Plan to win *this Christmas*

Shoppers are planning and spending earlier every year. Make the right decisions on range, rotas and displays now, and make the most of the run-up to Christmas

Christmas rewards those who are prepared, so if you confirm your stock, promotions and rotas now, you'll win the early sales and be in the strongest position when Christmas trading reaches its peak. Last year, 24% of shoppers had already been budgeting and saving for Christmas by July[1], so many are already buying and it's important to capture these early visits from November as shoppers secure their festive favourites.

Think premium

Across every category, there are opportunities to encourage customers to spend a little more on premium products and seasonal treats. Alcohol and confectionery were the categories most likely to see trade-ups last year, with 69% of chocolate tubs bought as branded or premium own label[2]. Premiumisation isn't just for the drinks and confectionery fixtures – look across the store for a step-up option in every category, from a luxury chocolate box and gourmet crisps to a craft beer selection or party platter. These lines need clear signage, so go big with a dedicated display and reap the rewards that affordable indulgence can bring.



(Sources: [1]One Pulse, How UK consumers are thinking about Christmas 2025, Sample +1,000; [2]IGD, Unwrapping Christmas 2025, 14 .01.26)



Around 59% of UK shoppers plan to shop earlier to spread the cost of Christmas over more than one payday

(Source: A1 Retail Magazine, Sensormatic Solutions reveals its predictions for the UK's busiest in-store shopping days of the Christmas season, 01.10.25)

Boost the festive cheer

Even the best range needs the support of a well-prepared team behind it. Map out your promotions against key dates, including paydays and party weekends. If you haven't already, give the team plenty of notice of their Christmas rotas and be as flexible as you can – knowing their hours early lets colleagues plan their own festivities and saves you from the panic of being short staffed during the Christmas rush.

The busiest time of year is also the most tiring, so it's crucial to bring cheer to your team and make sure they feel supported. Festive treats in the back room, a team meal once the rush is over or even just a heartfelt 'thank you' will keep spirits high. Customers will notice the difference when staff offer a warm greeting or have the energy for a quick chat at the till.

Make your store the destination

It can be hard to find new ways to differentiate your store at Christmas, however, local products are a great way to make your range stand out and encourage customers to keep coming back. Regional chocolates, craft beers, preserves and baked treats are novel additions that supermarkets can't replicate. Put the producer's name on the shelf edge or take to social media to share the story of where the products are from. Promote your local stock and customers will appreciate your choice to represent the local community. Around 80% of convenience stores have been involved in community activity in the past year[3], so it's proven to be a natural way to build rapport and show goodwill.



In-store theatre can also make a big

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(Source: [3]ACS Local Shop Report 2025)



TOP TIP Decorate the exterior of your store and windows too and you'll catch the eye of passersby and draw them in

difference, and it doesn't necessarily need a big space or budget. Themed events and interactive displays create connection, and you can have a small version of that in any store. Pick one hero display, such as a tower of festive treats by the door, and do it well. Fairy lights, festive bunting, seasonal music, a festive greeting and, of course, a decorated Christmas tree will add atmosphere and make store visits memorable for shoppers. Really go for it and encourage staff to wear festive jumpers too!

The stores that win at Christmas are the ones that get it right from the early November sales and up until the new year. Top up your stock, support your team and put your best displays out now, and you'll be ready to make the most of every sale.





November

Don't get caught short

Knowing what customers will buy, and when, can help you to plan your range and become the go-to store for all things Christmas. During November, the holiday planning kicks off and non-essential treats sell quickly. Start with stocking impulse confectionery and remember that popular lines are likely to sell out elsewhere, so customers need to be able to count on you to stock their favourites. Make sure boxed chocolates and stocking fillers, alcohol for gifting and freezer-friendly party food are on shelf for easy ways to secure early wins.

It can be helpful to review last year's sales to see which lines ran out and when, then confirm your orders and delivery dates for the weeks ahead. Plan where back-up stock will sit so shelves can be refilled in minutes. If shoppers can't find their favourites, they won't wait for you to restock; they'll simply go elsewhere.

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December

Big spend opportunities

By December, shoppers will move from planning to hosting, so home in on products associated with the main meal event of Christmas Day. Focus on the items shoppers are most likely to forget such as gravy, cranberry sauce and stuffing. Household products are important for the big day too, so keep your shelves topped up with handy items such as tin foil, roasting trays, cling film and even festive napkins.

Novelty confectionery and sharing treats can encourage self-gifting during December as customers show increased willingness to indulge when the holiday approaches. Party food and premium nibbles also sell strongly, so think about placing them next to drinks and promote bundles





to build bigger baskets. Mixers and alcohol-free options shouldn't be ignored either, with customers increasingly opting for moderation while still wanting to take part in social gatherings.

Gifting solutions are always a good idea during this time, and it's best to create a dedicated gifting section where you merchandise cards, gift wrap, festive bottle bags and crackers together near the entrance. You could consider offering a small selection of festive gifts too, for those looking for last-minute solutions.



Click for advice on which products to build your displays around in the Focus On Christmas Essentials guide

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Source: (1) Circana (UK) Ltd, All Outlets, GB, Pork Snacks, Value Sales, 52 WE 27 JUN 2026
(2) Circana (UK) Ltd, All Outlets, GB, Pork Snacks, Value Sales % Change vs YA, 52 WE 27 Jun 2026