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## Shop local

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### Rose Prince on the best of regional British food. This week: Christmas markets

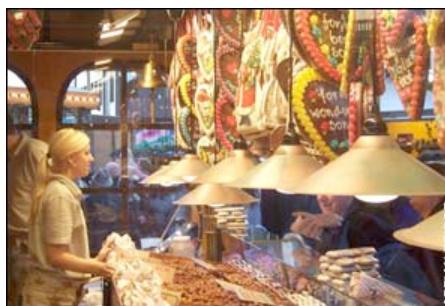
The Christmas lights are on earlier than ever this year in London's Oxford Street. Brought to life by the television X Factor diva Leona Lewis (promoting her new single), they feature characters from the latest Disney film.

Around the corner, in Regent Street, the lights are sponsored by Nike, "to celebrate the opening of their new flagship store".

Slightly more tasteful than Oxford Street's mile "with all the magic of Christmas and Disney", these are recyclable, carbon-offset and change colour and brightness using motion cameras that record, among other things, crowd density.

I take this to mean that when the crowds start leaving for home, the Nike store lights up like a great come-hither beacon.

How did Christmas get to be so hijacked, crass and ghouly? People who get tearful hearing the unpaid choirboy from King's singing Once in Royal David's City on Radio 4's Christmas Eve carol service, need an antidote. "Christkindlesmarkets" are counter-culture places where you can buy a gingerbread house, heat your body with glühwein and grilled bratwurst and your hands with roasted chestnuts, buy a hand-made present and then sit with the children and listen to stories.



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Thankfully, these markets, which originated in Germany and Austria, are now a regular feature in many British cities at Christmas and are often combined with, or take place close to, Slow Food and special farmers' markets. The two go well together. We checked out the best.

#### LONDON MARKETS

##### Covent Garden Market, North and East Piazzas, Covent Garden, London WC2: Dec 12-23, 4-9pm (12-6pm Sundays)

Covent Garden is the location for what promises to be a fabulous Christmas Night Market, where you will find producers such as Parsons Nose selling three- and four-bird roasts, Richard Vines's native venison and

game, hand-dived scallops and oysters from the McManus Brothers, white truffles from Prebilato and organic Brussels sprouts from Ash Green Organic.

Sweet things are provided by Violet, which makes figgy puddings and jewelled cup cakes, and Maison du Chocolat, which sells the finest hand-made goodies. Through it all, keep going on a drip feed of hot spiced cider from Burrow Hill Farm in Somerset.

In addition, there should be some great entertainment, including story-telling for children and acrobatic performances and flying acts on the Piazza.

##### Slow Food Christmas Market, Southbank Centre, Thames Riverside, London SE1 (near Waterloo Bridge): Dec 20-23, 11am-8pm

For the weekend before Christmas, the Southbank Centre will host a market for serious food lovers, with stalls run by Sillfield Farm (wild boar and rare-breed sausages, bacon and dry-cured hams), organic vegetables from Perry Court farm, Sarah Moore's traiteur dishes, hand-made with rare breed meat and biodynamic vegetables, honey from Twickenham and beautiful Montgomery cheddar cheese.

#### BRISTOL MARKETS

##### Corn Street and the Glass Arcade, St Nicholas Market: Slow Food Market, tomorrow,



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### 10am-4pm; Christmas Food Market, Dec 22, 10am-4pm

Bristol is my favourite place to shop in markets. The St Nicholas glass arcade is home to a string of independent cafés selling local ingredients that are whipped up into international cuisine. The weekly Wednesday farmers' market and monthly Slow Food markets have a vast range of West Country suppliers. This is an area rich in good food.

There will be a Slow Food Market tomorrow and a Christmas Food Market on Saturday, December 22, so you can stock up on everything you need from stalls that include Brown Cow Organics (beef), Bristol Hampers, which sells wicker hampers packed with good things, Charlton Orchards (apples and hot spiced apple juice to keep you warm as you shop), crabs, scallops and more from the Handpicked Shellfish Company and the most delicious Scotch eggs from the incisively named Handmade Scotch Egg Company. For the brave, there is a somewhat scary swing - the only one of its kind in the UK.

#### EDINBURGH MARKETS

No city goes bigger on Christmas markets than Edinburgh. For typical gifts and foods from Frankfurt, visit the **Traditional German Market**, Princes Street Gardens, until Dec 24 (Sun-Thurs, 10am-8pm; Fri-Sat, 10am-10pm). In addition, you can find locally produced Scottish food (and gifts) in the upper level of Princes Street Gardens, by the Edinburgh Wheel at the **Highland Village Christmas Market**, until Jan 2 (Sun-Thurs 10am-8pm; Fri-Sat 10am-10pm; Christmas Eve 10am-6pm; closed Christmas Day).

For fair-trade global food and guilt-free festive gifts, visit the **Ethical Christmas Market**, Castle Street, Dec 5-9 (Wed 11am-5pm, Thurs-Sun 11am-8pm; entry £1). Also in Castle Street, The Eating Place, Dec 13 and 20 (12-6pm), is a foodie market with both Scottish and international food.

There will be carol singers at the **Edinburgh Farmers' Market**, Castle Terrace, Dec 22 (9am-2pm), as well as a vast range of producers (it is one of the best farmers' markets in the UK), so you can stock up on all you need for the following week and see the "Producer of the Year" award being presented.

#### LINCOLN MARKET

### Cathedral Quarters, Lincoln: Dec 6, 4-9.30pm; Dec 7-8, 10am-9.30pm; Dec 9, 10am-7pm

Lincoln's Christmas market is a perfect combination of pure Christkindlesmarkt and local food market. The traditional Continental-style market features stalls selling hot grilled bockwurst and bratwurst, leiberkuchen (decorated gingerbread, including houses), wines from Neustadt van der Weinstrasse and hot glüwein.

Stalls in the local food market include Grassmere Farm, which makes Lincolnshire's famous chine, haslet and Lincolnshire sausages, local butcher SW Reed, game pasties from Poacher's and beautiful smoked eel and trout from Lymnbank Smokehouse.

The setting is romantic, high up on the city's hill in the cathedral quarters (which was used as a location for the movie *The Da Vinci Code*). In fact, Lincoln is becoming a favourite UK location for movies - a remake of *The Dam Busters* is under way near the city.

#### PS...

There are also Christmas farmers' markets and fairs in York ([www.yuletideyork.com](http://www.yuletideyork.com)), Manchester ([www.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.manchester.gov.uk)) and Bath ([www.bathchristmasmarket.co.uk](http://www.bathchristmasmarket.co.uk)).

- [rose.prince@telegraph.co.uk](mailto:rose.prince@telegraph.co.uk)

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