

Shopping around the Christmas tree

The smart way to shop for pressies is to stick to one district. Ten city experts plan your eating and shopping itineraries in the coolest districts

Illustrations SCOTT JESSOP

West End Glasgow

With stylish one-off shops and a vibrant arty scene, Glasgow's West End bursts at the seams with fabulous deli-café, bustling bars and outstanding restaurants

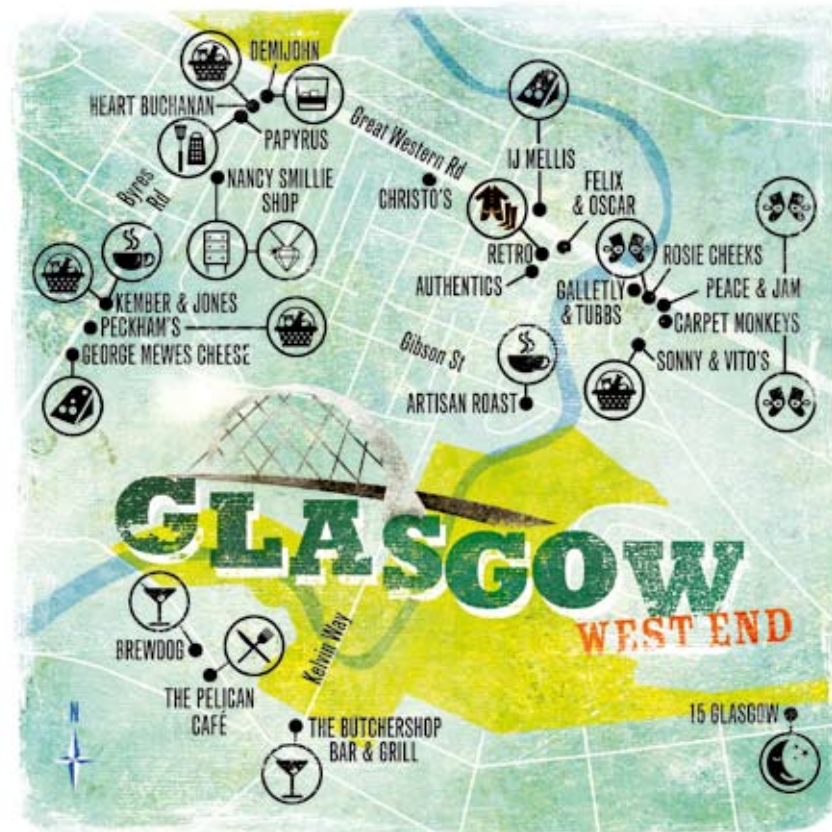
Jay Thundercliffe is a Glasgow-based food writer of cookbooks and food guides, who also covers Glasgow's eating-out scene for *The List* magazine, and edits its annual *Eating and Drinking Guide*.

10am Artisan Roast (artisanroast.co.uk) has taken coffee in Glasgow to another level. Carefully selected beans are roasted in-house and expertly prepared for the best coffee around. Try a single-origin filter brew, around £2, accompanied by a home-baked savoury brioche or decadent muffin, around £2.

11am For baby gifts and designer kidswear, try **Rosie Cheeks** (rosie-cheeks.com), **Carpet Monkeys** (0141 334 0995) and **Peace & Jam** (peaceandjam.com). Rummage through vintage delights at **Retro** (retro-clothes.com), antiques at **Authentics** (0141 334 2848), and designer wares at **Felix & Oscar** (felixandoscar.co.uk). **Galletly & Tubbs** (galletlytubbs.com) offers stylish furnishings and quirky tree decorations, while **Christo's** (christosgallery.com) has original Scottish paintings and jewellery. Cheesemonger **IJ Mellis** (mellischeese.co.uk) and Italian deli-café **Sonny & Vito's** (0141 357 0640) come up trumps for foodie gifts.

1pm Kember & Jones fine food emporium (kemberandjones.co.uk) blends café, deli and kitchen shop into a gourmet heaven, with delectable dishes to match the quality produce. Browse the kitchenware and cookbooks before enjoying superior sandwiches, salads and continental sharing platters, £12.95. Bread is homemade, as are the excellent cakes and tarts.

2.30pm Shop for food-lovers at gems such as **Heart Buchanan** deli (heartbuchanan.co.uk), the venerable **Peckham's** (peckhams.co.uk), 'liquid deli' **Demijohn** (demijohn.co.uk) for stacking whisky bottles, **Papyrus** (papyrusgifts.co.uk) for cool kitchenware, and **George Mewes Cheese** (georgemewescheese.co.uk). Nearby, the **Nancy Smillie Shop** (nancysmillieshop.com) does a great line in furnishings, homewares, gifts and jewellery.



Above: Kember & Jones' Rococo sweet selection

6pm Raise a festive glass with revolutionary Scottish brewer **BrewDog** (brewdog.com) at its trendy bar opposite Kelvingrove Art Gallery. Try the 5.6% Punk IPA, £3.50/pint. Nearby, the classy Manhattan stylings of **The Butchershop Bar & Grill** (butchershopglasgow.com) are fitting for a pre-dinner cocktail – go for the locally inspired Rob Roy, £7.50.

