



Christmas traditions around Manchester

Cutting costs at Christmas

Fashion trends this winter



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Letter from the team

It is the most wonderful time of the year - or so they tell us. Putting together this Christmas issue was a mix of compiling the light-hearted things that we all enjoy during the festive season, whilst also making sure that we cover the more sombre and emotional themes that consume some families at this time of year. We've got stories to brighten your days and speak to the moments that make this season special - and challenging.

Christmas isn't always easy. For those finding it hard to embrace the season's joy while carrying the weight of grief, we have gathered sincere advice and heartfelt stories to remind those that need it that support is always within reach. In this edition, we also shine a light on the severity of spiking, a growing issue which is particularly prominent around Christmas, and explore how we can protect one another.

On a lighter note, who could forget the humble jacket potato? It is certainly having its moment in the spotlight! Whether you love the classic beans and cheese or are more on the experimental side, we explore why this dish is so comforting to all especially in this time of cold and crisp. The holiday season is also a time for giving back.

Making a shoebox full of things to send to children less-privileged than ourselves at school was an activity that brought the community together - but exploring the impact it had on the people receiving them, really highlights the extent of the joy that giving back can have on others.

In this issue, we also take a look at the inclusivity of makeup - with a particular focus on fair skin.

Whilst we are seeing a much-needed increase in the range of products catered to darker skin tones, with just two or three fairer tones to choose from, are people with paler skin being left behind?

All of this, as well as sustainable gift giving, money saving tips, winter fashion trends, and more, in this Christmas edition of the Mancunian Matters magazine.

By: Amy, Laiba, Mia, Milly, Mehek

What is cuffing season?

By Mia Williams

With the nights drawing in and the temperature seemingly dropping everyday, only one season can be around the corner. And no, it's not winter...it's cuffing season. Trends show that more and more people are getting into relationships during the winter months, but what is it about the festive season that makes having a partner so appealing? Getting 'cuffed' - AKA getting into a relationship with someone - is something that happens all year round. But with brat summer sadly over, we have seen a lean towards securing yourself a partner for the winter season.

Let's face it - Christmas markets, parties, and family events aren't much fun on your own. Neither is the colder weather. This, coupled with the constant chatter of family asking if you have had yet another unsuccessful year of finding love, doesn't make for a very joyful festive season. With cringe-worthy Christmas songs blasting in every shop, and



"It just feels so magical." Credit: Alice Donovan Rouse

an overly loved-up couple around every street corner, it's no wonder people are scouting out past situationships to secure for the festive season. Generally, cuffing season is thought to start in October and end in March the following year- ensuring you make the most of the Valentine's Day celebrations of course.

The idea is that you get into a short relationship for the winter season, before becoming single again for a 'hot girl' summer. According to sex and relationship adviser Katie Lasson, cuffing season is more to do with 'human needs' and 'emotional responses' than any thing else. She said: "Research

indicates that during the colder months, the drop in sunlight can lead to lower serotonin levels, impacting mood and potentially increasing the desire for emotional comfort. "Seeking a partner during this time can act as a buffer, providing emotional and even physical support against the 'winter blues'."

Despite the increased sense of warmth and connection you might feel with a partner during December, Lasson emphasised the importance of getting into a relationship for the right reasons.

The expert added: "While cuffing season can provide comfort, it is essential to stay mindful of your emotional needs.

"If entering a relationship mainly for the season, it helps to set clear expectations to avoid future misunderstandings."

A survey conducted by dating app Hinge, found that men were 15% more likely to want a relationship during winter, and women were 5% more likely.

But when did this cultural obsession begin?

It was in 2011 when the Urban Dictionary was the first to put out an official definition of the term.

It read: "During the fall and winter months people who would normally rather be single find themselves along with the rest of the world desiring to be 'cuffed' or tied down by a serious relationship."

Emily Severn from Nottingham, said that getting into a relationship during 'cuffing season' was more exciting.

She said: "There is just something about being cold and trying to feel cosy during the festive season.

"Walking in the park and having a hot drink on a date.

"Also after a walk in the cold, the hot drink

from a coffee shop or Christmas market is very welcoming."

She added: "It just feels so magical, minus the rain that there is a lot of."

Her cuffing season relationship has lasted, and truly believes that any relationship, no matter the time of year, is just what you make it.

She said: "While some people may approach it with a casual mindset, for others, it can lead to meaningful and lasting relationships.

"It is not the season itself that determines the outcome but the intentions and connection between the individuals involved."

After falling in love during the winter, Severn believes that the season had nothing to do with the 'longevity

of her relationship.

She said: "While cuffing season might spark the initial desire for connection, the depth and longevity of the relationship depends entirely on the people involved and how they nurture that bond."

Lydia Young from Bournemouth is also in a successful cuffing season relationship.

She said: "I started going out with my boyfriend in January, we'd been talking for about four months but didn't make it official until then.

"I think there's something romantic about Christmas time and spending it with loved ones so maybe there's a certain vibe that goes around making it more exciting to be in a relationship."



"The longevity of a relationship depends on the people involved." Credit: Brooke Cagle on Unsplash



What fashion trends are in this winter?

By Laiba Chaudhri

As winter approaches the question on all our minds is 'what are we wearing this season?' Whether you're looking for fashion inspiration or some gift ideas here's a guide in my top eight on what I think will be in this winter.

1. One thing that was huge during the autumn season was all things red and I think that will definitely still be popular during winter especially to add pops of colours to your outfits such as adding a red scarf, bag or shoes. This is also the perfect trend for the festive season and is a perfect way to spice up an outfit!

2. In autumn we also saw the rise of suede and though the suede coat trend may not be as practical for a rainy winter, I think suede bags will still be a staple accessory for a winter outfit. Coach is offering many different styles with suede on of my favourites being the suede Hamptons bag which would be a great Christmas gift. However ASOS also have some amazing more affordable options one being the ASOS design

suede panelled oversized tote for £80.

3. Another thing that has become big in women's winter fashion is fur coats which is the perfect fashionable option to keep warm this winter. Stradivarius have a perfect affordable option of a short fur coat which would be a perfect gift for anyone who loves keeping up with the latest trends.

4. Cardigans – one thing that has been big for a while now is round neck cardigans. I think these will still be big throughout winter and are a perfect chic layering option. I love them layered with wool blazers and are such a versatile item to dress up or wear casually. H&M have some great options under £30.

5. I also think that this is the year we say bye to puffer jackets and will see more long wool coats and blazers. Especially ones with more of a slouchy oversized fit.

6. Earthy tones are definitely becoming a winter staple and a perfect place to shop



for this is Sisters and Seekers as they have loads of earthy tone clothing items. Some of my favourites are their hoodies which will definitely keep you warm this season.

7. All things bow – we've seen bows everywhere this year, but I think they'll be especially big towards Christmas. I think add-

ing a velvet bow to your hair is the best way of spicing up any festive outfit.

8. Leather jackets are something that have been big the past few years which I think will still be big this year. But specifically red and brown leather as they aren't as harsh as a black.

An expert's tips on a greener Christmas

By Laiba Chaudhri

A modern Christmas has become associated with waking up to lots of presents under your tree, but a huge issue is the over consumption over the holiday period, and it makes us question how sustainable gift giving is.

I spoke to Lynda D'aboh to gain more insight on the importance of sustainability over Christmas and to share tips on how we can improve. Lynda is the founder of 'Wonderlusting' on Instagram where she promotes sustainable living.

Companies have perfected ways to get people buying during winter and it can sometimes be hard to resist with black Friday, cyber-Monday and winter sales all being conveniently around Christmas. However over consumption has become an issue people tend to forget when doing their Christmas shopping.

Whether it be buying multiple rolls of wrapping paper, ribbon and bows or new Christmas decorations every year we tend to be less cautious about sustainability during this period, but Sustainability at Christmas isn't about being a kill joy and getting in touch with your inner Scrooge. It's about being responsible and taking care of our home - the planet! With more intentional choices we can enjoy the holidays without leaving behind a mess for future generations to clean up.

This isn't about being perfect; it's about doing better. A little thought goes a long way in keeping the season merry *and* mindful.

But how can we avoid overconsumption?

"Unfortunately over-consumption is basically a Christmas tradition!"

Here's a few tips from



Lynda to rein it in while keeping the season fabulous:

One thing we can try to do is shop smarter by making a list and sticking to it 9as hard as it may seem) those impulse "just in case" buys usually end up gathering dust anyway. Nowadays social media has set the expectation for Christmas one of them being having a new theme every year. But being mindful and investing in decorations that will last you for years won't take away the magic and will also take a bit of weight of your shoulder when it comes to shopping for the season.

When it comes to gift

giving, try to skip the stuff and give experiences instead such as concert tickets, cooking classes, or fun days out create memories, not waste. If you are looking for meaningful gifts, the best way to stay sustainable is to look for small businesses – this is also a great way to give unique gifts! A perfect place to look right now is the Manchester Christmas markets with many stalls for you to find the perfect gift. Try to remember to go for quality instead of quantity, it's okay to not wake up to tons of presents if the ones you get are meaningful and will last you.

