

# QUEEN OF CHRISTMAS

**A DONNA HAY CHRISTMAS**  
 Sunday 8 December at 8.30pm **ONLY ON** The LifeStyle Channel [106]

The ultimate cook's cook shares her Christmas triumphs – and one particularly memorable disaster – as she reveals how you can throw **A Donna Hay Christmas**

**Standing at the pristine white kitchen** bench, saucepans bubbling away while delicious scents fill the air and tantalise tastebuds, Donna Hay is the picture of professionalism. We're at Palm Beach in Sydney, on the set of her new special *A Donna Hay Christmas*. While a whale swims by in the blue-water backdrop, the queen of the Australian culinary scene is cool, calm and collected as she dispenses handy hints and top tips to help even the most clueless home cook deliver a no-fuss festive feast.

Considering all that – along with the fact she's worked at a professional level since kicking off her career as a food stylist at the age of 19 – you'd think Donna Hay the recipe guru, respected *MasterChef* guest, and one-woman brand couldn't possibly get flustered in a kitchen. But she can. And she has – on the last day you want a bona fide kitchen disaster.

"I've cooked Christmas lunch since I was 13 – that's a lot of lunches!" she recalls. "But one year, I was running quite late because I had planned to do too much. Having two young children means I'm quite distracted on Christmas Day, too. So I'd forgotten to put the glazed ham in the oven. If you want a perfect glazed ham, you have to pull it out of the oven about 12 times to get the glaze even."

That's when Donna decided to throw caution to the wind to save a little time.

"I thought I'd edge it out of the oven a little bit, rather than lifting it up on the bench," she explains. "I had the glaze in one hand, and was holding the baking dish in the other, and the shelf slipped out. I caught it in my beautiful Christmas dress, and in the end there was no glaze on the ham – it was all over me. I had to start all

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– Donna Hay

over again, so what was already a late Christmas lunch became even later."

Having furnished her extended family with a killer "Do you remember when..." story, Donna is determined you don't suffer the same fate. Enter *A Donna Hay Christmas*, her how-to guide to creating a divine yuletide meal – without stress or ruined frocks. "You're going to see the most beautiful Christmas special ever filmed," she says of this hour-long exclusive. "It's extremely practical, which is what I love. There are lots of tricks and cheats in there as well. I'm giving

audiences an entire Christmas menu, and I do it in real time, just to show you that it's achievable on what is quite a frantic day."

As a down-to-earth mother of two boys aged seven and 10, this ethos of being able to make tasty food in a hurry is the foundation of Donna's empire – and it has been since she was just a young girl.

"My mum was really encouraging of me to cook," Donna explains. "And she didn't mind how much mess I made. I used to think it was fabulous. It was like playing with mud pies in my cubby house, but I didn't have to pretend. I don't know what she was thinking, but it seems to have worked out."

It's this heart-felt encouragement from her mother – as well as some early training from her grandma – that meant Donna had a bunch of solid recipes under her belt when she left home. Though it seems her pals didn't fare so well.

"When I was starting in the industry, a lot of my friends were working in beauty and fashion and interiors," she says. "My phone would ring from 3pm onwards, because they just didn't know how to cook and needed help."

It was then that Donna realised the problem lay not in her friends' abilities – or lack thereof – but in the recipes they were trying to follow. She's since honed her skills to ensure any advice she offers is designed to turn simple into special. ▶

WORDS: REBECCA LAKE; PHOTOGRAPHY: NICHOLAS WILSON



"When I came into it all, there were a lot of technical, 'chef-y' terms in recipes," she explains. "I realised people needed to read something that was a bit more forgiving and concise. You've got to say, 'Cook the onions for five minutes until golden, or until just soft,' instead of using terms like 'sauté'. I realised I needed to rephrase recipes and make them more user-friendly."

And so Donna Hay, the ultimate cook's cook, was born. From her early days styling food for photo shoots, she landed the job as food editor at *Marie Claire*. From there, her reputation as a fountain of practical advice saw US domestic goddess Martha Stewart court her for a job. Donna came home to take stock of her situation when the offer came through that would change

her life – she was head-hunted by media giant Lachlan Murdoch to start her own self-titled magazine in 2001. The first issue sold 60,000 copies. The next shifted 95,000 and the rest is culinary history. But it's time-honoured traditions like Christmas lunch that keep Donna grounded – even if she's more careful now about preparation.

"I have my standard things I do every year, and depending on who's coming on the day, I like to do little extra things," she says. "For example, if my brother-in-law is coming, I'll do oysters and seafood. But I still always do a glazed ham," she adds with a laugh. "I always do a turkey and then my grandmother's pudding. My family have high expectations of me at Christmas because they know I can cook."

