

Deck the shelves

October is when shoppers really start to think about Christmas. Plan ahead, stock smart and you can lock in early festive sales

Now we're into October, you can capture the early Christmas shoppers who are already planning for the season ahead and stocking up to spread their spend. Start thinking about your festive displays now and you'll become the go-to store for all things Christmas.

Set the scene

Small, eye-catching displays can signal to your customers that you're primed ready for the season and encourage early basket spend, so position Christmas SKUs just below eye level, at 'buy level'. To capture these early seasonal shoppers, display a selection of self-eat treats and small sharing formats now, followed by popular Advent calendars and small selection boxes from late October for those customers who want to secure their favourites before the seasonal rush clears the shelves.

Timing matters as much as range. Once Bonfire Night and Diwali have passed, go big on the decorations and customers will know exactly where to come for their Christmas shop. Advertise your festive opening hours in late November or early December, giving shoppers plenty of notice and reassuring them you'll be open when they need you.

When the season is in full swing, in-store theatre goes a long way. Consider introducing a festive greeting to keep the atmosphere welcoming and you'll see a lift in both spirits and sales. You could use your window or counter space to support a local cause too – a charity collection point or community giving tree is a low-cost way to create a point of difference for your store and build goodwill with the local community that lasts well beyond December.

Don't rein me in

Customers are prepared to spend that bit more at Christmas to make the occasion special, and premium beer, cider, wine,

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spirits and ready-to-drink (RTDs) can be one of your main sources for boosted basket spend. Promote these from mid-November as customers start to get together for seasonal parties and look for more premium gifting alcohol options. Check out the **Focus On Wine guide** for tips on building a bestselling range. Ready-to-drink cocktails and spirits also had a standout season last year, with RTD sales rising 30.1% over the festive period[1].

Keep premium wine, spirits and RTD lines in high visibility areas and cross-merchandise with bottle bags and gift wrap to add value and offer your customer a solution to last-minute premium gifts. These are the lines shoppers are consistently trading up on, so don't be afraid to give them eye-level space on shelves rather than tucking them away.

Big occasion, bigger baskets

Affordable indulgence is the key to Christmas confectionery, and sharing formats meet that need perfectly. Tubs, pouches and cartons can be versatile and suit a range of occasions including gifting, family nights in, last-minute top-ups and more, which means they should be an essential part of your range from October right up until the festivities. The confectionery category is one of the most valuable of the festive season, worth £1.3bn in 2024 across the total market[2], so get your range right and stock will be flying off the shelves.

In the run-up to the Christmas season there's also demand for larger formats beyond confectionery, with multipacks seeing value growth of 24% and 2L bottles rising to 26%, marking a clear trade-up into bigger packs as households stock up for upcoming festivities[3]. Don't forget the power of Advent calendars and limited-edition novelty lines early in the season too, as they're a great way to bring organised shoppers through the door before December even begins. Have a read of our **Focus On Autumn/ Winter Confectionery guide** for more information.

(Sources: [1]Better Retailing, UK Convenience Stores See Sales Drop Over Christmas, 09.01.26; [2]Kantar Worldpanel and Discounters data, 20 weeks to 29.12.24; [3]SmartView Convenience Volume & Value Sales, Nov-Dec 2024)

What to display and when

October
Sharing formats of bestselling confectionery and novelty lines

Late October
Advent calendars and chocolate selection boxes

November through to 25 December
Decorations, premium alcohol lines, gifting solutions and multipack formats

Late November
Advertise Christmas opening hours

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"We've started donating to local nurseries and giving them selection boxes every year. It's nice to give back and thank the local community for their continued support."

Jaz Lalli, KeyStore More Temple

"We do something called a community box that we place in the store for customers with limited means. This will have essentials such as bread, milk and fruit in. It's important to me to help those who may be struggling and I try my very best to look after customers who may not be able to afford the items they need that week."

Omar Jamil, KeyStore Jamil Store



"Be sure to stock up on all the essential day-to-day products that can be easily forgotten in the panic leading up to Christmas Day."

Uzair Ali, Lifestyle Extra

"In the lead-up to Christmas I expand my premium range. I move the premium products to eye level and put as many on offer as I can."

Nicky Kaur, Lifestyle Express



"I create bespoke hampers for customers and they fly off the shelves."

Kesh Bagha, Lifestyle Express

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