8pm Enjoy the gallery and university backdrop while sampling the best local and seasonal produce at **The Pelican Café** (thepelicancafe.co.uk). This relaxed bar-bistro offers exceptional regional dishes at conspicuously good prices, such as Orkney Gold steaks, £19.50/8oz sirloin. Everything on the extensive wine list is also available to take away.

Overnight The boutique b&b **15 Glasgow** (15glasgow.com) is a beautifully restored Victorian townhouse in a very central but tranquil setting. Spacious rooms blend original features with modern comforts. Doubles from £95.

PHOTOGRAPH: KRS KESIAK

Clifton Bristol

Bristol's chicest neighbourhood has a delightful village atmosphere with lots of independent shops and restaurants

Award-winning food and wine writer Fiona Beckett moved to Bristol four years ago. She is wine columnist for The Guardian and has also written for The Good Food Guide and Time Out.

10am Go for cappuccino, £2, at the **Arch House Deli** (archhousedeli.com), recently nominated Deli of the Year and a fantastic place for foodie gifts, such as their range of infused oils and vinegars, which includes fig and date balsamic cream vinegar.

11am Explore the **Clifton Arcade** (cliftonarcade.co.uk), a buzzy Victorian shopping mall where you can find antique and retro jewellery (**Bees & Graves**, 0117 973 8448), vintage clothes shops (**Clifton Vintage Boutique**, 07791 671229), a great knitting shop (**Woolly Thinking**, woolly-thinking.co.uk) and the **Otomi** Mexican food and crafts shop (otomi.co.uk), where you can pick up gorgeous spiced Mayan Drinking Chocolate from the Cool Chile Company, £4.90, or El Yucateco Salsa Chipotle, £3 – perfect stocking fillers. Round the corner there's the newly opened **Lahloo Pantry** (lahlootea.co.uk), which has a terrific range of teas – also available online. The Amber Oolong is a winner.

1pm The Albion (thealbionclifton.co.uk) is a relaxing gastropub with large oak tables that's hugely popular among the locals. The starters make good light lunches on their own – try the Montgomery cheddar and onion quiche, £4.50, or mussels, thyme and cider with chips, £9.

2.30pm Head over the road and browse round Princess Victoria Street and the Mall. There's another great deli, **Chandos Deli** (chandosdeli.com), the best greeting card and wrapping paper shop, **Sky** (skyframing.co.uk), and some really good gift shops including **About Face** (0117 923 7405), where you can buy gorgeous scented candles and colourful Saddler purses and wallets, from £4.99, and **Pod in the Mall** (thepodcompany.co.uk), which has cute presents for kids including Olive & Moss animal bibs, £10.95. There are more great gifts for toddlers at the lovely **Just So** toyshop (justso-online.co.uk) down Regent Street, including Honeybake wooden kitchen toys (the baking set is £44.99). Then wander through leafy St Andrews Walk to the restored Victorian **Lido** (lidobristol.com), for tea, poolside.

6pm Sneak over the border to neighbouring Redland for a glass of prosecco, £5, at the convivial **Flinty Red** wine bar (flintyred.co.uk), which also has some great nibbles. Try the deep-fried panisse – an incredibly moreish, spicy, chickpea pancake, £3.50.

8pm Have dinner at **Rockfish** (therockfishgrill.com), celebrity chef Mitch Tonks's stylish seafood bistro serving fantastic fresh fish from the Devon coast. It's a casual place with an open-plan

PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS TERRY (ROCKFISH)

eat out, eat away
city shopping



Clockwise from top: Sparrow's Tongue tea from Lahloo Pantry; sea bream at Rockfish; The Albion gastropub in Clifton

kitchen and booth-style diner seating. Share a charcoal-grilled sea bass with herbs and garlic, £21.50 each, with a glass of Mitch's own deliciously crisp white wine, Tonnix.

Overnight Number Thirty Eight Clifton (number38clifton.com) is the district's newest boutique hotel, a converted Georgian house with stunning views over the wild open spaces of the Downs on one side and the fairy-tale lights of the city below. Doubles from £100. 🍷

Liverpool One Liverpool

The Liverpudlian food and drink community is thriving – especially in the newly renovated Liverpool One area, where all the big chain stores sit alongside a great range of independent shops and restaurants



Jade Wright is food writer on the *Liverpool Echo* and *Daily Post*. She is also a judge for the North West Fine Food Awards.

10am Catalan restaurant **Lunya** (lunya.co.uk) opened last year and already its breakfast menu is legendary. Devotees travel cross-city for its crumbly morcilla black pudding, part of the full Catalan breakfast, £5.95. Then kick off the shopping in Lunya’s deli – pick up a bottle of fragrant pink vermouth vinegar or a pot of Empeltre olives.