But how to be more



Credit: @wonderlusting on instagram taken by Lynda Dáboh

sustainable? Here are Lyndas top ten tips!

1. Ditch the glittery wrapping paper (plastic coated and not recyclable) for something reusable, like *furoshiki* which is a type of Japanese fabric wrapping or even newspaper.

2. Go for cork, bamboo, or recycled materials when . Think eco-friendly, stylish, and built to last you forever.

3. Find those quirky

jumpers, unique decorations, and vintage treasures second-hand. Pre-loved is the vibe this year.

4. Gift experiences - Spa days, wine tastings, or even a tree-planting session. memories over material things every time.

5. Choose ethical brands: Support companies that put the planet first, whether that's through carbon-neutral production, zero-waste

packaging, or giving

back to environmental causes.

6. Deck the halls sustainably Forget mass-produced plastic baubles. Try to find natural or home-made decorations. This is a perfect thing to also do with children to get them into the spirit! Invest in timeless pieces that you'll cherish and reuse for years rather than throwaway trends

7. Shop local to cut down on transport emissions and support

small businesses.

8. DIY gifts: Hand-made presents are thoughtful, unique, and often way more meaningful with a lower carbon footprint.

9. Borrow or rent don't buy: if you need extra chairs or killer party outfits, rent them!

10. Plan festive meals carefully to avoid waste.

Add more plant-based dishes to your menu.

“There’s a real stigma around spiking”

By Milly Harrison

“Being a victim of spiking isn’t just an isolated event it alters your perspective on nights out and celebrations and it affects you for the rest of your life.”

Christmas is all about celebrations and bringing good cheer to the young and the old, but ahead of the festive period not everyone is feeling as excited about all the work’s do’s, family parties and nights out with friends that are fast approaching.

Here a brave woman, who wishes to remain anonymous, shares her account of personal and traumatic experiences with spiking and how it has changed the way she lives her life. Are the police and government doing enough for these victims?

“The incident occurred in 2021 when I was freshly 18-years-old. I have never really opened up about my spiking experience before as I was never made to feel comfortable enough to admit what had happened and I felt as though people wouldn’t understand the extent of what I had been through.

I had just finished work and was going out for just one drink before heading home, as it was around the Christmas/Winter period and all my friends were out. It was also a weekend so I had just been paid and at the time I was being paid cash in hand, I had made roughly £400 including tips with it being the festive period.

As I went out straight from work I had placed the money that I had made in my bag which I assumed would be safe, as I was only heading out for one drink and I had intended to keep my bag on my shoulder and with me at all times.

The pub I went out to was Wetherspoons, I bought a drink but then bumped into some friends that I knew and stupidly left my drink on the table whilst I went to greet them.

When I came back to my drink after roughly 30 minutes I downed it and intended to then make my way home.

The next thing I know I was leaving the pub and heading to a nightclub which wasn’t on my original agenda for the night. It was probably 2 minutes away

from the pub I was in. Once I had entered the nightclub I do not remember anything from that point onwards, I had not consumed more than that one drink I had had in the previous pub yet my memory and body just shut down.

The next thing I knew I woke up in a bush outside, lying on the floor with my bag beside me. My friends found me and took me home. I was in and out of consciousness and it was so scary. It was the worst experience of my life.

When I got home I could not stop being sick and I fell asleep on the floor of my shower. When I woke the next day I looked in my bag and saw that someone had stolen all of my money that I had earned from work and taken out with me into town.

I should have but I never went to the hospital, I was taken home by my friends and was then in the care of my mum after that. When I mustered up the strength the following day I returned to the place my friends had found me and naively prayed that my money had just fallen out of

my bag and would still be there, during this I had to stop every couple minutes to be sick, it was horrible.

I never reported it because I feel the police never do anything about it. The drugs seemed to pass through my system pretty quickly, as far as I am aware, and within a few days, physically, I was back to feeling myself but my symptoms on the night were memory loss, brain fog, sickness, dizziness and fading in and out of consciousness.

Moving forward it has affected me, being a victim of spiking isn’t just an isolated event it alters your perspective on nights out and celebrations and it affects you for the rest of your life. I will never take a drink from someone else, I will never leave the house with money in

my bag and I will never leave my drink unattended. I guess in some aspects it’s taught me

lessons but I should never have had to go through what I did to find them out. It definitely knocked my confidence and it has made it very hard for me to trust people.



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash



My friend also had something similar happen to them and her experience wasn't great with the police. They also couldn't prove it so I felt that there was no point. There's a real stigma around spiking I feel.

“Being a victim of spiking isn't just an isolated event it alters your perspective on nights out and celebrations and it affects you for the rest of your life.”

However, one thing I did not do is blame myself for other people's actions. I should not have left my drink unattended but the person who committed the crime had the intention of doing it. Therefore I believe they would have found a way regardless. It was such a horrendously traumatic incident in the first place that blaming myself would not have gotten me anywhere, the anxiety of it all cleared up pretty quickly but I put that down to the sort of individual

I am, I can imagine that for others this isn't as easy.



Photo by Adam Wilson on Unsplash



Photo by Dan Gold on Unsplash

What is being done to tackle it?

According to data sourced by Greater Manchester Police, over the past five years reports of spiking in Manchester have increased to what some would consider a scary amount. In 2019 there were a total of 128 recorded reports of spiking to Manchester's police force and recent data that only extends as far as September 2024 shows that there have already been 463 offences this year. Despite the government's plans to tackle the rise of spiking the numbers seem to still be increasing. The Home Office set out plans in December

2023 to modernise the law making it clear that spiking putting drugs or alcohol into another person's drink or body without their consent - is a criminal offence. A more detailed account of their plan consisted of more training for door staff to help prevent potential perpetrators from entering establishments, funding for testing kits alongside research into these kits to detect when a drink has been spiked and intensive operations by the National Police Chiefs' council to target key weeks when spiking seems to be prevalent such as the Christmas period. The King also made reference to the of-

fence in his 2024 official opening of the new Parliament speech, once again introducing a new law to make spiking a specific criminal offence. This was put in place with the hopes that a new and specific offence would help police better respond to incidents. Therefore, there are plans being put in place to make bars and establishments safer, now only time and new data will tell if these suggestions being put into action will work. On everyone's behalf we hope that this world is one step at a time becoming a safer place for the community.



Photo by George Bakos on Unsplash



What to watch this Christmas?

By Laiba Chaudhri



Credit: Joshua Herrera

Christmas is fast approaching which also means it's time for some of our seasonal favourites to come back on our screens but what do we have to look forward to this year?

Whether you're looking for a festive cinema trip, Christmas theatre shows or just need something to watch on Christmas day, here are some shows and experiences to look forward to.

One of the core memories of a British Christmas is seeing the TV guide and getting to see what Christmas classics are playing over the

festive period. I did a survey to see what people are looking to the most.

The top pick was drawn between the Dr Who Christmas special and the Gavin and Stacy Christmas special both getting 25% of votes each. And luckily for fans

Lucky for fans the Dr Who Christmas special has been confirmed to air on TV at 5:30pm on Christmas day.

Gavin and Stacy fans can also look forward to the last ever special which is going to be 90 minutes long, the airtime yet to be confirmed.

From a survey I took a

Christmas carol seems to be a fan favourite in Manchester and this winter you can catch a Christmas carol musical In Manchester at The Lowry on the 6th of December.

For any theatre and HOME Manchester is offering many Christmas shows to get you in the festive spirit. One of them being Miracle on 34th street which is running from the 6th of December until the 31st. The show is based on the classic tale where a New York department store frantically need to hire a new Sants and end up hiring one who thinks hes the real deal which leads to a court case on his

authenticity leaving the fate in the hands of a girl who has to restore peoples belief in Santa clause. It's the perfect show to water with friends or family to get into the festive mood.

Elf the musical is another fan favourite and is currently touring around the UK. If you're in the north west, you can catch elf the musical in Leeds at the first direct arena on the 23rd and 24th of December. Or if you feel the post-Christmas blues you can watch the musical in hull on the 27th of December!

For everyone who loves a festive movie, you can enjoy them throughout December. The Everyman cinema is offering a festive menu and is also showing some festive favourite films which would be the perfect experience to get in the Christmas spirit. Some of the movies they have on their programme include Love Actually, Home Alone 2, The Holiday and It's A Wonderful Life and you'll definitely find something for you making this a great option for everyone!

The worst ways to find out Santa isn't real

By Milly Harrison

It's the most wonderful and magical time of the year, but for some this time of year is full of unexpected revelations and heart-breaking confrontations. Some kids have it gently explained to them, while others face the truth in the most bizarre, unexpected, or downright painful ways. Here we will explore ten of the worst and most crushingly comical ways kids have discovered the truth about Santa Claus.

1. The Christmas Morning Disaster - Jacqueline Osbourne

At 13, a group of siblings eagerly rushed down the stairs to greet Christmas morning, only to find... no presents in their stockings or by the tree. Confused, they ran to their mum's room and said: "Mam, Santa hasn't been." Her response? "Oh, s**t! I've forgotten to put the toys out." Talk about ruining the magic. While the siblings tried to salvage the moment, their little sister was inconsolable, crying for hours after the accidental reveal.



