

Christmas in the Land Down Under

Nov 26, 2019 | Julia Holliday

I've been working with New Zealand based photographer [Jessie Casson](#) since she began shooting for Getty Images in early 2016. I was drawn to her energetic, candid approach of her own personal and professional work. Her natural ability to put people at ease allows her to capture individuals at their best, and gives us an insight into their unique personalities, emotions and relationships.

Knowing that summer Christmas imagery is in high demand by our customers, Jessie and I began to work on a series of images that depicts the festive season in the sun. We wanted the imagery to have a local flavor and set to work on a brief that reflects the experience of many New Zealanders and those that live in the Southern Hemisphere. Naturally, we included all that is quintessentially Christmas, from decorating the home, wrapping, giving and receiving gifts and eating delicious food, but most importantly we wanted it to focus on the people, the experience of the day and what makes it special.

Keen to avoid shooting on Christmas Day itself Jessie set up three pre-Christmas shoot days at her own home in Auckland shooting a large, multi-generational family, grandparents with their grandchildren, young friends and a Maori single parent family. With lots to prepare on each day everyone pitched in, including cooking several Christmas dinners with all the trimmings. This in itself became a photo opportunity but it also helped to maintain a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

Jessie explains, "I just said "OK, action!" and recorded crackers being pulled, lunch being served and eaten. I offered a bit of direction but tried to document things as they happened rather than staging too much."

This approach has resulted in a series that captures the fun, love and affection that is shared between family and friends at Christmas. It includes kids pulling faces at the dinner table, Grandmas giggling together like school children, siblings hand crafting decorations, young friends with delighted faces licking the spoon from the Christmas baking and triumphant parents delivery a feast to the dinner table.