Your free festive guide

Support for Christmas, New Year and the moments in between

You can enjoy the season and protect your recovery.

Whether this is your first sober Christmas or you have been in recovery for years, the festive season can bring extra pressure. Parties, family expectations, memories and changes to routine can all make things feel harder.

This guide brings together practical ideas, festive drinks, things to read and listen to, and a little humour. Take what helps, leave what does not, and keep reaching out.

You do not have to do it all

You are allowed to say no, leave early, rest and make different plans. A quieter Christmas is still a Christmas worth having.

Before you change your drinking

If you drink heavily or regularly, need alcohol to feel steady, or have had withdrawal before, speak with a doctor before stopping or sharply reducing. Alcohol withdrawal can be life-threatening. This guide is not a detox plan.

Inside: 22 recovery tips | Food and drink choices | Seven festive recipes | Books and podcasts | Christmas jokes | Support contacts

About The Freedom Room

Compassion, connection and practical support

The Freedom Room supports people affected by alcohol addiction, including partners and families. We believe people deserve to be heard, understood and supported without shame.

Our founder, Rachel Acres, brings more than 14 years of continuous sobriety alongside her work as an alcohol and other drug counsellor and recovery coach. Her lived experience is part of what makes The Freedom Room personal: she understands that asking for help can feel difficult, and that recovery involves much more than putting down a drink.

Recovery happens in everyday life

Support can help you understand patterns, manage difficult feelings, build healthier routines and reconnect with people. Counselling, recovery coaching and peer connection can give you somewhere to turn when life feels overwhelming.

Support for families too

Alcohol addiction affects more than the person drinking. Families also deserve information, support and space to talk about what they are going through.

Find out more

Visit thefreedomroom.com.au for current services and contact details. Ask about online options if travelling to The Freedom Room is difficult.

About this resource

Prepared for The Freedom Room Foundation. This edition updates the original festive guide, keeping its practical focus and bringing it into the free resource collection. Education and reflection support professional care; they do not replace it.

Your festive recovery toolkit

Plan before the pressure

1. Plan ahead and keep expectations realistic

Decide how long you want to stay, what might be difficult and how you will leave. You do not need to prove anything by staying until the end.

2. Choose people and places that support you

If certain people pressure you to drink, spend time with people who respect your choices. You can suggest a different place or activity.

3. Keep using your recovery support

Check holiday meeting times in advance. Keep appointments and stay connected with your recovery programme, counsellor or peers.

4. Practise your leaving words

Try: "Thanks for having me. I have had a lovely time and I am heading home now." You do not owe a long explanation. Repeat it calmly if someone pushes.

5. Make room for activities you enjoy

A walk, book, swim, craft project or music can give your day some structure. Choose things you actually enjoy, and allow time for rest too.

6. Take a moment to settle

Notice your feet on the floor or the sounds around you. Try a short meditation if it helps. If an exercise makes you uncomfortable, stop and choose another way to settle.

7. Start a new tradition

Try a Christmas film night, board games, a morning beach walk or a shared breakfast. Traditions can change as your life changes.

Your festive recovery toolkit

Protect your space

8. Bring a drink you feel comfortable with

Take sparkling water, juice or a favourite soft drink. Having your own option means you do not have to depend on what is available.

9. Decide what to order before you arrive

Choose your restaurant drink in advance. Plain sparkling water with citrus is always an option. Ask about ingredients if you are unsure.

10. Keep eating regularly

Busy days can make meals easy to miss. Plan food that is simple and satisfying so you are not trying to handle a difficult evening hungry.

11. Check food ingredients

Ask about alcohol in sauces, desserts and chocolates. You can choose an alternative without making it a big conversation.

12. Say no when you need to

An invitation is not an obligation. Try: "Thank you for inviting me, but I am keeping things quiet this year."

13. Take a break before you feel overwhelmed

Find a quieter space, step outside if it is safe, or call someone. A short pause can help you decide whether to stay or leave.

14. Save serious conversations for a sober moment

If someone who has been drinking wants to debate your recovery, try: "We can talk about that another time." Change the subject or leave the conversation.

Your festive recovery toolkit

Stay connected to your recovery

15. Notice and record your progress

Write down how you felt, what helped and what you managed. Getting through a difficult event sober is something worth recognising.

16. Keep control of your transport

Plan how you will get there and home. Have a backup so you can leave when you need to. Never drive after drinking.

17. Notice harsh self-talk

When you catch yourself thinking "I cannot do this," try something believable: "This is difficult, and I can take one useful step."

18. Reach out before things get harder

Message a sober friend, trusted family member or recovery contact. If you have access to a support group chat, use it. Have another contact ready if nobody replies.

19. Remember why recovery matters to you

Think about what you are protecting: peace, relationships, health, trust or waking up clear. Write your own reasons rather than borrowing someone else's.

20. Read or listen to something supportive

A recovery story or podcast can remind you that other people understand. It can support connection, but it does not replace asking for help when you need it.

