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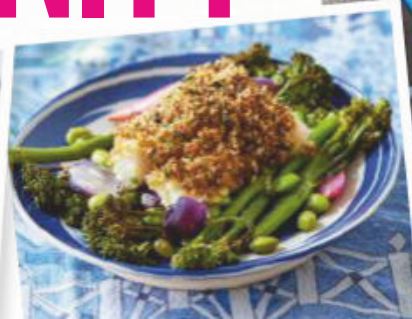
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Hermione Norris

My children watch me on
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Hello!

Something for nothing

I love a forage – hunting in hedgerows and woods for plants or berries to eat, and each year our family works its way through a glorious cache of frozen blackberries, picked on autumnal expeditions. There's also nothing more delicious than freshly picked wild mushrooms – though you need to know what you're looking for – but unlike the berries they rarely escape the frying pan for more than a couple of hours in our house. It's curiously satisfying coming across healthy produce for nothing, so if you too fancy an outing to the hedgerows in search of food – or remedies – take a look at our feature on page 10.

Geoff

Group Lifestyle Director
geoffrey.palmer
@ti-media.com

3 of the best... Foods for stress



HONEY

It's thought honey can reduce anxiety and stress, so why not drizzle some in your tea to kick-start your day the right way?



DARK CHOCOLATE

Eating dark chocolate increases serotonin levels, which fights stress, and it can boost your brain's health. Plus it tastes great!



CAMOMILE

This great little plant doesn't just have anti-anxiety properties, it's also anti-inflammatory and antibacterial.

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Good to SHARE

Snowdrop watching, money buddies, and diary dates!

From us to you

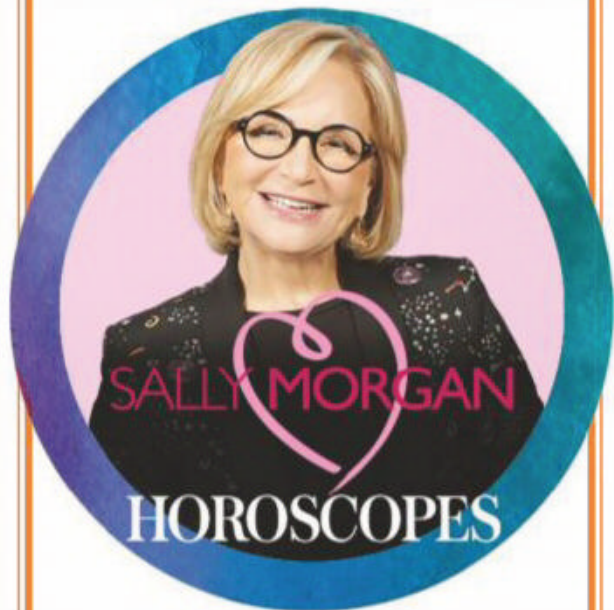
Seeking snowdrops!

Shake off the winter and welcome the first signs of the new season with the National Garden Scheme Snowdrop Festival. These glorious harbingers of spring can be viewed in over 100 National Garden Scheme gardens throughout England and Wales now until March. To find your perfect snowdrop garden, visit ngs.org.uk/snowdrops

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR 2020?

Do you have an Alexa and want to know what this year has in store for you? If so, you can get your daily, weekly and annual horoscopes, and so much more, from Sally Morgan – the expert astrologer and psychic.

Download Sally Morgan horoscopes today, via the Alexa app.



DID YOU KNOW?

More than half of women surveyed admit to feeling stressed or anxious after making an impulse purchase, according to a study by Nokia phones. This compares with just a quarter of men surveyed.



On this day in history

On 2 February 1901, Queen Victoria's funeral took place, eight days after her death. She was Britain's then longest-reigning monarch. Her coffin, draped in white satin, wound its way from London to Windsor on the back of a gun carriage, before arriving at St George's Chapel. She was laid to rest at The Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore, near Windsor Castle, with her beloved husband Prince Albert.



If you do one thing this week Get a 'money buddy'

In the same way that exercising with a friend can spur you on to get fitter, finding a pal with whom to talk about money can help too. So whether it's swapping budgeting tips or keeping each other updated with the progress you're making towards your savings goals, having a 'money buddy' could help you stay on track. Just make sure you pick someone who manages their finances well.



LOST AND FOUND

Where would you find a 5ft unicorn made from flowers, a 65-year-old bonsai tree that's been passed down through three generations, two alpacas called Ant and Dec, a brand-new Aston Martin car and a gingerbread village with residents and an illuminated moon? Where else but the Lost and Found office of Travelodge! These are just some of the things left behind in its 571 hotels, over the past 12 months. Have you ever left anything?



Have you heard?

More than half of over-65s have money stashed away to support adult children through financial trouble, a survey by Saga Savings has found. The average this age group has put aside to help in case of emergency stands at £11,500. The study also found 49% of those surveyed said they dip into savings at least once or twice a year to help – up from 34% in a 2012 survey.

Deal of the week



LEGOLAND Windsor Resort is open for February half-term for the first time! Brick Week runs from 15-23 February. Tickets cost £20pp when booked online in advance. There will be extra activities during half-term but, as it's a special event, only selected rides and attractions are available – Duplo Valley, Atlantis Submarine Voyage and all other water rides will be closed. Visit legoland.co.uk/brick-week-2020

CONCERNED ABOUT AGEING

Cosmetic surgery experts at flawless.org found that some 60% of women* believe that social media has made them more insecure about ageing – and 45% of 13- to 24-year olds believe they are already showing signs of getting old.

For your diary

Join the British Iris Society for its Early Spring Show on 8 February at RHS Garden Wisley. Enjoy rare iris displays and competition classes of early spring-flowering irises, as well as a photographic exhibition, free tours, plants for sale and friendly experts available to answer your questions. Visit rhs.org.uk/wisley



Good to SHARE

We love to hear what you've been up to, so do get in touch!

From you to us



Where I read mine

Here I am multitasking, reading my *Woman's Weekly* in Maine, USA, while looking at the beautiful autumn coloured leaves and watching out for wildlife.

Lynn Barker, Devon

❖ We'd love to see where you read your copy of *Woman's Weekly*. The more exotic the location, the better!

Letter of the week



MY GORGEOUS FAMILY

I would love to share this special photograph of my daughter Melanie, husband Paul and their beautiful triplet daughters Lily, Isla and Ella, age four, and their big sister Ava, six, dressed up as an Edwardian family on a day out to the Beamish Museum in County Durham. They had to hold quite a solemn expression to look authentic!

Sheila Craig, Lancashire

Lash envy

I wanted to share this photo with you of my baby boy Charlie, who has just turned one. He has super-long eyelashes and everyone who meets him is very jealous. I'm sure many people spend lots of money on products to make them look as long as Charlie's.

Emma Jenkins, Wales



Paws for thought

Do you ever think you're seeing double? My 'twins' Snow and White make a super-cute duo.

Louise Milne, West Sussex

❖ Got a pet pic that makes you smile? We can give it a good home

Get in touch

WE LOVE LETTERS

Woman's Weekly, 161 Marsh Wall, London E14 9AP. P.S. It really helps when you put your details in capitals.

We do not return photos (apart from You Wore It Well) so please do not send originals.



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Tell us your full name, address and daytime phone number, please



FANCY A CHAT?

Log on to facebook.com/womansweekly
We can't wait to hear from you!



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What you're WEARING

CAROLINE McCaIG, 47

Tell us about your look

My faux fur coat is from Topshop. I'm really into creams, caramels and beiges at the moment, and loved the colour. My jumper is from Zara – my favourite store – and my black jeans and boots are also Topshop buys. My bag was a gift.

And the best bit of your body?

My smile.

FIONA SLOAN, 56

Tell us about your look

My coat came from The Kooples. They have some gorgeous and elegant contemporary pieces. I love the bold floral print in faux fur – it's a really striking design and great fun to wear. My black jeans are by True Religion and I love designer accessories – my scarf and boots are Louis Vuitton and my bag is Chanel.

And the best bit of your body?

My boobs!

SANDY CRAWLEY, 73

Tell us about your look

I don't think you can beat a good tailored coat in winter. I bought this one in M&S – it fits me perfectly and I thought the colour was fabulous. Underneath I've kept things quite simple with a white top and a pair of black trousers by Jaeger. My shoes are Clarks and are very comfy, and my bag is also from M&S. And you'll be pleased to know I knitted my scarf!

And the best bit of your body?

My hair.

DANIELLA VIDAS, 38

Tell us about your look

My coat is reversible and from Topshop. I love the mix of white faux sheepskin and leather. It's very luxe! My jumper is Balenciaga and my trousers are from Massimo Dutti. My bag is Chanel and my monkey boots are from & Other Stories.

And the best bit of your body?

My legs.

You Wore It Well

Joan Hayes, 1940, sent in by her daughter, Bernie

This is my lovely mum on the street where she lived in Widnes, Cheshire. She looks so smart in her best clothes and I love the fact that there is a street game going on behind her!

✦ We'd love to see how great you looked in any era up to and including the 1980s. Please send a good-quality photo with your name, address and daytime phone number clearly written on the back, to: Fashion Dept, *Woman's Weekly*, 161 Marsh Wall, London E14 9AP. Photos will be returned.

'I feel like an absentee in my OWN LIFE!'

Cold Feet actress Hermione Norris on why she struggles working away from home

We're delighted to see *Cold Feet* is back again, along with one of our favourite actresses, Hermione Norris. She's been a regular fixture on our TV screens in a wide variety of shows, from *Spooks* to *Wire in the Blood* and *Luther*. But it's her role as Karen in the hit ITV show that has really found a place in our hearts. And it's hard to believe it's been 23 years since she first appeared in *Cold Feet* because Hermione, now 52, doesn't seem to have aged a day!

But she's the first to admit she finds her busy career and home life a challenge to juggle. She's just finished a lengthy period working away from her home in

Dorset, where she lives with her husband, TV writer and producer Simon Wheeler, and their two children, Wilf, 15, and Hero, 12.

'I've been away maybe nine or 10 months,' she reveals. 'I was in Australia for almost five months filming a series called *Between Two Worlds*. Then I headed straight to Manchester to film *Cold Feet* for 12 weeks! The time just disappears – you're like an absentee in your own life! When I was in Australia, the family came out to stay for a while. As a working mum, you're just running everywhere. I'm sure it's how every mum feels, like you're everywhere and nowhere.'

Cold Feet was away from our screens for 13 years,

between 2003 and 2016, and you may think the cast, including Fay Ripley, John Thomson and Robert Bathurst, would find it challenging to reprise their roles having not seen each other for so long.

But Hermione reveals it wasn't an issue. She says, 'It's a weird thing – time expands and contracts. You don't notice it if you're just going about your business but there's something about regrouping. You get everyone together and you read a script, and it's just all there. The history, you just get it.'

Like Hermione and James Nesbitt, their characters Karen and Adam have always been 'just friends', and they were as shocked as the viewers when they discovered the writers were linking them romantically.

And as her character Karen's relationship deepened

with James' character, Adam, she reveals it has inevitably led to more on-screen kissing and intimacy.

But Hermione takes it all in her stride, saying, 'As an actor, that's your job. I've had quite a lot of it over the years!

But I've found that those scenes get harder as you get older. It makes you feel quite vulnerable.'

And with two parents working in TV, Hermione's children are also unfazed by the kissing scenes. 'They've never known anything else,' she explains. 'I think they've watched bits and probably



Hermione and James Nesbitt as *Cold Feet*'s Karen and Adam



With husband Simon Wheeler and their children Hero and Wilf

'People want the best for Karen and Adam'



**As DCI Carol Jordan
in *Wire in the Blood***

cringed, but it's important for them to know it's only a job.'

Hermione thinks the fact they were friends first is the reason their on-screen relationship works so well – as shown in the current series, when Adam is accused of sexual misconduct and Karen leaps to his defence.

'That's a prime example of their relationship,' Hermione says. 'If you didn't know him before, you'd think, "Oh, what am I getting into?" But it's the fact she knows who Adam is, and is not intimidated or threatened by that at all.'

'I think the audience is invested in Adam and Karen, and people want the best for them. Wouldn't it be nice to see two people find joy?'

Hermione credits the viewers for the success of *Cold Feet*, with many of us growing up alongside the cast over the past two decades.

She says, 'The audience are measuring where they're at in their lives against where we are with ours. It's as much about them sitting there thinking, "Oh, I remember that back in the day," and who they were, and how they've changed.'

'The characters are so relatable, they're just flawed people trying to find love – and that's all it is, really.'

❖ *Cold Feet* continues on ITV

The joy of **FORAGING**

Our hedgerows are a rich source of food and natural remedies, explains Christine Iverson

For centuries, hedgerows were invaluable to our ancestors. In every medieval village, a wise woman or man would have known where to find the right plant to fortify, heal or protect people from illness. Even today, you can still bring home a free harvest to cure minor ailments and make a few tasty treats, so get your wellies on and see what you can find.



Only gather plants when you're sure it's allowed (it's illegal to pick flowers in parks and community gardens) and when you're absolutely sure they are the correct species. If in doubt, avoid! Be careful to choose plants that are out of the way of dogs, cats and other animals.

Primrose

Primroses were so popular in Victorian times that country

people would dig them up and send them to London to sell to city dwellers.

The flowers were traditionally used to make healing salves for skin conditions and burns, while the leaves were infused in boiled water to make a soothing eyewash or gargle for sore throats.

✚ Primrose flowers can be crystallised for cake decorating. Simply whisk egg whites (or aquafaba), paint it onto the flowers, then sprinkle on caster sugar. Allow to dry on baking paper for 24 hours. This works for violets, pansies and other edible flowers, too.

Nettle

We usually give stinging nettles a wide berth, but they are incredibly useful and full of vitamins, protein and iron.

The stalks contain long, strong fibres that have been spun into cloth and cord since the Bronze Age. During World War One, when cotton was scarce, nettles were grown on a huge scale to make soldiers' uniforms, and the green dye was used for camouflage uniforms in World War Two.

✚ Nettles are a nutritious, free substitute for spinach. Using rubber gloves, pick young leaves from the tops of plants in spring. Wash well and cook as you would spinach. Don't worry – cooking neutralises the formic acid that stings.

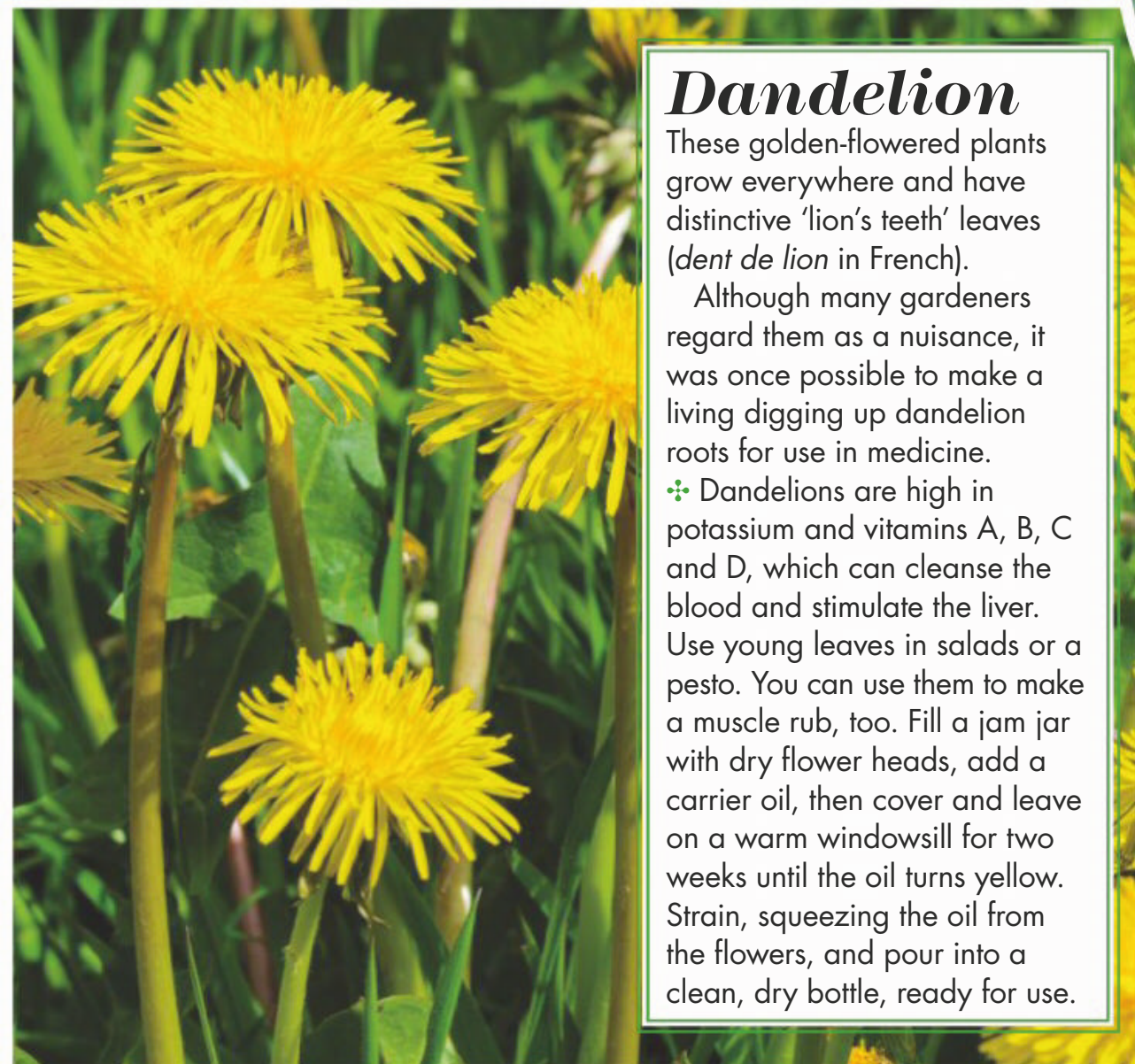




Wild garlic

In early March, damp ancient woodlands are often full of this plant, which has a giveaway garlicky smell. It has broad, spearlike leaves and starry white flowers. Always crush the leaves first to check for the garlic smell as they look similar to lily of the valley and lords and ladies, which are poisonous.

❖ Wild garlic is high in antioxidants and a good immune booster, so gather the leaves for salads and sauces, add them to omelettes and risottos, or use to make a delicious pesto.



Dandelion

These golden-flowered plants grow everywhere and have distinctive 'lion's teeth' leaves (*dent de lion* in French).

Although many gardeners regard them as a nuisance, it was once possible to make a living digging up dandelion roots for use in medicine.

❖ Dandelions are high in potassium and vitamins A, B, C and D, which can cleanse the blood and stimulate the liver. Use young leaves in salads or a pesto. You can use them to make a muscle rub, too. Fill a jam jar with dry flower heads, add a carrier oil, then cover and leave on a warm windowsill for two weeks until the oil turns yellow. Strain, squeezing the oil from the flowers, and pour into a clean, dry bottle, ready for use.

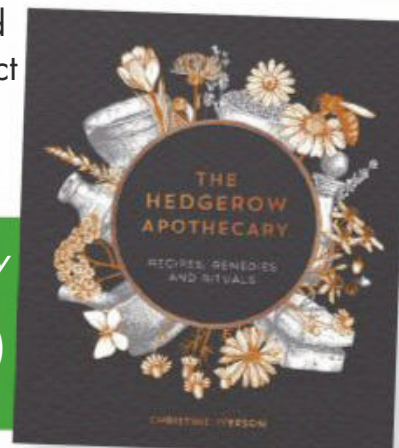
Plantain

Usually seen as a weed, and often found along pathways, this is one of the best healing plants on earth. Its broad oval leaves grow in a flat rosette, and it has long, slender greenish-yellow flowers that seed prolifically.

