

get
fit

eat
well

enjoy
life!

with uncle chris

THE GOOD NEWS

about the virus

Hello folks

Funny how you can find something good in a bad situation. The Covid-19 pandemic has been a traumatic time for all, but Brad Banducci, head of the Woolies supermarket chain, says: "We, as a community of grocery shoppers, have adapted to this time of dramatic change. We are becoming healthier and more adventurous in our cooking."

He should know – Woolies keeps a close tab on what's selling.

Soup mix packets are up 200% – so that's a healthy sign.

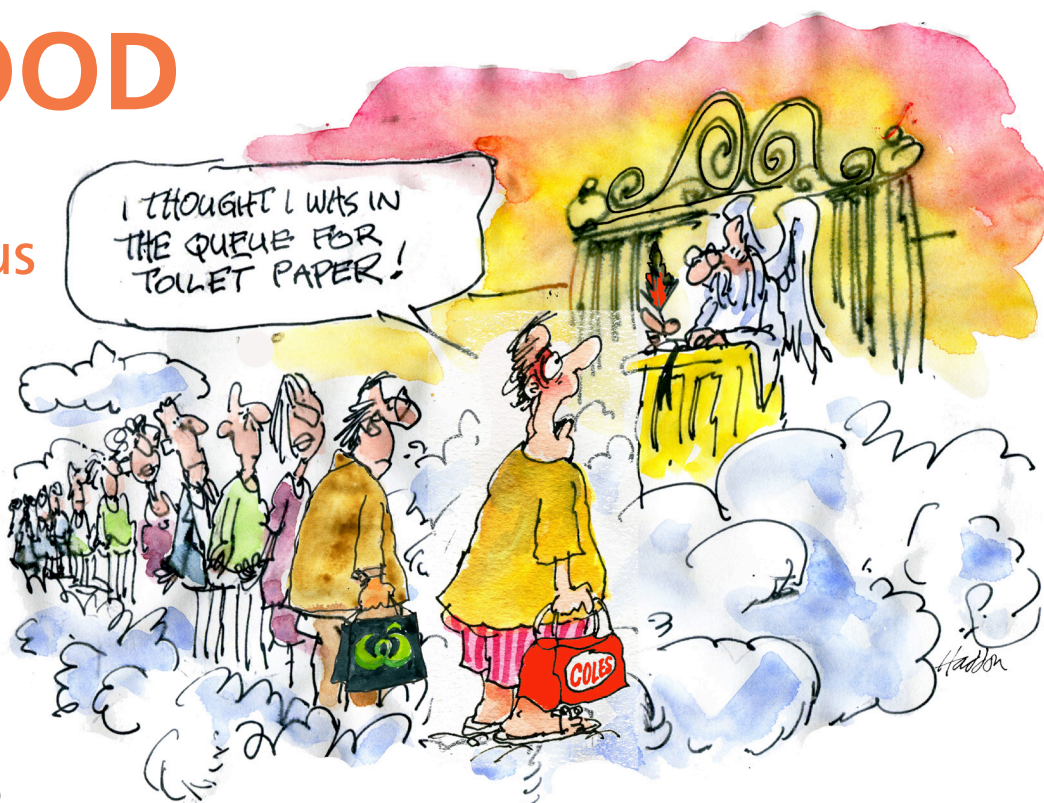
Roasted peppers sales are up 65%, Asian and chilli sauces are up 40%, ingredients such as cardamom, saffron and sesame seeds have doubled in sales – so we are more adventurous in our cooking.

The Woolies boss says there has been a big rise in vitamin sales, while sales of cough and cold medicines are much lower when compared to last year.

We all recall the recent rush on basics – rice, pasta, sugar, eggs, flour, cleaning products and toilet paper. There was a lot of hoarding going on and on TV we saw some anti-social behaviour among shoppers. In March Woolies supermarkets around Oz were selling 40 million rolls a week; now they're selling less than 10 million rolls a week.

Back in March, our cartoonist George told me: "I went to Coles about 7.30 one morning when the crazies were buying up all the toilet paper. The queues to pay stretched so far. I went home and drew this cartoon, initially for my own amusement."

Now, sadly, the cartoon on this page is the last one George will draw for Uncle Chris.



A farewell note from Uncle Chris editor John Hall:

It's farewell to Uncle Chris, with the winter 2020 edition bringing the project to a close. It survived for 39 editions, but death was imminent when it changed from print to online two years ago.

Back in the spring of 2010 at an informal catch-up, Swiss-born chef Chris Stucki, Brighton Council general manager Ron Sanderson and I came up with the idea to encourage healthier lifestyles in Brighton municipality.

Chris, who had run restaurants in Hobart and more recently one in Tea Tree, was the chef we needed to front the project, Ron knew what the community could benefit from, and I could make the project happen – and so in the summer of 2010/11 Uncle Chris was born as a quarterly publication exclusively for the 17,000 residents of Brighton municipality.

