

Countdown to the *perfect* *Christmas*



IF THE MERE THOUGHT OF THE FESTIVE SEASON BRINGS YOU OUT IN A COLD SWEAT, THEN YOU NEED OUR FOUR-WEEK CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN. Leading West End businesses give you their top tips to make it through to the 25th of Dec, in control, and ready for fun!

Mariella MacLeod talks so much sense. 'Just keep it simple,' she says. 'Prepare as much as you can in advance and don't make life too complicated for yourself. It doesn't have to be hard you know, it's supposed to be fun.'

Easier said than done in my view, but as founder of Dickory Dock Concierge Services, Mariella is the West End's Lifestyle Management expert and should know. So what are her top tips for keeping Christmas on track and fraying nerves smoothed?

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Top Christmas tip is, don't expect too much from yourself. 'Christmas for all its build up and expectation is just one day and you are just one person - a person who wants to

enjoy what the day has to bring as much as everyone else in the family. It is not your place to do all the work to make it 'perfect' for everyone else. When you accept this all the jobs that need to be completed before the big day become much clearer', says Mariella.

'And don't be afraid to delegate. If you don't have the time or skill to complete a task, ask or buy the right person in. This is when it pays to have a 'stable' of contacts you can rely on when the computer goes into meltdown in the middle of an online Christmas shop, or some slates get blown off the roof - unless it was Santa's sleigh of course!'

So, let's remember Christmas is fun. Time for family, food, pressies and a beautifully decorated house. No pressure there then.

With this in mind, and the explosion



Mariella at Dickory Dock

in crafting of late, Jill Stewart at Boxwood on Byres Road has come up with some easy kits to make your own Christmas decorations. With her easy, rustic Nordic design style Jill also has armfuls of ready-made items in stock if time-management is key. Says Jill, 'Ditch the tinsel and sparkle and experiment with colour. Reds and whites make for a simple yet strong statement.'

When tackling the decorating job Jill's top tip is to see your home as a guest would view it, so start at the