

winter edition

Seasons

January 2026



Featuring



Winter Home Comforts



Beauty and the Winter Blues



Things to See & Do This Winter



Winter Motoring



January Sales



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Welcome to **Seasons – Winter 2026**

As winter's chill begins to settle across our three counties, there's a certain kind of beauty that only this time of year brings. The light turns soft and silvery, the mornings sparkle with frost, and our towns and villages seem to slow their pace just enough for us to truly take in where we live.

This, then, feels like the perfect moment to launch **Seasons** – our brand-new glossy magazine, created to celebrate the people, places, and stories that make Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands such a wonderful part of the world to call home.

Each quarter, **Seasons** will follow the rhythm of the year – from the crisp calm of winter to the first buds of spring, the brightness of summer and the richness of autumn – highlighting the very best of local life, from independent shops and community ventures to countryside walks, home inspiration, and hidden gems worth discovering.

Our first Winter edition is all about warmth – in every sense of the word. You'll find features that reflect the spirit of the season: comforting food, inspiring people, caring places, and ways to make the cold months glow with local charm.

Whether you've picked up **Seasons** in a café, shop or community space, or are reading online from the comfort of your own home, we're so pleased you've joined us for this very first issue. This magazine is for you – our readers, neighbours and local businesses – and we can't wait to share the year ahead with you, one beautiful season at a time.

Stay warm

The Seasons Team
(01527) 588688



Winter Home Comforts

How to make your home glow with warmth, calm and local character this season.

As winter's chill begins to settle across our three counties, there's a certain kind of magic that only this time of year brings. The light turns soft and silvery, the mornings sparkle with frost, and our towns and villages seem to slow their pace just enough for us to truly take in where we live.

This feels like the perfect moment to celebrate what makes being at home in winter so special — warmth, softness, and the joy of a well-loved space. Whether you live in a cottage, a city apartment or a modern family home, now is the time to nest, to layer, and to make every room feel like a haven from the cold beyond the door.

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Let There Be Light

In winter, light becomes our most precious element. Warm-toned bulbs instantly soften a room, while fairy lights draped around mirrors or windows add a gentle glow. Swap bright white light for golden shades to mimic candlelight — your home will instantly feel warmer.

Local lighting shops and electrical retailers are full of clever ideas this time of year, from energy-saving lamps to artisan glass shades that add personality to any room.

The Power of Texture

Nothing says “comfort” like texture. Swap light summer throws for heavier knits, faux fur, and velvet cushions. Layering rugs underfoot can add instant warmth — visually and physically. If you’re thinking of refreshing your décor, look to rich, earthy colours: forest green, mulberry, deep navy, and caramel tones bring depth without feeling overly festive. Local upholsterers and fabric shops often have remnants or bespoke services that can transform a room with minimal cost.

The Heart of the Home

As the evenings draw in, the kitchen becomes the heart of the house. Whether you’re simmering a stew or baking something sweet, warmth always begins here. If you’re lucky enough to have an open fire or wood-burning stove, make it the focal point — keep logs neatly stacked in baskets and let the glow take centre stage.

Local butchers, farm shops, and cookware suppliers all help make winter cooking a pleasure rather than a chore.

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Comfort and Calm

Winter can be hectic, so create spaces where you can unwind. A reading chair with a good lamp and side table can become your sanctuary. Add a throw, a candle, and a favourite book — instant calm.

Indoor plants are also mood-lifters in the darker months. Choose low-maintenance evergreens such as peace lilies, ferns, or rubber plants to bring freshness and colour when gardens lie quiet.

Fragrance and Feeling

Scent plays a quiet but powerful role in how a home feels. A diffuser or candle with notes of cinnamon, cedarwood, or orange brings subtle warmth. Or make your own natural fragrance — simmer orange peel, cloves, and a cinnamon stick on the hob for a scent that feels like home. “The right scent turns a house into a haven.”