My colleagues – cartoonist George Haddon, gardening guru Tony Fawcett and designer Lisa Luscombe – signed up for the Uncle Chris project. Tasmanian Olympic hurdler Tristan Thomas later also

became a valued contributor.

When Chris died in March 2018, Hobart chef Victoria Tiberio-Hardwick took over producing the recipes. We kept the Uncle Chris project going as a tribute to our colleague.

But mailouts are expensive to produce and distribute through Australia Post. So with the 30th edition of Uncle Chris, Brighton Council decided to go exclusively online with the project.

Nothing lives forever. With this edition – the 39th Uncle Chris – it's time to say goodbye.

In this final edition ...

We reprint some cartoons that George Haddon produced exclusively for Uncle Chris.

Victoria revisits some of her favourite recipes and Tony and Tristan gives some final words of advice.

So eat healthy foods, grow your own and keep fit!

get
fit

eat
well

enjoy
life!

with uncle chris

BY GEORGE, he makes us laugh

Welcome to the whimsical world of George Haddon, who's been entertaining Uncle Chris readers over the past decade. He's been with the Brighton Council project since the first edition, which featured home-grown apricots.

George has been cartooning in Australia for quite a few decades – first as the political cartoonist for the Melbourne Herald newspaper (later merged to become the Herald-Sun), later as a key contributor to the Australian publication with the largest monthly distribution – RACV's RoyalAuto magazine – and more recently as illustrator of children's books.

Along his creative journey George has won many accolades – four Walkleys, Australian journalism's major awards, and in 2004 his body of work in RoyalAuto magazine won him the title of Australia's Cartoonist of the Year – the judges were 150 of his peers around Australia.

When chef Chris Stucki died several ago, with the permission of his widow Geraldine we kept the Uncle Chris name for the Brighton Council project, but moved away from using his image.

All of George's cartoons are memorable.

Here's a random selection.

– John Hall, editor



Continued over 2

get
fit

eat
well

enjoy
life!

with uncle chris



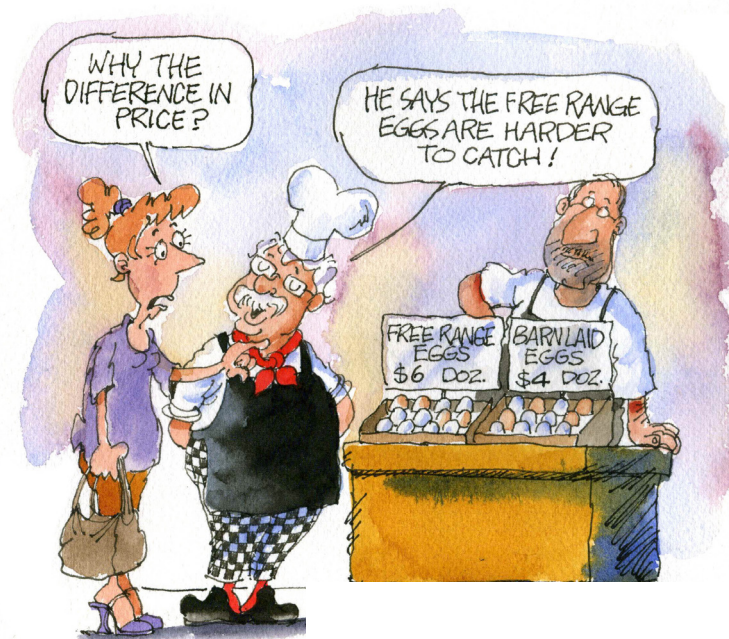
Continued over 3

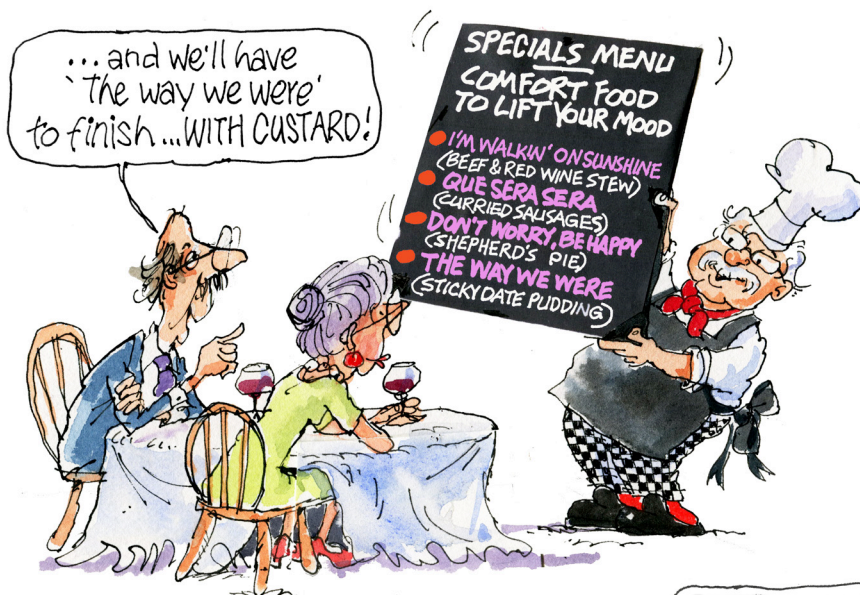
get
fit

eat
well

enjoy
life!