11am It’s a short walk to **The Bluecoat**’s beautiful buildings (thebluecoat.org.uk), which contain galleries, an excellent selection of craft shops and quirky little stalls. Claire Bates, the owner of **Landbaby** (landbaby.blogspot.com), creates mini-masterpiece vintage accessories – anything from a handbag to a tea-cosy – out of beautiful old pieces of fabric, even your favourite old dress or grandmother’s tablecloth. For music cachet, **Probe Records** (probe-records.com) is one of the city’s oldest vinyl shops – Julian Cope, Pete Burns, and Frankie’s Paul Rutherford are all former employees. **Harvey Nichols Foodmarket** (harveynichols.com) is also nearby, with its brilliant hampers and gift sets.

1pm Lunchtime. There’s the grand **Upstairs at the Bluecoat**, or the high-ceilinged **Espresso** (also at The Bluecoat) – the latter attracts hungry art and media types with its free WiFi and great coffee. Aubergine couscous, coriander and chickpea salad, £3.20, comes highly recommended, and on chillier days, the homemade soup and chunky sandwich deal, £4.50, will keep you full until dinner.

2.30pm Stroll through **John Lewis** Liverpool’s kitchen department (johnlewis.com) to **Lakeland** (lakeland.co.uk). It’s a short walk on to **The Home Quarter** (thehomequarter.co.uk) – a large independent department store with a big, well-stocked kitchen section. Just down the road, at **The Chocolate Cellar** (thechocolatecellar.co.uk), owner Bala Croman makes everything on site; her hot chocolate is a meal in itself. Pick up unusual flavours of chocolate such as rose and chilli, £1.95/50g.

6pm **The Hub Alehouse & Kitchen** (thehub-liverpool.com) was voted ‘favourite bar’ at this year’s Liverpool Food & Drink awards. Relax over a tangy caipirinha, £5.50, or try the excellent Josephine Butler elderflower ale, £3.10/pint.



Left: Start your day with breakfast at Lunya; Above: Salt House Tapas

8pm For dinner, sister restaurant **Salt House Tapas** (salthousetapas.co.uk) is a short hop over the road. It’s a lovely, lively corner joint with a well-selected Spanish menu. Like most of the restaurants in this area, it only opened last year, but it has already attracted a loyal following. Try the seared scallops, sweetcorn purée and Serrano ham, £8.95, but save room for the Spanish cheeseboard, £5.50. There’s a good range of Spanish wines and a dedicated sherry bar.

Overnight The flash **Posh Pads** serviced apartments (posh-pads.co.uk) in a renovated 18th-century building can be booked nightly or weekly. Doubles from £65. 🏠

Montmartre Paris

The steep roads to the south of Montmartre hill are full of terrific bakeries, butchers, delis and greengrocers; Parisians will even cross town for some of them, but the everyday shops are full of gastronomic treasures, too. The area has become fashionable in recent years but it still feels like classic Paris, not least at Christmas, when the boulangeries and chocolatiers deck their stores with festive treats



Sophie Dening is a food and travel writer who does regular stints in Paris to report on its restaurant scene, and is author of *Hedonist's Guide to Paris*.

10am Avenue Trudaine is home to a number of nice cafés but **Kooka Boora Café Shop** (0033 156 921 241), which opened last spring to high praise, is the only one where you can get a decent flat white, €3.50.

11am Start off at **Arnaud Delmontel** (arnaud-delmontel.com) for macaroons – in seasonal flavours such as nougat, yuzu and chocolate-orange – that both look and taste exquisite, €12 for a box of eight. The mini-financiers, €9.50 for 150g, travel well too. Stop at **La Maison du Fromage** (00 33 145 268 488), just up the street, for owner Josiane Molard’s soft, creamy-white cow’s milk cheese, about €4. The Christmas treats at nearby **Chocolatier Natier** (0033 142 813 575) include chocolate stars, cherubs, and a dark-chocolate crown with candied orange peel and caramelised nuts, from €5.

1pm Have lunch next door at **Rose Bakery** (0033 142 821 280), the pared-down Anglophile deli-café that’s famous for its carrot cake, €7.50, and winter warmers such as braised shoulder of lamb with honey and rosemary, €17, or ceps and chestnut risotto, €16.

2.30pm It’s worth the short trek south to **A la Mère de Famille** (lameredefamille.com), a beautiful sweetshop that’s been in business since pre-revolutionary times. A gift box of fruit jellies, marzipan fruits, chocolates and calissons starts at €37. Head back north via **Aux Pipalottes Gourmandes** (0033 144 530 453), where you can browse 4,000-plus produits du terroir. Then seek out some vin pétillant naturel (sparkling wine) at the terrific **Cave des Abbesses** (0033 142 528 154). The Bulles de Roche Saumur, €15, makes a perfect Christmas aperitif.

6pm The **Cave du Miroir** (0033 142 337 969), is a new, all-day sibling for the well-established Le Miroir bistro over the road. You can order wines by the glass, from around €5, accompanied by good, simple snacks such as radishes with butter, €3, and boudin noir, from €4.