Keep the Cold Out

True comfort starts with warmth. Check doors and windows for draughts and consider adding thermal curtains or door stoppers. A few small changes can make a big difference in both comfort and energy bills. Many local tradespeople offer quick insulation checks — it's worth asking before the frost sets in. Even a switch to flannel bedding or a thicker duvet can transform your night's sleep.

Celebrate Local Craft

Winter is a wonderful time to bring in handmade, locally crafted pieces — pottery mugs, woven blankets, framed prints by local artists. These small details tell a story and connect your home to the community. For gift and home inspiration look out for Christmas markets, pop-up galleries, or local makers' fairs.

The Comfort of Home

As frost dusts the hedgerows and breath clouds the air, it's the little things that make the season shine — a warm glow in the window, the smell of supper, the weight of a blanket across your knees. This winter, let your home be more than just a shelter from the cold. Let it be a place that welcomes, restores, and celebrates the beauty of the season itself. Because when the world outside is frozen, the comfort we create inside becomes our greatest luxury.



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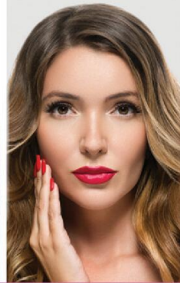
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Beauty and the Winter Blues

How to revive
your glow, lift
your spirits, and
feel your best
this winter.

As the days grow shorter and the air turns sharp, it's all too easy to slip into hibernation mode. The sparkle of Christmas lights can only do so much when the mirror tells us our skin's gone dull, our hair's gone flat, and our mood feels one shade greyer than the sky outside.

But winter doesn't have to mean washed-out. In fact, it can be the perfect time to reset, refresh, and rediscover yourself. A little self-care can make a big difference — not just to how you look, but to how you feel.

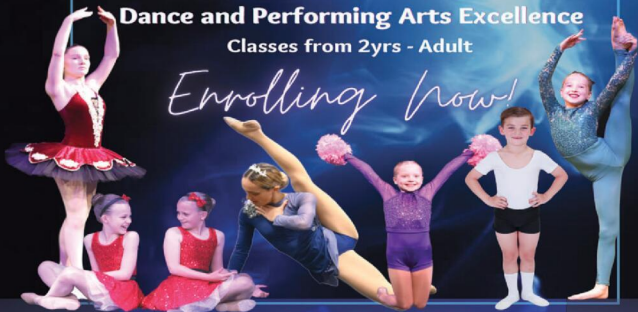
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Here's how to bring back your brightness this season, from head to toe.

A Cut Above the Cold There's nothing like a fresh haircut or colour to chase away the winter gloom. The low, golden light of winter actually flatters richer tones. A trim can instantly lift tired locks, while a nourishing treatment or scalp massage brings back shine and softness lost to cold winds and central heating.

Skin Deep: The Winter Glow Winter is notoriously unkind to skin — cold air outside, dry heat inside, and festive indulgence all play their part. Now's the time to adjust your routine: richer moisturisers, gentle exfoliation, and hydration from within make a world of difference. Many local beauty clinics offer winter facial designed to rehydrate and rejuvenate tired complexions.

The Warmth Within: Massage and Wellbeing When temperatures drop, stress and tension have a way of creeping in — literally into our shoulders and necks. A professional massage can melt away those knots and lift your mood in minutes. Hot stone or aromatherapy massages are especially blissful this time of year, helping to improve circulation, ease stiffness, and promote a deep sense of calm.

Smile Bright Winter is the perfect time to invest in your smile — whether that's a regular dental check-up, whitening treatment, or the confidence boost of straighter teeth. Many cosmetic dental practices now offer minimally invasive treatments that can be completed in just a few visits.




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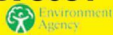
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Nail It Hands work hard in cold weather — from wind exposure to endless washing and sanitiser. Treat them kindly with a moisturising hand cream and regular manicures.

This winter's nail trend leans towards warmth: rich berry tones, deep greens, and soft neutrals that pair perfectly with chunky knits.