And – with 25 cookbooks and more than three million sales worldwide to her name, plus a line of unashamedly thigh-expanding cake batters – Donna constantly lives up to those high expectations.

Indeed, *A Donna Hay Christmas* doesn't just provide tips for whipping up lunch – Donna showcases crafty ways to wrap presents and showcases some nifty edible Christmas tree decorations. So what's next? A new Donna Hay series? A Donna Hay restaurant? Global domination?

"There's so much more to do," she says. "I'm all about the home cook, so I'm not interested in opening my own restaurant. But I'd love to do another long series, and I'm working on a new book. So there are tonnes of things happening. It's exciting!" ▶



**HAY DAYS**

Donna shares her favourite – spillage-free – memories of Christmases past and present

**CHRISTMAS THEN**

"When I was growing up, my grandmother had this really funny Christmas tradition that started in October. My cousins and I would come into her kitchen – where we'd all have to stand in an orderly line – and have a stir of the Christmas pudding for luck. Then they'd all go outside to play, but I would stay with her. I'd help her put the flour on the pudding cloth, and would hold its string so she could tie it. We did a lot of Christmas cooking together."



**CHRISTMAS NOW**

"Everyone comes over early to open presents, and we have lunch and go for a swim, then take the ham out of the fridge again and slice it up. We're all so busy and I don't really catch up with my entire family in one place very often, so it's good to have a laugh. Having kids around at Christmas is always special. They like dressing up grandpa and putting him in a tiara and a fairy wand and wrapping him in tinsel. He's a good sport."

# EXCLUSIVE RECIPE

## DONNA HAY RASPBERRY AND WHITE CHOCOLATE TRIFLE

### TIPS & TRICKS

When making the jelly layer of the trifle, using frozen berries helps cool the jelly. You can also **make the jelly layer 1-2 days in advance.**



You can vary the flavours in your trifle. For example, **substitute the raspberries with blueberries or strawberries.**



Depending on the size of the **sponge fingers** you use, you may need to **cut them to fit** into your serving bowl.

### INGREDIENTS

SERVES 6-8

- 20 small store-bought sponge fingers
- 1/2 cup (125mL) orange-flavoured liqueur
- 250g fresh raspberries, to serve

#### RASPBERRY JELLY

- 1 1/2 tablespoons gelatine powder
- 1.5L cranberry juice
- 1 cup (220g) caster (superfine) sugar
- 500g frozen raspberries

#### WHITE CHOCOLATE GANACHE

- 180g white chocolate, finely chopped
- 1 cup (125mL) single (pouring) cream

#### MASCARPONE CREAM

- 1/2 cup (140g) mascarpone
- 1/2 cup (80g) icing (confectioner's) sugar, sifted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
- 1 1/2 cups (375mL) single (pouring) cream

### METHOD

1. To make the jelly, place the gelatine and 1/2 cup (125mL) of the cranberry juice in a bowl and stir to combine. Set aside for 5 minutes or until the gelatine is absorbed. Place the remaining juice and sugar in a saucepan over medium heat and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Bring to the boil and cook for 1 minute. Remove from the heat, add the gelatine mixture and stir to combine. Set aside to cool for 20 minutes. Pour the jelly mixture into the base of a 4-litre glass dish and top with the frozen berries. Refrigerate for 4-5 hours or overnight until set.
2. To make the ganache, place the chocolate in a small saucepan over low heat and stir frequently until melted and smooth. Remove from the heat and add 1/4 cup (60mL) of the cream in a thin, steady stream, stirring constantly until well combined. Pour the mixture into a bowl and refrigerate until just cold. Whisk the remaining cream until stiff peaks form, add the cooled chocolate mixture and fold through to combine.
3. To assemble, spoon the ganache over the jelly and smooth with a palette knife. Dip the sponge fingers in the orange-flavoured liqueur and layer over the ganache. To make the mascarpone cream, place the mascarpone, sugar, vanilla and cream in a large bowl and whisk until soft peaks form. Spoon the cream over the sponge fingers and top with the fresh raspberries to serve.

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### CHRISTMAS, 3 WAYS

#### Meaty matters

In *Secret Meat Business Christmas* (Tuesday 3 at 8.30pm on LifeStyle FOOD), loud'n'proud carnivore Adrian Richardson dishes up old faves (think turkey and ham) and exotic game.



#### Aussie BBQ

BBQ maestro Darren Robertson reveals how to throw a *Charcoal Kitchen Christmas* (Thursday 12 at 8pm on LifeStyle FOOD) before his new series launches next month.



#### Fast and fab

Left your Chrissie dinner preparations until you can hear the sound of Rudolph's hooves on your rooftop? Lorraine's *Last Minute Christmas* (Tuesday 17 at 8.30pm on LifeStyle FOOD) has plenty of quick tricks for creating a delicious meal.