8pm **La Mascotte** (la-mascotte-montmartre.com) is one of very few authentic brasserie-café remaining in Paris. Amazingly, it’s not a tourist trap but a place that Parisians hold dear for its avuncular service and excellent fruits de mer, from €28, as well



Below left to right:
A la Mère de
Famille sweetshop;
Montmartre lit up
at Christmas



as old-school ris de veau poêlés (fried sweetbreads), €13.50, and braised pork knuckle with lentils, €23.

Overnight The rooms at hyper-trendy **Hotel Amour** (hotelamourparis.fr) are decorated in hip, bohemian style, so expect risqué photography and vintage bric-à-brac. The restaurant serves straightforward homemade food – burgers, steaks, roast chicken – that’s impeccably sourced; much of its produce is organic. Doubles from €155. 🍷

Pontcanna Cardiff

A 20-minute stroll from the Victorian Arcades and markets of Cardiff city centre, Pontcanna has boutiques rubbing shoulders with gastropubs and the galleries of its neighbouring district, Canton

Nicola Tudor has lived in the Cardiff area for six years. Her food blog, Cardiff Bites (cardiffbites.blogspot.com) was nominated at the Wales Blog Awards 2010 and she was a judge at the True Taste Wales awards 2011.

10am Breakfast on Welsh rarebit, £3.30, and Fairtrade coffee, from £1.20, at **Chapter** (chapter.org), a former school that now boasts a gallery, cinema and café-bar. In its shop, pick up Umphen Editions’ jewelled and retro Christmas cards, Pantone mugs and other design-friendly gifts.

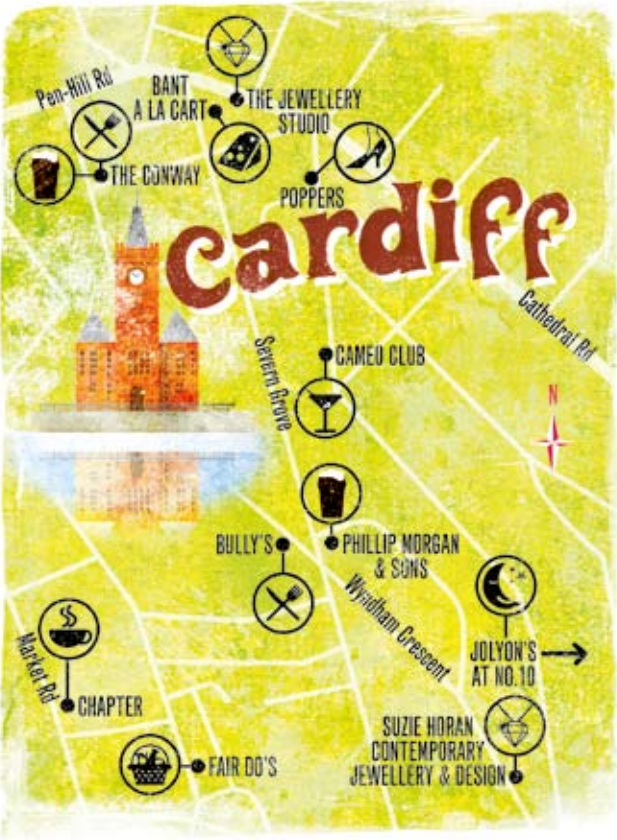
11am For eco-conscious presents, head to nearby **Fair Do’s** (fairdos.com), stockists of Fairtrade food hampers, from £15, as well as clothing, jewellery and children’s toys. A few minutes away in Pontcanna, shop for statement jewellery made by an award-winning Welsh designer at **Suzie Horan Contemporary Jewellery & Design** (suziehoran.com). And visit **Phillip Morgan & Sons** (029 2023 1570), a traditional off-licence selling a fantastic range of Welsh beers, including locally based Untapped Brewers (also available at untappedbrew.com).

1pm The Conway (knifeandforkfood.co.uk/conway.htm), Cardiff’s only entry in the Michelin pub guide, has an intimate bar serving local guest ales, tapas-sized plates and traditional British pub food – the menu changes on an almost daily basis. Settle into a leather sofa for a tapas lunch – typical tapas includes Perl Wen (Welsh cheese) with chilli and loganberry jam, and cod goujons with tartare sauce, £3.50 per tapas plate.

2.30pm Turn a corner and find chic, contemporary ladies’ fashion at **Poppers** (popperscardiff.co.uk), bespoke jewellery and Thomas Sabo watches at diamond experts **The Jewellery Studio** (jewellerystudio.co.uk), and a host of delightful interiors, antiques and other gift shops. **Bant a la Cart** deli (bantalacart.com) stocks Welsh cheeses such as award-winning Dragons Back, and delicious brownies made by Cardiff-based The Chocolate Brownie.

6pm Cardiff’s see-and-be-seen side comes out at the **Cameo Club** (cameoclub.co.uk), a former members’ club with dark-wood and chandelier-hung bar. Pick a cocktail from the lengthy menu or glug a glass of Sachetto Veneto Prosecco Frizzante di Paolo, £4.95.