with uncle chris



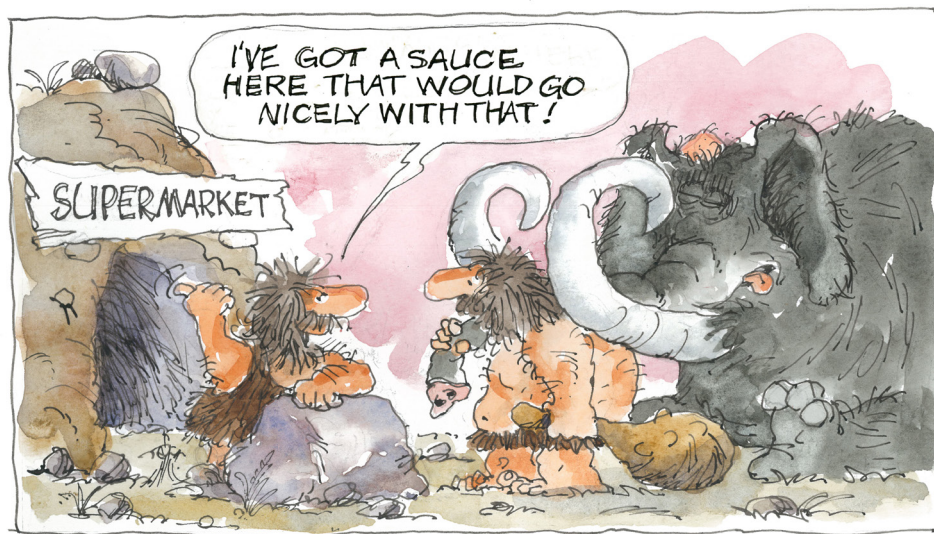


get
fit

eat
well

enjoy
life!

with uncle chris



With the death of Chris Stucki, George revisited a theme which had won him third prize in an international cartooning contest with a food theme.

Enter the caveman, a new age kind of guy – into salads and almond milk!



MY FAVOURITE WINTER WARMERS

Chicken korma

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large brown onion, diced
4 cloves
¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
4 skinless chicken breasts, diced
3 garlic cloves, crushed
4 cm fresh ginger, peeled and grated
1 teaspoon ground coriander
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
1½ teaspoons ground cumin
½ teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon mild chilli powder
2 teaspoons tomato paste
75g almond meal
250ml chicken stock
200ml cream
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oil in a large frying pan. Once hot, fry the onion, cloves and cardamom for a few minutes until the onion begins to soften. Add the chicken, garlic and ginger, frying for a few minutes. Add all the remaining spices, stirring constantly, continue to fry allowing the spices to become aromatic and infuse the chicken. Add the tomato paste, almond meal, stock and cream and bring to a simmer. Cook for about 15 minutes until reduced to the consistency of thick cream. Taste and add seasoning if needed.

Cottage pie

3 tablespoons olive oil
1 kilo beef mince
1 onion, finely chopped
2 carrots, chopped
2 celery sticks, chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 tablespoons plain flour
1 tablespoon tomato paste
125ml red wine (optional)
400g can crushed tomatoes
2 tablespoons worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon thyme
2 bay leaves
salt and pepper

For the mash

1.5 kilos potatoes, chopped
60ml milk
100g butter
200g strong cheddar, grated
½ teaspoon nutmeg

Heat 2 tablespoons oil over a medium heat in a large saucepan and cook onion until softened. Add garlic, carrot, celery, bay leaves and thyme then cook for 2-3 minutes. Transfer to bowl and remove bay leaves. Add the remaining oil to the same pan, add the mince and cook over a high heat until browned. Add the flour and cook for a minute, then add the wine and cook for 2-3 minutes. Return vegetables to the pan with the tomato paste, worcestershire sauce and crushed tomatoes. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season to taste then transfer to an ovenproof dish and let cool. Preheat oven to 180C

Meanwhile, boil the potatoes in salted water until tender, drain, then mash with milk and butter until smooth and fluffy. Season with pepper and nutmeg, spoon over the meat and top with the grated cheddar. Bake for 30 minutes until golden and crusty.