2. The Carrot Conundrum - Alice Gregory

Curiosity can lead to some questionable conclusions. At 10, one child became suspicious of Santa during her annual Christmas eve ritual. She carefully and cleverly placed a carrot out for Rudolph, counting the amount her parents had in the house. The next morning the carrot had gone off the plate as usual but had "mysteriously" returned to the fridge. That was the final clue Santa had been replaced by the cold, hard truth. There was no fooling this girl.

3. Grandad's Not-So-Silent Night - Thomas Brace

Every year, one lucky child got a special phone call from Santa on Christmas Eve. Or so they thought. The call was actually from their grandad, who, for reasons unknown, liked to pretend he was jolly old Saint Nick.

One year, the child caught on, realising that Santa's "ho-ho-ho" sounded suspiciously like their grandad's voice. The magic of Christmas? Gone in a heartbeat. Let's hope there's no hard feelings after that one.

4. The Amazon Slip-Up - Joe Mulhane

Online shopping, with the growth of electronics and the online world, is convenient for parents but in this

case catastrophic for kids. One child, eager to get a sneak peek at a potential Christmas gift that he had written on his annual letter to Santa, checked Amazon. When browsing he found that the DVD he wanted had already been delivered to the house. With one click, the veil was lifted, and it became clear that it was the parents, not Santa, doing the shopping. Kids these days are just too clever!

5. The Best Friend Betrayal - Poppy Dipnall

For some, the truth is revealed in the playground. In year three, one child's best friend, perhaps unwittingly, spilled the beans about Santa not being real. A casual conversation turned into a moment of pure heartbreak when the friend nonchalantly said: "But... Santa isn't real, is he?" It was a cruel moment of social education that left one child's perspective changed for life.

6. The Supermarket Showdown - Phil Wilkinson

Illness can often bring



unexpected moments of revelation. One child, off school with the flu, was taken to Asda by their mum. While standing in line, the child overheard a conversation between the man ahead of them and the retail worker. The man was buying a full trolley of Christmas toys for his kids. The innocent excitement of Christmas was shattered in that instant, and the magic of Santa Claus was replaced by the harsh reality of consumerism. As if being poorly and being dragged around Asda wasn't heartbreaking enough!

7. Dad in Disguise - Emma Butterworth

Sometimes, reality hits when you least expect it, like at a children's Christmas party. At one local cricket club event, a child excitedly waited for Santa to make his yearly entrance, only to be greeted by none other than their own dad in a cheap Santa suit. The realisation came quickly that Santa

was in fact not real but denial was deep rooted into this kid. Years later, at the pub, family members laughed about the whole "Santa's not real" situation. Still in denial the child asked, "What? Santa isn't real?" The whole family burst into laughter, leaving the child in tears for a second time.

8. The Drum Kit Disaster - Matthew Butterworth

Imagine waking up on Christmas morning, ready to see what Santa has brought you. For one child, Christmas morning started a little earlier than expected. The surprise was ruined when their parents, trying to sneak a drum kit into the room, accidentally dropped it at the end of the bed. The early-morning crash was enough to snap the child out of the illusion that Santa was real and had anything at all to do with the present. It was a lesson in ruined surprises and the

end of childhood innocence.

9. The Lump of Coal - Norman Comley

No one wants to find a lump of coal in their Christmas stocking, but for one child, it was the beginning of the end for Santa's magic. Their parents delayed their Christmas morning presents, due to the kids' poor behaviour all year round.

It wasn't until the evening of Christmas day that the child received their presents from their parents. This cruelly and unfortunately uncovered the fact that Santa was in fact not real. No more reindeer hooves or sleigh bells, just mum and dad trying to make up for the trauma caused that Christmas.

10. The Geography Teacher's unfortunate lesson - Serena Murphy

For some kids, school is the place where the truth comes out, no

matter how hard you try to protect it. One child, in Year 7, found out from an unexpected source, their geography teacher. While the class laughed at the idea of Santa being real, the teacher casually remarked that he wasn't. In that moment, the last shred of childhood wonder vanished. The whole class knew, but for this one child, it was a particularly painful moment of awakening.

While these tales are entertaining in hindsight, there is a better way for children to learn the truth about Santa. It has been recommended that the conversation should be gentle and gradual, quite the opposite to these ten ways above. The key is fostering a sense of wonder, even if it no longer comes from a jolly man in a red suit. After all, Christmas can still be magical, even without the man in the sleigh.



Making a difference in Manchester this Christmas

By Amy Bewick

Christmas time is considered 'the most wonderful time of the year' but is it the same for everyone? What is a month full of family time, gifts, and traditions for most, 2024 presents a Christmas of struggle for others.

With the cost-of-living crisis still weighing heavy on many households, giving back to those less fortunate than yourself is a fantastic way to put a smile back on someone's face.

One in five kids in the UK currently go without necessities such as fresh food and warmth according to Action for Children.

I spoke to a school-teacher who put this into action - helping a family after finding out that one of her pupils would not be having a Christmas.

She took this information and reached out to the mother to give this family the Christmas they deserve.

She said: "Obviously I will not be talking about the reason she is in this situation, but I felt like I could not sit back and watch this happen."

"The mum had told her children that Santa was sick this year so would not be coming due to the situation that she was in. She had five children. Thinking about it broke me. Thinking about her children waking up on Christmas, speaking to kids at school about what they got and her feeling guilty about it. "I reached out to her and told her that I would do everything that I could to help as both her and the kids did not deserve this. I have my two kids covered so any money I had spare I bought presents for her kids and dropped them off. I genuinely would do anything to change a child's Christmas." Giving back at Christmas is both extremely important and achiev-

able for most people, whether it be a small donation to a food bank or buying your kids' struggling classmate a present, below are several ways to help during this time.

Donate a meal with life share Manchester

There are countless things you can donate around this time. You can donate to your local food bank to help families make a Christmas dinner; you could donate money towards giving a homeless person a meal on December 25.

Locally to Manchester, you can donate to life share. Life Share Manchester is a voluntary organization with the aim of helping and protecting the homeless within Manchester and Salford. They are active all year round, helping those who have struggled to get off the streets.

They are the first point of contact, providing them with practical as-

sistance, support, and information.

The aim is to provide the people on the streets with a starting point and being there alongside them while they rebuild their lives.

During Christmas, this charity provides the homeless with a Christmas dinner. You can pay for these meals on their website, <https://www.lifeshare.org.uk/christmas-2024/>.

In 2023 they served 3000 Christmas din-



Picture courtesy of Cash for Kids

ners to the homeless, with 1000 extra meals projected to be given out in 2024.

Cash for Kids- Mission Christmas

Cash for Kids is dedicated to improving the lives of disadvantaged children from birth up until and including 18 in all ten boroughs of Greater Manchester.

They aim to be there for kids when they need it most, helping

combat illness, poverty and neglect and lending a helping hand to those who need it.

The charity works with businesses, charities, and community groups who share the same vision and provide grant-funding yearly and Christmas gifts in December.

They managed to raise £1.9 million in 2023, which gave support to 40,208 children around Manchester.

Mission Christmas is run by a charity every

year, providing underprivileged children with gifts to open on Christmas day.

I spoke to the acting Regional Charity Manager Jes Rigby about this mission and what Mancunians can do to help.

Jess said, "For them, Christmas is a time of stark choices. Choices between heating their homes or buying food. Choices that strip away the magic of Christmas. No child should

worry that Santa won't come. That's where Cash for Kids Mission Christmas comes in to provide gifts for these children! We have applications this year for over 36,000 children living in Greater Manchester who without our help won't receive toys to open on Christmas morning.

As a small team of three we need as much help as possible with this huge mission! We have 800 volunteers joining us in our

Mission HQ in Trafford Park over 5 weeks and our aim is to fill this warehouse with gifts local children living in poverty will be able to call their own. We could not do this without the wonderful kindness and generosity of the people of Manchester.

Whether you can donate a gift, take part in some festive fundraising, or make a cash donation, you can join us in bringing joy to local children this Christmas. Head to <https://cashforkids.org.uk/mission> to find out how."

The 12 Dips of Christmas

An obtainable way to give back at Christmas is through taking part in a fundraising exercise in your local area.

Whether you run, walk, jog, or enjoy open water swimming, there is a charity challenging you this December.

A number of these are active in Manchester including The Christie Festive Dash and the 12 dips of Christmas by Cancer Research UK.

These are only a couple of ideas, but there are many ways to get stuck in and fundraising this Christmas, have an exciting time and help people along the way.

The 12 dips of Christmas take place across the UK and encourages you to take 12

dips in open water from December 1st to December 31st. In doing this, you fundraise money alongside the dips for cancer-saving research, to help those who need it the most. Almost 1 in 2 of us will get cancer in our lifetime, according to Cancer Research UK, but fundraising can make a difference to someone who is ill and by taking part in the 12 dips of Christmas, you are supporting lifesaving cancer research.