21. Choose entertainment that feels helpful

If a film or programme makes drinking feel tempting, switch it off and choose something else. You do not have to watch what everyone else is watching.

22. Take the season one day at a time

You do not have to work out every future celebration today. Focus on your next safe step and getting your head on the pillow sober tonight.

Food: know what is in it

Ask, check and choose what feels right for your recovery

Some festive foods contain alcohol. Cooking does not always remove all of it. Recipes vary, so checking with the cook or reading the ingredients is more useful than guessing from the dish name.

Puddings, fruitcakes and rum cakes

May contain rum or brandy, including alcohol added after cooking.

Brandy butter, rum sauce and whipped cream

Dessert toppings may contain alcohol or alcohol-based flavourings.

Sauces, gravies and marinades

Wine, beer or spirits may be used in savoury dishes, including ham glazes.

Beer batter

Some batters are made with beer. Ask about the recipe.

Chocolates, truffles and desserts

Liqueur chocolates, tiramisu, ice cream and sorbet may contain alcohol.

Fruit dishes

Fruit salad or soaked fruit may have liqueur or other alcohol added.

Mulled wine and cider

These are often alcoholic. Choose a clearly alcohol-free drink and check the label.

If you accidentally eat something containing alcohol, that does not automatically mean you have relapsed. If it brings up cravings or worry, speak with someone supportive and make your next choice with care.

Festive drinks to enjoy

Choose what supports your recovery

You do not need a drink that looks or tastes like alcohol to join in. If mocktails bring up cravings, choose a simple soft drink or water instead. Check labels, especially ginger beer and flavourings. Recipes use a 250 ml cup; metric conversions are approximate. Recipes are adapted from the original guide.

Grinch punch

Adapted from the original for easier local shopping.

Ingredients

1 litre lemon-lime soft drink; 350 ml pineapple juice; 350 ml chilled lemonade; green food colouring (optional); ice; red decorating sugar (optional).

Method

Combine the chilled drinks in a large jug. Add a little colouring if you want a green finish. For a decorated rim, dip the glass rim in water, then sugar. Add ice just before serving.

Many festive drinks are sweet. Smaller servings, extra soda water or your preferred lower-sugar alternative are options. Check ingredients and allergens before sharing.

Festive drinks to enjoy

Choose what supports your recovery

Cranberry and basil cooler

The original cranberry basil sangria, without wine.

Ingredients

3 cups cranberry juice; 1/2 cup orange juice; 350 ml soda water; 1 sliced orange; 1 cored, sliced apple; 1/3 cup frozen cranberries; 1/4 cup basil leaves; ice.

Method

Combine the juices, fruit and basil in a large jug. Add soda water just before serving and pour over ice.

Citrus spritzer

A simple, bright drink to share.

Ingredients

4 cups orange juice; 4 cups lemon-lime soft drink or soda water; 2 sliced oranges; 2 sliced limes; ice.

Method

Chill the juice and sliced fruit for at least 30 minutes. Add the fizzy drink just before serving. Pour over ice.

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Festive drinks to enjoy

Choose what supports your recovery

Holiday cranberry fizz

Cranberry, apple and a little festive garnish.

Ingredients
2 cups cranberry juice; 1 1/2 cups apple juice; 475 ml soda water; ice; 4 rosemary sprigs; 1/4 cup fresh cranberries (optional).

Method
Mix and chill the juices. Divide between glasses with ice and top with soda water. Garnish with rosemary and cranberries. Use a large jug or additional glasses if needed.

Candy cane Christmas cooler

A creamy peppermint treat.

Ingredients
1 cup of equal parts milk and cream; 350 ml cream soda; 4 teaspoons sugar syrup; a small amount of food-grade, alcohol-free peppermint flavouring, following its label directions; crushed candy canes (optional).

Method
Lightly dip glass rims in a little extra syrup, then crushed candy canes. Stir the milk and cream with the syrup and flavouring. Add cream soda gently just before serving. Do not use aromatherapy essential oils.

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Festive drinks to enjoy

Choose what supports your recovery

Sparkling festive punch

The original mock champagne punch, served your way.

Ingredients

2 litres chilled ginger ale; 1.36 litres chilled pineapple juice; 1.9 litres chilled white grape juice.

Method

Combine in a large punch bowl just before serving. Serve in any glasses you enjoy. This makes a large batch; halve the quantities for a smaller gathering.

Apple and ginger cooler

The original apple-ginger Moscow mule, with clearly alcohol-free ingredients.

Ingredients

120 ml apple juice; 15 ml lime juice; a pinch each of ground cinnamon and nutmeg; 120 ml alcohol-free ginger beer; ice; apple slice, cinnamon stick and lime wedge (optional).

Method

Mix apple juice, lime juice and spices in a chilled glass. Add ice and top with ginger beer. Stir gently and add a garnish if you like.

Many festive drinks are sweet. Smaller servings, extra soda water or your preferred lower-sugar alternative are options. Check ingredients and allergens before sharing.

