

Current climate creates costume conundrum

Will climate change destroy the Christmas party? NZME creative director Glenn Dwight takes a tongue-in-cheek look at the possible pitfalls of this season's end-of-year bash.

Fear not! This isn't going to be another sad article about how climate change has robbed me of any chance of a 'White Christmas'. You haven't stolen my childhood. I have always lived in the Southern Hemisphere and have no illusions of frolicking in the snow and throwing snowballs at innocent passers-by. I am happy to accept that watching *Frozen* with my nieces will be as close to a snowman as I will get. A 'White Christmas'? I have 'let it go'!

No, this article is about how 'not in this current climate' has stolen away my kiwi Christmas party. HOW DARE YOU! I am not saying that things didn't have to change from the old days of unlimited drinks, anatomy photocopying, recreating that scene from *Dirty Dancing*, and bad decisions. But I do question if the pendulum has swung too far. For example, the company I work for is having a 'Kiwiana' Christmas party; a theme that one would think would be easy... But when I started to think costume ideas, it was like walking through a mine field.

My first costume thought was to dress as a Pavlova. Basically find a white sheet and add some kiwi fruit around the base. But I did quickly realise that if the kiwifruit garnish fell off, I would be in a lot of trouble. I'd resemble a ghost at best... or a ghost of the racist American South at worst. No one wants that. I also dreaded a debate with the Aussie in the company as to the true ownership of the Pavlova. You can have Russell Crowe and Crowded House, but for the love of all sweet desserts the Pav is ours. So the Pavlova costume was officially off the menu for fear of leaving a bad taste in the mouth.

A quick Google of 'Kiwiana' and I find the Edmonds Cookbook, surely a safe and kiwi choice. But then I started thinking, where would the words 'sure to rise' sit on my body and would this again raise complaints from the masses? Another food-related costume fail and perhaps a sign that in a world of gluten free, food protein-induced enterocolitis syndrome and general food allergies, this was a recipe for disaster.

Back to Google and up came the 'Four Square Man', or (for those in the know) 'Cheeky Charlie' as he was originally known. This must be the answer; a simple apron with a 4 and a pencil behind my ear. What could go wrong? While a rhetorical question, the answer to this came from Dwayne in our legal department who pointed out that Dick Frizzell robbed Charlie of his innocence AND made his image copyright. Very cheeky Dick. Poor Charlie's story of transition from innocent grocery worker to poster child reminds me of the story of

Norma Jeane Baker, innocence robbed. There are also a few questions as to how cheeky Charlie was. After all, he was a product of the 1950s, a very, very different time and climate. Maybe he was too cheeky? Too risky. So that also means the 'Four Square Man' costume will not make it to check out.

Like they say, often the answer to your problem is right under your nose. In this case it was under my toes. The Jandal! The Jandal is 'kiwi as', right? Maybe not! Debate surrounds the origins of said footwear with a growing consensus that Mr John Cowie started manufacturing the traditional Japanese sandal (hence the name Jandal) out of plastic in Hong Kong in the late 1940s before immigrating to New Zealand in 1959. And there is also the confusion of the Jandal and the Thong. I don't want to confuse any Aussie friends or be accused of wearing a thong, so it looks like a flip flop on the Jandal as well.

Maybe I was over-thinking this. Maybe I need to learn from that old saying 'keep it simple stupid'. What would be simpler than that iconic kiwi lolly the Snifter? Easy as.

Step one: dress in green. Step two: Sniff.

Okay, I admit this was never going to take off, but it highlights my point, that 'in this current climate' finding a costume that won't offend is very tricky.

Forget the Grinch who may or may not have stolen Christmas! Watch out for the 'current climate experts' who have put the good old-fashioned office Christmas party at risk for all. I say, forget the costume theme party, have a drink around the barbecue and celebrate 2019, because 2020 will be here before we know it and she is going to be a doozy, maybe even a humdinger... Definitely a good old-fashioned ding dong, a little like the cricket World Cup that we drew?? Lost???

Kiwi bloke and Xmas party-goer Glenn Dwight is creative director at NZME in Christchurch.

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