

## My top 10 tips for a stress-free Christmas\*

- **Plan ahead** – Decide on your menu and the day's events well ahead of time in consultation with the rest of the family. Don't leave it all to the last minute.
- **Don't aim for perfection** – Magazine articles pressurise us to have the perfect Christmas with beautifully decorated tables and gorgeous food. More important is being together as a family and having a fun special time together. Don't put unnecessary pressure on yourself.
- **Have a budget and avoid debt** – Be honest with yourself and your family about what you can afford to spend on Christmas and try to stick to a realistic budget. This will minimise the potential stress later of having large credit card bills to pay.
- **Take a list with you** – This will keep your shopping focused, as it is easy to get distracted!
- **Shop in the quieter hours** – Go shopping for food and gifts during the quieter hours. First thing in the morning or late afternoon is a good time for grocery shopping. Avoid Saturday morning, the rush hour and the days before Christmas as much as possible (except for perishables like salads, milk and cream).
- **Shop online** – Avoid the congested malls and the stress of still finding that 'perfect gift' when you have already 'shopped til you dropped'. Sit in the quiet peace of your own home with a cup of tea and shop away.
- **Share out the cooking responsibilities** – You don't need to be the perfect hostess by taking on the preparation of the whole meal; rather limit your stress by asking other family members to help with different tasks. In our family, the guys are cooking the meat on the Weber and the ladies are sharing out responsibility for the veggies and desserts.
- **Do most of the food preparation ahead of time** – The majority of food preparation can be done a day or two before, especially if you are having a cold meal. Baking Christmas cake and biscuits can be done a week or two in advance if they are stored in airtight containers.
- **Do a cold meal or braai** – While we all love a cooked roast meal, in our climate it can be exhausting to prepare on the day. Go for the easier option of cooking the meat ahead of time to be eaten cold on the day, with a variety of salads which are easier to prepare in the heat.
- **Take breaks from the family** – Lastly, having all the family together, especially if it is for several days can be quite overwhelming. Don't be shy to take a break from everyone – take a nap, read a book or go for a walk.

\*Specifically aimed for those with ADHD but applicable to everyone.