The Feelgood Factor True beauty radiates from feeling good. Gentle exercise, regular rest, and mindful moments make a bigger difference than any product. If the gym feels daunting, try something new — yoga, pilates, or even a winter walk in the countryside.

Local fitness studios often run new-year trial offers or short-term passes to help you move and recharge.

Yes and Energy The winter blues often start with tired eyes — too much screen time, too little daylight. An eye test or updated lenses can make a real difference to comfort and wellbeing.

Meanwhile, try stepping outside each morning, even briefly. Natural light helps

reset your body clock, improving sleep and mood — the ultimate natural beauty fix.

Treat Yourself (Guilt-Free)

There's an old saying: "You can't pour from an empty cup." Taking time for yourself isn't selfish; it's essential.

A mini spa day, a brow tidy, a new fragrance, or even a few hours to unwind with a magazine and a hot drink can recharge your batteries. Small acts of care ripple outward — when you feel good, you look good, and everything feels a little brighter.



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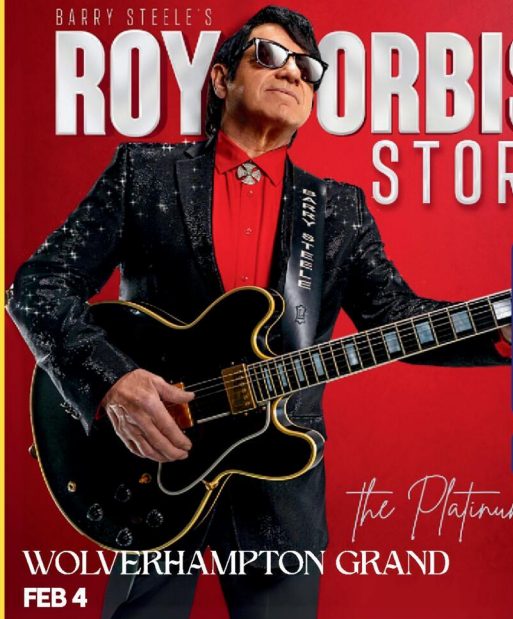
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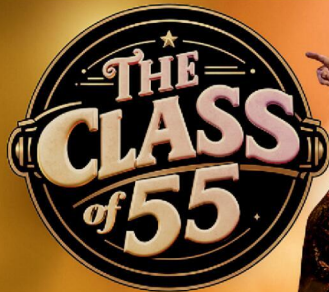


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Things to See & Do This Winter

Exploring Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands — where every frosty morning brings something new to discover.

Winter has a magic all its own. Mists roll across meadows, lights twinkle in market towns, and the familiar places we know so well take on a quieter,

more romantic charm. It's the season of well-wrapped walks, roaring fires, and cultural evenings that remind us how lucky we are to live where countryside and culture meet so beautifully.

Here are just some of the wonderful things to see, do and savour this winter — all right here on our doorstep.

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1. Wander Through History

Our region wears its history proudly, and there's no better time to explore it than winter, when the crowds thin and the atmosphere deepens.

In Warwickshire, Warwick Castle stands majestic against grey skies, its towers often dusted with frost. Winter events bring the place to life — think torchlit evenings, festive markets, and historical re-enactments. Over in Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakespeare glows with twinkling lights and the promise of theatre; the Royal Shakespeare Company's winter productions are always a highlight.

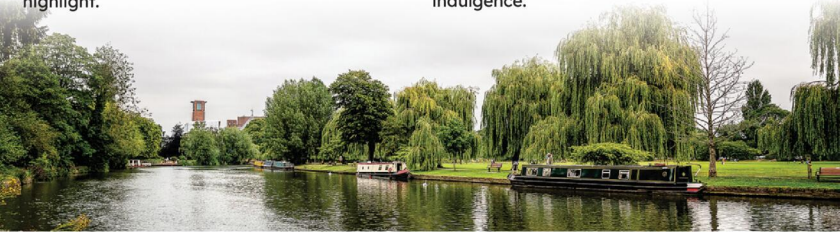
Meanwhile, Worcester's Cathedral, set above the River Severn, feels especially peaceful in winter. Step inside for a moment of stillness — or stay for a choral concert to lift the spirits.