Lamb and pearl barley soup

2 tablespoons olive oil
4 trimmed lamb shanks
2 large onions, diced
4 cloves garlic, crushed
2 carrots, peeled and diced
2 sticks celery, diced
2 parsnips, peeled and diced
2 litres beef stock
1 litre water
¾ cup pearl barley
2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large saucepan and brown lamb shanks

Remove and set aside. Add onions, garlic, carrots, parsnip and celery and cook for 5 minutes or until lightly browned.

Return the shanks to the pan and add stock, water, pearl barley and rosemary. Bring to the boil then reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, for 2 hours.

Remove the shanks and cool slightly. Take the meat off the bone and flake into pieces. Return the meat to the soup and add an extra 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary. Season to taste.

Fettuccine with salmon and dill sauce

3 tablespoons butter
750ml cream
2 cloves garlic, crushed
3 tablespoons lemon juice
3 teaspoons lemon zest
900g fettuccine (150g per person)
600g smoked salmon
2 bunches asparagus, cut in 1cm lengths
1 bunch dill, finally chopped (reserve 1 tablespoon for garnish)
Sea salt and cracked black pepper

This sauce cooks in no time at all, so it's a good idea to put a large pan of well salted water on to boil first so that you're ready to cook the pasta.

To make the sauce, melt the butter in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Add garlic and cook it, stirring frequently, for 1 minute, or until softened. Add cream, asparagus, zest and juice. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and let simmer. Once sauce has reduced by half turn off the heat.

Cook fettuccine until al dente, as per packet instructions.

Meanwhile add the salmon and dill to the sauce and warm through gently. Do not boil. Season with sea salt and cracked black pepper, taste and balance with more lemon juice if needed.

As soon as pasta is ready, drain thoroughly and add to the sauce. Toss it all together until fettuccine is thoroughly coated. Transfer into warmed serving bowls and garnish with extra dill.



Spaghetti and meatballs

Meatballs

600g beef mince
½ cup dried breadcrumbs
½ cup milk
1 egg white
1 teaspoon garlic crushed
½ teaspoon dried basil
½ teaspoon dried oregano

Sauce

1-2 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion finally diced
1 cup red capsicum diced
2 teaspoons crushed garlic
1 punnet grape tomatoes
680g jar tomato passata
2 tablespoons tomato paste
1 cup water
1 teaspoon dried Italian herbs
salt and pepper
900g raw spaghetti pasta (150g per person)
Parmesan cheese for grating over

To make meatballs

In a large mixing bowl, soak breadcrumbs in milk for 2 minutes. Place all the remaining meatball ingredients into the bowl, use your hands to help combine all ingredients. Roll mixture into 36 balls and leave to one side.

To make sauce heat a large saucepan to med-high and add oil, onion, garlic, capsicum and herbs sauté for 2-3 minutes. Add the tomato paste and tomatoes, cook for a future 1 minute.

Add passata, water and seasoning to taste, Bring to the boil

Lasagne

Bolognese sauce

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 cloves garlic
2 onions, finely diced
2 carrots, finely diced
2 celery stalks, finely diced
1 kilo minced beef
680g tomato passata
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 tablespoon Italian mixed herbs
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
1 cup red wine
sea salt and pepper
500g fresh pasta sheets
250g grated mozzarella

Heat a deep large saucepan over high heat. Add the oil, garlic, herbs, spice, onion, celery and carrot and cook for 3 minutes or until just soft. Add the mince and cook, stirring, until brown with no lumps.

Add the tomato paste, cook for 2 minutes then add wine, cook and reduce wine, then add tomato passata and slowly simmer until oil starts to release from the sauce. Stir through the salt and pepper and set aside to cool.

Béchamel sauce

80g butter
4 tablespoons plain flour
4 cups (1 litre) milk
½ teaspoon nutmeg
¾ cup grated parmesan cheese
sea salt and cracked black pepper

To make the white sauce, in a saucepan over medium heat, bring the milk to just before the simmer.

While this is happening place the butter in another saucepan over medium heat and allow to melt. Add the flour and stir to a smooth paste. Whisk in the warmed milk and then stir until the sauce has thickened. Stir in the parmesan and nutmeg, salt and pepper.

Set aside to cool to room temperature with a piece greaseproof pressed over the sauce to stop a skin from forming.

Preheat the oven to 180C. Grease a 20cm x 30cm ovenproof dish and line the base with some of the lasagne sheets. Thinly spread over quarter of the Bolognese sauce, cover with more lasagne sheets, then spoon over quarter of the white

sauce. Repeat the layers, finishing with the white sauce. Sprinkle with the mozzarella and bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown and cooked.

Slow cooked beef and mushroom casserole

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, diced
500g portobello mushrooms, sliced
1.3 kilos gravy beef, cut in chunks
10 small pinkeye potatoes, halved
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped finely
1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped finely
3 tablespoons tomato paste
400g crushed tomatoes
330ml beef stock
salt and pepper

Pre-heat oven to 180c

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large heavy-based pan. Add the onion, garlic and herbs and cook for 3-4 minutes until golden. Add the mushrooms and cook over a high heat until browned, then remove from the pan and set aside.