NSPCC- Personalized letter from Santa and Christmas 5k

The NSPCC (National Society for the Preven-

tion of Cruelty to Children) does a variety of things all year round to protect children from abuse. However, during Christmas you can purchase your children a personalized letter from Santa, with the money you pay going towards more staff to answer calls from children in bad situations. Another thing that NSPCC do yearly is the 5k Walk for Christmas on the 21st of December, which is the longest night of the year. It takes place all around the UK, always on the longest night of the year because for children suffering from abuse, every night feels like the longest.

Shaun Friel, Childline director, said: "Christmas should be a time of wonder and excitement for children but sadly for some it can be a moment in the year when problems at home come to a head, triggering instances of issues like domestic abuse. "Contacts to the NSPCC Helpline about domestic abuse have been on an upward trend this year and the worry now is this will continue over Christmas and into 2025. "We are committed to ensuring no child is left to suffer in silence in December or any other time of the year, with our Childline service being open



Picture courtesy of Cash for Kids

throughout the festive period providing free, confidential advice and support."

Any adult can contact the NSPCC Helpline if they have a concern about a child on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@NSPCC.org.uk

"I genuinely would do anything to change a child's Christmas."



Picture courtesy of Cash for Kids



"Christmas is a time of stark choices. Choices between heating their homes or buying food. Choices that strip away the magic of Christmas."

Picture by Claudia Raya on Unsplash

Young relationships at Christmas: Balancing family, tradition, and expectations

By Milly Harrison

Christmas is seen as a time for joy and togetherness - spending time with loved ones. But for young couples, the festive season can be a balancing act between family and a growing relationship.

So how can you deal with the pressure of pleasing everyone? Here's how some young women are juggling parents and partners this Christmas.

Blending Traditions and Family Time

Sydney Stonier, 20, enjoys the opportunity to learn about her partner's family traditions and blend them with her own. "It's special to introduce your partner to your family's traditions, while also being part of theirs," she says.

"Christmas is a time to make new traditions together, and that's

something I cherish."

For Sydney, the holiday season is a chance to prioritise family time, something often lost amid the chaos of the year. However, balancing both families can be difficult. "It can get stressful trying to make everything equal, and sometimes I feel like I'm juggling too much," she admits.

Managing Expectations and Guilt

Hannah Beeley, 21, has learned to manage expectations by assuming she won't see her boyfriend on Christmas Day. "I'd rather expect not to see him than be disappointed if we can't," she says. For Hannah, Christmas is a family-focused day, and she values time spent with her loved ones. "We usually have a family meal prior to Christmas day where I share time with both my family and my boy-

friend," she explains. However, on the 25th, if they have the chance later on in the evening, then Hannah will meet with her partner even if it means missing out on some smaller family moments.

Sarah Bowler, 21, admits she feels pulled in two directions so splits her time between her family and her boyfriend.

She said: "I sometimes feel guilty leaving my family to be with my boyfriend."

"Especially because I'm the last one living at home, and if I don't go, it's just my parents alone so I spend the morning with my family, then meet my boyfriend later in the day. It's a good balance."

The Pressure of Tradition

Maisy May Harrison, 18, also divides her time between both families, even if it's not



always easy. "It's about compromise.

"On Christmas Day, I'll exchange gifts with my boyfriend's family, then have dinner with my own. It's about finding what works for us."

For many young couples, Christmas can feel like a rite of passage. "In the future, I might not be with my family on Christmas morning, but I'll be with my partner, and hopefully, there'll be many Christmases with him," says Sarah.

Ultimately, Christmas may bring out the complexities of young love, but it's also a time to create new traditions building a foundation for future holidays.



Five beauty advent calendars with the best value for money in 2024

By Amy Bewick

Back in the early 2000's when I was growing up, the only advent calendar option available were ones made of chocolate, but now every brand under the sun has created an advent calendar. From beauty to Lego calendars, I investigated which of the most popular beauty advent calendars are worth your money.

The run-up to Christmas is one of the most important and exciting parts of the whole holiday, so why not aid this by grabbing a beauty calendar to see you through the festive party season.

1. Sephora (£250)

Sephora is a brand that shocked consumers with their advent calendar's this year. Whilst £250 is expensive for a calendar, you cannot complain as the value inside is four times what you pay at £1000. It contains 40 products, with 23 of these being full size and includes popular brands such as Rare Beauty, Glossier and Makeup by Mario. What is noticeable about the products inside is the mixture



Photo by Tamanna Rume on Unsplash

between viral products and cult classics, there is something for everyone in this calendar.

2. Next 25 days of beauty calendar (£90)

If you are looking for a beauty product every day of December, the Next calendar is a smart option. This one has a value of £383, making it one of the most valuable calendars on the market. With other calendars from more high-profile brands stealing the limelight, Next surprised everyone with the quality of this calendar.

It includes luxury brands such as Elemis and Benefit and is the

perfect investment for someone who wants to try the latest brands without the hefty price tag.

3. Boots advent calendar (£99)

This multi-brand calendar boasts a value of around £365.

The advent calendar contains 24 products - 12 being full-size - and some of which are the retailers' best sellers.

Some of the brands include Drunk Elephant, Nars, Fenty, No7 and Laura Mercier and the products range from makeup to haircare.

At just shy of £100, it is one of the most af-

fordable on the market.

4. Harrods 12- days of hair and body calendar (£79.25)

This 12-day calendar was reduced from £99 to just £79.25 and boasts an overall worth of £310.

It contains some full-size products from popular brands including Sol de Janeiro and Gisou. This calendar is ideal for those who want to sample some of the best-selling brands of this year.

5. Charlotte Tilbury advent calendar (£170)

Due to their popularity, some of these have sold out, so if you want a new beauty product every day of the month, snap up one of these early.

An example of a popular beauty calendar in 2024 is Charlotte Tilbury.

Sitting at a whopping £170, this calendar includes 12 of Charlotte's full-size, travel size and most popular products and is reported to have a value of £243.

Cuddle, click, repeat!

By Mehek Naseer



Walk into TK Maxx and you might think you have stumbled into a 90s and early 2000s time warp. I recently visited and I was transported back to a time when life was simpler, and my biggest concern was keeping my Tamagotchi alive or believing collecting Beanie Babies would make me a millionaire one day. Picture this: you're wandering through the aisles of TK Maxx, hunting for Christmas gifts, and suddenly there they are (with a much heftier price tag) — Tamagotchis and Beanie Babies. Now, these childhood icons are back, and they're not just for kids any-

more. But why do we keep falling for these blasts from the past? What is it about toys from our childhood that makes grown adults rush to the tills like kids on Christmas morning? Tamagotchis and Beanie Babies reappeared in 2024 Christmas stock due to a surge in demand driven by nostalgia. The latest data from Circana, a leading advisor on the complexity of consumer behaviour, reveals that toy sales in the UK dipped slightly in 2024 but 'kidults' drove a record-breaking £1 billion in sales over the past year, contributing nearly one-third

of total toy spending, up £57 million from 2023. The biggest growth categories include building sets, plush toys, collectible cards and stickers - appealing across all age groups. Collectibles are particularly noteworthy, representing 23% of toy sales with an average price of £6.92, making them popular for both pocket money and adult impulse purchases. You might be wondering: what does nostalgia have to do with holiday shopping? And why are some Mancunians particularly drawn to the comfort of childhood memories through toys this festive season? Kev Fleming is a lifelong toy collector and 15-year owner of Manic Minors

Toystore in Warrington. "I've been a kid that never grew up," he says. "I look in the mirror, see a man with a progressively grey beard, and think, Oh damn, I forgot I looked like that," then carry on being a kid." For Fleming, toys are more than objects - they're vessels of joy, helping adults reconnect with their inner child. The pandemic amplified this nostalgia. As people sorted through old possessions, they rediscovered long-lost treasures, and a collective yearning for simpler times emerged. This desire to reclaim childhood joy mirrors a broader societal need for comfort and familiarity.

"We swapped action figures for acceptance"

According to Fleming, the emotional significance is clear: "Most people don't start as collectors. They begin as adults reclaiming a happy moment lost when they gave up their toys to fit in". Why the rush to relive our playtime days? Fleming believes it's rooted in that pivotal moment when childhood innocence was traded for teenage social status. "We swapped action figures for acceptance," he explains. "Now, as adults, we're rewinding the clock to fight villains and save the day - just like Optimus Prime." Sports fans can watch their heroes in a stadium, but pop culture fans can't see a courageous leader like Optimus Prime walk around as a robot (yet)!" This surge in nostalgia-driven purchases is most evident with iconic toys from key childhood milestones. Think of the frenzy over Buzz Lightyear in the '90s or Cabbage Patch Kids in the '80s. "Finding 'that' toy freezes time," Fleming says. "And before you know it, there's a corner of your house dedicated to good mental health and internet checklists!" But it's not just about the toys - it is about the memories tied to them. "Customers recall sacrifices their parents made to get that one special toy

or flashbacks to tearing open presents around the Christmas tree," Fleming shares. The emotional pull isn't limited to older generations. Younger audiences, who never grew up with these toys, are jumping on the nostalgia train. From high-ticket LEGO sets to reboots like Ghostbusters, a shared passion for brands are bankable toys," he adds. Fleming's advice? Collect disposable income. what brings you joy.

