

WHY NOT LET SOMEONE ELSE COOK?

DINING

WHAT with all that shopping and preparation, not to mention parties and social occasions, by the time Christmas Day comes round you could very well be ready for a rest.

Yet the big day itself needs more exertion, with the chef of the family cooking up a storm in the kitchen. So if you'd rather be relaxing with family and friends rather than cooking for them, then why not consider dining out at this special time of year?

If you're thinking about dining out for Christmas Day, you'd better book quickly to make sure you are not disappointed, especially if you are in a big group.

"They need to be thinking now," says Gill Venning, sales

and marketing manager at the Coniston Hotel, in Skipton, which is taking bookings for Christmas Day lunch and its festive breaks.

"What happens, in my experience, is that once half-term and Hallowe'en are out of the way, then at that point people will start switching to Christmas thoughts."

Dining out means that everyone can eat exactly what they want, from the traditionalists who wouldn't eat anything other than turkey and the trimmings on the day through to others who want to try something a little more exotic.

Plus, you will be able to check in advance if your desired venue can cater for special dietary requirements.

It also has a positive impact on the run-up to the day as it removes the stress of

planning and shopping.

What's more, it creates more time for people to relax and have more time to enjoy the company of loved ones more, especially for those who would usually cook the meal.

"Coming out to dine, it allows larger groups of friends to enjoy the special meal together, because it's quite a lot of pressure on one or two people to accommodate that," says Gill, adding that staying in a hotel over Christmas can create a family atmosphere you can't get at home.

She adds: "I think you're guaranteed a bit of a festive atmosphere if you go for lunch, especially for the empty nesters because they probably feel it quite hard at that time."

Victoria Allen, the general

manager of The Coachman Inn in Snainton, North Yorkshire, which has a waiting list for Christmas Day three-course lunch but has some availability for its New Year's Eve menu, adds: "When people get together for Christmas I think, for a lot of people, it's maybe the only time of the year when they do get together, they do all sit down and eat together."

"It's quality family time together and obviously everything is done for you."

"I think by the time you've done the shopping, buying the table cloths, crackers, hats, drinks, vegetables, puddings, meats – it's just as beneficial to come out."





ALL THE TRIMMINGS: But if you want to eat out on Christmas Day, you'll need to book fast.