Heat the remaining oil and start browning the meat in batches, setting each batch aside. Add meat, potatoes, mushrooms and onion mix back into the pan. Over a medium heat fry off the tomato paste then add the stock and tomatoes. Bring to the simmer and season to taste.

Transfer to an oven proof dish, cover and bake for around 2 hours. Uncover, bake for a future 30 minutes or until meat is tender.

Hungarian beef goulash

100g butter
900g beef topside, cut into cubes
450g brown onions, diced
50g paprika
50g plain flour
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 litres beef stock
225g carrots, peeled and diced
450g potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Heat the butter in a large heavy casserole pan, season the topside and add to the pan. Brown the meat. Add the onions and cook for 2 minutes, stirring. Add the

paprika and flour, mix well and place in the preheated oven, uncovered, for 10 minutes.

Remove from oven and mix in the tomato paste. Reduce the oven temperature to 180°C. Add enough of the stock to cover the meat. Bring to the boil on top of the stove and season. Cover with lid and return to the oven for 2 hours. After 1 ½ hours, mix in the chopped carrots and potatoes and cook for another 30 minutes, or until the meat and vegetables are tender.

Spicy lamb pilaf

30g butter
1 brown onion, diced finely
2 cloves garlic, minced
500g lamb fillets, sliced into a diced shape
250g minced lamb
2 teaspoons ground coriander
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon turmeric
1 cinnamon stick
2 tablespoons tomato paste
2 ½ cups chicken stock
sea salt and pepper
2 ½ cups long grain rice
2 zucchinis, round slices, not too thin
½ cup raisins
¼ cup pinenuts, roasted
fresh coriander and natural yoghurt to garnish

Melt butter and sauté onion and garlic until tender and translucent in a large saucepan. Add meat and mince, brown well. Stir in the spices and cook for 3 minutes, stirring continuously.

Blend tomato paste and ½ cup of stock, add to pan and stir well, loosening all the stickiness off the base of the pan. Simmer covered for 45 minutes or until meat is tender.

Add remaining stock and bring to the boil, season and then add the rice and zucchini. Simmer until the rice is tender.

Fold in the raisins, pinenuts and adjust the seasoning.

Sprinkle with fresh coriander and natural yoghurt when you serve.



Cabbage rolls

8 large green cabbage leaves
500g pork and veal mince
1 teaspoon dried thyme, rosemary
½ teaspoon crushed chilli
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 brown onions, finally diced
2 teaspoons flat leaf parsley, finally chopped
1 teaspoon paprika
½ cup medium grain white rice
2 tablespoons olive oil
410g can tomato puree
3 tablespoons basil, chopped
sea salt and cracked pepper

Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil over high heat. Cook cabbage leaves in batches, for 2 to 3 minutes or until bright green. Drain on a tray lined with paper towel. Set aside to cool completely.

Using a medium sized frypan over medium heat sauté off the onions, garlic and chilli in 1 tablespoon of olive oil until softened without colour, add remaining herbs and cook for a further 2 or so minutes.

Combine mince, rice and onion mix in a bowl. Season well with salt and pepper.

To prepare rolls, cut about 4cm of the thick vein from each cabbage leaf. Place 1 leaf on a flat surface. Spoon 2 heaped tablespoons of mince mixture along the base of leaf. Roll up cabbage leaf, folding in sides, to enclose filling. Repeat with remaining leaves and filling.

Heat remaining oil in a large, deep frying pan over medium-high heat. Place cabbage rolls in pan in a single layer. Cook for 2 minutes. Pour over combined tomato purée, 1/3 cup cold water and basil. Bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low. Cover. Simmer for 45 minutes or until mince is cooked through and rice is tender. Serve sprinkled with extra basil.

Vegetable rogan josh

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 onions, diced
1 medium butternut pumpkin, cut into 1cm chunks
1 small cauliflower, cut into bitesize chunks
1 fresh red chilli, seeds removed, sliced
4 cloves of garlic, crushed
1 fresh bunch coriander, rinsed and finely chopped
140g Patak's rogan josh paste
400g can of chickpeas
100g baby spinach, prewashed
250g tub of natural yoghurt

In a large pan over a medium heat add olive oil, then onion and garlic cook until soft and golden. Add pumpkin to the pan, then add cauliflower. If you want some extra heat, then add the chilli.

Finely chop the coriander (stalks and all). Reserve a few leaves for garnish and add the rest to the pan with ½ cup of boiled water. Add the rogan josh paste and the can of chickpeas, with their juices.

Season and stir well, then put a lid on. Cook hard and fast, stirring occasionally.

Adjust the consistency at this point adding more boiled water if needed, depending on whether you want it drier or wetter. Taste and add a pinch of salt, if needed, then add the spinach and stir through. Serve with the yoghurt and some coriander leaves.

