

# DECOR NATION



Home For Christmas Collection, Sophie Allport

## *Best of British*

British designed, made or manufactured, here's my edit of the best Christmas Fayre...

Is there anything more satisfying than the scent of Christmas? Think cinnamon, orange, gingerbread, nutmeg and the nostalgia-evoking scent of a real Christmas tree. Meet MËON Candles, who have managed to capture the essence of Spice or Spruce and 'bottle' them as candles in charming apothecary jars. Each offers a different ambience that's sure to get you in the festive spirit. Established just last year in Bicester, founder Mairéad O'Neill hand-pours her luxury scented soy wax candles using only high quality vegan and cruelty free ingredients. All the packaging, from the apothecary style amber glass jar to the wrapping, is recyclable.

These elements make a candle that is not only sustainable but smells divine. (From £15 for a 180g candle with a 30-35 hour burn time. Other scents and diffusers are also available. MËON Candles).

Did you know an estimated 40 million Christmas crackers are thrown away every year? Me neither. Now we can ditch the single use waste, wave goodbye to naff plastic toys and smell you later generic jokes - a new tradition is here; reusable crackers by Kaneo. In 2019 Lucy Ewles and husband Jonny hosted a Christmas party with personalised 'fill your own' crackers, only to be horrified at the bin bags full of

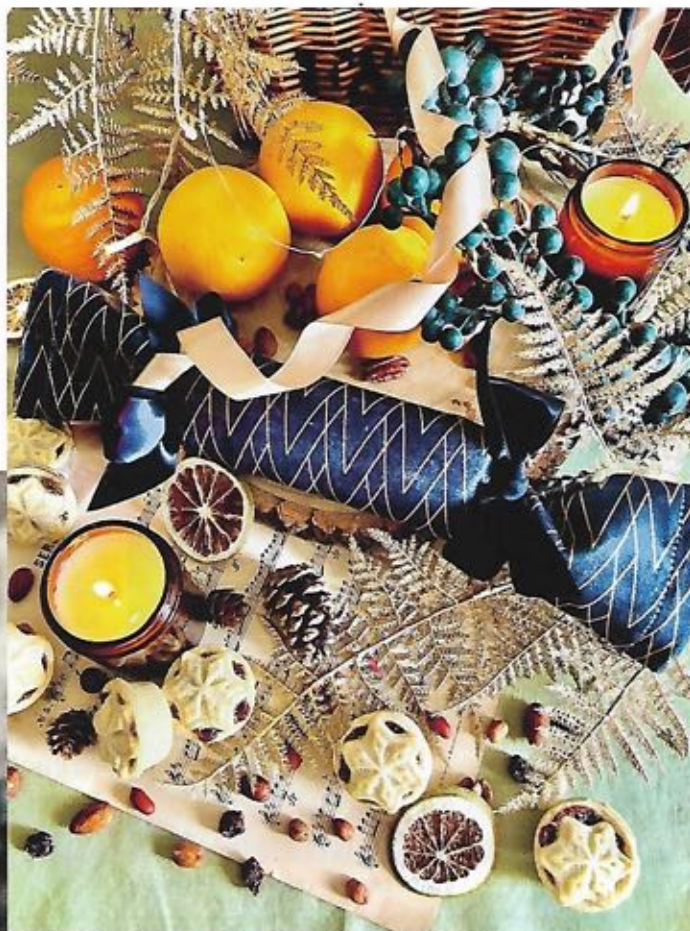


## Step inside Polly Gibbs

Polly Gibbs, Creative Director at Coco Design, shares her down to earth approach to interiors, from design secrets to trends and everything in between.

waste afterwards. They not only vowed to buy reusable crackers for the following year, but launched their own. "When we started searching, none of the offerings had all the elements we were looking for: beautiful, reusable, personalisable and with a real snap. So, during lockdown I bought a sewing machine and learnt how to sew from Youtube to create the ultimate reusable luxury cracker." The result is crackers wrapped in a choice of soft upholstery quality velvets from 'Furry Tails of New York', 'Ziggy Stardust' and 'One Pine Day' to 'Lord of The Wings'. Each has a unique sliding mechanism, personalisable name tags and that all important snap. Instead of naff plastic novelties and cheesy jokes, every name tag has a QR code on the reverse which can be scanned for 'chuckles' and 'challenges', and you

Christmas Spice Candle, Meon Candles. Styled by Polly



Ziggy Stardust reusable crackers, Kaneo Crackers. Styled by Polly

can fill each cracker with your own choice of gift. (From £16. Kaneo Crackers).

These cards by Susannah Garrod are perfect for art lovers aren't they? Susannah is a British fashion illustrator, working for brands including British Vogue, Louis Vuitton and Jimmy Choo. She also created the visual identity for 'Prêt-a-Portea', their famed fashion afternoon tea at The Berkeley Hotel in London, which I have enjoyed as a birthday gift and would make a lovely Christmas present. ('Colour of Christmas' cards, £8.95 for 10. Available at the Royal Academy gift shop).

Having previously worked in Milan designing prints for clients including DKNY, Fendi and Christian Dior, Tori Murphy has been dedicated to English manufacturing and creating designs with longevity since she launched her own



STEP INSIDE *by Polly Gibbs*



brand in 2012. A sense of home and family have remained at the heart of the business and her commitment to English craftsmanship is hugely admirable, especially given the likely cost savings outsourcing abroad would afford. Steadfastly British, her fabrics are woven in Lancashire, washed in the Yorkshire Dales and made into products like these charming Christmas stockings, in Nottingham. As with the whole collection, from curtains to tea towels, these stockings are designed to last, offering a relaxed English style that's steeped with comfort and tradition. (Christmas Stockings, from £48. Tori Murphy).