8pm Bully’s (bullysrestaurant.co.uk) gets a-huuundred-and-eighty for its local foodie reputation. Serving unfussy, French cuisine, the charmingly rustic small restaurant is relaxed and welcoming. Daily specials typically include confit rabbit leg, flageolet beans, crispy pancetta and tarragon mustard sauce (£16.50). Wines on the mainly French list start at £22.



Clockwise from left: Russell Bullimore - owner of Bully’s; café-bar (and gallery and cinema), Chapter arts centre; Jolyons at 10



Overnight On leafy Cathedral Road, **Jolyons at No. 10** (jolyons10.com), sister to the popular Cardiff Bay boutique hotel, opened its doors this year. It mixes traditional regency furniture with bright, contemporary colours to stylish effect. Doubles from £75, b&b. 🍷

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID COTSWORTH, ALAMY

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Glockenbachviertel Munich

Don't do all your shopping at the Christmas market at Marienplatz. Munich's bohemian Glockenbachviertel quarter, together with Gärtnerplatzviertel (collectively known as 'Die Glocke') is full of trendy shops, restaurants and cafés, and is a great base for exploring the famous food market, the Viktualienmarkt



Barbara Geier is a German travel writer and co-founder of alternative travel website germanyiswunderbar.com. She has regularly visited Munich since childhood.

10am Grab a morning cappuccino, €2.70, at **Bar Corso** (barcorso.de) – part cosy ski hut, part style bar. If you prefer a less caffeinated start to the day, they also stock delicious organic, mostly herbal teas from local brand Wurzel Sepp.

11am Die Glocke's alternative vibe comes across clearly at shops such as **Schmatz Naturkost** (schmatz-naturkost.de), a light and bright health food store that also stocks natural cosmetic brands such as Dr Hauschka. Among café and chocolate shop **Götterspeise's** (goetterspeise.info) lovingly packaged products are chocolate Father Christmases, from €2.80. It also does cups of warm almond milk to go, €2.80 – ideal for staving off winter chills. On the same street, pop into French design shop **Salon Tsé & Tsé et Compagnie** (salontsetse.de) to pick up one of its quirky Buddha-shaped pudding moulds, €30.

1pm Modern-Bavarian café-bar **Firn** (firn-bar.de) serves classic Alpine dishes in an updated, contemporary way; for example, the Backhendl – fried chicken – €12.50, comes rolled in pumpkin seeds rather than the more traditional breadcrumbs. Try Firn's take on a typical Brotzeit (breads with cold cuts and cheeses), from €9.

2.30pm Take some time exploring Gärtnerplatz and the shops along Rumfordstrasse. Then immerse yourself in the foodie paradise that is the **Viktualienmarkt** (viktualienmarkt-muenchen.de) where 140 stalls and shops offer all sorts of local products, deli items and crafts. An astonishing variety of honey can be found at **Honighäusel** (honighaeusel.de), including a selection of small pots of Bavarian honeys, €1.90. An absolute seasonal must-buy is **Lebkuchen Schmidt** gingerbread (lebkuchenschmidt.de). Available in different variations - either black (chocolate-coated), white (sugar-coated) or brown (natural) – the gingerbread comes in colourful, nostalgic tins, from €6.50. The company is a household name in Germany and, in the run-up to Christmas, three million lebkuchen are produced each day, from a carefully guarded recipe.

6pm The stylish Louis Hotel (louis-hotel.com) serves a range of Asian-inspired cocktails at its Japanese-style **Emiko Bar**. The saké martinis are especially good, €9.50, or try one of their Japanese cocktails such as a Yokohama breeze, a peppy mix of shochu, cherry brandy and grapefruit juice, €9.50.



From left to right:
Götterspeise,
Viktualienmarkt



8pm Unpretentious **Kleinschmidtz** (kleinschmidtz.de) is a long-established neighbourhood restaurant with a big local following. Its classic Mediterranean cooking includes dishes such as lamb noisettes with thyme sauce, chanterelles and polenta, €22, and lavender honey parfait with chocolate sauce, €7.50.

Overnight **Hotel Olympic** (hotel-olympic.de) is a small hotel in the heart of the district, on a busy shopping street. Most of the rooms face a courtyard, and breakfast is served in a beautiful high-ceilinged room. Doubles from €155. 🍷

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10am Owned by local DJ, illustrator and tea-lover, Mr Scruff, **Teacup** café (teacupandcakes.com) is a hive of making 'n' baking activity. Try the eggs Benedict, £7.50, and a pot, £2.20, of Scruff's own tea blends. You can buy his teas, cups and T-shirts here, too.

11am **Richard Goodall Gallery** (richardgoodallgallery.com), a retail gallery for music- and movie-related artworks, and menswear store **Oi Polloi** (oipolloi.com) should yield knockout gifts for blokes. Opposite, **A Few Fine Things** (afewfinethings.co.uk) makes beautiful bespoke handbags. **Manchester Craft & Design Centre** (craftanddesign.com) comprises numerous artist-maker ateliers – there's cool perspex jewellery at **BLAC** (blacdesign.com), and teapots and cosies knitted from 1960s patterns at **Fibre** (fibredesigns.com).

