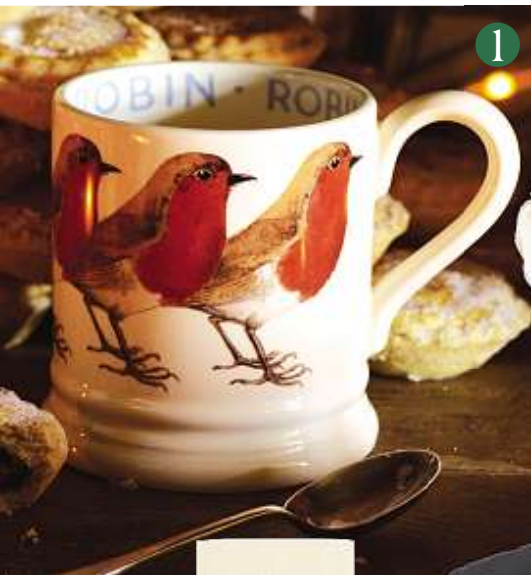


Season's EATINGS

Here's our round-up of new products, places and fabulous tipples to make your Christmas extra-special...



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WINE COLUMN

with Felicity Bellamy



Most people enjoy a tippie (or two!) at Christmas – here's an idea of the wines I'd like to drink over the festive season.

I tend to drink supermarket Champagne, which I've kept for about six months to give it a bit more bottle age – this year it's from Waitrose.

For those of you who want more for your money, why not pick Prosecco from northern Italy? This wine has become much more fashionable. My own Prosecco Castello 4357 (£8.65) never fails to impress. As for whites, my favourite is still a Sauvignon Blanc from Tasmania – Tamar Ridge Devil's Corner (£9.25). It really is superb – crisp, aromatic and delicious. For a big gathering, it's worthwhile opting for something less expensive such as the Kintu range from Chile. The Sauvignon and Merlot, both £4.99, are eminently quaffable. The red I'll choose to go with turkey is from Australia – Hackett Old Vine Grenache 2006 (£8.99). It's rich, fruity and will stand up to the full flavours of a Christmas dinner. Dessert wine has always been one of my favourite treats. I look to South Africa this year for a half bottle of Jordan Melifera Botrytis Riesling (£9.99). The fortified muscats from Rutherglen in Australia are also delicious – especially with mince pies.

■ Nene Valley Wines telephone 01604 770257

1. Snuggle up at Christmas with Emma Bridgewater robin mug, £14.99, from Abraxus Cookshop, St Giles Street, Northampton and Heart of the Shires shopping village in Weedon.

2. If you've never tasted the delicious cakes and puddings made by historic company Betty's in Yorkshire, you're missing a real treat. For bespoke hampers and gift boxes at a variety of prices, visit www.bettysbypost.com or 0845 345 3636. Last Christmas orders must be placed by December 14.

3. Treat the chocolate lover in your life with the I Love Chocolate Hamper, £25 each, from Thorntons, Abington Street, Northampton and High Street, Kettering, www.thorntons.co.uk

4. Tableware from The Just Slate Company would make a welcome addition to any Christmas dining setting, from £15, available at www.justslate.co.uk, 01592 654222.

Christmas came early at The Embankment in Bedford, which held a thank you dinner for special guests, including *Image* editor Ruth Supple.

The evening featured a delicious turkey dinner, complete with all the trimmings, and mulled Pimms aperitifs.

Guests were invited to experience a relaxing massage or facial before the night with The Embankment's on-site beauty company.

The evening celebrated an award won for the second year running for the pub company behind The Embankment and its sister pubs, The Swan in Salford, and The Black Horse in Woburn.

Peach Pubs picked up the highly-coveted best place to work in hospitality bar chain 2009 at a glittering ceremony in London.

■ Christmas bookings are available at The Embankment, telephone 01234 261332 for more information.