Something to read

Books from the original festive guide

Personal stories can offer connection and perspective. These books include memoirs and self-help approaches; their views are those of the authors and are not a substitute for individual medical or recovery advice. Borrowing from a library may keep costs down.

This Naked Mind
Annie Grace

The Unexpected Joy of Being Sober
Catherine Gray

Alcohol Explained
William Porter

The Sober Diaries
Clare Pooley

The 30-Day Sobriety Solution
Jack Canfield and Dave Andrews

Quit Like a Woman
Holly Whitaker

Sober Curious
Ruby Warrington

Recovery: Freedom from Our Addictions
Russell Brand

We Are the Luckiest
Laura McKowen

Alcohol Lied to Me
Craig Beck

A book cannot tell you whether it is medically safe to stop drinking at home. If dependence or withdrawal may be involved, speak with a doctor first.

Something to listen to

Listening ideas from the original festive guide

Look for these podcasts or their episode archives on your usual podcast app. Availability and hosts may change. Personal stories and opinions can be helpful company, but do not replace professional care.

Soberful

Conversations about sobriety, recovery and personal growth.

Recovery Happy Hour

Stories about life beyond drinking.

The Bubble Hour

Recovery conversations and personal experiences.

Recovery Elevator

Stories and discussions about building a life without alcohol.

The SHAIR Podcast

Personal stories about addiction and recovery.

Keep it useful for you

If an episode leaves you feeling unsettled or brings up cravings, stop and choose something else. You can talk through what came up with someone you trust.

A festive wish from us

We hope your Christmas and New Year bring moments of peace, connection and laughter. You do not need a perfect holiday. Keep taking care of yourself and remember that you are not alone.

Do not forget to laugh

A little Christmas silliness from the original guide

1. Why was the snowman looking through the carrots? He was picking his nose!

2. What do you get if you cross Santa with a detective? Santa Clues!

3. What does Santa su■er from if he gets stuck in a chimney? Claustrophobia!

4. Why was the turkey in the pop group? Because he was the only one with drumsticks!

5. What do you call an obnoxious reindeer? Rude-olph.

6. What do you get when you cross a snowman and a vampire? Frostbite.

7. What do you call a cat on the beach at Christmas time? Sandy Claus!

8. Why are Christmas trees so bad at knitting? Because they always drop their needles.

9. What do you call a snowman with a six-pack? An abdominal snowman.

10. What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa? A rebel without a Claus.

11. Why don't you ever see Santa in hospital? Because he has private elf care!

12. What do you call a bunch of chess players bragging about their games in a hotel lobby? Chess nuts boasting in an open foyer!

13. What did Adam say the day before Christmas? “It’s Christmas Eve!”

14. Why was the Christmas tree so good at sewing? It had a lot of needles.

15. Why did no one bid for Rudolph and Blitzen on eBay? Because they were two deer!

16. What do you call an elf who sings? A wrapper!

17. How does a snowman get around? He rides an ‘icicle.

18. What’s a dog’s favourite carol? Bark, the herald angels sing.

19. What kind of motorbike does Santa ride? A Holly Davidson!

20. What did the gingerbread man put on his bed? A cookie sheet!

21. Why don’t penguins ■y? Because they’re not tall enough to be pilots!

22. What’s Santa’s favourite type of music? Wrap music.

23. What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations? Tinselitis.

24. Why did Santa's helper see the doctor? Because he had low "elf" esteem!

25. What do snowmen wear on their heads? Ice caps.

26. What’s green, covered in tinsel and goes ribbit ribbit? A mistle-toad.

27. What do you call a greedy elf? El■sh.

28. How does Christmas Day end? With the letter "Y"!

29. What do you get if Santa goes down the chimney when a ■re is lit? Krisp Kringle!

30. Why are Christmas trees so fond of the past? Because the present’s beneath them.

Support is here

Save these contacts before you need them

Immediate danger or medical emergency

Call **000**. Call for seizures, severe confusion or hallucinations during possible alcohol withdrawal. If someone is unresponsive or breathing slowly or irregularly after drinking, do not assume they can sleep it off.

National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline

1800 250 015 | Free, confidential advice and information about support options.

Adis Queensland

1800 177 833 | Alcohol and drug support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including support for loved ones.

Lifeline

13 11 14 | Crisis support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Alcoholics Anonymous Australia

1300 222 222 | aa.org.au | Check local holiday meeting times.

Al-Anon Australia

1300 252 666 | al-anon.org.au | Support for people affected by someone else's drinking.

The Freedom Room

thefreedomroom.com.au | Visit for current contact details and services. Check holiday opening times; this is not an emergency service.

Safety information and contact sources: healthdirect.gov.au/alcoholism; adf.org.au/insights/safely-withdrawing-alcohol/; lifeline.org.au/131114; adis.health.qld.gov.au; aa.org.au/contact-us; al-anon.org.au/contact-us. Contacts checked 1 October 2026.

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