



New herb kits cut food waste

We all love the idea of adding fresh herbs to our cooking, but after one or two ambitious dishes, half-used bunches often end up languishing.

To prevent this, Waitrose & Partners has introduced a new range of herb kits, designed to reduce food waste while encouraging adventurous cooking.

The four kits – part of the newly expanded Cooks' Ingredients range – contain the exact herbs and spices you need to make a delicious dish for four – from Thai curry to dhal.

'The idea is to provide inspiration for customers while also preventing them from needing to buy all the different ingredients and then ending up with leftovers of each,' says Waitrose herb supplier Jean Stewart, from R&G Fresh Herbs.

'People like to cook from scratch, but time can be an issue and ideas about what to cook can be helpful.'

There are suggestions on each kit about what to make, plus a recipe.

'The bouquet garni can be added to soup, stuffed into chicken, or popped into boeuf Bourguignon.'

'The Indian recipe herb kit – with fresh coriander, ginger, garlic, turmeric and Thai chillies – could be used in a dhal, but also makes a nice marinade,' adds Stewart.

'The more you use them, the more confident you become at cooking with herbs and the less likely you will be to throw them out.'

Anna Shepard

Food delivered while you're out

Waitrose & Partners is trialling a scheme that will allow 100 south London customers to get their groceries delivered while they're out.

The driver will be sent a temporary access code for the customer's lock, which is later deleted, and will put refrigerated and frozen goods away and leave other groceries in the kitchen.

Lucy Allen



HOW MUCH?

A limited-edition bottle of Scotch described as 'the Holy Grail of whisky' has been sold for £848,750 at auction. The drink was created in 1926 and bottled in 1986 with a label designed by pop artists Valerio Adami and Peter Blake.



MY WEEK

Alvin Hall



Through despair and hope, it's the circle of friendship

This week I decided to reconcile with a former friend I stopped speaking to 10 years ago. The reason for the silence was a hurtful comment made behind my back. It reflected a mean-spirited judgement I did not want on my life. At the time, I doubted she would have told me the truth. And if she had, I might have said something I would have regretted. So rather than confront her, I thought it easier to drift away from the friendship. Knowing she had fixed habits, I just changed my routines so we were unlikely to see each other. It worked, and we live only two blocks apart.

Her son and I remained friends. Being courteous, I usually enquired lightly about his mother. He never asked me what happened and I never volunteered an explanation. So when he proposed that we all meet for dinner, I responded more formally than warm.

My former friend, however, was enthusiastic. She sent fun pictures of herself, text messages saying, 'looking forward to it' using exclamation points and emojis of all kinds. This reminded me of one of her most attractive traits: enthusiasm. I recalled her generosity. She enjoyed making and seeing people happy. All of the memories were warming. Maybe it was time to move past my silence, but I was cautious.

The three of us met for cocktails first. When her son and I arrived, she greeted me like a long-lost friend.

She graciously asked me a few questions about what had happened in my life over the last decade. But I could tell she was being polite. I sensed that there was something else on her mind. When I paused to begin asking her questions about herself, she leaned in and said: 'You know, Alvin, life is a cycle. Sometimes life

brings you around to the same people, but in different circumstances.' I then knew she'd moved past our silence and didn't want to talk about it at all. Her life philosophy made me realise that it was time to release myself from that past incident. So I did.

At the end of the evening, my friend invited me to drop by her apartment, without her son, to gab and laugh the way we used to. Now, I really look forward to this cycle of our renewed friendship.

SHARING IS CARING

A young man I volunteered to mentor during his final year at university called me to catch up. He talked about how his jobbing hours have been recently reduced by half. He expressed his frustration in paying the rent and bills, buying food, and having almost no money left to 'enjoy life'. He talked about feeling obligated to help family members.

As a volunteer for many different groups, I've learned not to offer advice directly unless asked. Instead, I tell stories – from my own life or a friend's – that had a lasting impact. Each, I hope, conveys the guidance to the listener in a way that they will remember, and carry forward in their lives.

My mentee said he remembered the story I told him to illustrate that if you don't save yourself first, then you can't possibly save someone else. He has begun to see why paying rent, buying food, and having money to get to work must be top priorities or none of the people in his house would have a place to live or be able to eat. Equally importantly, he's learning how to say this to himself and his family in ways that have a practical, irrefutable logic, but without judgement.

After our conversation, I thought about what a gift volunteering has been. It is about more than giving back; it is also about giving away – as much of the insights, wisdoms, commonsense practices, and emotional intelligence so that a young person, who may not have sufficient support, can use these to make his or her life better – and hopefully successful.