2. Walks Worth Wrapping Up For

A crisp winter walk is one of life's simplest pleasures. The countryside of Worcestershire, Warwickshire, and the West Midlands is brimming with routes that offer big skies, fresh air, and plenty of places to stop for a warm drink afterwards.

3. Afternoon Tea & Winter Treats

Few things beat the comfort of afternoon tea on a cold day. Luckily, our region excels at indulgence.






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4. Markets, Makers & Magical Shopping

The post-Christmas months are a great time to rediscover our local markets and craft centres. Perfect for picking up jams, cheeses, ceramics, and winter blooms.

Supporting local traders not only means finding something unique, but also helps the local economy through the quiet months.

5. Culture, Curtain Calls & Cosy Nights Out

When the evenings draw in, our theatres and music venues come alive. In Stratford, the RSC stages world-class drama through winter, while The Swan Theatre in Worcester, Malvern Theatres, and The Alexandra in Birmingham host everything from comedy to opera.

6. Warm Up Indoors

Winter is also the perfect excuse to explore the region's museums and galleries. Visit the Museum of Royal Worcester to discover the county's world-famous porcelain; head to Compton Verney Art Gallery for seasonal exhibitions and woodland walks; or spend an afternoon at Black Country Living Museum, where the scent of coal fires and freshly baked bread brings history to life.

Make this winter one to remember – explore, eat, relax and rediscover the magic on your own doorstep.



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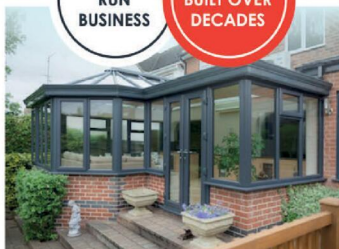


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1 Tyres with Grip Your tyres are your first line of defence against winter weather. Check tread depth (at least 3mm for wet and icy roads) and tyre pressure weekly. Consider switching to all-season or winter tyres for extra traction.

2 Battery Health Cold weather can drain battery power by almost half. If your car struggles to start, get the battery checked before it fails completely. Most garages will test it for free, and a new one fitted in minutes is cheaper than a recovery call-out.

When the frost bites and the mornings turn misty, your car deserves as much care as you do. A little preparation before the cold truly sets in can make all the difference between a smooth, confident journey – and a chilly wait by the roadside.

3 See and Be Seen Clean your headlights, top up screen-wash with a winter formula, and replace worn wiper blades. Keep an ice scraper and de-icer handy – but avoid boiling water on windscreens; it can crack the glass.

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Winter Car Essentials

4 Emergency Essentials

Keep a small "just-in-case" kit in the boot: torch, blanket, phone charger, gloves, snacks, and a bottle of water. A bag of grit or cat litter is handy if you ever get stuck on ice.

5 Book a Winter Check Many local garages offer quick, affordable winter safety checks — including fluids, lights, brakes, and battery. It's the simplest way to ensure peace of mind before the frost really bites.

5 Things to Keep in Your Boot

Be ready for whatever winter throws at you with a few smart extras tucked away.

- 1. Blanket & Gloves** – to keep warm if you're waiting for help.
 - 2. Torch or Headlamp** – darker evenings mean visibility is key.
 - 3. De-Icer & Scraper** – essential for early starts and frosty mornings.
 - 4. Snacks & Water** – handy if traffic grinds to a halt.
 - 5. Phone Charger & Power Bank** – so you're never caught without contact.
- Add a small shovel and a bag of grit (or even cat litter) for traction if you get stuck.

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a more spacious premises complete with it's own customer car park.

However, we'll continue to welcome customers at our current location up until 20th December.

