



LETTER FROM THE UK

Expect tuna slosh

Dear Aunt Ethel,

Coming up.....



Monday August 7: Chicken cooked

in white wine, with cream, pesto, cashew nuts and fresh basil.

Tuesday August 8: Traditional osso bucco with red wine, fresh basil and garlic.

Wednesday August 9: Closed

Thursday August 10: Braised leg of lamb off the bone cooked in rich red wine and port sauce with juniper berries, cloves, fresh mint, thyme and rosemary.

Also, DISH OF THE DAY's home chicken casserole with flavours of whole coriander and basil.

Friday August 11: BY POPULAR DEMAND our oxtail stew with red wine, sherry and butterbeans.

Saturday August 12: Teriyaki beef stir-fry with chilli sauce, soya, honey, tamarind seed and Chinese vegetables.

Monday August 14: Chicken do piaz (with onions, whole cardamom pods and tomato)

Tuesday August 15: Beef braised in Guinness with baby carrots, peas and thyme.

Wednesday August 16: Turkey saltimbocca, a gorgeous turkey casserole with bacon, fresh sage, white wine, lemon juice and cream (let us know if you would like some without bacon, just give us a call).

Thursday August 17: Lamb shanks kleftiko cooked with loads of garlic, origanum and lemon juice.

Friday August 18: Jamie Oliver's hearty fish pie with white fish and prawns, flavours of fennel, star anise and lashings of Pernod liquor. We will serve ours with a puff pastry crust instead of potato.

Saturday August 19: Venison casserole marinated for 2 days and slow-cooked to enable the flavours to permeate the meat.

A 'kykweer' at Anthony Still's DISH OF THE DAY's 'Coming up ...' of a few e-mails back makes one's mouth re-water. Let me explain. I am in Torquay, Devon, doing another of many 6-week locums at an NHS hospital, with adequate on-site self-catering bachelor accommodation. Supermarkets aren't too far away, but the rucksack can get quite heavy and the arms longer when wine and fruit juice are on special offer, 3 for the price of 2, and milk is cheapest in a huge container.

Is domestication essential? On a previous locum 'floor-mate' Rau, tall with wonderful rolling eyes, prepared 'to-slobber-

'Doc' has been in specialist physician practice in Pietermaritzburg for almost a quarter-century. As Robert-Ian Caldwell he performs musical revues and writes an 'Aunt Ethel' column for the local SAMA newsletter. He and his wife (doctorate in plant pathology) and three children are all past UCT students.

To sign on to the newsletter Doc salivated over, email enquiries@dishoftheday.co.za

over' Madras dishes for the week ahead. He found me sloshing tuna over a 'nuked' potato.

'Cook-king, Rob-bairt?' he enquired. 'Doesn't look very good.' Getting closer: 'Doesn't smell very good.' Pause for sampling. 'Very bland.'

He mourned the passing of an era in the UK known to us both when 'We doc-torrs in residence were treated like em-per-rors. Now? Now – they don't even vac-cuummm!

The tuna recipe had been phoned through urgently by a son when his sister texted concern that father's staple diet was Famous Grouse and peanuts. Have to remember each time to prick skin of potato liberally: intra-microwave-oven mayhem otherwise. Similar havoc has led to abandonment of instant-poached-egg-in-a-mug formula: a mere two seconds is the difference between perfection and disaster.

Since then one has progressed to pasta, having mastered the art of microwaving pre-cooked items and, more recently, porridge.

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The UK is of course expensive unless you are earning in pounds, or have zillions of spare rands. But supermarkets are reasonable if one avoids meat and takes advantage of the numerous special offers. A Tesco week's 'wolf-from-the-doorstopper' selection for one – cornflakes, eggs, digestive biscuits, apples, packet soups, etc. – can cost no more than £10. Even cheaper, and interestingly continental, though more hassle, is to bulk-shop at a German chain. Its motto should be 'Lidl things

mean a lot'. Don't try buying two potatoes and three tomatoes: you may not be invited back. I like coffee, I like tea: no problem with a small cafetière and Sainsbury's re-sealable packets with freshness valve. Be sure to bring whisky wiff on the plane.

DISH OF THE DAY's descriptions make one homesick. Comparisons are odious, but check out the following anyway. Welcome to Robert-Ian's Refectory ...

Coming up.....



A glass or two of acceptable SA chenin blanc or dry white wine (£3.50 a bottle max) accompanies these evening meals. Pre-dinner ironing warrants whisky.

Monday October 9: Nuked baking potato sloshed with mashed tuna chunks (in brine) & mayonnaise (& Italian cheese), peas & raw tomato. Vanilla soft-serve ice-cream. Mini-Kit-Kat optional.

Tuesday October 10: Pasta (conchiglie) with tomato/mushroom sauce (& dregs of tuna-in-brine) & Italian cheese. Vanilla soft-serve ice-cream. Banana optional.

Wednesday October 11: Sainsbury's basics 85p cottage-pie for one, peas & raw tomato. Matzos & cheddar: the end of both. Vanilla soft-serve ice-cream. Mini-Kit-Kat and/or banana optional.

Thursday October 12: Nuked baking potato sloshed with mashed tuna chunks (in brine) & mayonnaise (& Italian cheese), peas & raw tomato. Vanilla soft-serve ice-cream. Banana.

Friday October 13: BY POPULAR DEMAND our pasta (penne for your thoughts) with tomato/mushroom sauce (& dregs of tuna-in-brine) & Italian cheese. Vanilla soft-serve ice-cream. Mini-Kit-Kat optional.

Saturday October 14: Teriyaki beef stir-fry with chilli sauce, soya, honey, tamarind seed and Chinese vegetables ... we wish! Dream on, and await weekend developments.

Sunday October 15: Fish & chips from local 'chippie'.

Monday October 16: Lidl/Cutler's GIANT Cornish Pastij for one ('Devon, I'm in Devon ...'), peas and raw tomato. Vanilla soft-serve ice-cream scraping.

Tuesday October 17: Nuked baking potato sloshed with mashed tuna chunks (in brine) & mayonnaise (& Italian cheese), peas & raw tomato. Vanilla soft-serve ice-cream alas finished. Banana, blackening, compulsory. Mini-Kit-Kat optional.

Wednesday October 18: Pasta (penne) with tomato/mushroom sauce (forgot to keep dregs of tuna-in-brine – and no need to let us know if you would like some without bacon, 'cos it's never with bacon) & no Italian cheese: finito. Mini-Kit-Kat compulsory (yes sir we have no bananas).

Thursday October 19: Exhausted (of gourmet ideas and energy). Balance of Famous Grouse & peanuts.

Friday October 20: FAREWELL SPECIAL! John Sainsbury's basics 85p fish pie for one, devoid of prawns, flavours of fennel, star anise or lashings of Pernod liquor. We will serve ours with peas and 2 over-ripe tomatoes. Washed down with delicate Sainsbury's South African chenin. 3 mini-Kit-Kats – 2 left for train.

Saturday October 21: SAA's Economy Class compote, served in the bubble. Metal fork and spoons. Plastic knife compulsory. Just enough hooch for nocturnal paralysis.

Sunday October 22: Wife says we look trim. HOME COOKING YIPPEEE!

Yours gastronomically and affectionately,

Robert-Ian