

# This Glossy Life

*Three traditionalists share their Christmas rituals, from riding out on St Stephen's Day to going on frosty family walks ...*



## DEVIL ON HORSEBACK

"I've been riding horses from a very young age," says dashing caterer **ANDREW RUDD** when we meet him on a crisp morning at Brennanstown Riding School in Wicklow, where owner Jane Bloomer keeps over 70 horses and ponies. "Being brought up on a farm, one of nine children, I was fortunate enough to enjoy the thrills of rural life, and hunting was very much part of that." The run-up to Christmas is one of Rudd's busiest times of the year ("I had three events last weekend, although it doesn't really feel like proper work, as I enjoy it so much," he says amiably), so come December 26, he's ready to blow the cobwebs away with the adrenaline rush of the hunt. "St Stephen's Day has involved the ritual of hunting in Cloughjordan, Co Tipperary, every year for as long as I can remember. It's just down the road from my parents' home. Riding is very social and has no class barriers. That's what is so refreshing about hunting in Ireland; everybody has a common bond and it's very sociable. My brother Tom and his wife hunt regularly as well, as they also work with horses – he won the Irish Grand National in 1999, so it's in the blood." As well as the camaraderie, Rudd also enjoys the traditional element of donning the finery. "Part of the ritual is getting dressed for the occasion, but also having a drink before the hunt starts. You might even manage to carry a hipflask of whiskey in your inside pocket. I'm not sure whether too many other sports would allow that!" [www.andrewrudd.ie](http://www.andrewrudd.ie)