Owners Gavin & Sarah would like to thank all our customers for over three decades of loyalty and support.

We'd also like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and we can't wait to greet both new and familiar faces at our new home in 2026!

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10% OFF your first framing order!!

A Toast to the Season

Celebrating local vineyards, breweries and distilleries this winter

Winter is a wonderful time to raise a glass to the talent and tradition found across our three counties.

Worcestershire is steeped in brewing and winemaking heritage. The award-winning Astley Vineyard, near Stourport-on-Severn, is one of England's oldest commercial vineyards and offers tastings and tours showcasing its cool-climate whites. Beneath the Malvern Hills, Eckington combines vineyard ex Lovells Vineyard produces boutique still and sparkling wines, while Deer Park Wines at periences with wildlife walks. Beer drinkers can visit The Hop Shed at Suckley—based on a working hop farm—or sample traditional ales from Teme Valley Brewery at The Talbot in Knightwick and Bewdley Brewery beside the Severn Valley Railway. Local produce completes the picture: try Croomie Cuisine cheeses or Droitwich Salt, harvested from an ancient brine spring at Churchfields.

In Warwickshire, vines flourish on the slopes above Stratford-upon-Avon at Welcombe Hills Vineyard, which runs year-round tours and tastings. Beer fans can explore the sustainable Purity Brewing Co. in Great Alne, whose visitor centre and taproom champion eco-friendly brewing. For something stronger, Shakespeare Distillery produces Stratford Dry Gin and hosts popular distillery tours, tastings and river-cruise experiences. The West Midlands adds an urban edge to the region's drinks scene. Birmingham Brewing Company and Attic Brew Co., both in Stirchley, offer lively taprooms serving modern craft beers, while Piston Distillery in Worcester invites visitors to blend their own gin at its hands-on gin school.



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A Winter Haven

Keeping Garden Wildlife Happy

Simple ways to help the creatures who share our outdoor spaces.

As winter tightens its grip across our region, our gardens can become a lifeline for the wildlife that stays behind. Shorter days, frozen ground and dwindling food supplies make life tough for birds, hedgehogs and other small visitors — but a few thoughtful actions can make a big difference.

Feed the feathered.

Birds burn extra energy keeping warm, so regular food supplies help them survive the coldest nights. Fill feeders with high-energy mixes — sunflower hearts, peanuts (unsalted), and suet blocks — and top up water bowls daily to stop them freezing. A small bowl of warm water in the morning can mean the difference between thirst and survival.



Give shelter and safety.

Hedgehogs hibernate between November and March, often under piles of leaves or logs. If you're tidying the garden, check for sleeping hogs before moving compost or bonfire heaps. A simple wooden hedgehog house or even an undisturbed corner can provide a safe retreat. Leave gaps under fences so wildlife can roam between gardens.

A few small steps can turn any garden into a true winter refuge.



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Why this is the perfect time to shop smart, shop local and fall back in love with our high streets.

After the sparkle of Christmas fades and the decorations come down, January can feel like a lull. But for savvy shoppers, it's actually one of the most exciting times of the year — the great January Sales.

From fashion to furniture, gadgets to garden tools, the post-Christmas weeks are bursting with bargains, and it's not just the big chains who have something to offer. Independent shops, boutiques, and family-run businesses across Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands are cutting prices too — often with deals you won't find anywhere online.



The January SALES

Hidden Gems and High Street Heroes

The real joy of the January sales lies in discovery. Wander through your local town centre and you'll find small businesses with big heart — from jewellers and gift shops to independent bookshops, florists, and cafés. These are the places that give our towns character and charm, and the January sales are a wonderful reason to revisit them.

Shop Smart, Shop Local

It's easy to get swept up in the click-and-collect world of online sales, but there's something deeply satisfying about walking into a shop, speaking to someone who knows their products, and leaving with a great find in your hand.

The January Sales aren't just about saving money — they're about starting the year feeling refreshed, inspired, and proud of the place you live.