The seeds are easily picked up on the soles of shoes – Native Americans called it 'white man's footsteps' as it came from settlers' shoes.

❖ You can make a first-aid ointment with the leaves, or chew a leaf and rub it on nettle stings, insect bites and stings, sunburn and eczema.

The Hedgerow Apothecary
by Christine Iverson
(£14.99, HB, Summersdale)
is out now.



15 ways to better DIGESTION

Tummy troubles? Whether it's IBS or bloating, heartburn or indigestion, there are easy ways to help your gut...

1 Get moving

Many digestion problems are lifestyle related – the key one being inactivity. Exercise aids digestion by helping food move through your digestive system, preventing bloating and constipation, says GP Dr Gill Jenkins. 'A daily walk has been shown to improve bowel motility and reduce constipation, as well as being generally good for most bodily functions.'

2 See your GP

We often struggle on without seeing a doctor despite an estimated 40% of us having at least one digestive symptom at any one time, according to Dr Anton Emmanuel, consultant gastroenterologist at London's University College Hospital. But our GP could have some helpful advice and should always be consulted if you're experiencing a change in bowel habits such as regular constipation or diarrhoea, are bloated for weeks, or have blood in your poo.

4 Make your next loaf wholegrain

It has stacks of fibre, meaning it acts as 'manure' to help healthy gut bugs grow. Fibre also adds bulk to your poo, making it easier to travel through your bowel.

HIGHER-FIBRE SWAPS

Try porridge, brown rice and wholewheat pasta in place of white, and reduce the meat in stews, curries and soups by bulking out with beans and lentils instead.

3 Eat yogurt

Fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, miso and sauerkraut have undergone controlled microbial growth and fermentation. They often contain higher levels of gut-friendly probiotics and prebiotics, helping to populate the gut microbiota, which is linked to immunity and hormones as well as our digestion.

5 Smell your food

And savour it before eating. Good digestion starts before food enters your mouth. 'The smell and thought of food can prompt the production of digestive enzymes,' says nutritionist Natalie Lamb. 'This is why cooking and mindful eating are so important.'

6 And chew!

It's not just your belly's job to break down food. Your teeth should help by working it into a more manageable mulch. 'Swallowing whole or poorly chewed food sets off a disastrous chain of events,' says Robyn Youkilis, author of *Go with Your Gut* (Kyle Books). 'Your body goes into crisis mode, with organs forced to begrudgingly assist in digesting. They respond with inflammation, wind, burping, bloating and acid reflux.' Chew at least 20 times.

7

Go Med

A Mediterranean diet has been hailed as one of the healthiest generally. And thanks to all that fish, olive oil, fruit and veg, including leafy greens, it's great for digestion too – and your mental health. 'Research has shown that a Mediterranean diet increases beneficial gut bacteria and reduces your risk of becoming depressed by 30%,' says health psychologist Dr Meg Arroll (drmegarroll.com).



8 Eat oily fish

Omega-3 helps to combat inflammation in the gut, says nutritionist Dr Emma Derbyshire, and one of the best sources is oily fish. 'However, data shows that we don't get enough omega-3s through our diet. It's worth considering taking a supplement.'

9 Take antibiotics carefully

They kill your gut's good bacteria as well as the bad, so only have them when necessary. Obviously it's important to take them when advised but follow your doctor's guidance on exactly how and when to take.



10 Choose veg carefully

Vegetables are crucial to good gut health, but some cause uncomfortable wind and bloating. Top culprits include cauliflower, cabbage, sprouts and broccoli (and beans, of course), so go easy on those if you're particularly sensitive.

11 Drink...

Water, that is! Dehydration is a major cause of constipation, as our food needs water to help our motions pass through the digestive tract. Aim for at least eight mugs a day or more, says Dr Gill. 'Drink plenty of clear fluids, but avoid alcohol. Water, teas and some fruit juice are good.'



12 ...but not booze!

'Alcohol is not good for gut health,' says gastroenterologist Simon Smale. It dehydrates and can irritate your stomach lining, and too much can lead to serious gastrointestinal and liver disease. Know your limits.

13 Love a leek

Foods from the *Allium* vegetable family, such as leeks, onions and garlic, are high in prebiotics – a type of gut-boosting dietary fibre. 'While probiotics are the live bacteria themselves, the less-known prebiotics are what feed the good bacteria, helping them thrive – like a fertiliser for your own gut flora,' says Glenn Gibson, Professor of Food Microbiology at the University of Reading.

OR TRY
A prebiotic supplement such as **Bimuno Daily**, £11.99 for 30 sachets, Boots

14 When you gotta go...

Don't delay if you need the loo. Ignoring the urge to go can dry out stools and cause constipation. It's better for your digestion if you can keep to a regular time and place, and give yourself plenty of time to go.

15 Try Tai chi

Or any relaxation technique to help control anxiety. High levels of the stress hormone cortisol can restrict nutrient digestion and absorption – and cause stomach upset.



Woman's Weekly Travel Offers

LUXURY RIVER CRUISES

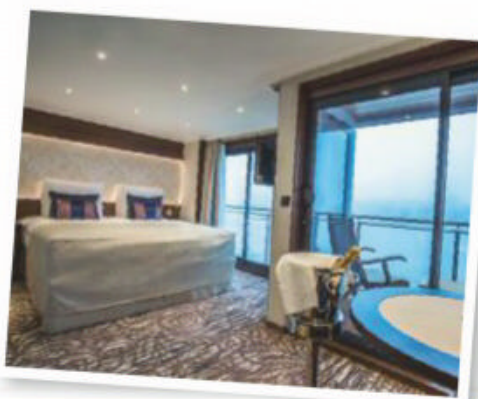
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Cruise the Heart of Europe	15 days	£2,999pp
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The Douro, Porto & Salamanca	8 days	£1,199pp
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New Year on the Blue Danube	6 days	£1,299pp
New Year on the Rhine	6 days	£1,299pp



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**It's
a funny
old
world**

'I have a different music playlist for everyone who gets in my car!'

This week's columnist: English tenor Russell Watson

“ There's a common misconception if you have a link to classical music that you're listening to Tchaikovsky all day. Or that I'm driving around in my Jag, with a monocle in my right eye, smoking a cigar singing the tune to Mozart's *Serenade in G Major* in the fast lane on the motorway.

But I set up different playlists depending on how I feel at the time.

If the kids are in the car, it's pop music or whatever they're listening to, like Dua Lipa, Maroon 5 and Mabel. With the brother-in-law, it's always 80s favourites and if I'm driving Mum around I go for classical music. When my wife's in the car I go straight for relaxing tunes – I never put high-energy pop stuff on when she's around, I don't want the earache!

In my career, mixing things up has been the secret to my longevity. I've never been one for playing it safe. There's that old expression, 'It does what it says on the tin,' but I've never been someone who's only wanted to do that. I like to do different things. I've

sung Puccini's *Nessun Dorma* and I've performed with Shaun Ryder, lead singer of indie band Happy Mondays. I should say my dream collaboration was with Aled Jones, but I'm not going to!

I've been so fortunate to have sung with a lot of my childhood heroes, including Luciano Pavarotti and Sir Paul McCartney. When I appeared at the Nobel Peace Prize awards in Oslo

I sang *Let It Be* with Sir Paul at the end of the night – that was such a big thing for me. While the Beatles were long gone when I was a kid, I still used to sit in my bedroom, playing Beatles' covers.

I was always a fan of their music, so being on stage with Paul was a pretty amazing experience!

It's the 20th anniversary of my first album, *The Voice*, this year and I'm lucky to have a great body of work to delve into from the past two decades – everything from swing and soul to classical repertoire. That album was a huge success for me. It was No.1 in the classical charts for a whole year, a record

that has never been beaten. It was such an achievement – the first classical record from a UK artist to sell a million copies. It broke so many boundaries and barriers. It does seem strange that it was 20 years ago because I don't feel much different now. But it was, and here we are. I am very proud. ”

**'I've never
been one
for playing
it safe'**



✦ For Russell Watson's 2020 UK tour dates, celebrating the 20th anniversary of *The Voice*, visit raymondgubbay.co.uk

My Funny Old Week

WHERE I'VE BEEN I spent a delightful afternoon at the National Railway Museum in York.

WHAT I'VE BOUGHT Sportswear. When I'm not performing, I spend 99% of my time in a tracksuit top, shorts and trainers.

WHO I'VE MET Fans who turned out to see us perform in the North West for our charity concert in aid of Global radio's Make Some Noise campaign.

WHAT I'VE SEEN I was totally overwhelmed by all the birthday wishes I received towards the end of last year. Almost 1,000 fans sent messages.



**National Railway
Museum, York**

NEXT WEEK Katie Fforde

If you want to travel solo, JUST GO!

Going on holiday by yourself can be the most incredible experience, as Claire Sweeney found

Your choice of destination, as much culture as you can soak up and delicious local cuisine... The only 'c' you won't experience on a solo holiday is compromise, so it's no surprise that more people than ever are opting to travel by themselves.

However, rather than go it alone, a solo guided tour with Just You unites the best of both worlds – the flexibility to do and see as much as you want, with the opportunity to make new friends. Just You offers more than 130 holidays in 60 countries and has something for everyone – from glamorous city breaks in New York and epic adventures in India to captivating river cruises.

Each one comes with expert Tour Managers and Local Guides, so you can relax knowing that everything has been taken care of, from seeing all the sights to discovering hidden gems off the beaten track. It's no wonder that Just You was voted the Best Singles holiday company for the second year running at the 2019 British Travel Awards.

Travel ambassador Claire Sweeney toured with Just You to Italy and says she'd recommend it to anyone thinking of travelling solo. 'I'd been to a wedding in Tuscany so exploring the region was at the top of my list. Our Tour Manager Sandra was great, and she had brilliant local knowledge because she's lived in Italy for the past 16 years. I particularly enjoyed the mix of exploring cities one day, then heading up into the mountains to experience local life the next – it was fantastic. The thing I love about these trips

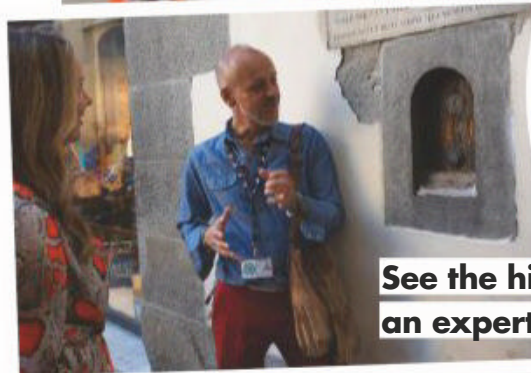
is that you're not wasting time trying to find the highlights – you're heading straight to the best spots and

that's down to the expertise of your Tour Manager and Local Guide.'

So why not take the plunge and discover what Just You has to offer? Whether it's an activity-packed break or a relaxing holiday, a guided solo tour is the ideal way to enjoy some serious me-time.

❖ Claire went on the Highlights Of Tuscany tour, eight days from £899

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sizes 6-20,
Matalan



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Hobbs



Skirt, **£20**,
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F&F Clothing



Top, **£12**,
sizes 6-22, F&F Clothing

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Aspinal of London



Top, **£39.50**,
sizes 6-24, M&S



Shoes, **£85**,
John Lewis & Partners



Boots, **£45**, Next

Expert
approved
beauty

TESTED by us!

The Woman's Weekly team reveal the products they can't live without this winter

Rimmel London Super Gel Step 1 in Venus, £6.99



They say Used with the Step 2 Top Coat, £6.99 (also below), this polish has the same colour intensity and shine as a salon gel manicure with no need to use a UV lamp. Lasting for

up to two weeks chip-free, it comes off easily with normal nail polish remover.

We say Discovering gel manicures helped my previously weak, split-prone nails grow strong and long underneath. But it's tricky to find time to get to the salon, so this is the ideal, cheaper at-home alternative. The thick brush makes application really easy too.

Jayne Marsden, Lifestyle Director



Banish
pasty
skin this
season

Charlotte Tilbury Overnight Bronze & Glow Mask, £38



They say Build up your dream glow by applying a thin layer to your face and neck over three or more nights, depending on how deep you want the colour to be. Formulated with nourishing blackcurrant seed oil and soothing oat kernel, skin feels smoother come morning too.

We say Once or twice a week, I put this on before bed to wake up with a more even-toned and subtly glowing complexion. My skin feels soft to the touch, not 'tacky' in the morning. It's constantly in my 'empties' pile, especially in winter when my skin needs a pick-me-up.

Charley Williams-Howitt, Beauty Director

Vaseline Lip Therapy Original, £1.95



They say Made with triple-purified petroleum jelly, this multipurpose balm instantly softens and soothes dry skin. Use on chapped lips to lock in moisture and keep them happy and healthy.

We say A classic buy, this is such a handy little tin. I've been using this for years, not only to keep my lips supple in the colder months, but also to tame my eyebrows and add a little sheen to my eyelids too.

Sophie Cullen, Contributing Beauty Editor





IT Your Skin But Better CC+ Illumination Full Coverage Cream SPF50, £31

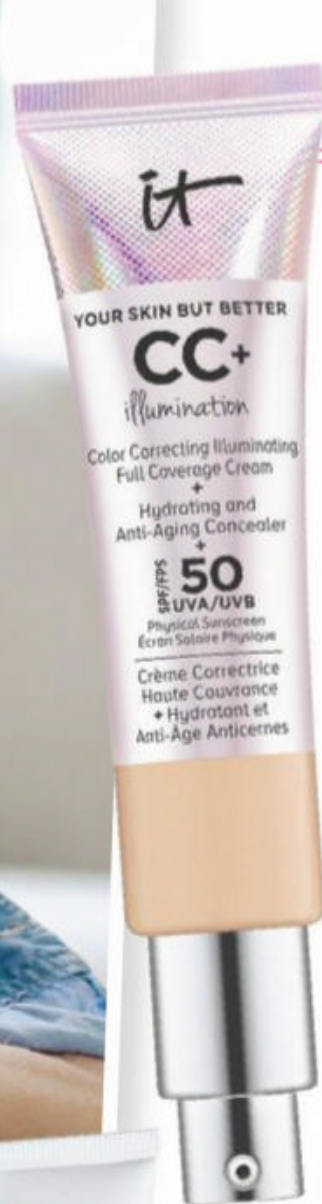


They say Available in 11 shades from fair to deep, this colour-correcting tube delivers seven benefits in one. Blurring imperfections, diminishing the look of wrinkles and

evening out skin tone, it's for anyone who wants a foundation but doesn't feel like wearing one.

We say I used to change my foundation between seasons, but since discovering this I use it all year round. There are three versions, but the illuminating one is my favourite, giving me a dewy glow and plenty of coverage.

Sarah Cooper-White, Beauty Director



Kiehl's Ultimate Strength Hand Salve, £22



They say Using a blend of botanical oils and natural wax, this hard-working hand cream allows skin to draw and absorb moisture from the air, forming a 'glove-like' barrier. Especially good for anyone with severely dry skin.

We say I have eczema and dry skin, both of which can be exacerbated by lower temperatures. This cream is a godsend for me, soothing and hydrating my sore, rough hands, leaving them soft to the touch with just a couple of uses. The non-greasy formula means there's no stickiness either.

Paula Moore, Fashion Director



Living Proof. Instant De-Frizzer, £25



They say The opposite of a texturising spritz, this conditioning spray brings softness,

smoothness and shine to unruly hair. Spray onto dry hair in a sweeping motion before brushing through with your hands or a comb.

We say My thick, frizz-prone hair only behaves when the weather is perfectly dry with zero humidity – so just a few days a year! To protect against the inevitable winter showers, I spray this on before leaving the house and again in-between washes to tame fluffy fly-aways.

Jess Beech, Acting Beauty Editor



Curél Foaming Facial Wash, £12.50



They say Recently launched in Boots, Curél is Japan's top-selling brand for sensitive skin, and fast gaining cult status in the UK. This wash cleanses without stripping skin of moisture and is best used as a second cleanse after removing make-up to whisk away left behind dirt.

We say It's one of those rare cleansers that doesn't make my skin feel tight and dry. It contains ceramides to protect against cold weather. It's unfragranced, so won't bother sensitive skin and is all in all the perfect gentle cleanser.

Fiona McKim, Beauty Editor



My beautiful LITTLE PRINCESS

All Jenna Carlin, 31, has ever wished for is a healthy family – but her baby girl faced a massive challenge

As Jenna Carlin's newborn baby girl, Ava, lay sleeping in her arms, she couldn't take her eyes off her little face.

It was December 2015, and like most parents, Jenna and her fiancé, Matt, both 31, thought their daughter was the most beautiful baby in the world.

'But it was as I was taking in every detail that I noticed something about her head didn't look quite right,' Jenna says.

'It looked out of shape, a bit squashed.'

After pointing it out to their midwife, Jenna and Matt were told that it was probably a result of the way Ava had been lying in the womb and that it would even out over time.

'We took Ava home later that day and introduced her to her older

brother, Luca, then three,' Jenna remembers.

'He doted on her, always offering to give her a bottle and running to get one of us the minute he heard her cry.'

With their family complete, Jenna and Matt decided to set a date for their wedding.

'We'd been engaged for several years, but with having Luca, and then Ava, the timing had never seemed right until that moment,' Jenna says.

But as Ava turned a month old, Jenna struggled to focus on the wedding planning.

Instead, she was worried about Ava.

'Her head still seemed a funny shape

and her forehead looked stretched, like she had a lump sticking out of it.

'And one of her eyes was circular, while the other looked oval.'

Matt agreed with Jenna, and in January 2016, their

health visitor suggested they take Ava to a doctor.

Their GP tried to reassure them

that facial deformities were normal after birth, but Jenna was beside herself.

'I know you're not supposed to look up symptoms on the internet, but from what I'd read online, I suspected Ava might have craniosynostosis,' Jenna recalls.

It is a rare condition that means a baby's head doesn't grow properly in the womb.

'I read that it could lead to brain damage, which worried me even more,' says Jenna.

When Ava was nine weeks, the GP referred her for a CT scan.

And that's when Jenna's worst fear was confirmed.

A team of specialists at Alder Hey Children's Hospital explained that Ava did have craniosynostosis and she'd need a major operation to rebuild her skull.

'Her condition could leave her brain damaged'



With Ava on the mend, Jenna and Matt finally married



Bones in her head would need to be broken, then reconstructed by surgeons.

'The operation was so complex, we'd need to wait until she was 18 months old,' Jenna says. 'We were advised that she wouldn't be strong enough to cope with the surgery until then.'

'I hated the thought of putting my little girl at risk, but if we didn't go ahead, her condition could leave her brain damaged. Matt and I were absolutely terrified.'

Thankfully, Ava remained unaware of her condition – and the looming operation.

'She was so smiley and cheeky – and thought nothing



**Brave Ava with
mum Jenna today**

of grabbing a toy she wanted from her brother,' Jenna laughs.

At baby and toddler groups, Jenna made sure to explain about Ava's condition.

'When she was old enough to talk, Ava kept telling everyone she was getting a new head!' Jenna explains.

But as the day of the surgery grew closer, Jenna felt more and more anxious.

'I was a nervous wreck, constantly wondering if I was doing the right thing. I had to hold back tears as I kissed her goodbye on the morning of her operation.

'I didn't want to scare her, but she just waved and said "Bye Mummy" and off she went.

With their baby girl in the hands of the surgeons, Matt and Jenna paced the hospital grounds, trying their best to stay calm and composed.

An agonisingly long nine and a half hours later, they were called to the recovery ward.