Don't treat your childhood toys like a stock portfolio, and stick to your budget. Oh, and a pro tip from the savvy collectors - keep those receipts out of sight from the family!





“You aren’t giving out a hotdog”

The humble Yorkshire pudding wrap, once a Sunday roast side dish, is soaring in popularity across the UK. This hearty creation is quickly becoming a favourite for foodies and comfort-seekers alike.

By Milly Harrison

A Sunday dinner is a British classic however, no dinner is complete without a mouth watering perfectly golden and crispy Yorkshire pudding. Originally the pudding was just served on only roast beef dinners, then it worked its way onto the plates of other meats and now us greedy Brits have made it the main event. The invention of the Yorkshire pudding wrap, a revolutionary idea. Could this be the new festive favourite?

The original Yorkshire pudding is made of a batter consisting of eggs, flour and milk. It is typically small and round in shape but is often consumed in larger and more rectangular quantities for meals such as toad in the hole, which is sausages inside of the Yorkshire pudding

batter. The oldest mention of the

Yorkshire pudding was in The Art of Cookery, Made Plain

and Easy by Hannah Glasse in 1747.

Like most great things as the years have gone by Yorkshire puddings have modernised.

In this case, through the power of social media. In today’s day and age the pudding has been transformed into a well-sorted af-

wrap into the spotlight and Manchester is home to one of the most notorious Yorkshire pudding wrap stands, Pork Pigs.

The owner of Porky Pigs, Eddie, started his business at Old Trafford when he was just 18 but now his stand is twice

Yorkshire pudding wraps that he serves to the streets of Manchester each year at the Christmas markets. “The problem is if you rush a Yorkshire pudding wrap it goes soggy. It’s not a hotdog, you aren’t passing

out a hotdog, so you do need to take that

bit of time to make sure it is done properly.” The Yorkshire pudding wrap went viral on Tiktok, with thousands of videos being shared of the food from Eddie’s delicious Porky

Pigs stand. Not only is this stand now attracting

people from all over the world but the Yorkshire pudding wrap itself is now being served by many and being offered at markets, festivals and many more events.

The people have gone crazy for this silly little invention, some to the extent

of recreating it at home and adding it to their monthly rotation of evening meals.

Yorkshire pudding wraps are the main event this festive season, and we are

certainly not mad about it.



ter Christmas delicacy. The Yorkshire pudding wrap may have been around longer than you think though. In recent years the rise of TikTok, Instagram and other social media platforms has brought the Yorkshire pudding

the size and better than ever. He said: “The demand gets bigger each year ... We’ve got a product that’s really good and that everybody wants at Christmas time.”

Eddie takes care and precision into the

Dealing with grief at Christmas

By Mia Williams

What happens when the 'most wonderful time of the year' turns into the most dreaded? For millions of families around the world, Christmas is synonymous with celebration and family. But for those who have been impacted by grief, it can be a grueling and dark time.

There really isn't a rulebook for dealing with the difficult emotions that come with grief, but when everyone around you is full of festive cheer, navigating dark feelings can prove even tougher.

Christmas can look so different for so many families, and often trying to figure it out in the midst of losing someone close can feel like a pretty impossible task.

One that you would much rather just pass you by.

And whilst you might be feeling slightly lost for words, it's important to keep talking to those around you.

Registered counsellor Georgina Sturmer noted that having 'trusted' family and friends you can 'lean

on', makes a lot of difference.

The expert said: "Some of us might want to throw ourselves into 'business as usual'.

"Some of us might

sad.

"Or we might also feel angry, resentful, jealous or frustrated."

She said that not putting pressure or expectation on your first Christmas without a



Allow yourself to feel the difficult emotions.
Credit: Ben White on Unsplash

want to plan a way to honour or remember our loved one.

"Some might want to escape the whole thing altogether. All of these are valid."

Explaining our coping mechanisms, she added: "It's about figuring out how we can cope. "And acknowledging that things might feel

loved one is so important.

It's okay if Christmas looks different that year, with less lights, less decor, and less people.

She said: "Allow yourself to feel what you need to feel."

Megan Donoher, 25, lost her dad to motor neurone disease in

2021.

She said: "I found his last Christmas here harder than the first one without him.

"Because he was here but he wasn't dad."

Meghan said that despite Christmas without her dad being 'unbearable', knowing he is no longer suffering is a comforting thought.

She added: "He was too weak to pull a cracker and open gifts so we did this for him."

In preparation for their last Christmas together, Meghan said that her family put up decorations a lot sooner than they usually would, and also asked her dad to choose new things for them to put up every year.

She noted that every year since his death, they have stuck to the same decorations and traditions.

After he died—Meghan's family made an effort to keep her dad's memory alive every year.

She said: "Mum got us presents 'from dad' and we talked about him as if he was in the room with us.

"I don't know how we got through it but we did."



"It's about figuring out how we can cope." Credit: Janusz Walczak on Unsplash

"I don't know how we got through it but we did."

Since losing him, Meghan feels like it's her job to carry forward his love for Christmas.

"My family goes out on Christmas Eve and I'll have a pint or glass of red for him," she said. "He really loved the season and I feel like it's my job now to love it for him."

"I also watch our favourite films and laugh/cry ten times harder knowing we shared the joy of seeing them together."

Holly Matthews, 40, is also familiar with the feeling of losing a loved one.

She lost her husband

Ross to brain cancer in 2017.

Her two daughters, Brooke and Texas, were just four and six when their dad died, so her priority was keeping Christmas special for them, all whilst dealing with her own grief.

She said: "In some respects, the magic of Christmas was a nice distraction."

Holly noted that certain baubles on her tree always evoke sombre feelings when they come out of their box, knowing they were bought when Ross was alive.

The mum-of-two

added: "My coping mechanisms have always been around acceptance and dealing with things head on."

"I have never pretended that it was the same and from the very beginning."

On the more practical side of things, she noted that the family's finances were trickier to navigate without her husband.

Holly said: "Suddenly I had to make every decision on my own, financial implications of Christmas matter too."

"As a one parent family the income is less than when it was us both but thankfully my children have great values and this has never been an issue."

She also finds that the more social aspect of Christmas is tough, constantly surrounded by families of four and happy couples, which is a constant reminder of her own loss.

She added: "I find couples and family stuff a little hard and have to juggle a lot but we have an incredible little trio that have found our route, doing things in our own way."

Holly also said that going into a new year

without her husband by her side was difficult to comprehend.

She said: "I tend to find New Year a difficult experience in general as there's a lot of pressure around it and the feeling of wanting to see the New Year in with a person that you love."

"It felt sad and hard to be going into a year that Ross had never set foot in."

Holly said that she

"The magic of Christmas was a nice distraction." Left: Mike Labrum on Unsplash; right: Annie Spratt on Unsplash



"Many will be feeling their loss all the more during this time." Credit: Vidar Nordli-Mathisen on Unsplash

and her family 'talk about' her husband all the time, and simply getting through Christmas that year was just enough for them.

Orla Blackburn is another mum who was widowed after she lost her husband in 2018.

She was left to make Christmas magical for her four-year-old, and six years later, her family is still finding their 'new normal' for Christmas.

She said: "I've navigated the elf on the

shelf, Santa, and wondering what on earth to do each year for Christmas.

"The stress of feeling like Christmas needs to be this big deal, that you should be surrounded by family and festivities, is so very hard when your life has been changed so much with this type of loss."

She also noted that the relationship with her in-laws broke down with the death of her husband.

Orla is aiming to help other people going through similar experiences to her, after sadly finding out how hard it is to hold everything together during the festive season.

She said: "I'm aiming to host a half day online soothing and connecting retreat for the widowed very close to Christmas, as there will be many who will be feeling their loss all the more during this time."



What appreciating Black fashion means

By Mehek Naseer

Black fashion is vibrant, and deeply rooted in stories of resilience and culture. Yet, too often, it is celebrated only in short bursts - think Black History Month, and then... silence. But Black fashion isn't a trend; it's a lifestyle that deserves the spotlight all year long. To dig deeper, I spoke to a Nigerian fashion business owner about Black fashion out of curiosity to learn more. Abaake by Equip by Nigerian entrepreneur Adekemi Ayodele, is an Afrocentric fashion brand dedicated to promoting authentic African fabrics and integrating them into contemporary fashion. The brand bridges traditional African culture and modern style, promoting responsible textile use and discouraging misappropriation. With a strong focus on sustainability, Abaake by Equip maximizes fabric usage to create timeless clothing and accessories that honour African heritage. Adekemi's passion for fashion began



early. "My mum used to sew our clothes for Christmas because it was more affordable. Watching her work sparked my interest," she recalls. After high school, she pursued this passion, immersing herself in the vibrant world of African fabrics, especially handwoven textiles like aso oke.



