

frame. For a pre-dinner lark, giant foosball literally brings people together. It's a lot of fun and it's on the table this Christmas time.

Pick a place

For a thrill that covers all the ingredients for a fine Christmas party, why not bring Mexico to Melbourne. Or take Spain to Sydney? A party with a strong exotic theme can incorporate exciting food, fancy dress, team-building and dancing. If Spain is your destiny, convert your function room into a villa, hand out the sombreros and treat your guests to sangria, tapas and seafood paellas. Top the night off with a session of flamenco dancing. Give your invitees a taste of things to come by sending out themed invitations. Again, your party is limited only by your imagination.

Winter wonderland

Flying the team to the northern hemisphere for an authentic Christmas party is an adventure few companies can budget for. So why not bring the North Pole to Australia? Dress up your venue like a scene from Santa's Grotto with strategically-placed lights, tinsel and ice sculptures. Experts suggest hiring out a spacious venue with concrete flooring, and turning the site into a winter wonderland with a snow-making machine. The props can be as elaborate or as modest as your coffers allow. Replacing drinking glasses with vessels forged from ice is guaranteed to make your colleagues' jaws drop. It'll create a talking-point that should carry-on well into the New Year. Costume hire is also a handy way to generate Christmas spirit among the team. Who wouldn't like to see the boss dressed as Santa – or Scrooge for that matter – at Christmas? And of course, don't forget the egg nog.



Above bring colleagues together with a food-themed team building activity where staff members get to create their own Christmas lunch

Beach and BBQ

Many Australians are shunning the traditional Christmas fare of our European ancestors for something, well, more at home. Event organisers note that many office Christmas parties around the country are ditching the stodgy roast turkey and pudding and making way for the all-Australian outdoor grill. "We're finding our BBQ events to be among the most popular. People love to learn how to barbeque food to perfection," says Cheeky Food Group Marketing and Events Manager Suzanne Sprod. If your city is blessed with a beach, make good use of it this Christmas-time. And don't forget the cricket kit.

Dinner and a band

Christmas-time coincides with an annual explosion of live music on these shores. There's no shortage of gigs going on around Christmas, from shows at the local pub, through to spectacles at theatres, arenas and stadiums. An alternative Christmas night out might see the team enjoy a dinner in town, before being rounded up and herded into a live music venue. December is a particularly special time to catch international bands who view the summer trip Down Under as a welcome escape from the northern winter. Typically, the big American and British bands release their Australian touring itineraries about three months before the show. So keep your eyes peeled.

Be a Masterchef

Network 10's Masterchef series has proven more than a ratings blockbuster. The hugely popular programme has ignited a passion for cooking among the masses. Cheeky Food Group has tapped into the theme with its Master Cheeky Chef challenge where teams compete against the clock to create glorious meals. Fittingly, the winning team lands a trophy and certificate for their efforts. "The team building element actually happens quite naturally," says Suzanne, "The guests tend to enjoy their cooking party so much, no one even realises they are team building."

Bollywood nights

The colourful world of Bollywood is a proven party starter, and few can resist a good curry. So why not recreate the Bollywood atmosphere at your Christmas party? Bollywood is all about bright colours and lively music, so drape your venue with fuchsia, lime green and orange material, and scent the room with sandalwood incense. When guests first arrive, they should slip their shoes off at the door before indulging in rounds of Taj-Mahini cocktails made with cranberry, pineapple juice and a fair-splash of orange-flavoured vodka. To finish the night on a high note, treat guests to henna tattoos, bindis and, of course, Bollywood dancing.

Life drawing

A birthday suit can wear just as well at Christmas. With that in mind, a 'life drawing' session can provide your corporate Christmas party with a memorable – and naughty – spark. Sitting subjects can be hired from about \$30 an hour, and 'life' models typically require a minimum call out of two hours. Best cover your bases and hire two models. A prize can be offered for the best artworks, and a booby prize for the worst. And who knows, the artworks may become handy Christmas gifts for loved ones. A life drawing session is definitely not for the inhibited, and perhaps dinner should come at the end. **1**