'Ava was attached to wires, a huge bandage wrapped around her head,' Jenna says. 'She was crying and calling for me. All I could do was hold her hand and tell her it was going to be OK.'

Ava was groggy, but the op had been a success.

'That night, I slept in a chair by Ava's bed, and the next morning, a nurse unhooked her from the machines. It meant I could finally pick her up and give her a cuddle,' Jenna says.

But when a nurse unwrapped the bandages covering Ava's head, Jenna was shocked. 'It looked worse than before. Still distorted and out of shape, with jagged stitches across the hairline.'

Doctors assured the couple that it would take some time for the swelling to go down, and a

few days later, they were allowed to take Ava home.

'Luca was a bit confused by it all. He'd been staying with family and didn't really understand what had happened to Ava,' Jenna remembers. 'He told us he didn't like her new head, and was hesitant before giving her a cuddle.'

But as the weeks passed, slowly but surely, the shape of Ava's skull changed.

'The swelling went down, and one day I looked at her and realised her face looked symmetrical.'

With Ava on the mend, Matt and Jenna decided to finally book their wedding.

And in April 2019, their family and friends gathered at Le Petit Château wedding venue in Northumberland.

'Luca, now eight, looked dapper in his grey suit. But my heart burst as I watched him take Ava's hand and walk down the aisle ahead of me.

'She looked so beautiful, wearing an ivory dress decorated with lace from my wedding gown.

'Her scars were completely covered by her hair, and clutching a wand in her little hand, she looked every bit the perfect princess,' Jenna says.

'Luca and Ava were definitely the stars of the show but I didn't mind. Both my children were happy and healthy and that's all I could have possibly wished for.

'Now, Ava, four, still has a scar in her hairline, but it's not too noticeable. You'd never know what she'd been through. Her speech is monitored but specialists are sure there's no lasting brain damage.

'In fact, she's such a talkative, confident and loving little girl. Matt and I are grateful to the wonderful nurses and doctors who helped our baby. And Ava's been so brave. She can upstage me any day!'

**'My heart burst
as I saw her walk
down the aisle'**

Top immunity BOOSTERS

Try these hearty dishes full of ingredients that will help keep you healthy this winter

CHICKEN SOUP WITH MATZO BALLS

Known for its healing properties, this soup has dumplings to make it even heartier.

SERVES 6

- ❖ 1 medium chicken
- ❖ 2 onions, roughly chopped
- ❖ 4 carrots, roughly sliced
- ❖ 3 celery sticks, roughly chopped
- ❖ 4 garlic cloves, peeled
- ❖ 3 bay leaves
- ❖ 75g (2½oz) spaghetti, snapped into pieces
- ❖ 1 small bunch of flat-leaf parsley, leaves picked
- ❖ 1 small bunch of dill, chopped

For the matzo dumplings:

- ❖ 150g (5oz) matzo meal (blitz matzo crackers if you can't find the meal)
- ❖ 4 eggs, beaten
- ❖ 3tbsp vegetable oil

1 Put the whole chicken into a large lidded saucepan or pot and cover with 4 litres (7 pints) cold water. Bring to a simmer and cook for 25-30 mins. Skim any froth off the top.

2 Add the onions, carrots, celery, garlic and bay leaves. Season well and simmer for 45 mins to 1 hr. Continue to skim off any froth.

3 Meanwhile, make the matzo dumplings. Put the matzo meal into a bowl and mix in the eggs, 75ml (3fl oz) boiling water, the vegetable oil and a good pinch of salt and pepper.

Mix well until combined.

Cover and chill the mixture for 1 hr. Then take small amounts

of mixture (about 1tsp) and roll into balls.

4 Once the soup has finished cooking, remove from the heat, take out the whole chicken and place on a plate. Put the pan back on the heat, add the matzo dumplings, put the lid on and simmer for 10 mins. Add the spaghetti and

simmer again for a further 10 mins or until the pasta is cooked.

5 While the soup is finishing cooking and the chicken is cooled enough to handle, remove the meat from the bones. Add the chicken to the soup and stir well. Ladle into bowls and scatter over the parsley and chopped dill.

PER SERVING

491 cals, 17g fat, 3g sat fat, 38g carbs



MISO COD WITH TENDERSTEM BROCCOLI

Not only is broccoli tasty and vibrant, it's great for the gut and improves immunity.

SERVES 2

- ❖ 30g (1oz) panko breadcrumbs
- ❖ 1tsp brown rice miso
- ❖ 1tbsp olive oil
- ❖ Small handful of chopped fresh coriander
- ❖ 2 pieces of cod loin
- ❖ 200g (7oz) tenderstem broccoli
- ❖ 100g (3½oz) edamame beans
- ❖ 8-10 radishes, cut in half

- ❖ Miso soup sachet – we used Itsu
- ❖ 1tbsp rice wine vinegar
- ❖ 1tsp sesame oil
- ❖ 1tsp honey
- ❖ ½tsp light soy sauce – we used Lee Kum Kee

1 Heat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. Mix the breadcrumbs with the miso, oil and coriander. Coat the top of each piece of cod with the panko

mixture and set aside.

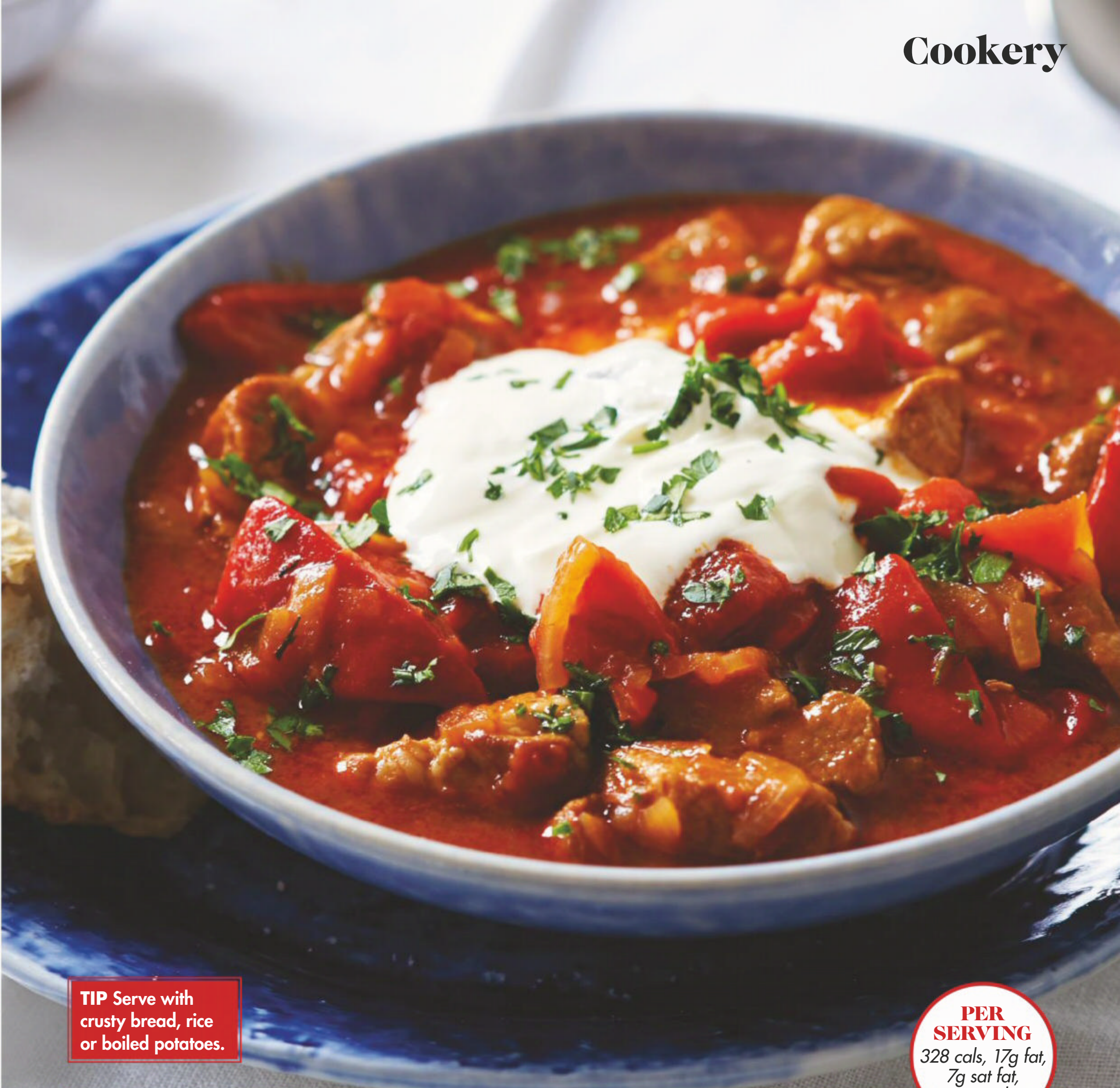
2 Layer the bottom of a deep roasting tin with the broccoli, beans and radishes.

3 Mix the miso soup sachet with 200ml (7fl oz) boiling water, rice wine vinegar, sesame oil, honey and soy sauce. Pour over the veg and roast for 5 mins. Remove from the oven and place the cod on top. Bake for a further 20 mins.

PER SERVING

417 cals, 17g fat, 3g sat fat, 23g carbs





TIP Serve with crusty bread, rice or boiled potatoes.

PER SERVING
328 cals, 17g fat,
7g sat fat,
15g carbs

PORK AND RED PEPPER GOULASH

Red peppers are great for the immune system and also help to reduce inflammation. We've packed this goulash full of them.

SERVES 4

- ❖ 2tbsp olive oil
- ❖ 1 onion, finely sliced
- ❖ 2tsp sweet paprika
- ❖ 1 garlic clove, crushed
- ❖ 400g (14oz) pork shoulder steak, cubed
- ❖ 1tbsp plain flour
- ❖ 1tbsp tomato purée
- ❖ 400g can tomatoes

- ❖ 300ml (½ pint) pork stock – we used Knorr
- ❖ 400g jar roasted red peppers, chopped
- ❖ Small handful of chopped fresh parsley
- ❖ 150ml pot soured cream

1 Heat the oil in a large frying pan and fry the

onion for 3 mins or until translucent. Mix in the paprika and cook for 30 secs.

2 Add the garlic and pork to the pan and cook until the pork has browned. Stir in the flour and mix to cover the pork.

3 Stir in the tomato purée, tomatoes and stock.

Bring to a simmer and cook for 20 mins or until the sauce begins to thicken. Stir in the red peppers and cook for a further 10 mins. The pork should be tender and cooked through. Sprinkle over the chopped parsley and stir through. Serve with a spoonful of soured cream.



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PB73331/10.19



Retire at 55?

That's what the followers of a new movement called FIRE plan to do. Alice Grebot finds out how

Who wouldn't like the option to down tools in their 40s or 50s? Well, there's a new lifestyle trend called FIRE, and its followers aim to achieve Financial Independence and Retire Early.

The idea originated in the USA and is now catching on here. But if early retirement sounds like a dream, it comes at a cost. FIRE calls for frugal living, investing and extreme saving – you'd need to save 50% of your income and 70% if possible.

Marie Walshe, 47 (right), is attempting to achieve FIRE. She lives in Kent with her



husband, Diarmaid, 51. She works as a lecturer and teaches accounting.

'Growing up on a farm in Ireland, my parents taught me the importance of putting money away and saving for a rainy day. They ran a guest house and rented out land, which was a great way of earning a passive income.

Fifteen years ago, I moved to Huddersfield with my work

as a laboratory scientist. I was astounded that many beautiful stone properties cost £11,000. My husband and I bought one and renovated it, turning it into our first home.

One year later, we rented it out and moved down south, buying another property for £79,000 in Sevenoaks. Our retirement strategy was beginning to emerge and with it our goal towards achieving FIRE.

Over the years, I qualified as an accountant, rented out rooms in my house to lodgers and grew my property portfolio. We now own four

properties, worth around £750,000 in total. We live in one, with rooms rented out, while the other three properties are all rented, bringing us in around £1,500-£2,000 each month.

Many people laughed at the property I initially purchased, but it's currently worth five times what I paid for it.

I've made FIRE part of my life strategy and part of that is surrounding myself with other like-minded people. Many people feel that they can't be open about being frugal and find that FIRE is a positive way of expressing that.

I save around 50% of my annual income and my aim is to retire by 55. I live thriftily, buying most of my clothes on eBay, forgoing holidays, and not eating out, but who wouldn't want to be financially secure when they are approaching retirement?'

Want to know more about FIRE?

❖ 'It's all about setting goals,' says Marie. 'This could include anything from starting a small side business to renting out spare rooms. Many side hustles can be run in your spare time outside work and are a useful buffer in case of job loss.'

❖ A number of books have been written on the subject of FIRE. Try *Your Money or Your Life* by Vicki Robin and Joe Dominguez, and *Playing with FIRE* by Scott Rieckens.

❖ Listen to the financial independence podcast *FIRE Drill*, available on Apple and Google.

❖ Search for information online – two useful websites are: mrmoneymustache.com and theescapeartist.me



Muffin Top? It's time to burn those calories.

The spicy chillies in
New Nordic's Chili Burn
could help you shape
up this year!

You have tried everything, you know you are eating healthily and exercising, but the last few pounds refuse to shift. So why not spice things up and try Chili Burn, the leading chilli and green tea supplement, to help you keep trim the natural way.

Each Chili Burn™ tablet contains an advanced blend of stomach friendly chilli extract, green tea and micronutrients to help your body burn calories and provide you

with more energy. Working in harmony with your body the tablet combines natural extracts with key vitamins and minerals. B vitamins, magnesium and chromium picolinate, which are important factors for fat, carbohydrate and protein metabolism and helps release energy from food efficiently. It helps reduce tiredness and fatigue and contributes to normal muscle function. The chromium simultaneously helps maintain normal blood glucose levels helping you not to crave foods.



Chili Burn™ is easy to take – one tablet with lunch and one with dinner should keep your metabolism working efficiently all day long.

The Chili Burn™ tablet helps you burn more fat.

When is Chili Burn™ useful:

- ☒ When you get older and your muscle mass decreases, slowing down the calorie burn rate.
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- ☒ When you are genetically prone to being overweight.
- ☒ When you are not getting enough sleep and putting on weight because of it.

Where to buy Chili Burn™

Chili Burn™ is available from Holland & Barrett and leading health food stores. For an information leaflet call **0800 389 1255** or purchase online from www.newnordic.co.uk

ADVICE & QUESTIONS

You are always welcome to contact our New Nordic helpline at **0800 389 1255**

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Your wellbeing

Latest health solutions for your mind and body



Debbie Baisden, 52,
from Chelmsford, Essex

*I coped with the
menopause by doing*

STAND-UP COMEDY!

When my menopause hit it was like wading through mud. I was totally exhausted, with dreadful brain fog, hot flushes, repeated water infections and overwhelming anxiety. My doctor said blood tests showed I wasn't going through the menopause and prescribed antidepressants.

I knew it was my hormones, so I didn't take them. A year later, a return GP trip confirmed what I already knew – it was the menopause.

I'd always dreamed of being an actress, and in my 40s I did acting and comedy workshops. I created this pub landlady character, Dolly, who had no filter. I did a stand-up routine incorporating



a bit of my experience of the menopause. Then I wrote a whole show based on it, adding in other characters.

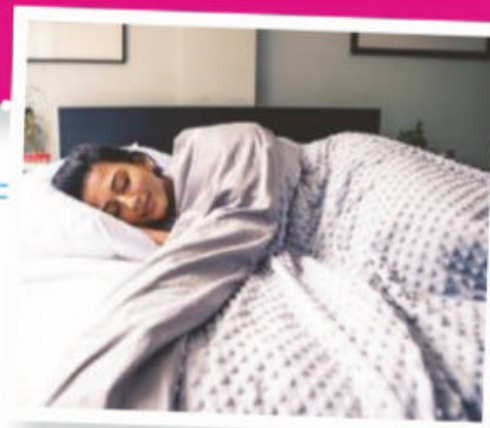
I performed it at a wellbeing show at Leicester University and now I have shows booked for 2020 in Chelmsford and at Oxford Women's Festival. I plan to build up a mini tour, and will do Brighton and the

Edinburgh Fringe next year.

I was nervous at first but the feedback has been amazing. I started adding in audience interaction by getting them to comment anonymously using their phones. It leads to a lot of discussion and laughter.

The show is very cathartic for me – HRT has helped too, of course! And I'm not suggesting that everyone can get through the menopause with a stand-up comedy routine but I think it helps to talk about it – and to see the funny side.

✦ Visit herandthechangeinme.wordpress.com



What's that?
It's a weighted blanket

Heavier than regular quilts, they've been used for years by people with autistic spectrum disorders and are increasing in popularity for people who have anxiety-induced sleep issues. The weight works like swaddling a baby, providing warmth and a sense of security, plus reducing stress hormones and boosting calming brain chemicals for sleep. Try a Mela Weighted Blanket, from £109.97, melacomfort.co.uk



3 ways to... age-proof your knees

BUILD MUSCLES

Strengthening your leg muscles can help stabilise your knee joint. Try squats and step-ups, and consult a physio for a tailor-made strengthening programme for you.

LOSE WEIGHT...

...if you need to. Being overweight puts added strain onto knee joints. In general, aim for a BMI between 18.5 and 24.9, but discuss your target with your GP first.

DRINK MILK

American researchers at Harvard found that women with osteoarthritis who drank a glass of milk a day had slower deterioration of their joints.

NEW READ
THE BOOK OF ICHIGO ICHIE
£12.99, QUERCUS

Learn to live in the 'now' with this Japanese philosophy of savouring what's happening around you to find happiness. It promises to teach you how to let go of the past, ditch unhelpful expectations, enhance relationships and be more creative and contented.





Dr Gill Jenkins
has more than 25 years'
experience as a GP

Dr Gill

Advice from our Woman's Weekly doctor

Beneficial dreams

Swiss and American neuroscientists' research into dreams has found that bad dreams improve the effectiveness of the brain in reacting to frightening experiences when awake. However, really terrifying nightmares were found to have a negative impact. Studying brain electrical activity and detailed 'dream diaries' kept by the subjects, the results suggest there is a link between emotions in sleep and when awake, and there may be benefits in using dreams as a form of therapy for anxiety disorders.



CHRONIC VESTIBULAR THERAPY

Chronic vestibular syndromes, such as labyrinthitis and vestibular neuronitis, may be treated with internet-based 'vestibular rehabilitation', according to a new Dutch study. A six-week programme with weekly online sessions and daily exercises, taking only 20 minutes a day, supplemented by home physio visits, showed benefits in adults over 50 with chronic symptoms. This offers new hope to those who have exhausted other therapies.

Coping with...

IRREGULAR PERIODS

Menstrual bleeds can be very variable, and the menopause has an impact

The average menstrual cycle lasts 28 days, which will include, at the end, the actual bleed, usually lasting between three to five days.

However, there is great variation for every individual, and each month can be different.

It's not unusual for periods to be as frequent as every 21 days or only to occur every 35 or even 40 days. This may just be your 'normal' and does not mean there is a problem. Even if your usually regular period occurs irregularly for one or two months, it's unlikely to be anything serious.

Finding the cause

There are many causes of irregular periods, including physical or psychological ill health, stress, excessive exercise, extreme weight loss or gain, or when taking certain medications, including all types of hormonal contraception.

Periods are more likely to be irregular at puberty, most commonly in your early teens, and at the menopause, which is usually between the ages of 45 to 55 (although one in 100 women have premature menopause, before the age of 40). Pregnancy of course usually stops periods, but a few women still get irregular bleeds, so if it's a possibility, check with a pregnancy test.