As a Yoruba woman, Adekemi takes pride in her heritage. She believes Black-owned businesses bring a unique energy to the market. "We're vibrant, and that reflects in our fashion, our music, and how we interact," she says. Yet, this boldness is often misunderstood as being "too loud." Adekemi clearly defines where appreciation ends and appropriation begins. "When a design is used without crediting its cultural origins, that's appropriation," she says. She highlights the danger of broad stereotypes, such as associating African fashion solely with tribal prints or face paint, which fail to accurately represent the diversity and depth of the continent's fashion. For Adekemi, change starts within the community. "We need to promote Black businesses year-round, not just during cultural events," she urges. By wearing African pieces regularly and supporting local brands, she believes Black communities can amplify their presence in the fashion world. "It's tough, but we have to push forward and embrace our culture beyond Black History Month".

What does winter mean for women's safety?

By Mia Williams

Almost three-quarters (72%) of women in the UK change their outdoor activity routines during winter, according to campaign This Girl Can. For many people, winter simply means a drop in temperature and wrapping up slightly warmer. But for a large majority of women, leaving the house past 6pm is a luxury that is stripped away when the darker nights roll around.

There's something about light that makes places feel slightly safer - knowing what is in front or behind you, and being able to see around corners or down alleyways.

When the clocks got put back an hour, there seemed to be an underlying dread for the majority of women, who felt instantly less confident about leaving the house whilst it's dark.

Being confined to your 'safe space' during the evenings in fear that danger lurks in the dark, strips women of their freedom.

One of the biggest things that impacts women during winter is how unsafe exercise

can feel.

The 'This Girl Can' campaign found that one in four women (24%) ensure to take well-lit routes, almost a quarter (23%) avoid certain areas altogether and one in five (20%) glance behind them to ensure they're not being followed.

Shorter daylight hours means that there is less time for women to feel safe in public during the day, and can massively impact their exercise routines.

Caroline Rimmer is just one woman who takes extra precautions to feel safe during the winter months.

She said: "I live in the country so we don't have street lights.

"I try to get all my outdoor work done before dark - I'm a farmer so often out most of the day, and also alone."

But Rimmer noted that it's not just the dark nights that cause women to change their behaviour.

She added: "We have to take extra steps to consider our safety, steps that most men won't even consider."

However, one woman living in London has found a solution to keeping active while



Top: Geronimo Giqueaux on Unsplash; bottom: Valentin Antonini on Unsplash.

the dark nights linger.

Megan Lomax recently joined a walking group which meets up in the evenings.

She said: "We have walked along the canal in the dark together. I would never do that on my own, in the dark.

"And chatting to new people is much easier

to do whilst walking.

Before joining the group, Lomax felt she couldn't walk in certain areas by herself.

She added: "I am careful about where I walk after dark.

"Where I live has changed a lot while I've lived here and has much better lighting."

Curry on Christmas Day? Exploring family Christmas traditions around Manchester

By Amy Bewick

Discover the heart warming charm as we explore how different households celebrate the festive season. From unique rituals passed down from generations to modern twists on classic customs, we delve deeper into the stories and memories of traditions that make Christmas that little bit more magical.

Elf on the shelf

The Elf on the shelf remains one of the most popular Christmas traditions of 2024.

Dating back to 2005, The Elf on the Shelf has become a fundamental part of Christmas for kids and parents alike all over the UK.

The Elf on the Shelf was originally a self-published book written in 2005 by Carol Aebersold and her daughter Chanda Bell.

Since then, it has become a staple Christmas tradition in more than 36% of UK households with kids under 10, according to a survey conducted by YouGov.

The idea is that the toy elf visits homes and reports back to Santa on



the children's behaviors.

The elf is moved around at night by the parents to complete several tasks and involves itself in "naughty" situations.

The child will then wake up in the morning and find the elf to see what it has been getting up to.

After a few years of doing this, the parents will run out of original ideas and turn to friends, online or Facebook pages to get creative ideas that use household items. These Facebook groups have thousands of members who post what their elf

got up to as a way of putting a handout to struggling parents.

It is a question that gets asked daily; how long will this last? I spoke to a mum named Lauren Holt from Bury who spoke to me about the importance of the elf on the shelf to her kids and how fundamental it is that she continues this tradition until her kids are older.

She said: "Every morning in December, the first step for my little ones; before breakfast, before even getting out of their pajamas, they must find Elfie!"

"I choose to move the elf in the morning be-

fore the kids get up as I do not have the energy after a long day. My morning starts a bit before them as I find the most intricate niche places around the house, I could find to hide little Elfie to challenge my kids, but somehow, they always find her.

"It has become such a staple Christmas tradition in our house and adds a touch to every cold December morning. It makes the entire process worth it to see my kids' reaction, it never fails to put a smile on their faces."

The detail and commitment to the process

put in by parents is admirable, creating situations and scenes for the elf that their kids have not seen before.

Lauren added "My favorite scene I have ever set up was putting the elf on toast."

"My idea stemmed from the day before's scene, where I put him in the fridge. The idea was that now he was in between two slices of toast to get toasty from his activities the day prior. My kids loved it."

Musicals

Dom Holt, 25, told me that he indulges in

a musical in the festive season.

It is quite a common tradition to go to a musical in the theatre or a pantomime during December, my mum used to take me to see one at the theatre in Newcastle every year. One of my favorite Christmas memories comes from this tradition with my mum, where we went to see Snow White in 2021. Alongside quality time spent with my mum, the pantomime itself was one of the best I have seen; somehow adding a Christmas feel to Snow White that I did not know was possible. Dom is going to see

Wicked at the Palace Theatre in Manchester this year, after the hype around the Wicked movie.

Curry on Christmas day

Milly Harrison, 20, is not having your typical Christmas dinner this year; but she is going out to have curry with her family. Milly - who is gluten-free - struggles daily with the limits put on her meals and cannot indulge like most people.

She very rarely has a Christmas dinner due to her dislike for gluten-free substitutes, such as gravy, so it has

become a family tradition to go out to eat at an Indian Restaurant on December 25th.

Several people that I spoke to had similar traditions, which surprised me a lot as to me it is far from an ordinary thing to do.

What kind of Christmas traditions do you and your family have? And is having curry on Christmas day considered normal?



"It makes the entire process worth it to see my kids' reaction"

Why are jacket potatoes cool again?

By Mehek Naseer

If you told me a year or two ago that jacket potatoes would be dominating my For You page, I would have laughed. But here we are - spuds are the new TikTok stars. The humble jacket potato has gone from a primary school lunch memory to a modern day sensation. British cuisine has always been the target of numerous jokes especially on social media, it is

almost as if British food is used as a buzzword to describe bad food. It is true that British food can turn out terribly if you don't cook or season it a specific way but the main argument on why critics are often left displeased are for reasons of it being too bland, unexciting or underwhelming. Once compared to Italian, Indian or even Japanese food, British food is proof that seasoning isn't

a national priority - British ancestors fought for spices but its almost as if any seasoning wasn't acquired in the first place. Why are jacket potatoes cool again though? I have a few ideas. First of all, it is undeniably a good example of a comfort food. Maybe because these seasons are getting colder - maybe nothing really soothes the souls' winter depression plight like the internal hug a jacket potato provides. As the Christmas season rolls in, they do well to embody the cozy festive spirit we all crave. Given their versatility and comforting qualities, it is a no brainer to believe they deserve a spot on the table this December. Another reason would have to be that jacket potatoes are easy to prepare with a variety of toppings - to choose from and a food option that certainly won't

break the bank. No matter the reason behind this newfound love for spuds, jacket potatoes are definitely enjoying their moments in the social media spotlight. TikTok has turned this simple dish into a trendy favourite, with creative toppings and easy to follow recipes, inspiring foodies everywhere to experiment in their kitchens - all thanks to the viral sensation Spud Bros.



KICKER IN CAPS: The rest of your caption should fill this space and help to tell the story. Names here clearly.

Spud Bros

The pair are really crushing it with the marketing - with customers waiting in line from Manchester, London, Colorado, Chicago and even Japan! Spud Bros, run by real-life brothers Jacob and Harley Nelson have amassed more than 3 million followers on TikTok with view counts climbing by the thousands each day - garnering nearly 2 billion views across

videos made in the last year. Die-hard fans start queuing as early as 4:30 a.m. for a chance at a free spud, even though the van doesn't open until 11:30 a.m - now that's dedication! This all happens at a converted tram in Preston, Lancashire, with occasional appearances in Manchester. A regular at Spud Bros, Anthony Haynes, 23, said: "Whilst it is true that Spud Bros spuds are tasty, I don't think that is what

is driving so many young people to this specific van. I do think it's more to do with community spirit and their TikTok platform is helping build that sense of community. The staff are friendly to chat with and there's just something that feels so nice about being there. It reminds me of high school a little with the long queues, thankfully I haven't waited longer than an hour though". Spud Bros spuds aside,

not everyone is fond of the warm bundle of joy that is a jacket potato, with some believing it does not live up to the hype surrounding its recent resurgence in popularity. I spoke to a Preston resident Macy Green, 24, who highlighted a divide in how this humble dish is perceived. Macy said: "Eating a jacket potato reminds me of eating a hotdog, it doesn't taste good plain.

Cheese and beans or cheese and chilli?

