

TEXTE

All that glitters: UK retailers shift away from plastic Christmas

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Manufacturers and shops remove millions of pieces of single-use plastic from their ranges

UK retailers and supermarkets have stepped up efforts to take plastic out of packaging for the festive season, boasting of a flurry of eco-friendly wrapping for Christmas puddings, desserts, party foods and chocolates, and with many greetings cards and crackers now free of glitter.

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Tesco alone has removed more than 20m pieces of single-use plastic from its Christmas range this year – including crackers, lights, cards and the packaging for puddings – as part of a national drive to reduce pollution from single use plastics.

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Of its rivals, the frozen food specialist Iceland is offering customers a “plastic-free Christmas” for the second year running, with 24 products in its festive range now in eco-friendly packaging. For Marks & Spencer, this is the first Christmas that it is not using black plastic for festive puddings as part of its goal to ensure all of its packaging is recyclable by 2022.

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The industry moves came amid growing concerns about the environmental impact of the global single-use plastic binge. Retailers face a regulatory crackdown in 2022 with a new tax on plastic packaging that fails to meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content.

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A recent report from a voluntary UK plastics pact reveals that between 2018 and 2019 its members – including retailers – reduced the number of plastic items deemed problematic or unnecessary by 40%. Worryingly, the proportion of recyclable packaging being placed on the market has remained virtually static, at 64% compared with 63% a year earlier.

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Food and drink companies are increasingly ditching plastic packaging in favour of new options. The alcohol-free spirit Seedlip, for example, has introduced a new gift box made of mycelium, the root structure of mushrooms.

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Ben Branson, Seedlip’s founder, said: “Mycelium is an organic alternative to cardboard or polystyrene which decomposes in 40 days. Unlike plastic, which makes up 12% of global waste, or paper and cardboard, which is responsible for 17%, mycelium is 100% home-compostable, meaning it does not contribute to the growing plastic crisis that is leaving oceans polluted and landfills overflowing.”

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