Physical conditions such as PCOS (polycystic ovary syndrome) and thyroid disease can cause variation in cycle regularity, menstrual duration

Things to know

- ❖ Keep a diary of at least three months, noting your bleeds, including start and end dates, heaviness, flooding or clots, pain and any premenstrual symptoms.
- ❖ Note other lifestyle and medical problems including diet, weight, stress, alcohol intake, medication use and any illness, as all can affect your cycle.
- ❖ See your doctor to discuss any investigations and medication that may make periods lighter or regular, such as the combined contraceptive pill.
- ❖ There is rarely a serious cause, but sometimes an ovarian scan is useful, or blood tests such as hormone levels, blood count and iron studies.

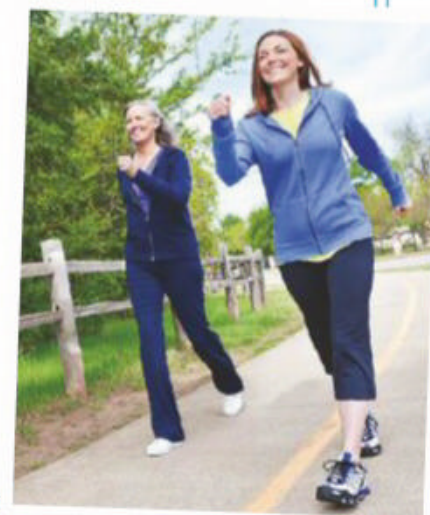
and blood loss. Chronic medical conditions, including uncontrolled diabetes, severe anaemia and heart disease, can also affect your periods. Rarely, a type of benign tumour of the pituitary gland in the brain, called an adenoma, may be the cause.

If your periods are very irregular, are more frequent than every 21 days, or less frequent than every 35 days, are very heavy or very light, and especially if you are trying for a pregnancy, it's worth discussing with your GP, although there



Q I know I should exercise regularly, but how much is enough?

A Exercise is beneficial for many medical conditions, as well as for weight management and, later in life, for maintaining good muscle strength, balance and tone, to keep independent and avoid falls. It's estimated that only half of us are sufficiently active. Evidence suggests that 150 minutes of moderate exercise weekly, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise, is needed to gain health benefits. The guidelines body NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) advises that all adults should aim to be active daily. This can be achieved in small bouts of at least 10 minutes at a time or in larger sessions, adding up to these totals. Moderate exercise will make you breathe faster, increase your heart rate and feel warm, while vigorous exercise makes you breathless with a rapid heart rate. On two days a week you should do muscle-strengthening exercises, plus balance and coordination exercises for the over-65s. The bottom line is that any activity is better than none!



may be no reason to worry. The doctor will ask about your medical history and examine you, and a menstrual diary is useful to keep track of your cycles.

If they think there is an obvious cause, for example your BMI dropping to under 18.5, they will advise on managing it. If it is unclear, they may arrange blood tests, including female hormone levels and thyroid function tests. An abdominal or pelvic scan may show any disorders, such as PCO, and for some, a brain CT or MRI scan may be needed to view the pituitary gland, which controls hormone levels. If the cause isn't clear, a referral to a gynaecologist may be indicated.

TRUE OR FALSE?

You can cure a hangover

False. Studies show that there is no evidence for any traditional dietary 'cure' such as bananas or Vegemite. Medications studied include propranolol, aspirin and tropisetron – but all failed to 'cure' hangovers. The only way to avoid one is to not drink too much alcohol, though hydrating helps symptoms, so try drinking a pint of water before bed.

4 fixes for... ingrowing toenails

SOAK YOUR FEET

Put them in warm water three times a day for a few days to soften the nail and skin around the toenail and reduce pressure.

AVOID TIGHT SHOES

Wear wide, comfortable shoes with more room for your toes, or choose sandals, to reduce the pressure on the soft pad at the end of the toe.

LEAVE IT

Leave the toenail to grow out and, when you do cut it, cut straight across. If there is pus leaking, see your GP for possible antibiotics.

SEE A PODIATRIST

Chronic ingrowing toenails may need referral to a podiatrist to cut away part or even all of the nail under local anaesthetic.

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Our relationship expert
Keren Smedley has over
20 years' experience

Here to help

Let counsellor Keren lighten your load

Do I take her back?

Q I run a local gym and have a number of young personal trainers who work for me. One of the most popular left a few months ago as she said she could earn more elsewhere. I don't make enough money to increase salaries. Her friend, who also works with me, told me that she isn't happy where she is and would like to come back. I'm not sure I can trust her not to do this again. I know the clients would be delighted to see her.

Melissa, Nottingham

A Take a step back and think of this from your employee's perspective. She left because she needed more money. My hunch is she didn't think about the work conditions and assumed, as she's young, all places of employment are the same. She's now discovered that workplace conditions are important and she'd rather work for less and feel valued.

She's clearly a bit embarrassed about it, hence asking her friend to ask you. Why not discuss your feelings with her, agree on terms and put this into a contract, so she knows the condition of her return? You can't keep her if she decides to leave again, but she'll know she won't be able to return.

If you agree to have her back, it sounds like you'll have happy customers, which can only be good for business.

My negative friend is getting me down

Q What would you advise if a friend makes negative comments to you about how you look or how you behave? It's getting me down.

Judy, Leeds

A A quick answer would be stop seeing them! I'm assuming you're asking the question because you want to maintain the friendship. You need to talk to them and find out what's behind their behaviour and tell them how you

I don't want to care for my grandchild

Q My son and daughter-in-law are expecting a baby and they've been told there are going to be some problems. They were offered a termination and they've decided against it. I don't think they have any idea what this will mean and how it will affect their lives. I had said I was happy to do some childcare but I'm not sure I still am, with the way things are. *Name and address withheld*

A If I'm honest, their decision is nothing to do with you. At this minute, they need your support as they're having to come to terms with the problems their child is likely to face. They've made the decision they think is best for them and their child, and that, above all, needs to be honoured.

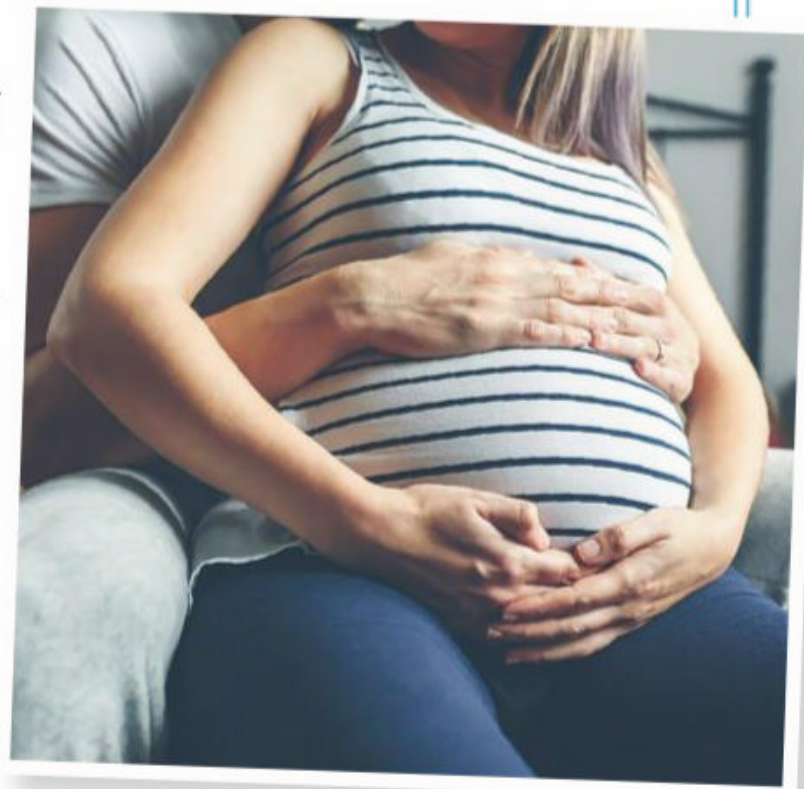
It may not be easy but it's their path and they'll find a way through.

If you no longer want to look after your grandchild, that's your choice. But I'm not sure now is the right time to tell them, as it will be a while before childcare is needed.

When it's discussed next time, offer your

thoughts so they can make other childcare arrangements. I'm sure your looking after the child or not won't affect their decision.

✦ Keren welcomes your letters, emails and texts, but she cannot reply to individual cases and will select correspondence at random for publication.



feel and what you need in the future.

If they can't or won't change, you'll need to stop seeing them. I expect there's something driving their behaviour and, once talked about, it will change.

They bribe their child

Q My son and daughter-in-law bribe their daughter all the time. For example, if she eats her dinner, she can have ice cream. It doesn't always work but often she plays ball. I worry about her growing up believing life is about bribery and bargaining.

Yvonne, Wales

A You didn't mention the age of your granddaughter but I'd guess between three and five. Children at that age can be difficult to manage, and they're not good at modifying their behaviour or being reasoned with. They have little concept of time and they want things immediately.

It sounds like they've found a way to teach her how to behave and to then reward the good behaviour. Your granddaughter will learn that being good is rewarded, and that's a useful lesson to learn. As she gets older, her parents will be able to reason with her and 'bribes' will no longer be needed.

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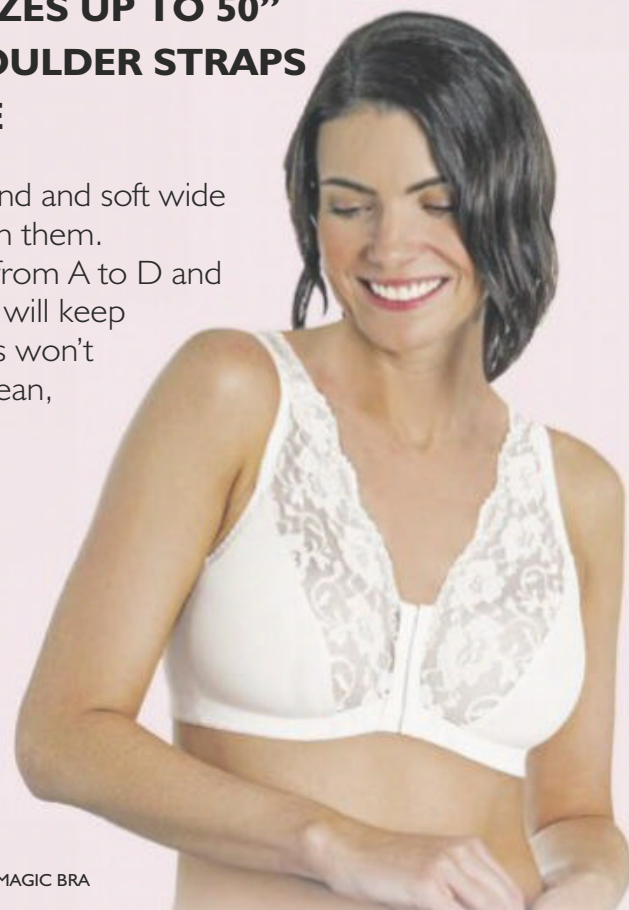
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Something FRUITY

Give yourself a burst of summer flavours with these sweet recipes using fruits in your store cupboard or freezer

CRANBERRY AND OAT COOKIES

These are a brilliant way of using up any leftover dried fruits and oats we all have lurking in the back of the cupboard. With filling oats, they're healthier than your average shop-bought biscuit.

MAKES 14 LARGE COOKIES

- ❖ 150g (5oz) dried cranberries
- ❖ 2tbsp orange juice
- ❖ 140g (4½oz) salted butter, cubed
- ❖ 175g (6oz) self-raising flour
- ❖ 100g (3½oz) large rolled oats
- ❖ 175g (6oz) light muscovado sugar
- ❖ ½tsp ground cinnamon

- ❖ ½tsp nutmeg
 - ❖ 45g (1½oz) pecans, roughly smashed
 - ❖ 1 large egg
- You will need:**
- ❖ 2 large baking trays lined with baking parchment

1 Heat the oven to 180C/Gas 4. Soak the cranberries in a bowl with the orange juice. In a large

bowl, use your hands to rub the butter into the flour until it resembles breadcrumbs.

2 Add the oats, sugar, spices and nuts, and stir to combine. Make a well in the centre, and add the egg, cranberries and orange juice. Bring together

PER COOKIE

112 cals, 4.6g fat, 2.8g sat fat, 26g carbs

to make a sticky dough.

3 Spoon 14 balls of dough the same size, and place well apart on the trays, pressing to flatten to about 1cm (½in). Bake for 15-20 mins until golden brown, then transfer to a rack and leave to cool.



PINEAPPLE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

Some vitamin C is lost during the canning process but tinned fruit is a wonderful source of nutrients all year round. Buy fruit with no added salt or sugar for maximum health benefits.

SERVES 12

- ❖ 45g (1½oz) light muscovado sugar
- ❖ 45g (1½oz) butter, softened
- ❖ 435g can of pineapple slices or rings in juice
- ❖ 7-9 glacé cherries

For the sponge:

- ❖ 225g (8oz) butter, softened
- ❖ 225g (8oz) golden caster sugar
- ❖ 4 eggs, beaten
- ❖ 225g (8oz) self-raising flour

- ❖ 60g (2oz) ground almonds
 - ❖ 4tbsp milk, plus extra
- You will need:**
- ❖ 20cm (8in) springform cake tin

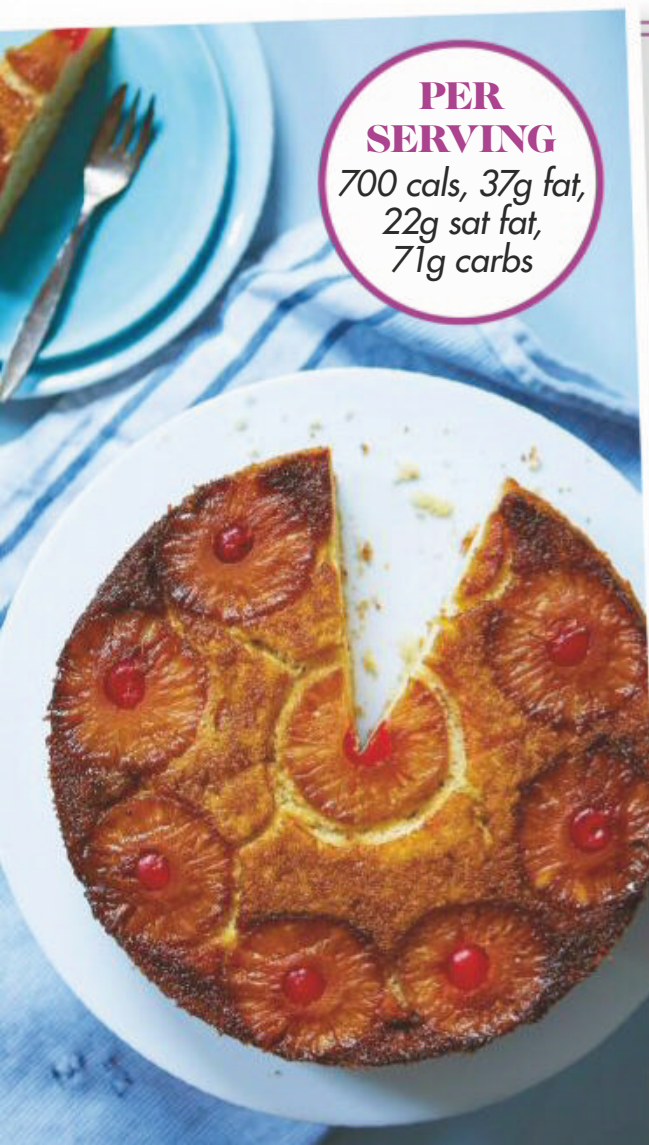
1 Heat the oven to 180C/Gas 4. Beat the muscovado sugar and butter together until well combined. Spread the mixture over the base of the cake tin. Arrange the pineapple slices over the butter mix in a single layer (you'll need 7-9 slices) and pop a glacé cherry into the centre of each slice.

2 For the sponge, cream the butter and caster sugar together until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in the eggs. To ensure the mixture doesn't curdle, mix in 1tbsp of the flour every now and then. Fold through the remaining flour, and the ground almonds and milk. If it seems a little thick, add 1tbsp milk or water. Spoon the mix onto the pineapples.

3 Bake for 40-50 mins or until a skewer comes out clean. Allow to cool in the tin for 10-15 mins, then turn out.

PER SERVING

700 cals, 37g fat, 22g sat fat, 71g carbs





TIP Use almond extract instead of lemon for a more traditional flavour.

**PER
SERVING**

289 cals, 18g fat,
11g sat fat,
28g carbs

FROZEN BERRY FRANGIPANE

This frangipane is super easy to make. Frozen fruit is great because it's packed up immediately after picking so retains its colour and nutrients. We've used lemon extract to give this frangipane a tangy twist.

SERVES 12

- ❖ 150g (5oz) cold butter, cut into small cubes
- ❖ 150g (5oz) plain flour
- For the frangipane filling:**
- ❖ 100g (3½oz) butter, softened
- ❖ 100g (3½oz) caster sugar
- ❖ 2 large eggs
- ❖ 100g (3½oz) ground almonds
- ❖ ½tsp lemon extract (optional, see tip)

- ❖ Grated zest of 1 lemon
 - ❖ Handful of frozen berries
- You will need:**

- ❖ 18cm (7in) loose-based fluted tart tin; baking parchment and baking beans

1 Heat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. For the pastry, rub the butter into the flour until it resembles breadcrumbs. Stir in enough

cold water to form a dough, around 1-2tbsp. Wrap in clingfilm and chill for 30 mins.

2 Roll out the pastry to the thickness of a 50p coin and line the tart tin. Trim the edges, prick the base, line with baking parchment and fill with baking beans. Bake for 10 mins. Remove the parchment and beans, and bake for a further 5-10 mins until lightly golden.

3 For the frangipane filling, beat the butter, caster sugar, eggs, ground almonds, lemon extract (if using) and zest together until you have a smooth mixture.

4 Spread the frangipane filling over the baked tart case and scatter with frozen berries. Bake for 20-30 mins or until the frangipane has cooked through.

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Serving suggestion

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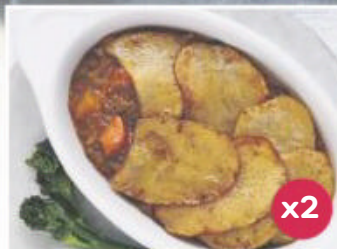
x2

2 x Sausage & Mash



x2

2 x Coq au Vin



x2

2 x Lamb Hotpot



x2

2 x Lasagne

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Mum, can you get Dad, I need to talk to him?

'Dad has his own phone, love.'

'But he never answers.'

This was true. Hazel looked over at her remote-control-wielding husband, who was furiously changing channels, eventually landing on wrestling rather than the crime drama she'd hoped for.

'It's Ali,' Hazel said.

Simon looked as though he was going to whisper he was in the middle of something, but instead he muted the TV and took Hazel's phone.

'Hey, love. How... it's what? The ceiling's come down?'

Hazel sipped her tea, glad it was builder's brew.

Ali had moved into her new starter home a few weeks ago, 10 miles from the family home. It was perfect for her, near where she worked, with plenty of nightlife. Unlike the hamlet where her parents still lived, which was quiet, just how Hazel and Simon liked it.

Although, since Ali had left, Hazel found it a bit too quiet. Now she realised how little she and Simon talked. Really talked. Mostly their conversations covered dinner plans, or what time they'd be home from work next day.

The fact that everything she and Simon talked about was so mundane, hadn't been so noticeable before. Not with Ali's music, her chatter and her friends coming round.

'Right, love, sounds like Ali has a leak. If I go now, I shouldn't be back late.'