1pm Lunch at **Common** (aplacecalledcommon.co.uk), an art and music bar with working men's club-style décor and eye-opening art. Its beef chilli, £6.50, and its tzatziki-dressed falafel and halloumi open kebab, £7.50, are both legendary.

2.30pm **Oklahoma** (0161 834 1136) is a crafty Aladdin's cave stocking everything from DIY cardboard cake-stands to plates designed by cult artist Rob Ryan. From there, loop out of the Northern Quarter, stopping off at Boggart Brewery's (boggart-brewery.co.uk) craft beer shop, **Micro Bar** (0161 277 9666), in the neighbouring Arndale Centre. Five minutes further on are potential foodie gifts in **Harvey Nichols Foodmarket** (harveynichols.com) and **Hanging Ditch** wine bar and shop (hangingditch.com). Head back to the Northern Quarter – with a stop at proper-coffee bar **North Tea Power** (northteapower.co.uk) before the shopping continues. **Piccadilly Records** (piccadillyrecords.com), sci-fi store **Forbidden Planet**

Right: A bedroom at the stylish Abode hotel near Manchester's Northern Quarter

Northern Quarter Manchester

The Northern Quarter is central Manchester's hip, creative enclave, packed with independent shops and great places to eat and drink



Tony Naylor was born, lives and works in Manchester. He writes about food and drink for olive, Restaurant magazine and The Guardian.



(forbiddenplanet.co.uk) and arty bookshop **Magma** (magamabooks.com) tick the box for trendy-geeky presents. Magma also stocks cool kitchen novelties. For style-conscious gifts, head to **Flannels** designer clearance store (flannelsfashion.com) or **Curiouser & Curiouser** (0161 835 4068).

6pm Dark and lively, **Socio Rehab** is N4's best cocktail bar (sociorehab.com) – try a gin and lavender Collins, £7. Alternatively, sink a superlative pint, from £2.75, at Marble Brewery's bar, **57 Thomas Street** (0161 832 0521).

8pm Regional ingredients such as Pugh's piglets and Goosnargh chicken are the bedrock of the **Northern Quarter Restaurant's** modern British menu (tnq.co.uk). Dishes such as lamb rump with peas, new potatoes, mint butter and olive jus, £19.25, are cleanly executed.

Overnight Just five minutes' walk from both Piccadilly Station and the Northern Quarter, chef Michael Caines's **Abode** (abodehotels.co.uk) has large, NY-loft-style rooms. Doubles from £89, b&b. 🍷

Covent Garden London

It's no big secret that Covent Garden – the area around the old market, between Charing Cross Road and Kingsway, High Holborn and the Strand – is great for shopping, dining and drinking. But bumping up against the old stalwarts are a steady stream of new additions keeping the area fresh



olive’s features editor and acting travel editor
Liz Edwards grew up in London. She and has lived and worked in the capital, writing about eating, drinking and travelling, for the last 12 years.



10am Kick off at **Kopapa** (kopapa.co.uk), Kiwi chef Peter Gordon’s latest all-day dining place. Turkish eggs (poached eggs in whipped yoghurt with hot chilli butter), £6.20, and spiced banana French toast with orange blossom labneh and bacon, £8.80, show off his signature fusion style even at breakfast time. Caffeine comes courtesy of **Monmouth Coffee Co.**, from £2, whose original branch is a few doors down on Monmouth Street.

11am Just round the corner are **Pages** (nisbets.co.uk), where you can pick up chef-standard kitchenware for food-nerd friends, and, at **Magma** (magamabooks.com) find super-cool design gems, such as shark-fin cruets, stationery and books. There’s gorgeous perspex jewellery at **Tatty Devine** (tattydevine.com); opposite, vintage show posters are a good buy at showbiz-related **Dress Circle** (dresscircle.co.uk), or for classy antique numbers there’s **Grosvenor Prints** (grosvenorprints.com). Pause for tea at **Bill's Produce Store** (billsproducestore.co.uk), where you can also custom-make hampers of pickles and preserves, from £10, then nip round the corner to **Stanfords** (stanfords.co.uk) for guidebooks, maps and all kinds of gifts for travel nuts.

1pm **Da Polpo** (dapolpo.co.uk) gets as busy as its sister restaurants Polpo, Polpetto and Spuntino – but at least you can book at lunchtime. Grab a bar seat or a vintage school chair and order small plates of arancini, £2.50, zucchini, chilli and mint pizzette, £6, and spicy pork and fennel meatballs, £5.

2.30pm Time to hit **Covent Garden Market** and its art and craft stalls. If you’re hunting for gifts for kids, **Benjamin Pollock's Toyshop** (pollocks-coventgarden.co.uk) does wonderful toy theatres and traditional games, while **Eric Snook** (ericsnook.co.uk) mixes classic toys with more contemporary gifts. Buy retro sweets



From top: Covent Garden Market at Christmas; Circus

at **Hope and Greenwood** (hopeandgreenwood.co.uk) and posh chocs at **Godiva** (godiva.com), then head up Neal Street for all things tea at **The Tea House** (covent-garden.co.uk/SITES/theteahouse) and cutting-edge trainers at **Offspring** (offspring.co.uk) and **Focus** (020 7836 5860). Small detours will take you to high-end vintage clothes at **Rokit** (rokit.co.uk), superlative cheeses at **Neal's Yard Dairy** (nealsyarddairy.co.uk), artisan goodies at Slow Food’s **The Taste Space** (slowfood.co.uk) and heavy-metal jewellery from the guy who supplies Metallica at **Crazy Pig Designs** (crazypigdesigns.com).

