

Heston fires up new barbecue range

It's that time of year again, when Britons dust off their barbecues and consider how to light them.

But amateur grillers can breathe a sigh of relief, thanks to a new range of 'revolutionary' charcoal barbecues that ignite at the touch of a button.

The HUB and FUSION models, created by chef Heston Blumenthal, come equipped with electric heating elements.

A single ignition button heats charcoal to cooking temperature in 10 minutes, eliminating the need for matches or firelighters.

The barbecues are part of the new Everdure range, tested at Blumenthal's development kitchen in Bray, Berkshire, in colla-

boration with Australian manufacturer Shiro.

'I wanted to bring some of the techniques I have developed in over 20 years in the kitchen to the great outdoors,' says the chef.

The range also includes the CUBE, a portable charcoal model, plus the larger gas-powered FURNACE and FORCE.

However, with a price of £1,499 the HUB is the top-of-the-range model.

Inspired by minimalist Danish design, the barbecue comes with a foldable rotisserie fixture capable of cooking a whole suckling pig, and has an easy-to-clean enamel coating.

The Everdure by Heston Blumenthal range is available at johnlewis.com



HOT STUFF Heston Blumenthal with portable CUBE

News in brief

Heads or tails? Nearly a quarter of Brits eat their soft-boiled eggs starting from what is traditionally considered the bottom end rather than the pointy top, according to a survey. Human behaviour expert Dr Jane Cox says such people probably approach lots of things in their lives differently.

Back to basics A dining event in London invited guests to kill their food before they ate it. Diners were shown how to prepare a crab following RSPCA advice.



Egg-cellent ideas People wanting to use up leftover Easter eggs have been taking to online site Pinterest for inspiration. Tips include crushing the eggs to make Rocky Road, or scooping out Cadbury Creme Egg filling and replacing it with Baileys.

Illustration: Dale Edwin Murray

My week

Alvin Hall



The TV finance expert on the importance of clean teeth, loving art and dinner dates



Brush up on oral health for a brighter life

I have a dental cleaning every three months. As I always do, I schedule my appointments in the morning at the beginning of the week, usually on Monday. My wonderful dentist told me nearly 30 years ago that oral health is directly related to heart health, and so I treat each cleaning as a quarterly reminder for me to eat well-balanced meals, maintain a regime that keeps plaque in check and remain cognisant of my overall health. I don't expect to live forever, but I want to stay as healthy as I can for as long as I can.

Quality and length of life have been very much on my mind this week as I visit and talk to several close friends who are struggling with unexpected health issues. One is the result of a severe accident while playing sport. The second is a surprising diagnosis of leukaemia. And a third is the metastasis of a cancer that had gone into remission five years ago. Looming in the background is a call from my sister who has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, caused by her husband's heavy smoking habit.

In each situation I've learned that simply showing up and being present for a period of time is important – whether it's over a meal, sitting beside the bed, or doing a simple activity they enjoy. I give them my full attention. I talk about whatever they want. I offer reassuring comments about their future without sounding patronising or too Pollyanna. And I always give them a hug when I leave.

The hug is as much for me as it is for them, especially from my friends who may not recover. It reminds me of their physical being in my life beyond their faces, their voices, their particular smell and the feelings I have for them. It is the sensation of the hug that I carry with me when I walk away and try to hold onto for as long as I can.

Invariably, though I try not to, I start wondering what I would do if I were in my friend's situation. I nearly always have the same amusing thought. Given all of the money I've spent on my dental cleanings, when the end comes, at least I would walk through the Pearly Gates with pearly whites.

'I don't expect to live forever, but I want to be as healthy as I can'

Art book collection storeys high

I love books. Nonetheless one of my New Year's resolutions was to sell or donate at least 500 of those I own.

Getting rid of the art books is the most difficult. I permit myself to keep those by or about contemporary artists I collect or whose work I follow. Everything else has to go – despite the pain.

During a dinner, a friend showed me the catalogue for the photographer Peter Hujar's exhibition, currently in Spain. Lust surged. A few days later, I'm still struggling not to acquire the book.



All back to mine for tea!

Meals with friends are a key part of my week. When I'm home, I usually invite a single friend or two to share the meal with me. It's the way we stay in touch.

With one friend who is a food critic and speciality food store owner, we have what we jokingly call Sunday Date Night at restaurants he's thinking about reviewing.

I had a similar ritual years ago with my late friend Drew Dreeland. We called our meal An At Home. When we both found ourselves at home on Friday nights, we would inventory the ingredients we each had, then cook a meal at the apartment who had the most interesting food.