Simon had his car keys at the ready. Hazel glanced at the bag by the front door. It was full of laundered clothes for Ali – though Hazel wasn't going to tell Simon that – as

The MERCY DASH

Now free from distractions, how well did Hazel and Simon really know each other, after all?

well as a few things she'd bought for her.

'I'll come too. Hold on.'

Simon looked surprised as Hazel slipped on her trainers and picked up the bag.

They were both quiet on the drive over. There was the elephant in the room of how much they were missing their daughter, but it was more than that, Hazel feared.

What did they have left in common now Ali was gone? Had her absence exposed a chasm in their relationship?

'How's work?' she asked.

'Not bad. You?'

'Few problems with IT, but that's to be expected.'

That was the extent of their conversation for the journey.

Ali's leak wasn't serious. She'd left a tap running, and water was dripping through the kitchen ceiling. A flake of plaster had fallen, but the house needed work anyway.

Hazel helped Ali unpack a couple of boxes while Simon tidied up.

'I wonder if she was just

lonely,' Hazel said as they set off for home.

'Maybe,' Simon replied.

'But she'll have to learn to...'

'... stand on her own two feet. I know, Simon, but it's early days. And she's on her own. We had each other. It's different for Ali.'

Simon didn't reply.

The fact they'd been together that long – was that part of the problem? You heard about couples splitting after years together because they realise they've nothing left in common once their kids leave home.

'Mind if I put the radio on?'

'Go ahead,' agreed Hazel.

It might drown out the silence, she thought.

The first song was one she didn't recognise. And the second. The third, though, that was a blast from the past. She blushed. Simon glanced at her and smiled.

Before they'd moved in together, they'd driven to the car park near the lake and spent many a happy hour,

listening to music, kissing, dreaming of the future.

This song had been one of their favourites. It had almost become 'their song', although, by the look on Simon's face, he'd forgotten about it until now. As had Hazel.

'Take a left here, Simon.'

'What, off the main road?' he asked.

'Yes,' she said, placing her hand on his knee.

'Great song, this,' he said.

'Remember. ?'

'I do,' she smiled.

'Right here?' he said at the turning towards the lake.

But when they got to the car park the barrier was down.

'Guess you can't have everything,' Simon said, kissing Hazel before turning the car round. 'At least these days we have a nice warm house to retire too. Home? Down the lanes?'

'Of course.'

This time they chatted and reminisced. They giggled, and sang along to more familiar songs, as well as putting the world to rights.

It was late when they got in. But good late. Not exhausted late. They both switched their phones to 'do not disturb'. Ali would ring the landline if there was a *real* emergency.

A couple of evenings later, when Simon was pulling into the drive, Hazel phoned.

Surprisingly, he answered.

'Fancy a drive?' she asked.

He hesitated. Oh no, they weren't back to stage one, were they?

'Only if we take the lanes and have the music loud,' he replied.

'That's a given,' Hazel said, pulling her trainers on and heading for the door.

THE END

Fran Tracey, 2020



Travel

Italy's largest gem LAKE GARDA

Set at the foot of the mountains in northern Italy, Lake Garda's sheer beauty entices visitors back time and again



Northern Italy boasts over 1,500 lakes and in the heart of the north is its largest, Lake Garda.

The diverse scenery surrounding it ranges from fjord-like mountains in the north to vineyard-strewn hills in the south.

Among the many attractions on offer are medieval harbours, historic castles, cobbled village streets lined

with cafés and boutiques, plus recreational activities and relaxing boat trips around the lake.

Head to the mountain top

Jump aboard the cable car to the top of Monte Baldo and take a leisurely walk along the ridge, where you're surrounded by spectacular vistas of snow-covered alpine peaks and softer slopes of nearby mountains.

The cable car whizzes up to 1,760m altitude within



Take the cable car to the top of Monte Baldo

15 minutes. Although you're squeezed in during peak times, it's certainly worth enduring the squash because the views are simply breathtaking.

Before leaving the area, wander through the winding cobbled streets of Malcesine, making sure you stop for a coffee overlooking the lake.

Enjoy a wine tour

From Bardolino to Amarone, the region is not only known for its beautiful scenery but also for its exceptional world-class wines. Take a trip into the tranquil countryside for an afternoon visiting local wineries – and get to sample the classy reds and whites too.

Spread over a hillside, Clementi (vini-clementi.com) is a family-run winery situated in the small village of Valgatara, which lies in the heart of the Valpolicella viticultural zone. From their 17 hectares, they produce natural wines using traditional methods – and what a fine job they do.

Great for INDEPENDENT EXPLORERS

Regular ferries take almost five hours to criss-cross from north to south. Fast ferries take three hours. Two car ferries cross east to west and also take foot passengers; navigazionelaghi.it

Fast or slow, ferries are a great way to explore the area



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Great for LOVED-UP ROMANTICS

Verona is a must-see, with its elegant squares, historic castle and summer opera festival. Shakespeare chose Verona as the setting for his ultimate love story, *Romeo and Juliet*. You'll see why with a trip to this magical city. Book an excursion locally.

Verona is historic
and picturesque



Family fun

Lake Garda is ideal for families. Hire a bike and explore the lakeside promenade, take a motor boat out on the lake, or head for one of many theme parks around the lake.

Enjoy an interactive journey from Lake Garda to the ocean depths at the Sea Life Aquarium, meet Peppa Pig at Gardaland Resort's new Peppa Pig Land, wander through film sets at Movieland Park, or whizz down slides at Caneva World Resort's Aquapark.

Where to stay

From Garda, with its wide sheltered bay, to Sirmione, located on the tip of a

peninsula, there are pristine resorts to suit everyone. One favourite is near Bardolino, on the lake's southeastern shore.

Surrounded by olive groves and vineyards, there is a Mediterranean vibe to this pretty town, with traffic-free streets lined with restaurants, bars and shops running down to the lakeside, where the hop-on, hop-off ferries ply their trade. Take a walk along the well-kept promenade or simply relax and gaze out across the lake's gentle waters.

When it comes to choosing a hotel, you won't find better than 4-star Hotel Caesius Thermae & Spa Resort. Overlooking the lake, facilities include five swimming pools, two children's pools, Turkish bath and gourmet cuisine.

The region boasts
superb wineries



Travel info

- ❖ TUI Lakes & Mountains offers a week's half-board at 4-star Hotel Caesius Thermae & Spa in Bardolino, Lake Garda from £1,126pp, including flights and transfers (price based on 16 Sept 2020 Gatwick departure). Direct flights available from all major UK airports; tui.co.uk/holidays/lakes-and-mountains, 020 8610 3139
- ❖ For more travel inspiration, visit thecaribou.com

Woman's Weekly Travel Offers



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Lake Garda, Venice & Verona

Selected departures from April to October 2020

This tour is a wonderful blend of some of the finest sights in northern Italy. Firstly, Lake Garda, where waves lap gently on the shingle shoreline, with the snow-capped Dolomite mountains in the background; then Venice, a unique city full of cultural delights such as the Doge's Palace, St Mark's Basilica and the Grand Canal; lastly, Verona, one of the most romantic cities you will ever find and so appropriate as the setting for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Price includes:

- Enjoy a full day exploring beautiful Lake Garda, both on land and by boat
- Explore Venice, the medieval world's richest city, on a tour with a local guide – choose between the 'classic' and 'undiscovered' tours
- Walk into history among the Roman ruins of Verona, guided by a local expert – choose between the 'classic' and 'undiscovered' tours
- Marvel at the breathtaking alpine scenery of the Dolomites on a full-day tour
- Enjoy two free days to explore further at your leisure or relax and take in the incredible scenery
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Luca the LLAMA

Stitch this lovable fluffy friend with the brightest of accessories, inspired by our Woman's Weekly archives

NOTE: Omit the tassels and chest strap if making the llama for a small child.

YOU WILL NEED

Finished size: 31x26cm

❖ Access to a photocopier

❖ Tracing paper and pencil

❖ 50x35cm rectangle (1/8m) of cream curly 15mm pile fur fabric

❖ 50x35cm rectangle (1/8m) of ivory 3mm mini long pile minky style fabric

❖ 35x25cm rectangle (1/16m) of beige 3mm mini long pile minky style fabric

❖ Two 9mm black toy safety eyes

❖ Pink stranded cotton embroidery thread

❖ 16x7.5cm rectangle of pink felt

❖ 40cm of 1.8cm-wide patterned ribbon

❖ 90cm of navy 8mm-wide lace trim

❖ Five pairs of 3cm tassels

❖ Matching sewing threads

❖ Toy filling

SUPPLIER: Curly cream matinee pile faux-fur fabric, £6 for 1/8m, ivory 3mm mini long pile minky style fabric, £3.08 for 1/8m, beige 3mm mini long pile minky style fabric, £2.05 for 1/16m, 9mm black toy safety eyes, £1.53 for five pairs, all mohairbearmakingsupplies.co.uk. 1.8cm-wide art deco patterned ribbon, £2 per metre, 8mm-wide Cluny lace trim, 85p per metre, dottodotstudio.co.uk. One pair 3cm turquoise tassels, £1, peppypaccessories.co.uk.

MAKING PAPER PATTERNS

On a photocopier, enlarge the patterns (overleaf) to 200%. Trace the patterns onto tracing paper, placing the face on folded tracing paper, matching the broken lines to the fold and making separate patterns for the ear, body, head, front leg, back leg, hoof, tail and tummy. Mark the arrows, notches, crosses, dots and mouth. Cut out the patterns and open the face out flat.

CUTTING OUT

Cut the fur fabric with the pile laying in the direction of the arrows. For accuracy, cut the pieces singly. To avoid snipping the curls, cut through the backing fabric only of the curly fur fabric. Cut one pair of ears, heads, bodies, tail and tummy from curly fur fabric. Cut one pair of ears, two pairs of front legs, two pairs of back legs and one face from ivory mini long pile minky style fabric. Cut four pairs of hooves from beige mini long pile minky style fabric. Snip the notches and mark the dots and crosses on the wrong side of the pieces with a pencil.



MAKING THE LLAMA

NOTE: Take a 6mm seam allowance. Pin seams before stitching with lots of pins because the layers of fur fabric are prone to move otherwise. Using a ballpoint needle on the sewing machine, join pieces with right sides together and edges level, matching notches and dots. After stitching use a pin to release any curly fur caught in the seam. Press the fabric face down on a towel with a cool iron to avoid flattening fur pile.

1 Pin each curly fur ear to a minky style ear. Stitch the outer edge A-A, leaving the lower short edge open. Clip the corner, snip the curves then turn right side out. Fold the ears in half with the minky style ears inside, pin the lower folded edges together. Pin and tack each ear to a head, matching A and B.

2 Tack, then stitch the heads and bodies together C-A-B-D. Snip the curves, and press seams toward the heads.

3 Stitch the tails together E-F, leaving the notched edge open. Snip the curves and turn right side out. Tack the tail to the right side of one body E-F.

4 Stitch the hooves to the legs G-H. Press the seams open. Stitch the front legs to the bodies and tummies from I to the dot at J. Stitch the back legs to the bodies and tummies from the dot at K to L. Press the seams toward the legs.

5 Pin, tack and stitch the bodies together M-C-E-F-N. Snip the curves.

6 Make a tiny hole at the eye crosses on the face.

Insert the shank of the toy eyes through the hole from the right side. Fix in place on the wrong side with its locking washer, pushing it down as far as it will go. Pin the face to the body. Stitch this seam by hand with a backstitch starting and finishing at the dots at O, stitch O-D-M-D-O. Snip the curves. Press seam toward the body.

7 Fold the face in half along the fold line. Pin and stitch P-O-Q. Snip the curves. Finger press the seam open. To finger press, open the seam and run a moistened finger along it. Leave to dry before handling.

8 Stitch the tummies together Q-N, leaving a gap between the crosses. Snip the curves, press the seam open.

9 Pin the tummy to one body, legs and hooves. Pin and stitch Q-I-G-R then stitch S-H-J-K-G-R then stitch N-L-H-S. Repeat to stitch the other half of the tummy to the other body, legs and hooves. Snip bodies and tummies to J and K. Snip the curves. Press seams open.

10 Stitch the hooves together along the bases. Finger press the seams open. Fold the hooves diagonally to match the end of the base seams to R and S. Stitch R-R and S-S.

11 Turn the llama right side out. Stuff the llama evenly with toy filling. Slip stitch the gap closed.

12 Refer to the pattern to mark nose and mouth with a row of pins. Embroider the nose and mouth with stem stitch using three strands of pink embroidery thread.

Continued overleaf

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you**

**Difficulty
level**



Visit the Woman's Weekly Vintage Exhibition

Love this llama inspired by a pattern in our archives. Then why not come and see our vintage exhibition?

A few years ago, we asked you to send in *Woman's Weekly* patterns and fabrics from the past. Working closely with dressmakers and an archivist, we have put together a capsule exhibition that feels like a walk down memory lane.

Our exhibition will be on display at The Creative Craft Shows run by ICHF from 19 March for the remainder of the year. It's a perfect day out for crafters who love knitting, cross-stitch, paper crafting, jewellery making, dressmaking and stitching enthusiasts, offering all the latest supplies.

❖ **To claim your £4 discount to the Creative Craft Shows, visit ichfevents.co.uk or call 01425 277988 and use the code EV262 at the checkout. The code is valid until midnight on the Monday before the show.**

Craft



MAKING THE SADDLE AND BRIDLE

1 With right sides facing up, pin and tack patterned ribbon to the long edges of the saddle with 1cm of ribbon extending beyond the short edges of the saddle. Turn the ends of the ribbon to the underside of the saddle and tack in place. Stitch 3mm inside the long edges of the ribbon.

2 Pin and tack lace trim to the saddle with the scalloped edge level with the

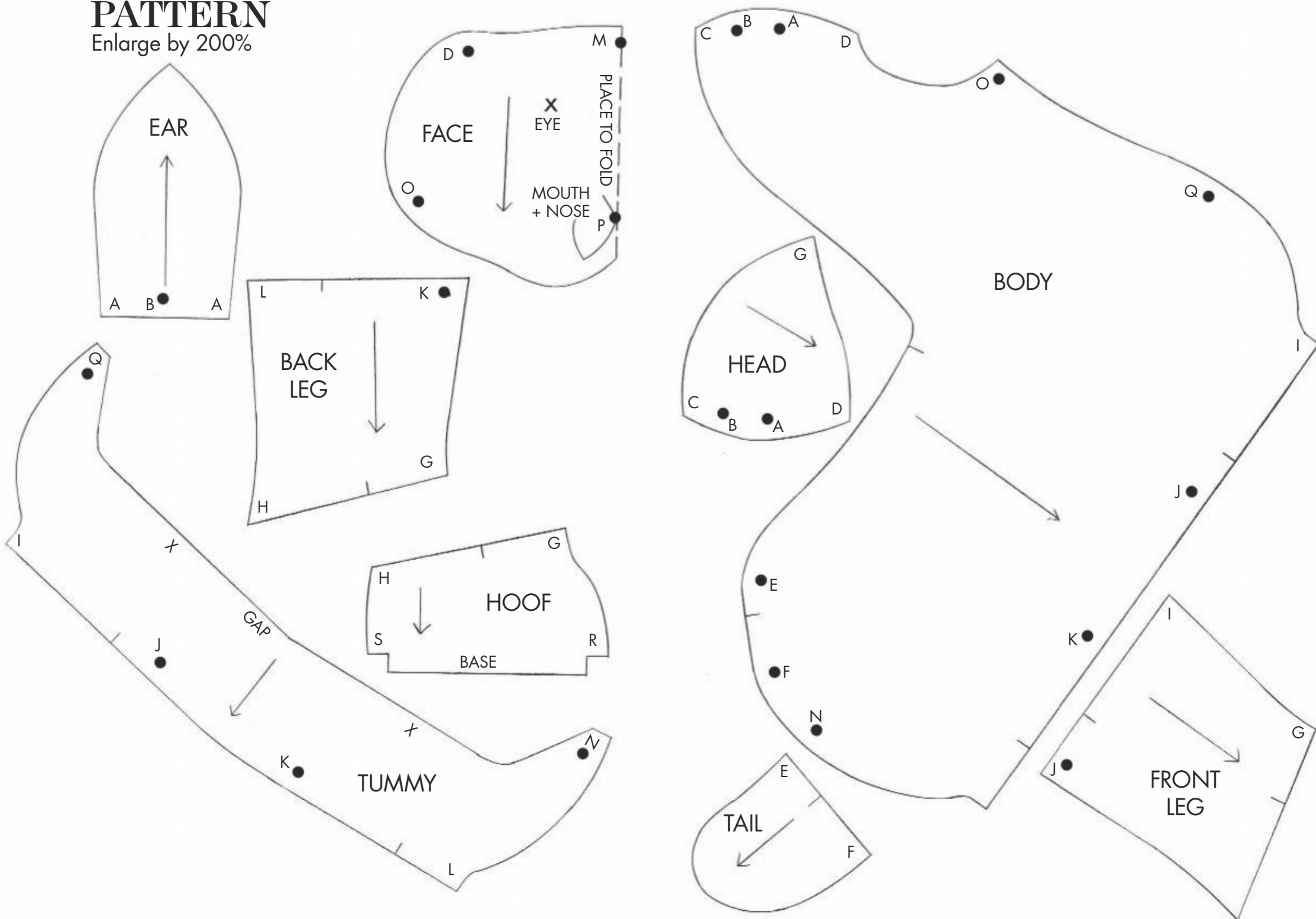
short edges of the saddle and 1cm of lace extending beyond the long edges of the saddle. Turn the lace ends to the underside of the saddle and tack in place. Stitch close to the long straight edge of the lace. Sew a tassel to each corner of the saddle.

3 Pin the saddle over the llama's body. Sew the saddle securely to the body at the corners. To make a chest strap, pin one end of lace trim under the front of the saddle 5cm above the short edge. Take the lace trim around the llama's chest and pin it under the other side of the saddle 5cm above the short edge. Cut off the excess lace. Sew the lace ends under the saddle, sew a tassel on top. Sew a pair of tassels to the centre of the chest strap.

4 Using the photos as a guide, pin lace trim around the nose, overlapping the ends on one side of the head, cut off the excess. Pin lace trim around the back of the neck as a bridle, pinning the ends to the nose band, cut off the excess. Sew securely to the llama at the intersections. Sew a tassel at the intersections.

PATTERN

Enlarge by 200%



Tips,
tricks
& buys

GARDEN notes

Helping birds, and spring plants

PRETTY BELLS

The lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) is a great plant for a shady corner. In the right spot, it forms a carpet of lush foliage with strongly scented, delicate white flower bells in May. Buy bare-rooted plants now to grow in pots, ready for planting out when it's warmer. Remember to soak the roots for 30 minutes, then plant with the tip just above the surface.



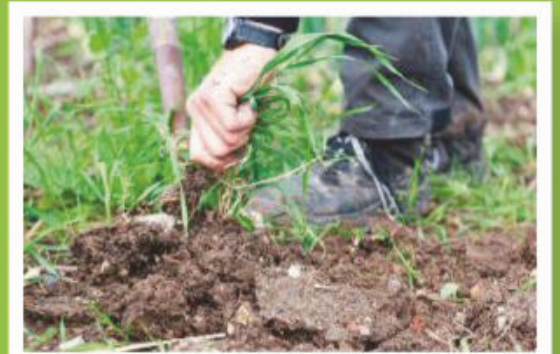
Winter calories

Help garden birds survive winter by making them a high-calorie fat ball. In a bowl, mix up bird seed (include maize, sunflower seeds and peanut granules) with softened lard or suet. Take a pine cone and squish the mix under the scales; or spread the mix over knotted string. Tie to a branch and enjoy watching the feasting birds.