6pm It might be a bit early for the entertainment to be in full swing, but the cocktails at mirrors-and-baubles **Circus** (circus-london.co.uk) are just as good – try a figgy, honeyed Fifi La Plume, £9.50, and nibble edamame on ice, £3.50, from the pan-Asian menu. Come back later for the cabaret.

8pm It’s a brief stroll down Endell and Bow Streets to **Opera Tavern** (operatavern.co.uk). This converted pub has a lively bar on the ground floor and an upstairs restaurant serving Italian and Spanish tapas. The mini Iberico pork burger, £5.95, and chargrilled saltmarsh lamb, £7.75, are standout dishes.

Overnight Come full circle back to Seven Dials and the just-stylishly-refurbished **Radisson Edwardian Mercer Street Hotel** (radissonedwardian.co.uk/mercerstreet). Doubles from £215. 🐉

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Cathedral Quarter Belfast

Named after St Anne's, the Cathedral Quarter forms Belfast's surprisingly charming red-bricked and cobbled heart. The narrow streets have been revitalised with new galleries, bars and restaurants

 **Joris Minne, an Armagh native and Belfast resident for 20 years, writes a weekly restaurant column for the *Belfast Telegraph*.**

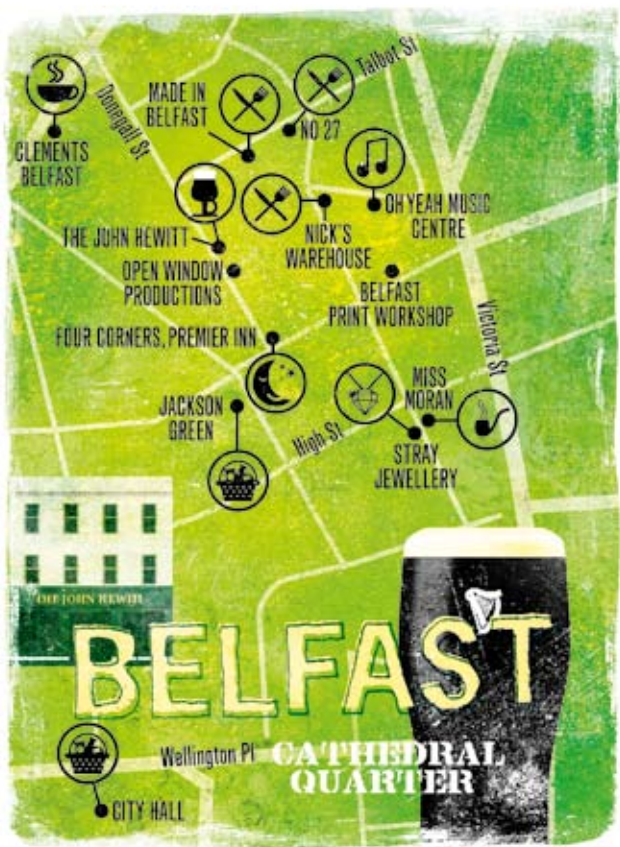
10am Coffee in **Clements Belfast** ([twitter.com/clementsbelfast](#)) opposite the *Belfast Telegraph* office on Royal Avenue will kick-start the day nicely, especially if you also order scones – the city's biggest and best. Go savoury with cheese and pepper, or sweet with blueberry and white chocolate or raspberry and honey, £1.95.

11am Dip briefly out of the Cathedral Quarter to find dozens of food and craft stalls at **City Hall's** Christmas market ([belfastcity.gov.uk/events](#)) – pick up locally made chocolates, toiletries and jewellery, Italian biscotti and nougat, Russian dolls, and Swedish hats and scarves. Then head back via the Victoria Square shopping precinct and check out **Stray Jewellery** ([strayjewellery.com](#)) – dispenser of bling and Belfast's cutest costume jewellery (they can also do repairs). Across the street is **Miss Moran** (028 9024 6836), the best little tobacconist in Ireland, with a great range of Cuban cigars, pipe tobacco, lighters and other paraphernalia – the perfect place to find a present for the inveterate smokers in your life.

1pm Make for **Nick's Warehouse** ([nickswarehouse.co.uk](#)) in Hill Street at lunchtime. It's a bustling brasserie with great food – try County Down chicken with linguine, feta and tapenade cream sauce, £8.95, or Irish grilled trout with pea, herb and caper potato cake and hollandaise, £9.50. The wine list is good and drinks also include locally brewed Copperhead dark lager.