Braised lamb shanks

4 lamb shanks, frenched (bone trimmed of excess fat and gristle)
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 red onions, peeled and diced
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 carrots, diced
2 celery stalks, diced
400g can diced tomatoes
125ml red wine
1 tablespoon rosemary, chopped
salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 160C

In a pan that can go into the oven, heat oil over a medium heat and cook the onion until translucent, add the garlic and other vegetables and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the lamb shanks and brown, pour in red wine and diced tomatoes, then bring to boil. Stir in rosemary and seasoning.

Cover and transfer to the oven for 2 hours or until meat pulls away from the bone. You may need to adjust the liquid with extra water to make sure that the shanks don't dry out. Adjust seasoning at the end.

Beef and red wine stew

1 kilo gravy beef, cut in chunks
30g plain flour, seasoned
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon rosemary
1 teaspoon thyme
150g streaky bacon, sliced
8 shallot bulbs, peeled, halved
200g button mushrooms, quartered
500ml red wine
2 tablespoons tomato paste
500ml beef stock
salt and pepper

Toss diced beef in seasoned flour until evenly coated. Heat oil in a large saucepan over high heat. Brown the beef in 3 batches until all coloured, add extra oil to the pan between batches if needed. Add the bacon to the pan and cook for 2 minutes, remove then add shallots, garlic, herbs and mushrooms and cook for 5 minutes or until onions are browned.

Deglaze the pot with the red wine scraping up any sediment from the bottom. Stir in the tomato paste and stock. Add the beef and bacon back to the pot with any juices. Cook slowly until meat is tender and the sauce is glossy and thickened. Adjust seasoning at the end.



Quiche lorraine

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 onion, diced
4 slices bacon, cut into strips
3 eggs
½ cup cream
salt and freshly ground pepper

2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
80 g parmesan
1 shortcrust pastry case

Preheat oven to 180C. Prebake the tart case on a tray still in the foil case for 10 minutes.

Heat a frypan over a medium heat, add oil and onions and cook for 4-5 minutes, stirring often until onion softens but doesn't colour. Add bacon and cook for a further 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat and cool slightly.

Whisk eggs with cream, salt, pepper, parsley and cheese. Spoon onion mix into cooked pastry shell. Pour egg mix into pastry shell and bake in a preheated oven for 30 minutes until golden and set.



Beef, Guinness and mushroom pie

1 kilo beef rump steak or beef chuck steak, cut into 2.5cm cubes
½ cup plain flour, seasoned with salt and pepper
40 g butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 brown onion, cut into thin wedges
200 g brown mushrooms, sliced
1 ¼ cups Guinness
¼ cup rosemary leaves, chopped
1 sheet puff pastry, thawed
1 egg, lightly beaten

Preheat oven to 200°C. Grease 6 cup capacity ovenproof ceramic dish.

Toss steak in flour to coat. Heat half the butter and half the oil in a frying pan over high heat. Add one-quarter of the steak. Cook for 3 minutes or until browned. Remove to a plate. Repeat 3 times, adding butter and oil as required.

Add onion wedges to frying pan. Reduce heat to medium. Cook for 3 minutes add mushrooms and cook for a further 3 minutes or until tender. Add steak,

Guinness, rosemary and salt and pepper. Stir until well combined. Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to low. Simmer slowly until meat is tender and gravy thickens. Spoon into prepared dish. Refrigerate until cold.

Place pastry over dish, trimming if necessary. Brush with egg. Season with salt and pepper. Bake for 25- 30 minutes or until pastry is golden and filling is piping hot.

If you're not a fan of Guinness, red wine could be substituted.



Lamb kofta curry

500g minced lamb
1 onion, finely diced
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 teaspoon grated ginger
1 small chilli, finely chopped
1 teaspoon garam masala
1 teaspoon ground coriander
50g ground almonds (almond meal)
2 tablespoons coriander, chopped

Sauce

½ tablespoon oil
1 onion, finely diced
3 tablespoons korma curry paste
400g can chopped tomatoes
125g thick natural yoghurt
1 teaspoon lemon juice

Combine lamb, onion, garlic, ginger, chilli, spices, almonds and salt in a bowl. Shape into walnut-sized balls with your hands. Heat a large fry pan and cook koftas in batches until brown on both sides. They don't have to be cooked through.

To make the sauce, heat the oil in a saucepan over low heat. Add the onion and cook until soft and golden. Add curry paste, cook until fragrant, then add tomato and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the yoghurt and lemon juice to taste.

Place the koftas in the sauce. Cook, covered, over a low heat for 20 minutes. Serve over steamed rice and garnish with coriander.

MY FAVOURITE WINTER DESSERTS



Chocolate fudge pudding

1 cup self-raising flour
½ cup caster sugar
1 tablespoon butter
Pinch salt
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
1 cup milk
½ teaspoon vanilla essence

Pre-heat oven to 180C

Sift flour, cocoa and salt. Add sugar. Then add melted butter with milk and vanilla.