Things to do THIS WEEK

PLANT BULBS 'IN THE GREEN'

Woodland-loving plants, including winter aconite (above), snowdrops and bluebells, grow better when planted in active growth, just after flowering.



WINKLE OUT WEEDS

If it's mild, spend 10 minutes pulling out weeds. Keeping on top of them now means you'll be one step ahead when the garden romps into growth.

INDOOR SCENT

Cut a few stems of winter-flowering shrubs, such as honeysuckle and daphne, pop them in a vase and wait for their scent to fill the room.



3 of the best... grape hyacinths



FOR POTS

'Golden Fragrance' has yellow flowers with unusual blue-grey tips – and smells of bananas!



FOR IMPACT

Two-tone *Muscari latifolium* looks stunning planted en masse, or contrasted with golden daffodils.



FOR POLLINATORS

The Armenian grape hyacinth spreads quickly and is beloved by pollinators.

Have you ever
singed your
pachyderm?
No?

Well, I have. And let me tell you, it's not pleasant.

It was a while back, in Creative Cakes – an evening class at the local school.

'Think outside the box,' Margery Watson, the tutor, had trilled, as she'd announced our assignment for the following week. 'I want fabulous creatures... lots of imagination.'

We were to produce the aforementioned fabulous creatures from sponge cake and buttercream. And I'm afraid my imagination hadn't stretched too far. So, when I turned up the next week and saw exactly what everyone else had come up with, my heart had sunk.

Jean Arkwright next to me was going to conjure up a dragon, all glittery wings, gleaming scales and flaming at the mouth.

'What are you doing?' she asked as we got stuck in.

'A hippo,' I mumbled, flushing slightly when I caught sight of Jean raising her eyebrows.

Well, I thought it was a good idea at the time. And to me a hippo is pretty fabulous... You don't get many padding around on our high street anyway!

Also, my grandchildren love to play the Hungry Hippo game. So I thought they'd like to tuck into a cake version. Clever Nana.

Only, halfway through the class, as I was washing my bowl...

'Dina! Your hippo's burning!' came a shriek from across the room.

It certainly wasn't a sentence I thought I'd ever hear in my lifetime.

Turning around, I saw that Jean had flung open the oven door and was vigorously wafting a tea towel in the general direction of my cremated creation.

Pulling on oven gloves, I ran to the rescue...

Too late. My hippo was toast. Not so clever Nana.

'You can still salvage it,' Jean said, attempting to sound encouraging, but without much conviction.

'I suppose so,' I grunted. 'All my friends who eat charcoal will love it...'

Jean laughed.

Nevertheless, I'd persevered, hoping I'd be able to hide my sins.

But it was useless. Smearing on grey buttercream 'skin' and adding beady fondant eyes only produced something that looked like it had crept out of an

actual swamp.

And then, to add to my misery, Margery was gliding towards

me, doing her best Mary Berry impression.

'Wonderful, Kate, such a magical mermaid.'

'A unicorn, Sophie! So clever.'

'Ah, Dina... a.?' She looked nervous. 'Pig?' 'Hippo!' I glared.

Margery's fixed smile wavered a little.

'Keep at it,' she encouraged, before flitting off to admire Jean's perfect dragon.

I stared down at my creation and it gazed up at me.

I'll never forget the poor creature's bewildered face as it thudded into the bin.

And that, for me, was the end of Creative Cakes. Demoralised, I just couldn't go back the following week for French Fancies.

I suppose at this point, I should tell you a little bit about myself.



In a class OF MY OWN

Dina had tried lots of classes, trying to get back out there, yet she was no closer to finding her niche

**Truth be told, I was
scared. I hadn't
a clue how to 'get
back out there'**

I'm 68, with two sons, Andy and Joe, and four adorable grandchildren.

Three years ago, I lost my husband, Sean. I still miss him terribly.

But, as they say, life goes on.

My boys have been simply wonderful, but, to be honest, it hasn't been easy.

Most of my adult life has been about raising my family. Sean had a good job, so I stayed home and was, to coin that rather old-fashioned word, a housewife. I did the weekly shop, cleaned, ferried the kids to school and back, and every evening, Sean would find a hot meal and a glass of wine waiting for him.

And do you know what? I loved it. I always felt valued. I had a role.

Even when the boys had both gone off to uni, I didn't set aside much 'me' time. I carried on cleaning, tidying the garden...

My lovely Sean had encouraged me to branch out a bit, take up a hobby. But I'd simply cuddle up beside him on the sofa and tell him I was just fine as I was, thank you very much.

And I was fine. Really, I was.

But then I lost Sean and everything changed. Sitting alone in the house every evening, I'd stare at the TV and think... Dina, you're well and truly up the creek with no sign of a paddle.

And then my boys began to worry about me being on my own all the time.

'You need to get out there, Mum, meet people,' they would tell me.

I'd smile and say, 'All in good time, I'm not sure I'm ready yet.'

But, truth be told, I was scared. I hadn't a clue how to 'get back out there'. How to be... well, just me.

Until the day Andy had handed me the flyer for Creative Cakes...

'Well, I could give it a try,' I'd said. Though I wasn't convinced. I enjoyed cooking, but my skills were pretty basic. And cakes had never really been my thing. My blood still ran cold when I remembered the 'light sponge' I'd once made as a treat for Sean. I'd been in such a hurry, I'd thrown in salt instead of baking powder. It looked like a shoe sole, yet my poor hubby still tried to cut a slice. I had to stop him. I couldn't see him suffer for my foolish mistake.

But looking at Andy's face as he held out the flyer, I thought I'd make the effort to go along, if only for his sake.

And that's how I came to incinerate a hippo. How many people can lay claim to that?

But the experience hadn't been all bad. I'd enjoyed meeting the others in the class, so I'd drawn a line under cakes and decided to try something else.

Ballroom dancing for beginners.

What on earth was I thinking? I don't have a rhythmic bone in my body! Something Sean had soon found out when we'd first met.

It was at a disco (they'd call it a nightclub these days). I was shuffling from side to side in the corner, clutching a warm cider, when Sean had come bopping up and asked me to dance. My cheeks still burn to this day when I remember standing there, swaying like a tree in the wind, while Sean gyrated around me.

It didn't put him off though, bless him. We got married the following year.

But all through our marriage, my lack of ability on the dance floor had bugged me. So when I saw the ad for ballroom dancing in the church hall, I thought... Dina, get yourself 'out there' and give it a go; perhaps rhythm is something you can learn.

I also liked the idea of 'pairing up' with someone. Not that I was looking for romance, but I thought it might be nice to form a closer

connection to someone. Make a friend, someone to walk the dog with, perhaps the

odd meal out... someone to talk to who wasn't a member of my family.

And, if I'm totally honest, I did fantasise about a dance partner who might be easy on the eye. I saw myself tripping the light fantastic with maybe a Monty Don or a George Clooney.

But *not* Patsy Wagstaff from the Golden Cod fish and chip shop in the precinct!

Because that's who I was partnered with on my first visit to the class.

Not that there's anything wrong with Patsy. She's a lovely lady, who does a mean mushy pea. It's just, she wasn't quite what I had in mind.

And it didn't help that her sense of rhythm was even less developed than mine.

If you think two left feet are bad, you want to see what four can do!

The first lesson was the Viennese waltz.

Good, I thought, something nice and slow. Ease myself in gently.

Patsy and I faced each other, bust to bust, so – both being fuller-figured ladies – she seemed quite far away.

I was to lead... and it was a disaster from the outset.

Right foot forward for me, left foot backwards for Patsy. Then one, two, three... two, three... three, two... oh dear... one... three... sorry, Patsy... ouch... three?... no... two...

Ploughing through the other couples, our juggernaut came to a halt when I drove Patsy straight into a trestle table laid out with light refreshments for the break.

The whole lot came crashing down. I've never been so mortified. Both Patsy and I were close to tears, scooping up chicken and chive vol-au-vents.

Neither of us stayed for the Argentine tango. I shudder to think what kind of a pickle that would have got us into. And neither of us went back the following week. Though Patsy and I did have a laugh about it when I popped into the Golden Cod for a battered sausage.

But now, as I sit here, I really think it could be third time lucky when it comes to evening classes. I may actually have found my niche... Art.

I'm enjoying it tremendously. There's a great mix of people and we all head out for a drink in the local afterwards.

But I mustn't sit here nattering. The class is about to start, and people are taking their places behind their easels. I better look lively.

Though it's quite chilly in here, so I'm not too keen to slip off my robe.

Never mind, as the life model, I might be naked, but at least I get to sit near the heater!

THE END

Andrew Shaw, 2020

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from Woman's Weekly



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Need for TWEED

These super simple textured cushions are the perfect cold-weather project

Difficulty
level



MEASUREMENTS

Cushion: 46cm/18in square to fit a 45cm cushion pad.

MATERIALS

Bobble-and-rib cushion: 3 x 100g (138m) balls of King Cole Chunky Tweed (72% acrylic, 25% wool, 3% viscose) in Mustard (Benbecula 1093)*.

Basket-weave cushion: 3 x 100g (138m) balls of King Cole Chunky Tweed (72%

acrylic, 25% wool, 3% viscose) in Blue (Orkney 1076)*.

For each project: Pair of 5.5mm (No.5) knitting needles; 45cm square cushion pad; 7 buttons; removable stitch markers or contrast thread. Yarn is available from theknittingnetwork.co.uk.

TENSION

15 stitches and 17.5 rows, to

10x10cm, over bobble-and-rib pattern; 14 stitches and 25 rows, to 10x10cm, over basket-weave pattern, using 5.5mm needles.

ABBREVIATIONS

St(s), stitch(es); **k**, knit; **p**, purl; **tog**, together (decrease, by working as many sts together as stated); **mb**, make bobble thus: work [k1, p1, k1, p1] all into next st, turn, p4, turn,

k4, turn, [p2tog] twice, turn, k2tog; **yrn**, yarn round needle (to make 1 st); **yf**, yarn forward (to make 1 st).

NOTE

Yarn amounts are based on average requirements and are therefore approximate. Instructions in square brackets are worked as stated after 2nd bracket.

Knitting



Basket-weave cushion

LEFT FRONT

With 5.5mm needles and Blue, cast on 65 sts.

1st row: P5, [k5, p5] to end.

2nd row: K5, [p5, k5] to end.

3rd row: As 1st row.

4th row: P.

5th row: K5, [p5, k5] to end.

6th row: P5, [k5, p5] to end.

7th row: As 5th row.

8th row: P.

These 8 rows form pattern.

Pattern another 52 rows.

For the fold edge, mark each end of last row with removable stitch markers or contrast thread.

BACK

Pattern another 115 rows.

For the fold edge, mark each end of last row with removable stitch markers or contrast thread.

RIGHT FRONT

Pattern another 57 rows.

Next row: Buttonhole row:

Pattern 2, [yf, k2tog, pattern 8] 6 times, yf, k2tog, pattern 1.

Pattern another 6 rows.

Cast off in pattern.

TO MAKE UP

Fold back pieces at markers, lapping right front over left

front by 12 rows and sew overlapped edges on outside. Join top and lower edge seams. Sew on buttons to match buttonholes. Insert cushion pad and button up to close.



Bobble-and-rib cushion

LOWER BACK

With 5.5mm needles and Mustard, cast on 69 sts.

1st rib row: K5, [p5, k4] to last 10 sts, p5, k5.

2nd rib row: P5, [k5, p4] to last 10 sts, k5, p5.

Last two rows form rib. Rib another 32 rows.

For the fold edge, mark each end of last row with removable stitch markers or contrast thread.

FRONT

1st row: K5, [p5, k4] to last 10 sts, p5, k5.

2nd row: P5, [k5, p4] to last 10 sts, k5, p5.

3rd and 4th rows: As 1st and 2nd rows.

5th row: K5, [p2, mb, p2, k4] to last 10 sts, p2, mb, p2, k5.

6th row: As 2nd row.

7th to 12th rows: Repeat 1st and 2nd rows, 3 times.

Last 12 rows form rib pattern

with bobbles. Repeat 1st to 12th rows, 5 times more, then repeat 1st to 8th rows only.

UPPER BACK

1st rib row: K5, [p5, k4] to last 10 sts, p5, k5.

2nd rib row: P5, [k5, p4] to last 10 sts, k5, p5.

Last two rows form rib. Rib another 50 rows.

Next row: Buttonhole row: Rib 7, [yrn, p2tog, rib 7] 6 times, yrn, p2tog, rib 6.

Starting with 2nd rib row, rib another 5 rows.

Cast off in rib.

TO MAKE UP

Fold the back pieces at the markers, lapping the upper back over the lower back by 12 rows and sew the overlapped edges on the outside. Join side seams. Sew on buttons to match buttonholes. Insert cushion pad and button up to close.



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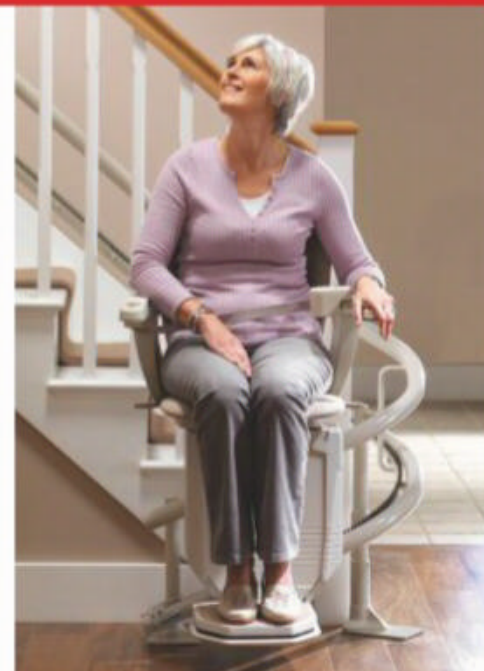
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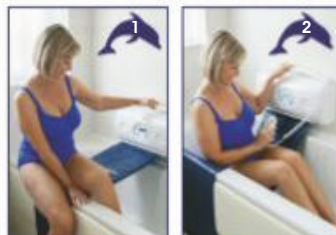


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RESIDENT Ghosts

Hermione clearly knew more than she let on, but how she came by their secrets was still a mystery

THE STORY SO FAR: Caroline Watson has hired out the dilapidated Old Rectory to reality show *Resident Ghosts* in an effort to raise money for renovations. On the night filming is due to start, Caroline takes a call telling her it has been cancelled due to the severe storm that is raging outside. The show's medium, Hermione Dove, along with the presenter, Emmanuel Hunter, and his assistant, Izzy Tabb, arrive regardless, not knowing filming has been called off. Celebrity guest Will Vincent crashes his motorbike and Caroline's friend Jessica finds him and brings him back to safety. That evening, the power goes off and Hermione gives Caroline an unsettling reading. Later, everyone is woken by a blood-curdling scream...

Woman's
Weekly
**SERIAL
PART
THREE**

Caroline looked at the strangers on her landing and shivered. The candles they carried threw eerie shadows across their faces, but she pushed her unsettling thoughts away.

'Someone should check on Hermione,' she said. 'What if it was her screaming?'

Will nodded. 'I'll do it.'

He straightened his shoulders and knocked lightly on the medium's door.

'Hermione? Everything OK?'

'Did you hear that?'

Caroline said. 'Sounded like whimpering. Perhaps we should go in.'

As Will began to open the door slowly, Emmanuel sucked in his breath.

'I wouldn't do that if I were you,' he said.

'Good job you're not me, then,' Will said.

As they peered into the darkness, Caroline could make out a shape sitting hunched on the bed and it was only as they all squeezed

into the room with their candles that Hermione's stricken face was illuminated.

'Something touched me,' she wailed.

'What? You think it might have been a ghost?'

Emmanuel asked mockingly.

'Stop it,' Izzy said. 'Can't you see she's terrified?'

'Out, out, all of you,' Hermione cried, her hands flying to her face as vanity overcame fear.

'Not you, Caroline.'

As everyone else withdrew, Caroline lit the candles beside the bed.

'I want you to check the room,' Hermione insisted. 'Are there any secret doorways?'

'It's only an old rectory,' Caroline said, looking in the wardrobes and behind curtains. The windows were still locked.

Hermione looked shaken

and Caroline felt a stab of sympathy. She was still cross with Hermione for laying her bare, but she couldn't hold it against the woman. It was what she did, after all.

'Would you like me to make you a hot chocolate?'

'That's going to make it all better, is it?' she snapped. 'Just leave me alone. I'll wedge something against the door.'

Caroline picked up one of the candles. 'As you wish.'

'There is something very wrong in this house.'

**The
atmosphere
in the house
deteriorated
rapidly**

Caroline groaned when she woke the next morning to discover it was still hammering down with rain.

Downstairs, she found batteries for the radio and tuned in to a local station. 'The Met Office says this is the worst storm to hit the area in a decade. Tens of thousands are still without power, and police advise

people to stay at home.'

She switched it off. At least they were all safe.

Making breakfast for everyone would be good practice for when she eventually opened her B&B.

As she reached for a frying pan, something on the table caught her eye. Her heart jumped when she saw a photo of herself as a child clipped to a sheet of paper.

More pages detailed her life story. Everything was there: the schools she attended, the deaths of her parents, the places she'd worked. The notes covered her marriage, the accident and the subsequent court cases. They went all the way to her buying the Old Rectory.

Someone had scribbled





what appeared to be instructions to Hermione in the margins. 'Show sympathy. Get emotional.'

More sheets had photos of Will and details of his life.

'Be tearful.' The words were written in red and underlined. 'Give him a hug.'

'She's a fake,' Caroline whispered. Presumably they were planning to use all this in the show. She dropped the papers back on the table as if they were dirty. How low!

And poor Will. Wasn't it bad enough that his wife had left him for his partner and best friend without having it used for entertainment?

As footsteps came down the stairs, she gathered up the papers and hid them away. No need for Will to see this.

'Still no power?' Hermione said, flicking the light switch.

'Not as yet,' Caroline said. 'Would you like breakfast?'

'Nothing much for me,' Hermione said. 'I'm not a big eater. Just a slice of toast and some black coffee.'

By the time everyone else arrived, Caroline had breakfast well underway.

'How are you this morning, darling?' Keith, the producer, asked. 'After your terrible fright in the night.'

'Fragile, Keith,' Hermione said. 'As you'd expect after an intruder had been in my room.'

'Intruder!' came a snort.

'Emmanuel,' Keith warned, and the presenter shrugged.

'It was very unsettling,' she said. 'It must have been

someone here. One of you!'

'Spare us,' Emmanuel said.

'Is there coffee, Caroline?'

Jessica held up a jar of instant coffee and Caroline smiled gratefully at her friend. If Jessica hadn't broken up with her boyfriend, Ed, she'd have been on her own here with these strangers.

'Morning, everyone,' Will said as he came in.

'Anything I can do to help, Caroline?'

'It's all done,' Caroline said. Will was one stranger she didn't mind. 'Please sit down.'

She set out serving dishes and said, 'I'll make your toast now, Hermione.'

'Don't worry. I'll have some of this. Any mushrooms? No? Oh, well, this will have to do.'

'It looks great, Caroline, thank you so much,' Keith said. 'It's very good of you.'

Caroline barely heard. She watched horrified as Hermione piled her plate high.

'This is all the eggs and bacon I have,' she said.

Hermione shrugged.

Caroline walked to the drawer where she'd hidden the notes. It might not be a revelation to Keith and Emmanuel, but she could expose Hermione for the fraud she was to Will.

Then she stopped. If she made a fuss, they might cancel filming at the rectory altogether and she'd lose the fee. She looked at Will and wondered if it was fair not to tell him. He seemed so nice.

'I'll have toast now, Caroline,' Hermione called out as she pushed her plate away, the food half eaten.

