

Snappy family: If you've been infuriated by a Christmas card like this, you're not alone



PIC: GETTY

POST BRAGS

Stamp out this scourge of pretentious Christmas cards, fumes **Helen Croydon**

HAVE you opened a Christmas card this morning? Don't tell me, on the front was a pic of your friend and their whole clan in Santa hats. Perhaps they were sipping fine wine (with a premier cru label in vision) in front of a real fire. Or was it the new kitchen Aga in the extension they've just had built? Everyone looks cheery. No one looks frazzled from the pressure of Christmas shopping; nor do they show signs of sleep debt from staying up all night writing cards.

Congratulations, you've received a status card. I can't help notice that cards no longer seem to be

There's something about Christmas that spawns a compulsion to broadcast unity. My married-with-kids friends are the worst offenders. Some of them even have professional photoshoots done because a family selfie doesn't cut it. And while I do get cards from single friends, they usually feature gags about pinching Santa's sherry.

I opt out of card-sending completely. I don't have my friend's addresses for starters. I tell people it's bad for the environment, but since I've ordered every single present online, each one being delivered by van to my home, clearly this is not true. I'm just tight and have too many parties to spend evenings writing cards.

Living alone and not having kids somehow exonerates me from the whole card charade, in the same way that I never have to pretend to enjoy baking cupcakes. (Though part of me wants to put on a naughty elf costume in front of an empty bottle of wine and send that as a picture on a card to my Santa-hatted married friends.)

In the age before social media, updating people on your year's news was vaguely acceptable. Which is why I don't think there's any reason to now send anything by post – it's just over-egging the pudding. Cards used to remind your friends that you're still alive and you're still friends. But now we have Facebook, I think it's time we replaced the status card with a simple status update. It can be a family selfie, if you insist.

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simple friendly gestures, but instead grandiose displays of success and family functionality.

I remember when you could buy 20 cards for 99p. They were only slightly bigger than the postage stamp and the off-white recycled paper was so thin they'd barely stand up. There would be four varieties in the box and you'd give the ones with the cute reindeer pictures to the people you like best.

And while the festive family portrait used to be the preserve of the Royal Family and the prime minister, now it seems that everyone is at it, with gold leaf, a smug family snap with an accompanying caption and rigueur.

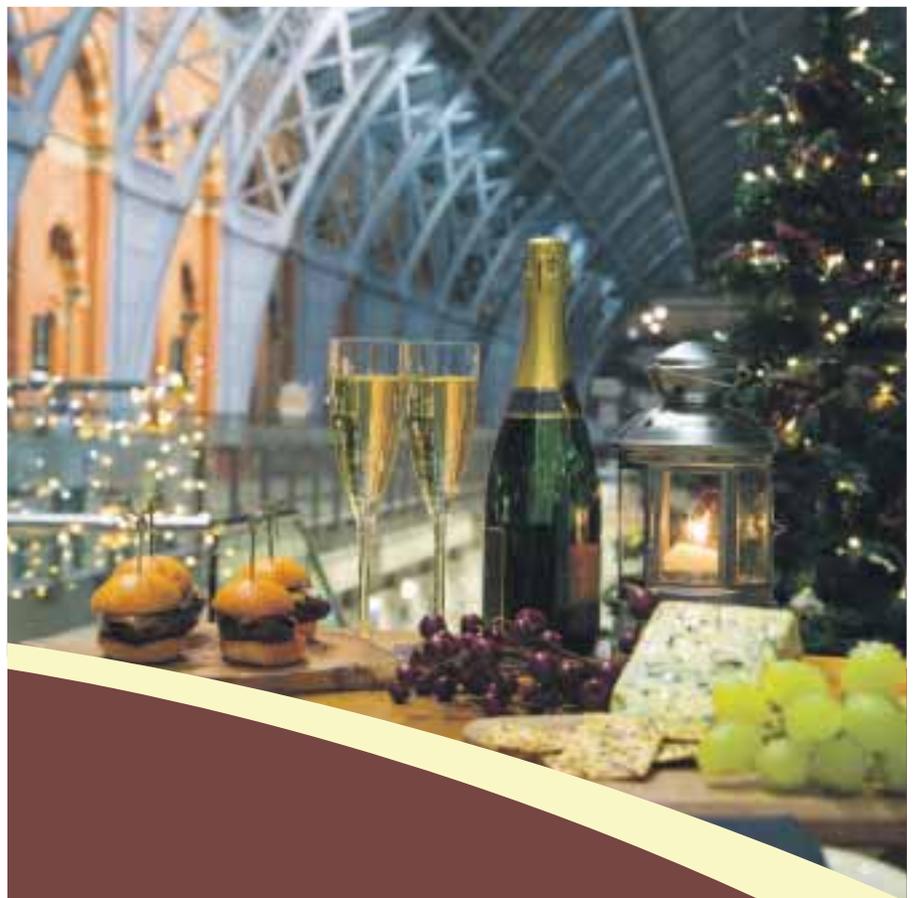
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