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Caring People Caring Places

The warmth that carries us through the coldest months.

As winter settles over our three counties and frost dusts the hedgerows, we're reminded that warmth isn't always something you find by the fire — often, it's found in people. In every town and village across Worcestershire, Warwickshire, and the West Midlands, there are countless individuals whose quiet compassion keeps our communities connected.

The Heartbeat of Care

“Caring” takes many forms. It's the nurse who still finds a smile at the end of a long shift; the care-home activity coordinator who organises festive lunches and visits from local choirs; the home-care worker who brings both groceries and companionship to someone living alone.

For many, winter can be a time of isolation — but thanks to these people and places, it's also a time of connection. Local care homes and supported-living communities provide warmth and friendship that go far beyond the practical. Many, turning their lounges into lively, laughter-filled spaces where residents feel seen, valued, and part of something bigger.

Planning for Peace of Mind

Care also means helping people plan ahead with clarity and kindness. Local solicitors who specialise in wills, lasting power of attorney, and estate planning provide families with reassurance during uncertain times. It's not just about paperwork — it's about ensuring dignity and choice.



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Care for All Creatures

There are also the carers whose patients have paws or whiskers. Our local veterinary clinics and animal charities work tirelessly through the cold months to keep pets healthy and safe.

From routine check-ups to emergency call-outs on freezing nights, their compassion extends to the people who love those animals, too.

The Power of Local Care

What unites all these caring professions is their commitment to people, not profits. They're the ones who answer calls after hours, who know your name, and who see the person — not just the patient, client, or customer.

For every pound spent with a local care provider, a greater share stays within our community — sustaining local jobs, funding local initiatives, and ensuring that essential services remain nearby when we need them most.



Compassion Beyond the Door

Care doesn't stop at the front step. Local funeral directors, often among the most quietly compassionate professionals in any town, offer gentle guidance when families face loss. Their role goes far beyond arrangements — it's about reassurance, respect, and helping people navigate one of life's hardest moments with dignity.

Alongside them, stonemasons, florists, and memorial services provide the finishing touches of love — a name carefully carved, a wreath placed with thought, a memory honoured beautifully.



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A Season of Humanity

In the heart of winter, when the nights are long and the days are cold, it's these people and places that remind us what warmth truly means.

So next time you pass the local care home, the vet's surgery, or the high street solicitor, take a moment to think of the work happening quietly behind those doors — the listening, the comforting, the helping hands that hold our communities together.

Because Caring People, Caring Places isn't just the name of a feature — it's the heartbeat of who we are, especially in the season when care matters most.



5 Ways to Show You Care This Winter

- 1. Check in** – Call or visit an elderly neighbour or relative who might be alone.
- 2. Support local carers** – Choose local services for health, home care, and wellbeing.
- 3. Volunteer your time** – Animal shelters, food banks, and community centres all need helping hands.
- 4. Give wisely** – Donate warm clothing, blankets, or pet food to local charities.
- 5. Be kind to yourself** – Self-care counts, too. Rest, recharge, and stay connected.

Small gestures of care can make a big difference — especially when the nights are long and the days are cold.



RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME



Jobs Close Residential Care Home (Charity No. 1101597) is a not-for-profit organisation devoted to offering affordable, high-quality care for older people in Knowle and the surrounding area.

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A Warm Welcome: Cosy Pubs and Winter Dining Spots

This is the time of year to eat well, linger longer, and savour the simple pleasure of being together.

When the days grow short and the nights draw in, there's nowhere quite like a cosy pub or a glowing restaurant table to remind us of winter's best comforts. Across Worcestershire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands, we're spoiled for choice — from Michelin-starred dining rooms to dog-friendly inns with muddy boots by the door.

Where Firelight Meets Fine Dining

If you think great food and rustic charm don't mix, think again. Some of the region's most celebrated restaurants are found in old inns and countryside settings where the welcome is as warm as the hearth.