Mix ingredients until smooth. Put mixture into a baking dish. Combine topping in the bowl from which you just removed the pudding mixture.

Topping

½ cup brown sugar
2 tablespoons cocoa
1½ cups boiling water

Combine topping ingredients, gathering any leftover batter mixture, pour over the pudding and bake in

oven for ¾ hour. You will need to sit your baking dish on a tray just in case it bubbles over.

Traditional apple pie

2 sheets shortcrust pastry, thawed
6 granny smith apples
1 lemon, juiced
50 g butter, diced
1/3 cup caster sugar
1 cinnamon stick
1 clove
1 egg, lightly whisked with 1 tablespoon milk
2 teaspoons caster sugar, extra for sprinkling

Pre-heat oven to 200C.

Peel and core apples, cutting into eighths. In a saucepan, mix with the lemon juice over medium heat.

Add the butter, sugar, cinnamon stick and clove to the apples. Simmer, stirring often for 10 minutes until sugar has dissolved and apples are just

tender. Set aside to cool.

Press one of the pastry sheets into a lightly greased round 22 x 5cm pie dish. Trimming edges where required. Brush edges with egg wash. Cut the second pastry sheet into 3cm wide strips.

Spoon cooled apple mixture into pie dish, discarding any excess liquid. Lay strips of pastry over the top of the apple mixture to form a lattice pattern. Brush with egg wash and sprinkle with half the additional sugar. Bake for 35 minutes until pastry is golden and sprinkle with remaining sugar once cooked.

Sticky date pudding

170g dates, pitted
1 teaspoon bicarb soda
300ml boiling water
60g butter
170g caster sugar
2 eggs
170g self-raising flour, sifted
1 tablespoon vanilla essence

Sauce

400g brown sugar
1 cup thick cream
250g butter
vanilla essence

Preheat oven to 180C, butter or spray an 18cm cake tin.

Mix dates and bicarb soda, then pour the boiling water on top, leave to stand until softened.

Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy, add eggs one at a time and beat well after each addition. Fold in sifted self-raising flour gently then stir in the date mixture and vanilla. Pour into prepared tin and bake in the centre of the oven for 30-40 minutes or until ready when you test with a skewer and it comes out clean.

To make sauce bring all ingredients to the boil in a saucepan over a medium heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Serve with slices of the pudding.

BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOURSELF

Dear Brighton

Let me begin by stating the obvious: it's sad that this may be the final time words are written for this purpose. It has been an honour to be able to share experiences with you, and I truly hope that we have all offered value in some way. In my objective of providing exercise motivation, I am aware that elite sports people can often be viewed as unrelatable when discussing fitness. On the surface, they don't seem to go through the common mental and physical struggles that 'normal people' go through when trying to keep active.

I hope that these articles have offered more insight though and acted as a snippet into the fact that I, or all 'stars', are human just like you. I'm not saying that every one of you can or should have gone to the Olympics, but I do hope that you have taken time to realise that you all have talents, and more importantly that you are capable of being the best version of yourself.

It is an interesting period to be releasing the last issue of Uncle Chris, and the world certainly doesn't look like what it did last time we wrote.

I personally have struggled a bit with the lack of direction, and all goals that were set as we continue our year of growth in London have been put on ice. There will be some of you that feel equally frustrated or lost in the current scenario. I'm sure there is a fair bit of fear also, and I hope you have all stayed safe.

While it is easy to dwell on the things we are all missing out on, I also hope you have had an opportunity to take more time to do things just for yourself - like reading a book, or learning a new skill, or even the ultimate wish for someone writing about exercise, that you joined in on some of those online fitness classes.



“There is no right or wrong. There is no 100% good or bad, there are just choices.

Even if you went for more walks, just to get out of the house, I'm sure your bodies would have benefitted from the chance to reset. We spend so much time working that it can be easy to forget to make the time to look after our health, so it would be great if new habits were formed that can last going forward.

The piece of motivation I'll leave you with is something I'd really like you to think more about. The bottom line is that there is no right or wrong. There is no 100% good or bad, there are just choices.

I could tell you that you should find a park and have an attempt at running 50m, and then see how many you can do. I could say to set a challenge of doing more and more push ups each day, and I could promise again that this will make you proud of yourself and raise self-esteem.

Instead though, I want to focus on the important point that not doing this doesn't make you a bad person. There

are a lot of horrible things happening in the world but all you can control is what you can do, and all you should be encouraged to do is to be your best. Everyone thinks differently, so how you deal with health or stress is unique to you. Again, I hope that a walk or some exercise is part of the routine, but that is and will always be totally your call.

