

It's beginning to smell a lot like CHRISTMAS

Whether it's pine needles, roast chestnuts or warmed cinnamon sticks, Christmas smells delicious. Here's how to recreate it every day

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hat does Christmas smell like, to you? Is it the spiced orange from a steaming glass of mulled wine that hangs to your collar as you leave a bar, the

gentle waft of pine needles when you amble past the tree or is it the gunpowder-like aroma of a recently pulled cracker? Perhaps it's the tang of maple-cured bacon searing down the hall as pigs in blankets crisp and crackle in the oven.

Whatever it may be, one thing is clear: no other time of year is capable of evoking such a cheery olfactory response. The smells that define Christmas hold an almost magical power, the effect of which can instantly put us at ease, soothe and coddle us, and for a few moments, have us thinking that all is right with the world. So much so, that for many of us, memories of Christmas

live as smells, rather than images, in our minds. That's the power of scent. And it's in the home, rather than on our skin, that the smell of Christmas can truly come alive.

"We want to conjure up the nostalgia and emotion of the season through scent – one reason sales of home fragrance increase at this time of year," explains Nicola Elliott, co-founder of Neom Organics. As well as calling up nostalgia, these scents work to help induce calm and reduce stress. Japanese scientists have found that infusing the air with crisp pine oil decreases anxiety, while researchers from Wheeling Jesuit University in West Virginia have discovered that a whiff of cinnamon improves cognitive functions such as attention span – a double win for those who are attempting to make a gingerbread house to rival The Shard.

UK sales of scented candles are set to reach an all-time high of £132.2 million by

the end of the year. But with a dizzying array of choice in home fragrance products, deciding on the perfect vessel for your abode is a science in itself. Diffusers are ideal for smaller spaces as most only scent a three-foot radius (and you can set them down and forget about them). Candles, on the other hand, are more powerful and need only be burnt for two hours to fragrance a normal-sized house (just leave the doors ajar). Meanwhile, a room spray is perfect for those who can't commit as its fragrance only lasts for a couple of hours.

Armed with this know-how, turn the page for *Stylist's* edit of scents that will transform your home into the ultimate Christmas grotto while doing wonders for your stress levels – as well as stowing away lots of tiny scent memories in your mind for years to come.

