



# Dreaming of a tight Christmas

Larissa Ham

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So, it's that time of year again - the season of mass consumerism, oops I mean Christmas, when even atheists get the chance to worship at the retail altar.

Advertisement

Suddenly the days are ticking by at a phenomenal rate, and you've still got a long list of friends and relatives to buy for, food to purchase and a credit card that could, quite frankly, do without the stress.

So if the thought of cash registers ringing makes you feel a little queasy, we've got the solution for you - our thrifty, no nonsense guide to enjoying a tight Christmas.

After all, why start the new year with a mountain of debt?

## Forget eggnog, how about the grog?

This far into December, if you've looked at your online bank balance, it's likely you'll already need a stiff drink.

So, where to find an inexpensive, but delicious tippie to enjoy (responsibly, of course) with friends and family?



Well to begin with, forget the major supermarket liquor shops. [Dan Murphy's](#) or [1st Choice](#) is your friend here, but there's also a wealth of other options such as [Get Wines Direct](#), [Cracka Wines](#) and [boozle.com.au](#), which lets you search liquor stores around Australia for cheapest prices on beer, spirits and pre-mixed drinks.

For parties or group dinners, the [Australian Cleanskin Group](#) also has some very affordable wines on offer, including a case of South Australian shiraz for \$1.96 a bottle or a case of semillon sauvignon blanc from Margaret River which works out at \$4.75 a bottle.

Why not buy a case of cleanskins and stick your own festive labels on? If anyone asks, you're just exploring your creativity.

## Presents

This could be the area where you are most likely to come unstuck. You don't want to look like a tightwad, but then again, keeping up with the Jones' on the present front can be very tricky.

Plus you really would like to buy something nice for your nearest and dearest.



One word for you - [eBay](#). At last count, this shopping marvel had almost 650 new necklaces for sale under \$5, and many of those include free delivery. Now we're not suggesting they're all worth buying, but it's well worth a look. Make sure you get in early if you're ordering from overseas. This reporter bought a pair of turquoise earrings for 80 cents, including delivery recently, and was well pleased with the results (even if a small amount of superglue was needed).

Now if you're going to look generous for little money, we'd recommend staying away from gift vouchers. But if you really have to, eBay has a number of unwanted vouchers up for sale, all at a discounted price. Think Myer vouchers or outdoor activities.

For your socially conscious friend who doesn't mind a secondhand read, why not try Australia's only not-for-profit online bookstore, [Brotherhood Books](#), which supports the work of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. There's a bargain bin, plus plenty of well-known authors including Maeve Binchy, Jeffrey Archer and John Grisham.

If new is more your style, try the UK's [Book Depository](#), or [The Book Grocer](#) in Australia. [Dirt Cheap Books](#) also have a number of outlets around Melbourne.

Of course there's always group buying sites - about 80 at last count - offering everything from massages to three-course meals. Try and disguise the voucher printout if you can by making your own, flasher version.

Make your own gingerbread cookies and wrap them up for a thoughtful gift, perhaps accompanied by a homemade, personalised card.

Don't fall down in the area of wrapping paper - buy a few rolls at markets or the Reject Shop, and always remember to keep fancy ribbons and gift bags for later use. After all, you're eco-friendly too, right?

## Holidays

Accommodation is at a premium at this time of year, but not if your walls are made of canvas.

Camping is free, or super cheap at least, in many of Australia's national parks. See websites including [parkweb.vic.gov.au](#) [nationalparks.nsw.gov.au](#) for details. This reporter enjoyed a campsite only a few kilometres inland from Lorne on Victoria's Great Ocean Road. Cost: nada, and you can always use the showers by the beach for a few

coins.

For a different approach, you could try housesitting at an idyllic location, that's if you don't mind taking a dog for a walk or looking after the garden. Try [aussiehousesitters.com.au](http://aussiehousesitters.com.au) - at last view there were still vacancies in beachside and country areas. Great if you have a bit of time up your sleeve.

### **Christmas dinner**

Now this is a tricky one - how to create a lavish meal without spending a fortune on prawns and Christmas crackers (surely the greatest rip-off of them all?).

If you're into markets, cheaper ones include Melbourne's Preston Market or Gleadell Street Market in Richmond for fruit, vegetables and nuts. In Sydney, head to the western suburbs or try Paddy's Markets in Chinatown.

Online, there's [groceryrun.com.au](http://groceryrun.com.au) and [buygrocery.com.au](http://buygrocery.com.au). In real life, Aldi might be able to provide a few cheap essentials, fill a ginormous trolley at Costco if you dare or swing into the bigger supermarkets late on a Saturday arvo, when markdowns promise to be at their finest.

Try yabbies - they look like mini lobsters, but come in at only about \$16 a kilogram. Better still, catch your own.

When it comes to decorating the table, why spend unnecessary coin? Get the kids to spraypaint some gumleaves, or tie a few twigs together with a colourful ribbon.

Most importantly, try and disguise the whole low-spend operation, or if sprung, look thoughtful and throw in a few buzzwords - try consumerism, affluenza or if really desperate "it's the thought that counts".

***Got any more tight tips? Share them here.***

*This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/money/saving/dreaming-of-a-tight-christmas-20111213-1osgx.html>*