Sundays, Suppers and Sharing

There's something wonderfully social about winter dining. Whether it's a lazy Sunday roast in a centuries-old pub or a Friday night curry with friends, the meals we share at this time of year seem to mean more. Local farm shops and food producers are offering tasting evenings, Winter markets and takeaway feasts. So even if you're dining at home, the flavours of our region are never far away.

"Eat local, linger long, and let winter taste its best."



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Ingredients (serves 4-6)

- 800g stewing beef (chuck or brisket), diced
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 2 tbsp oil or beef dripping
- 2 onions, roughly chopped
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 2 celery sticks, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 330ml good-quality local ale (try one from Birmingham Brewing Company in Stirchley - see ad on page 21)
- 400ml beef stock
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp dried thyme or a few sprigs of fresh
- Salt and black pepper to taste



Recipe for the Season Hearty Winter Beef & Ale Stew

A comforting classic from our countryside kitchens.

Method

- 1. Dust the beef** lightly with seasoned flour. Heat the oil in a heavy casserole dish and brown the meat in batches until golden. Remove and set aside.
- 2. Add the onions, carrots, celery and garlic** to the pan. Cook for 5 minutes until softened and fragrant.
- 3. Stir in the tomato purée** and cook for another minute before pouring in the ale. Bring to a simmer, scraping up all the caramelised bits from the pan.
- 4. Return the beef to the pot**, add the stock, bay leaves and thyme. Cover and simmer gently for 2-3 hours (or cook in the oven at 160°C) until the beef is tender and the sauce rich and glossy.
- 5. Season to taste**, and serve with buttery mashed potatoes or crusty bread to mop up the gravy.



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When the days are short and the nights draw in, a change of scenery can do wonders for the spirit. Winter is the perfect time to slow down, recharge, and rediscover the beauty of our own backyard — and you don't have to travel far to feel a world away.

A little luxury close to home

We're spoiled for places that offer the perfect escape. Imagine waking to the sight of giraffes strolling past your window at the West Midlands Safari Park Lodges. For something more classically elegant, Mallory Court Hotel near Leamington Spa and Stanbrook Abbey in Worcester combine country-house charm with fine dining and fireside comfort.

Country inns and quiet corners

Tucked among rolling fields and wooded lanes, traditional inns such as The Bell at Alderminster, The Lygon Arms in Broadway, or The Crown and Sandys in Ombersley invite you to unwind by the fire with good food, local ales and a warm welcome.

So whether it's a theatre break, a romantic night away, or a spur-of-the-moment staycation, winter is the perfect time to explore what's right on your doorstep — and fall in love with our region all over again.

Sometimes a night away from home is just the ticket



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Seasons

Welcome to the very first edition of 'Seasons' Magazine

Each quarter, Seasons will follow the rhythm of the year — from the crisp calm of winter to the first buds of spring, the brightness of summer and the richness of autumn — highlighting the very best of local life, from independent shops and community ventures to countryside walks, home inspiration, and hidden gems worth discovering.

This magazine is for you — our readers, neighbours and local businesses — and we can't wait to share the year ahead.

We will value and welcome your feedback - your suggestions will help us to produce and deliver a local 'Seasons' Magazine that will prove to be relevant to you, in print and on line.

The Spring (April) edition of 'Seasons' will be out towards the end of March 2026 and you'll be able to pick up a free copy from a supermarket near you or check it out on line

www.seasons-magazine.com

If you would like your business promoted in 'Seasons' then do call one of the team on **01527 588688**

Caroline, Kelly, Roisin, Paul and Gareth will be more than happy to help



'Seasons' Magazine is published by your local 'Observer Newspapers' and your local 'Standard Newspapers' covering Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the West Midlands - publishers of local newspapers, websites and magazines.





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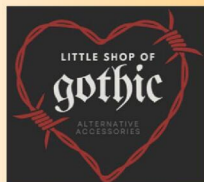
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