'I'll make it,' Jessica said.

'Sit down, Caroline. You haven't stopped since you got up. You're not here to wait on everyone.' She added a pointed look at Hermione.

'I'll have more coffee, thanks,' Hermione handed her cup to Jessica, who took it with a smile. 'And then whoever was in my room last night can return my property.'

Everyone fell silent.

'You were robbed?' Keith said at last.

'My notes,' Hermione said. 'I demand that they are returned to me immediately.'

Caroline glanced at the drawer. The notes would stay where they were for now.



The atmosphere in the house deteriorated rapidly after that. Will wished he'd never agreed to appear on *Resident Ghosts* now he'd seen what Hermione was really like. On TV she always came across as sympathetic and sincere.

In the kitchen, Caroline and Jessica were washing up

while Keith sat at the table making notes on a pad.

Will sat down opposite.

'I want to

talk to you about cancelling my appearance on *Resident Ghosts*.'

'What?' Keith said. 'You can't just cancel. You signed a contract, remember?'

'I don't remember agreeing to have my private life raked over,' Will replied.

'Hermione can't help it,' Keith said. 'She has a gift.'

Will lowered his voice. 'Do your worst, Keith. I'm going back to being a vet. Animals are far nicer to work with.'

'If it's because of her...'

Continued overleaf

The afternoon dragged in an endless stream of bickering and accusations

'It isn't,' he said. 'I feel ready to start over and set up my own practice again.'

'Vet reality show,' Keith shouted with a triumphant smile. 'Very popular. You have the looks. We could follow your progress. At least say you'll think about it.'

Will shook his head.



'If only I could go for a walk,' Hermione sighed halfway through the afternoon. 'I'm sure it would help clear my head. This house is so oppressive and I'm so bored.'

'No-one's stopping you,' Emmanuel said. 'The door is that way.'

'Let's play cards,' Caroline said quickly.

'Count me out,' Emmanuel said. 'I'm getting another jumper. This place is freezing.'

Caroline had just found the cards when Emmanuel came back, shouting in outrage.

'What's happened now?' she whispered.

'Goodness knows,' Jessica said as he came bursting into the kitchen.

'I don't know who did it, but I want them back.' He looked round at each of them, his eyes lingering on Caroline. 'Right now!'

'Have you been robbed, too?' Hermione inquired. She looked almost pleased.

'Someone has taken my medication,' he said. 'How am I supposed to sleep?'

'Oh, stop whining,' Hermione said. 'Your silly tablets will turn up. You probably forgot where you put them.'

'I'll help you look for them,' Izzy said, rising to her feet.

'Thank you, Izzy,' he said. 'At least someone cares.'

'Only because you pay her,' Hermione said waspishly, then she turned to Caroline, who was dealing the cards. 'Your hands are

shaking. I expect you're thinking of your husband and the way he died.'

'Actually, I try not to.'

'He says...'

'No, I don't want to hear it.'

She was aware of Keith watching her. She mustn't blow this.

'Save it for the show,' she said. 'It'll have more impact.'

She felt a touch on her arm and turned to see Jessica smiling at her. It meant the world to have her there.

Caroline felt bad about not telling her the truth about how David died. She should have trusted her instead of leaving her to find out from Hermione of all people.

'As you wish,' Hermione said. 'I want to have a bath later. Is there hot water?'

'I'm afraid not,' Caroline said. 'I can heat water in saucepans on the Aga and take them upstairs, but there won't be enough for a bath.'

Hermione huffed. 'This gets better and better.'

Caroline bit back a retort. Maybe if Hermione hadn't filled the bath yesterday, there'd be hot water left in the tank!



The rest of the afternoon dragged on in a stream of bickering and accusations.

'I'll get more logs in before dark,' Will said.

'We have enough to last until tomorrow,' Caroline said.

'I know.'

He went to the back door, but the coat had gone.

'OK,' he said. 'Who took the coat? I hung it right here this morning, now it's gone.'

They all began to talk at once, outlining their movements during the day.



'You'd know if one of us had been out,' Izzy said.

'Someone would have had wet feet.'

Will sighed. 'I don't want to alarm anyone, but it might be best if you lock yourselves in your rooms tonight.'

'No locks,' Hermione said. 'You'll have to put something up against the door like I did last night. What do you think is happening, Will?'

'I really don't know,' he said. 'But I think we'd be wise to take precautions.'

'Why don't you try asking the spirits what's going on?' Keith said, sounding serious.

'I don't think so,' Hermione said. 'What if they're out to get me?'

'Now you're being silly, darling,' Keith said. 'Why would the spirits want to hurt you? You're a bridge between

this life and the next.'

Emmanuel laughed. 'You don't really believe in all that, do you? Why don't you tell him, Hermione?'

'Tell him what?' she said.

'About the researcher who finds out all about locations and guests.'

'What?' Keith paled. 'At your audition you mentioned my father. You were so convincing. Are you now saying it was a lie?'

Hermione shrugged. 'I thought you knew.'

'Of course I didn't know,' Keith blazed. 'I'd never deceive our viewers.'

He looked at Caroline and Jessica.

'We won't say anything,' Caroline said.

'You don't have to be so angry,' Hermione said sulkily. 'Anyway, it seems there is something in it after all and now I'm being punished. Have pity!'

'And you went along with this, Emmanuel?' Keith said.

'Don't take it out on me,' he said. 'I'm just the presenter.'

'Well, this is it, then, isn't it?' Keith said. 'You're through, Hermione.'

'I have a contract,' Hermione pointed out.

'And you've breached it, darling,' Keith snapped.

'Is the radio still working?' Will asked. 'Perhaps we can find a play or something.'

Caroline hurried to the kitchen to fetch it, but the radio had gone. Maybe there really was something in the Old Rectory, some sort of presence they'd disturbed with all this nonsense. Or, more likely, someone was playing tricks. But who?



In the middle of the night, Caroline jerked awake. Something was tapping on the bedroom window. *It was impossible – they were on the first floor.* Yet there it was, all the same. Tap, tap, tap.

She lit a candle and crept across to the window, taking a steadying breath before flinging the curtain open.

She half expected to see a ghostly face staring in at her, but all she saw was her own reflection looking back.

She blew out the candle. She had the strongest feeling that someone – or something – was watching her.

CONTINUES NEXT WEEK

Teresa Ashby, 2020

**She was aware
of Keith watching
her. She mustn't
blow this**



Your stars

For 29 Jan – 4 Feb with Barbara Goldsmith
yourastrologysigns.com

ARIES 21 Mar – 20 Apr

You can accomplish a great deal this week if you put your mind to it. Set yourself clear goals and you'll most likely achieve them all.

TAURUS 21 Apr – 21 May

It will be important to express your emotions this week. Music, dance or any kind of movement will help.

GEMINI 22 May – 21 Jun

This is a wonderful time for going on a trip or planning a holiday. You may decide to learn a new language.

CANCER 22 Jun – 23 Jul

Relationships are in the spotlight for you this week. An existing connection can blossom and you may meet someone new.

LEO 24 Jul – 23 Aug

You may receive some good news about a job situation. It could be a promotion, a raise or a bonus.

VIRGO 24 Aug – 23 Sep

Your home situation may need restructuring. Perhaps you need to declutter, paint, renovate or simply uplift your surroundings.

LIBRA 24 Sep – 23 Oct

This is a very creative time for you. Make it your business to do at least one thing you enjoy every day.

SCORPIO 24 Oct – 22 Nov

What would you like to learn, to teach, to share? This is a good week for finding powerful information that could transform your life.

SAGITTARIUS 23 Nov – 21 Dec

A chance encounter could lead to a deep connection. Stay open to everyone you meet, no matter what they look like on the outside.

CAPRICORN 22 Dec – 20 Jan

You're going through a huge shift. Give yourself permission to have quiet time in order to integrate these significant changes.

AQUARIUS 21 Jan – 19 Feb

This week is all about you! What makes your heart sing? Give yourself whatever your heart desires. You deserve it!

PISCES 20 Feb – 20 Mar

This is a week when quiet reflection will be valuable. You'll probably be busy, so remember to pace yourself.

ANSWERS TO 21 JANUARY PUZZLES

JUMBO PUZZLE ACROSS: 1 Banned 5 Put on 8 Formally 14 Carat 15 Scrounger 16 Article 17 Omit 18 Jersey 19 Tot up 20 Saucy 22 Needless 23 Blinds 25 Arched 28 Assassin 30 Brazen 31 Caster 35 Meeting 37 Place 39 Owls 40 Twin 41 East 42 City 43 Comet 45 Scrooge 48 Sunbed 49 Should 51 Remember 55 Jordan 57 Ticked 58 Disorder 62 Sheer 63 Naomi 64 Berate 65 Kerb 67 At a loss 68 Sweetcorn 69 Cheer 70 Remnants 71 Steer 72 Divide
DOWN: 2 Airtime 3 Note 4 Dispenses 5 Phrase 6 Truly 7 Nightingale 8 Foretaste 9 Reappear 10 Antisocial 11 Lecture 12 Account 13 Beryl 21 Alkali 24 Libra 26 Snappy 27 Cringed 29 Stepson 32 Tow-rope 33 Immerse 34 Plus 36 Grit 38 Coo 39 Outcry 43 Crunchiness 44 Midge 46 Romcom 47 Tenderloin 50 Hothouses 52 Moistened 53 In unison 54 Bribery 56 Operate 59 Deep end 60 Usual 61 Armour 64 Bathe 66 CCTV **Answer:** BATTERSEA

CROSSWORD ACROSS: 1 Chateau 5 Sceptic 10 Eton 11 On approval 12 Heighten 13 Viewer 14 Edit 15 Contribute 17 Admittance 19 Brio 20 Staple 22 Estimate 24 Espadrille 25 Sild 26 Anthill 27 Minding **DOWN:** 2 Hot-headed 3 Tonight 4 Aloft 6 Cape Verde 7 Proverb 8 Image 9 Darning needle 15 Cathedral 16 Triathlon 18 Impeach 19 Bemused 21 Tyson 23 Trevi **Answer:** CAMDEN

LINKWORDS MODERN, HAMMER, BITTER, LIGHTS, ORANGE, FLIGHT, POSTER, SALMON, GINGER, DIVING **Answer:** PADDINGTON

WORDWISE 1 Abet, albeit, bait, Balti, beat, beet, belt, beta, betel, bite, bleat, celibate, cete, cite, cleat, eclat, elate, elect, elite, exact, exalt, excite, exeat, exit, late, latex, leat, table, tail, talc, tale, taxi, teal, telex, tile **Answer:** EXCITABLE

In your NEXT ISSUE

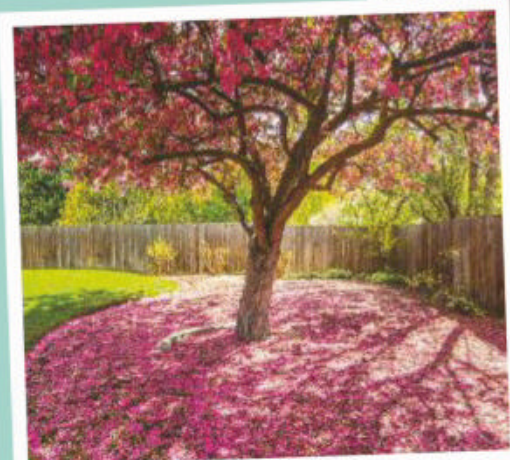
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PUZZLE TIME

LINKWORDS

Fit 10 words into the grid so that each links with the end of the word on its left and the beginning of the one on the right. Then unscramble the letters in the shaded squares to make a word. Clue: **Russian composer**

SURE							SAID
SWEET							SALAD
STERLING							TONGUE
SEA							TOWN
NAIL							OFF
PATCH							HANDKERCHIEF
REGISTRY							POLITICS
BURN							BAND
COFFEE							WATER
SPLIT							WIND

Wordwise

You have 15 minutes to find as many words as possible using the letters in the grid. Each word must contain four or more letters, one of which must be the central square. No proper nouns, plurals or foreign words are allowed. There is one nine-letter word in the grid, for which the clue is: **Ambulance worker**

R A P
A M E
I C D

Average = 30 More than 40 = well done

Crossword

Try the easy or cryptic clues and then rearrange the letters in the shaded squares for the answer. Clue: **Maybe Mr A to Z of music**

Easy clues

ACROSS

- 8 Avoids (6)
- 9 Badges of office (8)
- 11 Russian 'guitar' (9)
- 12 African animal (5)
- 13 Red precious stones (7)
- 15 Castle cell (7)
- 17 Slang term for toddlers (7)
- 18 Ask humbly (7)
- 20 Agitate (5,2)
- 23 Peculiarity (7)
- 25 France's longest river (5)
- 27 Waterproof coating (9)
- 29 Great Plains state (8)
- 30 Fidel ____, former Cuban leader (6)

DOWN

- 1 Beverage sachet (6)
- 2 Amphibian with a booming call (8)

- 3 Cascaded (4)
- 4 Embedded (6)
- 5 Luxury London hotel (4)
- 6 Not competent (6)
- 7 City in Georgia, USA (8)
- 10 Fails to hit (6)
- 14 Delete (5)
- 16 Pried, investigated (5)
- 17 Cattle-thieving (8)
- 18 Golden-haired (6)
- 19 Components (8)
- 21 Hands on hips (6)
- 22 Bold, dauntless (6)
- 24 Bar in a pub (6)
- 26 Academic test (4)
- 28 Street (4)

Cryptic clues

ACROSS

- 8 Dodges – hoodwinks, but not at first (6)
- 9 Italy gains in strange badges (8)
- 11 Russian dog on Welsh lake with instrument (9)
- 12 In the haze Bradley

could see the animal (5)

13 Scattered strange stones (7)

15 Where low-down criminals are held? (7)

17 US toddlers show floor cover before celeb's return (7)

18 Humbly ask for British crumbly cheese (7)

20 Drastic move putting fish in drink! (5,2)

23 Not even the head displays eccentricity (7)

25 Learning about one European river (5)

27 Below the surface, left car coat (9)

29 A banker's parlous state (8)

30 Actors line cut by dictator (6)

DOWN

1 Roughly beat silver

drink-making device (6)

2 Animal finds centre of target, for good (8)

3 Stumbled on Cumbrian hill (4)

4 Embedded level inside trendy top (6)

5 Sounds like court orders for luxury hotel (4)

6 Powerless, locked in sauna, bleeding (6)

7 Plain German boy backing a vehicle inside (8)

10 Avoids young women (6)

14 Some rubber, as employed to do this! (5)

16 Investigated knobbly

nodes (5)

17 Making a soft crackling sound is a crime (8)

18 Fair-haired woman left in the clutches of 007 at end of *GoldenEye* (6)

19 Essential parts for people in steel construction (8)

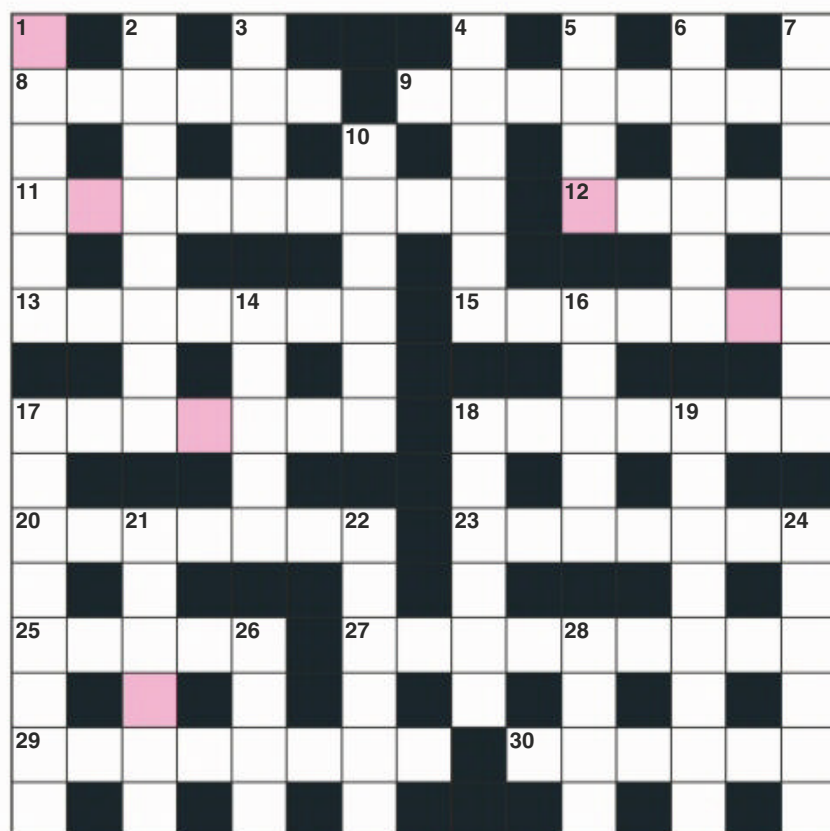
21 A girl has nasty smell with hands on hips (6)

22 Soft, then fortunate to be courageous (6)

24 Promptly gripped aluminium bar (6)

26 Test after midday? (4)

28 For TV school, this way after Waterloo (4)



Just
for
fun!

Jumbo PUZZLE

Read down the letters in the shaded squares to spell out a composer.