After studying Fine Art at university, Hannah Bidmead founded Nancy & Betty Studio, now located near Canterbury. Influences come from visits to Scandinavia with an emphasis on whimsical messages and luxury finishes. My current favourite is Fable Forest - even the name suggests the magic of Christmas. All goods are proudly made in



'Colours of Christmas' cards, Sussanah Garrod



wrapping, Nancy & Betty

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Great Britain using sustainable paper and vegetable inks. Incidentally, Nancy & Betty were Hannah's grandma and her twin sister, who were born in the 1930s and as children featured in the Pear's soap adverts because they had beautiful skin! (Fable Forest wrapping paper from £9.95. Nancy & Betty).

From selling her first mug at London's Spitalfields Market in 2011, to stocking retailers worldwide. Victoria Eggs graduated from Birmingham Institute of Art & Design in 2005 with a BA in Fine Art. Soon after she moved to Sydney, Australia, designing T-shirt graphics for



Royally British Bauble, Victoria Egg

iconic fashion brand Ben Sherman. It was there that Victoria began drawing British illustrations, which gave her the idea to capture quintessentially British moments when she returned to the UK. The buzz and excitement of visiting London as a small child; the unmistakable smell of fish and chips at the seaside; the simple joy of licking the spoon when baking cakes with her young daughter and the pure delight and magic that fills the air at Christmas. The design that



Porcelain Decorations, Sarah Jane Handmade



resonates most this year has to be the Royally British Bauble. Featuring the Union Jack, the Queen's crown, the National Flowers of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, the Gold State Coach, corgis and the Queen's favourite residences; Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace

and Balmoral Castle. Victoria's collection also includes an equally charming Santa's Sleigh and Night Before Christmas baubles, mugs, jugs, a Shortbread Tin, Tea, cards and textiles. (Royally British Fine Bone China Bauble. £21. Victoria Egg).

Sophie Allport draws on classic British heritage for her designs, with the occasional little twist. All of her designs are lovingly created from her countryside home in Lincolnshire, with a level of craftsmanship and attention to detail that ensures each item is kept for a long time.

"There's nothing I love more than creating and painting all the designs for each product, and hope they will be treasured for years to come and bring magical memories that last a lifetime." Sophie's Christmas designs include Festive Forest, Christmas Dogs, Home For Christmas and Highland Stag. (Oven Gloves £24, Hand Towel £16, Aga Hob Cover £16, Tray £22, Gift Wrap £7, Pot Grab £10, Mugs £14 each).

"May your hands be full of clay and your heart full of imagination". Sarah Jane has always been a creative soul whose rustic, French inspired style works well with her functional wares. Here, I've fallen for her mini jumper decorations, which are so cute, witty and beautiful. Sarah also offers courses and visits at her studio in Chicklade on the Wiltshire/Dorset border. (Single decorations £7.50. Set of 4 trees £26. Set of Mini Jumpers £14.50. Sarah Jane Handmade).

Aphra Hannah began baking at her mother's café in Peckham and worked as a waitress in Ottolenghi, London, where she happened to make some cupcakes as a leaving present for a colleague, which celebrity chef and owner, Yotam Ottolenghi, shared on social media, commenting, "she's not one of our bakers, but she sure can pipe!" An entrepreneurial seed was sown, and Aphra decided she wanted to bake professionally. So, after a move to Birmingham and with a new baby, Aphra used nap time to start focusing on the decorative elements of baking. She started sharing her



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Homes & Gardens

Value Life: Nov/Dec 2022

creations on Instagram and The Baking Theorist was born. With a particular talent for imagery and detail, her Christmas biscuits are a real delight. Her most

recent project however, was a Gingerbread Rapunzel tower, raffled off to raise money for the Little Princess Trust, along with a donation of 17 inches of her own

hair. (Christmas Biscuit Set - £15-£30. Also available: Decorate your own Gingerbread House Kit - £18. Pre-Decorated Gingerbread House - £30-£45).

orders from all over the globe. (Boxed 12 Cupcakes £33, Brownies By Post £15+postage. Happy Cakes).

### Source List

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[@meoncandles](https://www.instagram.com/meoncandles)  
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Since 2009 Julia Atkinson has literally baked thousands of cupcakes, cakes and brownies from her kitchen in Summertown - using only free range eggs and the finest ingredients. "We bake with lashings of real butter and high cocoa content quality dark chocolate. Our brownies in particular have just the right amount of squishiness!" Her festive cupcakes would be lovely to greet guests with on Christmas Eve wouldn't they, or grouped as table centrepiece. Julia has even sweetened the day of a few famous faces, including Kiefer Sutherland, Gary Barlow, Miranda Hart, Michael Ball, the cast and crew of Endeavour. She also accepts

● Polly is an award-winning designer, Top 50 Home Influencer - Sweetpea & Willow, Decorex100 Interiors Influencer & Amara Interiors Blog Award Finalist. If you've got a rockin' interior or design dilemma, message her and it could feature in the next issue. E: [polly@curious-coco.com](mailto:polly@curious-coco.com) W: [www.curious-coco.com](http://www.curious-coco.com) Insta, Twitter, FB: [@TheCuriousCoco](https://www.instagram.com/TheCuriousCoco)