Jacket potatoes can be good but I would be lying if I said they weren't overhyped, I just tend to eat them sometimes during the winter as it helps with the seasonal depression a little. Jacket potatoes have always been popular amongst office workers and older demographics, they are warm, cheap and convenient and not everybody has the financial means or patience to be able to cook something new everyday. However if you're buying them a few times a week from a van or stall, it does turn out to be quite pricey in the long run".

Jacket Potatoes: Yay or Nay...

To better understand the rising appeal and nutritional value of jacket potatoes, I spoke to Manchester Registered Nutritionist Aliya Porter, who was recently named Nutritionist of the Year 2024 for North West England by the SME Enterprise

Awards UK. She's also the founder of Porter Nutrition, a practice based right here in Manchester. Specialising in healthy eating without breaking the bank or time consuming meal prep, Aliya is dedicated to making nutrition accessible and practical for everyone. According to Aliya, jacket potatoes aren't just comforting but offer surprising health benefits that may be contributing to their resurgence in popularity. Aliya said: "No one food is going to provide you with all the nutrition you need unless it is a prescribed meal replacement, however jacket potatoes provide plenty of nutrients. They contain a good amount of fibre, protein, vitamins B6 and C, potassium, folate and magnesium. The bad reputation they get comes from

either the size of the jacket potato or what we top them with. In addition to this, I discovered another reason for the jacket potatoes' enduring popularity: its high resistance starch content. Aliya explained that thanks to the resistant starch found in potatoes, they have the ability to keep us feeling fuller for a long period of time compared to refined carbohydrates, which helps control blood sugars and reduce hunger. Jacket potatoes not only reduce hunger but also support better energy management throughout the day - a total win win in my opinion. Aliya left me with some creative tips to take jacket potatoes to the next level.

Her simple advice?

Think beyond the usual cheese and beans-try pairing with cottage cheese

instead to help increase your calcium intake. Want to boost your fibre intake?

Try pairing your jacket potato with baked beans or a classic vegetable chilli. If you are aiming for a dose of omega 3, tinned salmon or sardines are your go-to toppings. And don't forget about a side salad - at least 160g of veg will not only get you two of your five a day but also help keep you full and prevent from overindulging on the potato itself. The key here is balance: aim for a good option of protein, two portions of veggies and a starchy carb to round out your meal. Too often, we end up with a huge potato, a topping, but little to no protein and just a tiny salad on the side. With a little imagination, the classic jacket can transform into a nutritious powerhouse, proving that jacket potatoes are anything but boring or ordinary.

JACKET POTATOES... WHATS UP WITH THOSE?

● FIBRE, PROTEIN, VITAMINS, POTASSIUM...

● HIGH RESISTANCE STARCH

● COTTAGE CHEESE = CALCIUM INTAKE

● SALMON & SARDINES = OMEGA 3

● 160G VEG



Cutting costs this Christmas

By Mia Williams

If there's one time of year where saving extra pennies matters the most - it's the festive season. In a society where consumerism has reached new levels, and pressure to spend the big bucks ever increases, here's how you can cut down on the cost of Christmas this year.

You are one of two people - those that have every single present purchased and wrapped by December first, or a last-minute, next day delivery scatter-brain who shops a couple of nights before the big day.

What to buy family and friends is one

struggle, but budgeting so that your January finances don't feel like the world is falling apart is arguably a bigger struggle.

Money spokesperson at Go Compare, Matt Sanders, says that people are making 'tough' decisions this year in regards to their spending in the lead up to Christmas.

He said: "Our research shows that over a third of people (35%) have made the tough decision to cut their Christmas budget this year - but it isn't always easy knowing how to trim back your festive spending."



Photo by Maitree Rimthong

Giftng

Planning your gift buying well in advance can help spread the cost, but also help you find better deals.

It's worth noting that some brands have better deals around the beginning of December.

Sanders said: "Look out for sales and offers, and time your Christmas shopping around these to take advantage of the savings available."

"Remember to check for discount codes before you buy, too, as these could help you cut costs even further."

Household bills

Noting down renewal dates for bills instead of them automatically renewing is another way to save some extra money this December.

Sanders added: "Remembering to make a note of your renewal dates for everything from energy to insurance products, and shopping around before auto-renewing is a simple way to make sure you are getting the best deal."

And according to him, 'haggling' for bills such as broadband and mobile is

more of a common practice than people realise.

Persuading your current provider to match a deal you have seen elsewhere could be a good way to bring down the price.

He said: "Negotiate with your current provider and other competitors to get the best deal."

Energy saving

Hosting Christmas can quite often mean using a large amount of appliances you own, that all rely on electricity.

Sanders says taking small actions - like only boiling the amount of kettle water you need, or making full use of the oven when it's on - can help save you some extra pennies.

If you're planning on running Christmas lights outside your house throughout December, it's worth taking a look at the most efficient energy options.

Matt said: "If you plan to light up your home daily in the run-up to Christmas, taking a little time to research the energy efficiency of your decorations can help cap your spending."

Controversial opinions: Which is the better night out, Christmas or Boxing Day?

By Amy Bewick

Since I turned 18, the biggest debate between me and my friends at Christmas time is whether to go out on Christmas eve or Boxing Day.

Growing up, Christmas has always been spent indoors watching Christmas films, having hot chocolate, spending time with my family and going to bed early to wake up fresh for Christmas Day.

But for others, Christmas eve is a time to reconnect and celebrate with friends in a pub or bar.

To try and get some clarity on which is the most popular choice,

I asked 20 people between the ages of 19-24 their opinions on the subject, to which 63% of people said that they would rather go out on Christmas Eve.

One of the anonymous votes said, "For me, Christmas Eve captures the spirit of Christmas, and I love the atmosphere on the day, there is a much better festive buzz in the city on Christmas Eve."

A lot of those who answered said that Christmas Eve was the preferred night out as it prepares you for the main event, is much

more festive and more people who you haven't seen in a long time are out. Others who said that they prefer to go out on Boxing Day, said that the thought of being hungover on Christmas was enough to deter them from going out the night prior.

Mia Williams, one of the students who i spoke to, voted for Boxing Day.

She said: "I do not understand people who can go out on Christmas eve. I do not think it is funny that the person who ruins Christmas for everyone tends to be the person who ruins Christmas

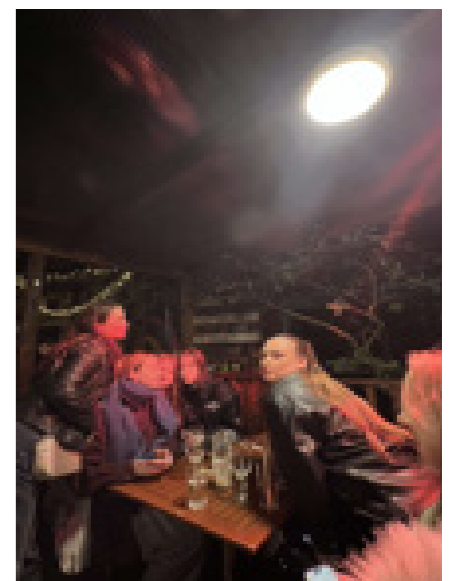
for the family.

"Boxing Day is much better as everyone has Christmas money; new outfits and it is a chance to get together with all your friends and share what you did on Christmas Day. Just all around a much better experience."

Despite only 37% of people voting for Boxing Day, it remains my favorite night out at Christmas, especially as i have gotten older.

It becomes a time to reunite in your hometown with the people you spent so much of your life with, before parting ways and moving all over the country.

Photo by Drew Farewell on Unsplash





Let's talk Manny!

By Mehek Naseer

Ever heard someone call a sibling 'our kid' or describe something great as 'mint'? Manchester's slang has always been a rich part of its identity, shaped by the city's industrial, musical and immigrant influences. Over the years, Manchester's got its own unique mix of words, phrases, and pronunciations that might leave outsiders scratching their heads - but for locals, it's second nature. The city's working-class roots, shaped by the Industrial Revolution, led to a creation of a distinct set of slang words. For example, the term 'mither' meaning 'to bother', was commonly used between factory workers. During the postwar years, Manchester's diverse immigrant communities, including Irish, South Asian, and Caribbean groups, brought their own linguistic influences, adding to the city's dynamic slang mix. The 1960s and '70s saw mod culture infuse new slang tied to music and fashion. The 1980s rave scene introduced iconic "Madchester" phrases like "buzzin'" (excited) and "sorted" (great), embodying the carefree

spirit of the time. To understand why some slang fades while others endure, I spoke to two linguists at Manchester Metropolitan University. Dr John Bellamy, a senior linguistics lecturer, explained that slang evolves with generations. As people age, their slang often disappears with them. Phrases like "mad for it" from the '90s are now rare, except as nostalgic throwbacks. However, some terms, like "our kid" for siblings, have endured and passed down through families. Dr Bellamy's personal favourite slang word? He says: "I've always liked 'sorted' for 'great'. It might be a word from my generation though!" I also spoke to Rob Drummond, a sociolinguist professor who has spent years researching Greater Manchester's accents and dialects. He explained that slang's survival is tied to the social groups that use it. As these groups fade, so does their language. "Dialect terms simply die out with people," he said. "While language evolves, preserving older slang requires people to consciously keep using it,

especially when it holds significance for regional, class, or ethnic identities". Rob noted that nostalgia can revive older slang, but usually on a small scale. "It's hard to see that happening more broadly," he said. I also asked Rob for his favourite slang term and he shared a gem. He said: "When we were doing the Manchester Voices Project we heard someone use 'It's dark over Albert's mother's' - meaning it's dark/cloudy over there in the distance. "I use that now, but I have no idea who Albert was! Incidentally, this phrase is quite well-known, but usually with 'Bill's' mothers." Language, like the weather, is always changing. And while it may be 'dark over Albert's mother's' at times, there's always light ahead when it comes to discovering new slang!