2.30pm As well as recording studios and a rock exhibition at the **Oh Yeah Music Centre** ([ohyeahbelfast.com](#)), directed by Snow Patrol singer Gary Lightbody, there's a small shop selling CDs showcasing new talent, T-shirts and other music-related presents. Nearby in Waring Street is **Belfast Print Workshop** ([bpw.org.uk](#)), selling beautiful prints by Irish artists from £15 (and up to £3,000). Anto Brennan's sculpture shop, **Open Window Productions** ([openwindowproductions.blogspot.com](#)) showcases unusual pieces including chess sets based on international political figures. For a uniquely Northern Irish edible gift, pop along to **Jackson Green's** fruit and veg shop and pick up tiny bags of dulse, edible seaweed from the Antrim coast. It keeps for a couple of weeks (and is a great snack for shoppers on the go...).

6pm Warm up with live music and a hot Irish whiskey or a beer from the impressive range at friendly pub, **The John Hewitt** ([thejohnhewitt.com](#)), an award-winning bar that was set up to generate funds for the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre.



Below left to right: City Hall Christmas market and continental Christmas market



8pm Talbot Street offers two excellent choices – at both, the mood is relaxed, the service is good and the food locally sourced. For calm, clean lines on the eye, go for buzzy, modern **No 27** ([no27.co.uk](#)) – try pan-roasted hake, £16.95, or roast honey duck breast, £18.95. For a mismatched, neo-punky visual feast, it has to be **Made in Belfast** ([madeinbelfastni.com](#)), where you could follow potted Lissara duck pâté with toasted sourdough, £6.95, with a classic (sustainable) fish pie, £12.95.

Overnight Yes, it's a **Premier Inn**, but this one (w f) at **Four Corners** offers boho chic in a hugely charming restored granary and is rated very highly. Doubles from £39. 🍷



10am The inky-black espressos at **71 Irving Place Coffee & Tea Bar** (irvingfarm.com) are made from beans roasted at an upstate farm, imparting them with a robust earthy flavor. Fortify with a fluffy homemade waffle, \$7, and pick up a bag of Gotham Blend to go, \$13.

11am **ABC Carpet & Home's** (abchome.com) two brownstones are full of things to make your home and kitchen heavenly, plus a secret top-floor restaurant (ABC Kitchen), helmed by Jean-Georges Vongerichten, that dishes up house-roasted turkey sandwiches with smoked apple bacon, \$18. Fish through the shelves at whimsical kitchenware store **Fishs Eddy** (fishseddy.com) or inhale the aromas of charcuterie, and artisanal and organic cheeses wafting around **Beecher's Handmade Cheeses** (beechershandmadecheese.com). Then swing by **L'Atelier du Chocolate** (cgchocolates.com) for deep, dark chocs flavoured with cardamom, wasabi, rose and pistachio at \$2 a pop.

1pm Book a seat at **Manzo**, the most in-demand restaurant of many at food emporium **Eataly** (eatalynyc.com), to dig into blood sausage with crispy pig's ear, \$15, or ribeye steak with Yukon potatoes and gorgonzola, \$45.

2.30pm Eataly overflows with Italian delicacies, mostly from Piedmont. Among the dried pastas and olive oils are towering two-foot Guzzini cheese graters, \$40. Hit the food stalls at **Union Square Greenmarket** (grownyc.org/unionsquaregreenmarket) for fresh, organic treats such as lip-smacking syrup produced by Deep Mountain Maple in Vermont, \$8-\$20. Continue your stroll to the kiosks selling handcrafted jewellery, ornaments and toys at **South Union Square** (unionsquarenyc.org). Then buck yourself up with a steamy cup of hot chocolate, \$5.25, or a chocolate

Union Square New York

Few places in New York are as magical as Union Square in the run-up to Christmas. On bustling 14th St, the busy square is surrounded by shops filled with delicious festive treats and top-notch dining spots



A reporter based in New York, Ginger Adams Otis has been writing about NYC's best restaurants for more than a decade, for publications such as *Lonely Planet* and the *New York Post*.



crêpe at **Chocolate By the Bald Man** (maxbrenner.com) before ducking into **Filene's Basement** (filenesbasement.com) for designer clothes, bags and accessories at half-price or less.

6pm **Pete's Tavern** (petestavern.com) has been around since 1864, doling out pale ales, lagers and zingy martinis. Swing through the doors and sink into a hundred year-old booth – maybe even the one where American writer O. Henry penned his Christmas tale, *Gift of the Magi*, in 1902.

8pm A pared-down Lyonnaise menu means **L'express** (l'expressnyc.com) is a French bistro like no other. Match house specialties like boeuf bourguignon, \$17.95, with a crusty crème brûlée or tarte Tatin to keep the cold at bay.

Overnight **Ace Hotel** (acehotel.com/newyork) is a 10-minute walk north of Union Square. Rooms are short on space but long on atmosphere and its late-night restaurant, The Breslin, is the perfect place for a nightcap. Doubles from \$409. 🍷

Clockwise from above: An overview of the annual Christmas market, Union Square; Manzo at Eataly; Union Square Christmas market; Beecher's Handmade Cheeses

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