lb, leave 90 minutes.

When cooked, keep warm and allow to stand for about 15 minutes, drain off juices (add to gravy).