

welcome

CHRISTMAS IS COMING...

LAST YEAR SOME friends of mine bought their first home in a gorgeous tree-lined street. However, unbeknown to them, it was a Christmas-light street! Shock! Horror! The pressure was on. All the neighbours wanted to know if they were going to take part in the annual display (they didn't dare not!). As the initial shock wore off and Christmas drew nearer they slowly got into the spirit of things – and very stylishly, too. They decked out their front window with a cute fluorescent “Merry Christmas” sign, strung coloured lights (no, not the flashing ones) along the roofline of their front verandah, and covered the rest of the house in fairy lights and paper lanterns. It was like a scene from Baz Luhrmann's *Strictly Ballroom* (in a good way). When a crowd of us piled into the car to do the drive-by with all the kids, we caught them on their front lawn, with champers in hand, admiring their lights (they really did look like they had just stepped out of a Colorbond ad).

I love how they embraced the spirit of Christmas and ended up enjoying the whole process – and here at **real living** we're doing the same. It's been a tough year for the world and it's time to celebrate and spoil ourselves a little. So, deck the house with bells and holly (literally) and let's have some fun. It's **Christmas made easy** with loads of stylish, clever and super-practical ideas, so get started before the mad rush. We've jam-packed the issue with gift ideas (nothing over \$200, and something for everyone on your list); we show you how to decorate your house from the front door (yes, there are even lights for your front verandah) through to the bedroom; we hunt out the best of the best affordable but cool decorations; and show you three very different looks for your tree. Not least, there's the perfect menu for a traditional lunch (and traditional in Australia means, “Don't forget the seafood!”).

Plus, there are 45 pages of modern homes, each unique in their own way. I have to say, if there was any place I'd love to be spending the holidays it would be in the Adri-Ann Brown house at Margaret River in Western Australia (page 78). I love the relaxed feel of this home – it's stylish, but doesn't take itself too seriously. So go on, get sorted early for Christmas so you can put up your feet on the big day.

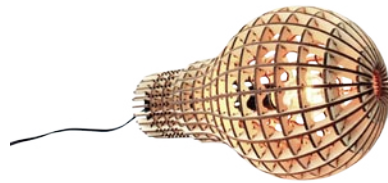
Have a Happy Chrissy!

Deborah

Deborah and the **real living** team

PS: I can't wait to see what my street-light friends come up with this year. I'll post some snaps on the blog (**reallivingmagazine.blogspot.com**) the week before Christmas – so make sure you check it out – it's bound to make you smile.

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Night-time glow
Gorgeous design in sustainable timber. Wooden Bulb **lamp**, \$249.95, Todae.



Slow-burning love
An Archipelago Botanicals delectable soy wax blend. White Fig **candle**, from \$42.95, Kit Cosmetics.



International cool
Italian leather + Sri Lankan cotton + Aussie print = wow! Slouch **bag**, \$330, Nancy Bird.

Spanish flavours
From a fab Melbourne restaurant to your kitchen. Olé! **“Movida Rustica”** cookbook by Frank Camorra & Richard Cornish (Murdoch Books, \$59.95).



To wit, to woo
An extremely cute wallhanging. Handpainted **owl** on plywood, \$25, Maxymoo.com.au



Rudolf

win this!



In a word
A simple sentiment says it all! Big Words Christmas **cards**, \$6.95 each, Raven & Lamb.



Answer to win! Q: Why do you need a microwave this Christmas?

Tell us in 25 words or less and you could win one of three **Panasonic microwaves** (pictured), worth \$359 each. See page 160 for entry details.