ACROSS

- 4 Put your nose in (3)
8 Metal tea-making vessel (3)
13 Running or jumping sportsman (7)
14 Treat tyrannically (7)
15 Examination at the optician's (3,4)
16 Garage slope (4)
17 Hit repeatedly (6)
18 Chirp of a young bird (5)
19 Woman's garment (5)
21 Disaster, flop (7)
22 Money matters (7)
24 Rice dish (7)
26 In a haphazard way (6)
28 Crusty white loaf (7)
30 Town's outer residential areas (8)
35 Glossy fabric for boots and macs (init) (3)
36 Variety of chocolate cake (7)
38 Small fragment of bread (5)
39 Funny in a clever way (5)
40 Strongly against (4)
41 Sports gambling game (8,5)
43 Smart ____, know-all (4)
47 Musical term for speed and rhythm (5)
48 Huge lifting machine (5)
49 Make-believe (7)
50 Domestic egg-laying bird (3)
51 Clumsy incompetent workers (8)
52 First month of the year (7)
54 Norway lobster fried in breadcrumbs (6)
57 Imaginary line that circles the Earth (7)
60 As a substitute (7)
62 Musician or actor (7)

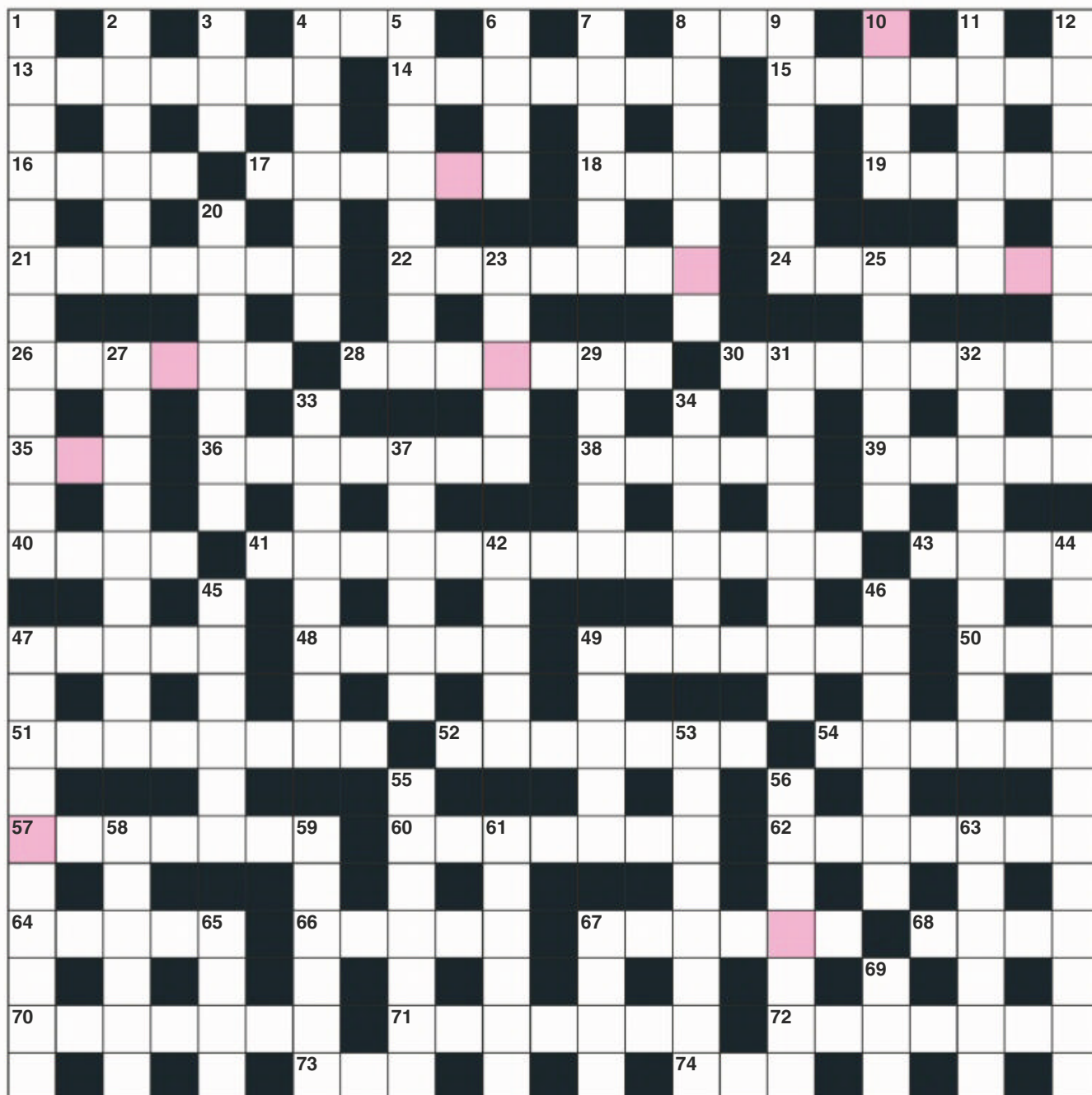
- 64 Colourful garden plant with tall spikes of flowers (5)
66 Large fleshy fruit (5)
67 Display ostentatiously (6)
68 Non-gloss (paint) (4)
70 Flourished, prospered (7)
71 Generally (2,1,4)
72 Mathematical expression (7)
73 Tropical potato-like root (3)
74 Shade of blue (3)

DOWN

- 1 Processed tinned vegetable (9,3)
2 London river (6)
3 Church bench (3)
4 Soccer forfeit (7)
5 Fresh-faced (8)
6 Cowboy's sharp boot extension (4)
7 Surname of 'Gravity' physicist (6)

- 8 Directed (people) at a wedding (7)
9 Collected by bees (6)
10 Asks for money (4)
11 Illustrate, show (6)
12 At a standstill (vehicle) (10)
20 Without dispute (2,5)
23 Opposite of 'all' or 'everybody' (2,3)
25 Harsh noise made by a parrot (6)
27 Sailors of small boats (9)
29 Do very well (5)
31 Opened (a door) (8)
32 Town in which Jesus was born (9)
33 Family vehicle (5,3)
34 Norway's continent (6)
37 Reasonably OK (3,3)
42 TV presenter, __ Chung (5)
44 Private, secret (12)
45 Collection sold together (3,3)
46 Put through school (7)
47 Large piece of fabric used in the dining room (10)
49 Take a break (5)
53 Gives off (heat or light) (8)
55 Shakespeare's first name (7)
56 Make (a thing) appear larger than it is (7)
58 Sports referee (6)
59 Cure, antidote (6)
61 Head protection in hot weather (3,3)
63 Life-size sculpture of a human or animal (6)
65 Central part of a church (4)
67 War between families (4)
69 Married woman's title (3)

✦ The answers for 21 January are on page 53. The answers to all this week's puzzles will appear in two issues' time.



What's on

Top entertainment for going out or staying in



Show

Looking ahead

Fans of the multi Olivier-award-winning *Sunny Afternoon* will be delighted once more as the hit West End musical tours throughout the summer and autumn of 2020 – with tickets to shows at venues throughout the UK on sale now. Opening at the Manchester Opera House on 7 August 2020, the show tells the story of the early life of singer Ray Davies and the rising success of 60s icons The Kinks, featuring all your favourite songs by this influential band, including *Waterloo Sunset* and *You Really Got Me*. Find out more and where you can see this uplifting show by visiting sunnyafternoonthemusical.com

Vera

ITV

In her final case of the series, Brenda Blethyn's wily detective investigates the shooting of a wealthy betting shop magnate in what appears to be a burglary gone wrong. With a knack for sniffing out the truth, Vera's soon donning her trusty fishing hat to uncover a clear-cut case of corruption and the possibility of an inside job.

TV



TV

Inside No. 9

BBC2

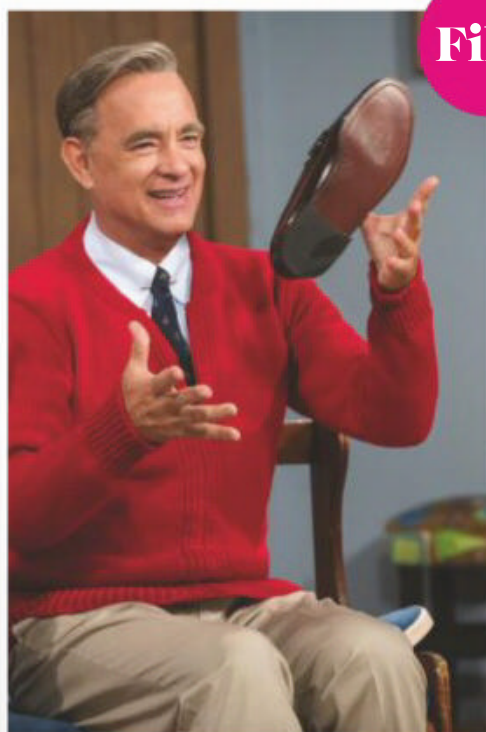
The comedy anthology returns for a fifth series of twisted tales written by and starring Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton. The roll call of guest stars joining the pair this time around includes the likes of Jenna Coleman, David Morrissey, Jill Halfpenny and Ralf Little, who appear in some bizarre new stories that combine horror, thriller, mystery and comedy.

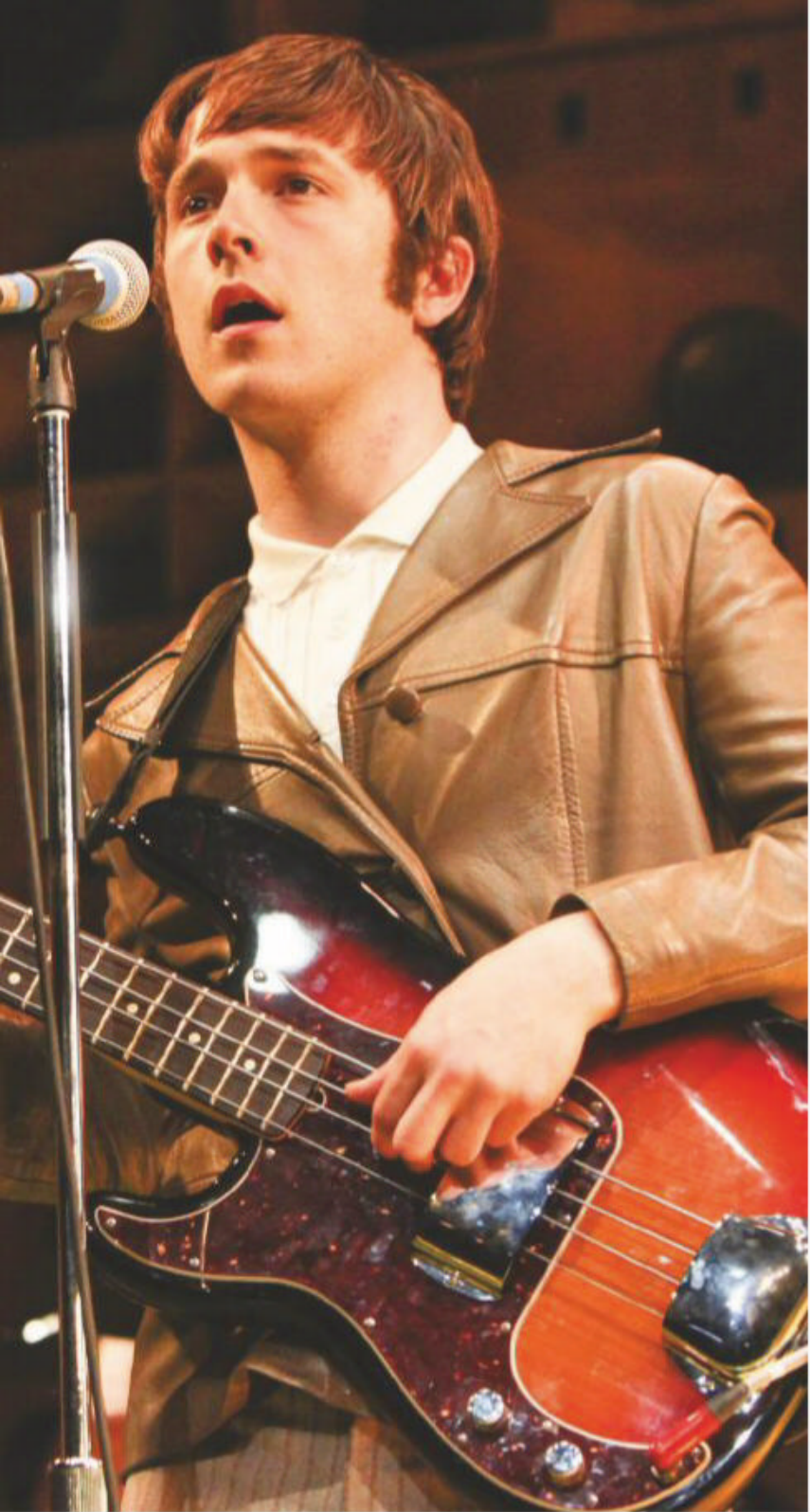
Film

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Out 31 January

A perfectly cast Tom Hanks radiates kindness and goodness as US children's TV show host Fred Rogers in this heart-warming, fact-based movie. With his cosy cardi and calm demeanour, the creator and presenter of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* is a beloved figure in American homes and an unlikely cultural icon. Commissioned to write a profile, Matthew Rhys' cynical journalist reckons he must be too good to be true. Will he prove immune to his charm?





Book club

Our pick of the best reads around

American Dirt

by Jeanine Cummins
(£14.99, HB, Tinder Press)

This powerful story explores the dangerous journey taken by people trying to cross illegally from Mexico to the US. A mother and son flee their home after a cartel massacre, becoming migrants on the run. Their journey is as emotional and harrowing as you'd expect. As they ride La Bestia (the train that heads to the US) and come into contact with cartel members, the heart-stopping moments keep coming. A novel about what a mother will do for her child – anything.

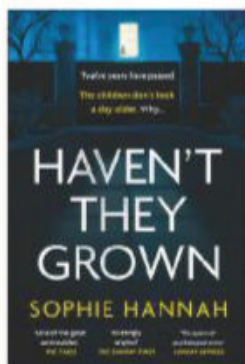
**Book
of the
week**



Haven't They Grown

by Sophie Hannah (£16.99, HB, Hodder & Stoughton)

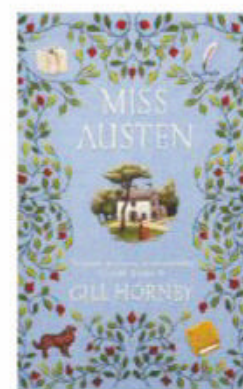
If you like your mysteries extremely twisty, this could be for you. The story starts with Beth driving her son to an away football match. Knowing that her former best friend lives nearby, she feels compelled to drive past her house and catch a glimpse of her. And she does – but there's something very wrong. Beth hasn't seen Flora for 12 years, but her sons haven't aged. And so it begins...



Miss Austen

by Gill Hornby (£12.99, HB, Cornerstone)

In this subtle novel, Gill Hornby explores why Cassandra burned letters written by her sister, Jane Austen. As we follow her through youth and old age, she pieces together buried truths about Jane's history, and her own. Based on a literary mystery, this complex story reveals a clever and warm-hearted character in Cassandra, and brings us closer to one of the greatest of all English writers.



Event

Behind the scenes

Ever wondered what goes on when the doors close to visitors at Blenheim Palace? Then look no further than its Restoration and Conservation tours, on until 9 February, which give an insight into what's being done in each of the State Rooms during the annual deep clean. This tour not only shows you the current techniques but those of the past, to ensure that the birthplace and ancestral home of Winston Churchill remains one of the UK's crowning glories. For more information, visit blenheimpalace.com/whats-on

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A lot on MY PLATE

A secret dinner date gathers an unwanted crowd

“You join me at a table for two at The Nice Little French Place On The Bypass, and the evening is not going entirely well.

If you’ve been following what, for want of a better word, we must call the plot, you’ll remember that Mr Dear is enjoying a chaps’ weekend in a country cottage. As we speak, he’s probably on his third helping of pudding. When Mr D and his chums push the boat out, it’s usually the Queen Mary.

Meanwhile, back at Dear Towers, I accepted a dinner invitation from an old flame called Graham, who keeps reigniting in the most unusual places (the yogurt aisle at Tesco, the little café in the park). I had earlier turned down the chance of Graham by candlelight, but was suddenly faced with the prospect of a lonely evening with *MasterChef* on iPlayer.

Anyway, here we are. And also here, apparently, is almost everybody I know. To get to the lavatory, diners must pass our table. And you’d be surprised how often people of about our age have to visit the lavatory.

‘Oh hello, Rosie,’ they say as they pass. ‘You all right, T...’. Just in time, they realise that Mr Thos Dear is not present. There is a short, embarrassed pause before

they remember their original appointment and scuttle off.

Tina, who used to work with me in the charity shop and was known to customers as The Nice Quiet Lady, has chosen this evening to celebrate her wedding anniversary, curse her.

‘Hello, Rosie,’ she says. ‘Oooh, who’s this?’

Quiet, but possibly not as diplomatic as she could be.

‘This is Graham,’ I say, ‘who is an old friend.’

‘Ooh,’ says Tina. ‘Where’s Tom?’

See what I mean?

In-between all these interruptions, Graham is...

well...just what *is* Graham doing? In anybody else, you’d think it was flirting.

‘I’ve been thinking a lot recently about that evening we spent together,’ he says. ‘You know, sitting on that hay cart in the evening sunshine, swinging our legs over the side. You looked gorgeous in that red dress.’

‘I was wearing blue.’

‘Were you? Perhaps you were. It was a long time ago. Still, I’ve never forgotten the way your wonderful red hair cascaded over your shoulders.’

‘Over my shoulders? You

must be thinking of somebody else. Back then, I kept it very short. Nits, you know. We couldn’t be too careful in those days.’ (No nits actually were brave enough to set up camp in my hair, but Graham wouldn’t know that, would he?)

‘How did we end up on that hay cart?’ Graham was asking, between mouthfuls of medium-rare steak. ‘I seem to remember that we walked through the woods.’

‘Woods? I don’t remember woods. We got chatting at Lizzie Watsername’s 18th birthday party. It was noisy, and

I couldn’t hear what you were saying. So we went outside, and ended up sitting on the hay cart with our drinks.’

‘Oh,’ said Graham. ‘I don’t remember Lizzie at all.’

‘You should do,’ I said. ‘You started going out with her a week later, and you were an item for about a year.’

Graham paused in mid-chomp, which was not a pretty sight. The membership secretary of the WI stopped briefly at the table, glanced suspiciously at Graham, paused to admire my chicken salad, and swept

onward in her great majesty.

‘I do remember a Lizzie now you come to mention it,’ he said. ‘Did we really go out for a year? Extraordinary. Yet I still recognised you when we met in Tesco, even though we really only met on that one evening.’

He carried on like this for much of the meal, and very wearing it was too. It’s always nice to be made a fuss of – especially when you’re out of practice in this area – but Graham is not what you call a subtle man.

He drove me home, and we chatted in the car, and a distant memory of courting ritual told me that he would shortly want to come in for coffee. Then – hallelujah! – my phone rang.

‘S’mee,’ slurred a familiar voice. ‘V’ad a lovely evening, but I just wanted to say how much I’m missing you. Honestly, love, you’d really like it here.’

‘Tom,’ I mouthed at Graham. ‘I’d better go – but thanks for a lovely evening.’

After a brief conversation with Mr D indoors, I watched *MasterChef* and counted my blessings.

Rosie x

To get to the lavatory, diners must pass our table



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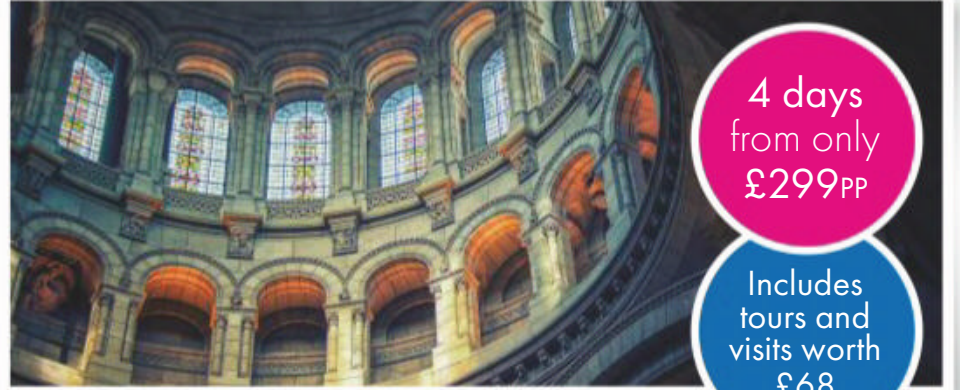
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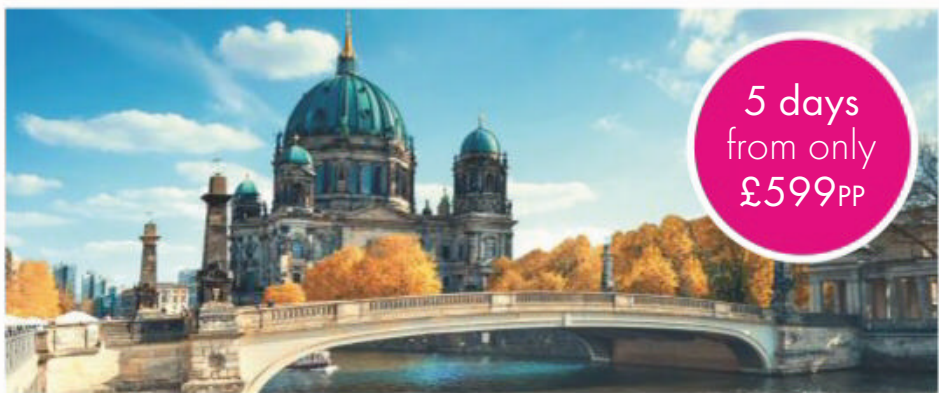
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