As I have discussed a lot, my greatest tip is to keep setting and focusing on goals. An example is this article. I

have found it hard to write this knowing the mission to help you is not continuing in this form. This impacted on the goal I had set and it took a while for me to work out the best way to get it done.

Saying goodbye in a meaningful way eventually became the new goal. Things will always get in the way of the perfect scenario but again, all you can do is 'crack on' as they say here in England. Always take the time needed to think through setbacks, and be honest with ways you could do things better. Just don't forget to set revised goals and always do what you can to continue going forward.

A corny line to finish on is that you are the best you that has ever lived. Be proud of your achievements, and no matter what happens, know that you are always capable of amazing things.

It has been a pleasure to be able to write to you, and I truly wish you happiness and good health going forward. If you see me walking down some street in Brighton in the future, please say g'day, and I'd love to hear of the great things you have done.

Kindest regards and good luck.
Tristan

TIPS FROM A LAZY GARDENER

I know I shouldn't, but I take pride in being a lazy gardener. I wear my outdoor laziness as a badge of honour.

I love all the picking and planting and admiring of my successes, but when it comes to weeding, pruning, digging, mowing and all those other perspiration-inducing tasks my interest wanes dramatically.

As a garden writer I shouldn't be revealing all this now but as it's the last hurrah for dear old Uncle Chris, God bless him, I figure you should know.

Besides, I reckon I have a few ideas, some of which I have shared here over the years, you might like to adopt in your own gardening going forward. That's if you want to spare yourself back aches and perspiration.

It's all about gardening smarter.

Weed out villains

Weeding is the big killer when it comes to garden effort.

Some see it as wonderful therapy. Not me. It's a pain in the back, and dead boring.

Eliminate much of your weeding and your garden laziness rating won't be an issue.

It's all about re-designing your garden. Yes, that involves some work but there are pay-offs down the track.

For starters, get rid of expansive garden beds. They might look good but they're a haven for weeds.

Sited as a garden focus, a good narrow bed is far superior, and requires minimal weeding, particularly when well mulched.

Like me, you are probably fed up with the preaching about the value of mulch. But it works wonders for lazy gardeners. Lay it on thick, after first giving the soil a good hit of a fertiliser such as Dynamic Lifter.

An organic mulch such as lucerne hay or sugar cane mulch is fine as it breaks down returning goodness to the soil, but



I prefer weathered, weed-blocking wood chips. Because they can rob the ground of nitrogen, first treat the soil to an extra dose of Dynamic Lifter to even things up.

TIP: Don't use horse manure as mulch or compost as it's generally choc-a-block with weed seeds.

Soil like concrete

Soil of concrete consistency has broken the spirit, and back, of many a gardener.

Sure, you can dig in compost and sand and a host of other additives to break it down, but it will likely take half a lifetime.

Often it's smarter to let it be. Grow your favourite plants and vegies in pots, containers or raised beds. Less effort, less weeds and, with raised beds, less bending.

Consider self-watering pots (less frequent watering)

TIP: Don't use a short-handled tool when a long-handled, lighter one will do the job just as well. Your back will thank you.

Lawn & order

A lush green lawn can be a visual winner yet your delight dissipates when you spend half a day mowing it.

If you're smart, attain a similar effect with a small patch of well tended lawn in a highly prominent position. You'll mow it in 10 minutes.

TIP: Don't suffer the heartache trying to grow a picture-perfect lawn in a shady area. Instead, grow a lush lawn alternative such dichondra repens.

Put down the shears

Pruning takes time and effort.

Minimise the number of plants, such as roses, that demand pruning – and don't get overly concerned with pruning by the book.

A quick snip with a pair of loppers is often good enough, and if the plant doesn't like it then it's probably not one you need.

TIP: Don't grow too many herbaceous perennials, ones such as catmint,



verbena, red hot pokers and verbena that need to be cut back each year to remain tidy.

Rules for the lazy

- So long as it's in a spot that gets good sun, keep vegie patches as close to your back door as possible (less walking).

- Only plant newer, highly disease-resistant roses. Many old ones look brilliant but need annual spraying.

Unfortunately, I don't always follow my own thinking.

Early in my gardening I was impressed by the words of Thomas H. Everett, a former director of horticulture at New York's Botanical Garden, who observed "a man should never plant a garden larger than his wife can take care of".

Alas, I slipped up badly there, forgot old Tom's tip and found myself with a garden far bigger than my wife could handle.

But you, dear readers, need not make that mistake.

For goodness sake, garden within your time constraints, energies and inclinations.

And before I'm attacked as being a misogynist, I stress this can apply equally to husbands as well as wives.

Whatever you do, though, garden happily.

As avid vegie-grower and vegetarian George Bernard Shaw once quothed, the best place to find God is in a garden.

Although, even GBS came unstuck with a garden chore. He died aged 94 from complications after falling off a ladder while pruning an apple tree.

That's it for me, but if you want to catch more garden tips you can read my column in The Weekly Times newspaper.