How inclusive is makeup for fair skin?

By Laiba Chaudhri

From foundations too orange or blushes to bright, people with albinism are quite often forgotten about when brands curate their inclusive makeup ranges and I wanted to see which brands are doing it right and how to formulate them

Inclusivity in the

beauty community is something people have been advocating for years and with brands slowly listening and providing wider shade ranges as someone with albinism myself this is a struggle very familiar to me as during my teenage years when everyone around me began to get into

makeup, I felt quite isolated as I could never find the right products for me. I talked to Amelia Walhout who is a makeup TikTok influencer who shares her struggle with makeup and albinism and her experiences with testing new makeup products.

Amelia also told me that when she began to gain interest in wearing makeup at age 13, she immediately noticed how limited the options were for people like us and she knew it was going to be struggle throughout her whole life.

The main products which seem to be the main issue are concealers, mascara eyebrow pencils and foundation. Foundations and concealers often lack variety in undertones as the lightest options usually run too orange or too yellow. Even if a shade is light enough it matters if the undertones aren't correct. A brand which does this well is Elf cosmetics with their cameo

concealer as for every shade they have different undertone options. For example I find the shade 'fair rose' to match my skin tone as it has more pink undertones, but they also have ones such as 'fair beige' which is more orange or 'fair neutral' which is more yellow so it's easy for you to find an exact match that works.

Inclusivity is important for obvious reasons but one of them that isn't talked

Credit: Kelly Sikkema

about is the negative affects it can have on your mental health to not have a place in the beauty community. Personally, my teenage years were ones where I felt extremely insecure on how I looked already due to having albinism then also having the issue of finding makeup products that work for me added to the anxiety. When talking to other people with albinism I found that wasn't only an issue I dealt with as

they told me that at that age, they faced the same thing.

Not having access to products that matched our skin tone or hair colour made me feel like there was something wrong with us, like we should be embarrassed for having albinism.

Even if a brand does have wide shade ranges, we still aren't able to have in person shopping experiences as some makeup shops wont stock the whole

range and with the fairest shades not being that popular, its likely for them to not have our shades in stock.

This really does diminish our shopping experience as for makeup products you've never nought before, it's always best to first try them on against your skin to see if a product works for you.

Having this kind of negative shopping experience can also

be extremely damaging to your mental health as ultimately it puts you off shopping.

Speaking to some other people with the same condition as me was really reassuring and made me realise that even though it can sometimes feel isolating, there are so many people out there facing the same problems and it isn't your fault! However it is up to us to raise awareness to grab brands attention.





What options are available?

Shopping for make-up can sometimes be stressful searching for the right match so I've listed brands and products I have found to work well for people with albinism.

For foundation it's still quite hard to find an option with the right undertone as most of them do tend to oxidise and turn quite orange. A good option available is the Haus Labs 'Triclone skin' medium coverage foundation. However this isn't the most affordable option retailing at

£42 and so it would be nice to see more foundation options in drug-store brands.

As I mentioned before the Elf 'Cameo concealer' is a perfect option for people with albinism and fair skin tones as they have many shades with different undertones so you can find your perfect match. The one I find works best for me is the shade 'fair rose' which has a pink undertone and is more of a cool toned concealer.

Fent Beauty has a whole range of wonderful options for people with fair skin tones across

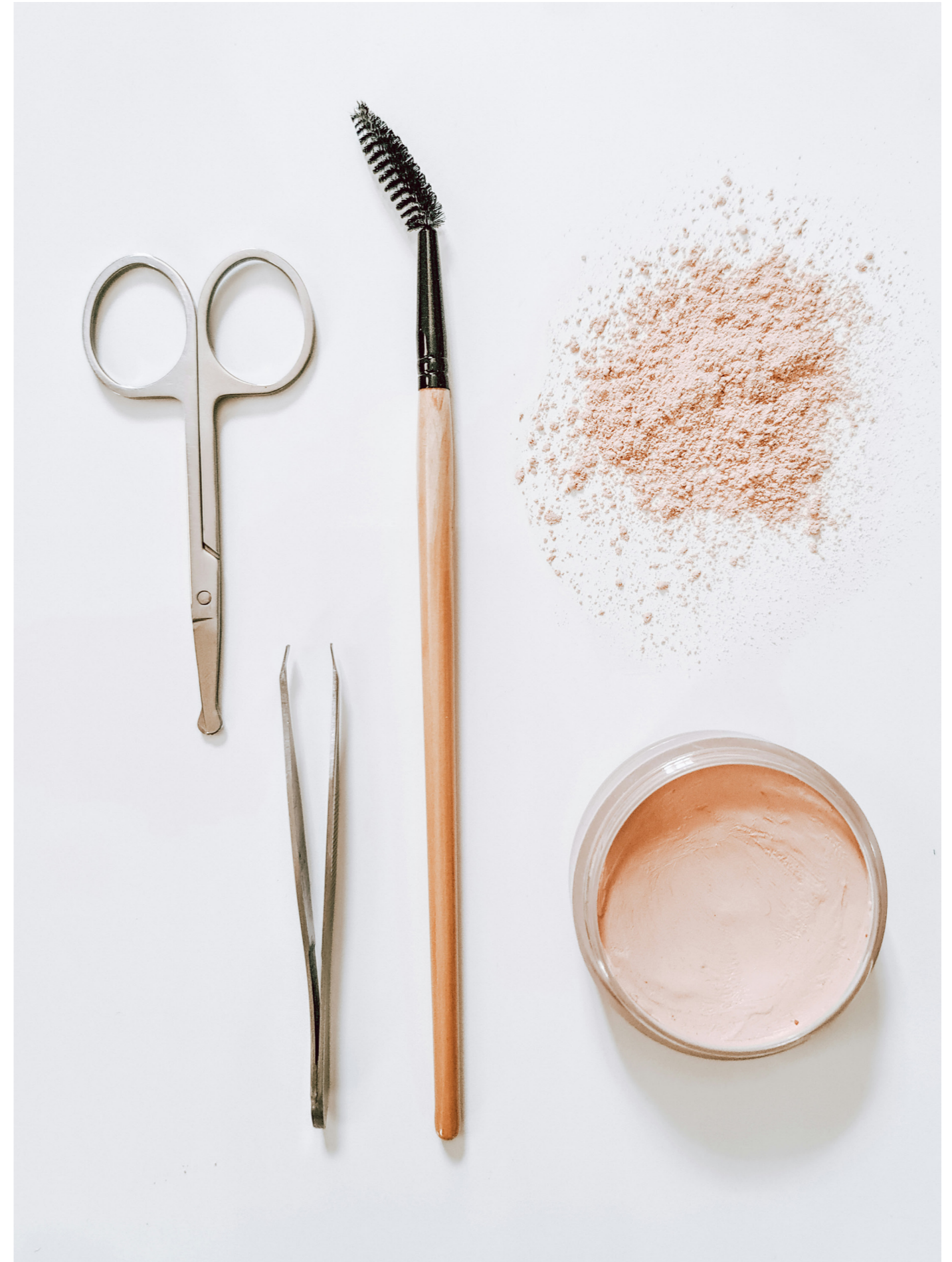
their whole brand and you can really see the effort they've put into inclusivity as they even showcase albino models wearing their products. I personally love their 'Sun stalk'r warm bronzer' in the lightest shade.

In terms of blush, I've found the best shades to get are cool toned pinks for natural make-up days but otherwise any blush shades would work as long as they aren't too pigmented and vibrant as these will be harsh on our skin tones. Blushes that are easy to blend are normally the ones that would work the

best. For example I would avoid super pigmented blushes like the rare beauty blush and instead opt for more muted options. Some that I have found work well for me are the milk makeup and refy beauty cream blushes. Cream blushes are often a safe option as they are quite easy to control and blend on the face and I've found that these two brands have the best muted options for my skin tone. I use the shade 'Dash' in the Milk Makeup lip and cheek stick and the shade 'rose' in the REFY cream blush.

We also need to remember that make-up leaves space for so much creativity and expression and no matter what your skin tone, you deserve to have this fully available to you. So don't be afraid to experiment with products and go out of your comfort zone just because some items might not work for me, doesn't mean it won't for you.

Dealing with albinism can sometimes make you feel insecure, and it can be hard to remember that make-up should be a way



Credit: Edz Norton

