

# THE DREAM SCENE

## NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 154, 2020

**The Weather!** March was extraordinarily rainy and the one with the fewest hours of sunshine since 1962. The State Meteorological Agency highlighted rainfall of 71 litres / m<sup>2</sup> in Ciudad Jardín, Madrid, the highest record in the history for March

Despite the fact that the March temperature average was close to the normal average, the reality is that the month has been thermally exceptional, with a very warm first fortnight (the second warmest in history) and a second fortnight with an average temperature that was extremely cold, the coldest in the last 45 years.

In the Valencian Community, the rainfall was four times normal during March with many complaints of dampness and water damage to properties.

Earlier in the month of March locally, there was considerable amounts of yellow pollen dust being blown about by strong winds and causing those with asthma and allergies some problems.

**Brexit!** The European Union and UK government have agreed to resume post-Brexit talks on week commencing April 20..

Following Brexit day on 31 January, the EU and UK managed only one round of talks before coronavirus crashed them. There were two cancelled sessions and the lead players were put into isolation. Barnier came down with coronavirus in March and has recovered. Frost, the prime minister's chief negotiator, who had "mild symptoms" of the virus, is no longer self-isolating. The EU and UK continued working on draft legal texts, but progress soon ground to a halt. Frost told Barnier the UK did not intend to seek an extension to the 11-month transition period, which ends on 31 December 2020. Yet EU diplomats are increasingly convinced that London will ask for an extension, as the fallout from coronavirus hammers the global economy and consumes political energy across Europe.

The British have irritated EU diplomats by denying Barnier permission to share these texts with national capitals. That means the 27 EU member states, who will make the ultimate decision on the terms of the future relationship, are relying on analysis and summaries from Barnier and his negotiating team, rather than the original documents.

The commission **has published its 440-page draft legal text online**, reflecting its longstanding Brexit transparency policy – and the reality that documents rarely remain secret for long in Brussels.

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/200318-draft-agreement-gen.pdf>

Plenty of coverage of the Covid-19 on the inside pages.

Worth mentioning a few businesses which are still open locally, other than the major supermarkets -

**Dal's Supermarket** in Via Park V is still open from 10am to 10pm daily. Dal carries a wide range of groceries, frozen bread, ice creams, booze and the best range of Indian spices and herbs on the Costa, along with puris and chapatis. Now you have plenty of time, try improving your curries....which are usually 'out of a jar' rubbish!

**Dream Hills Auto Repairs**, near Aldi's by Dream Hills 11 is also open. You can call 966 724 346 or contact them at [info@dreamhillsautorepairs.es](mailto:info@dreamhillsautorepairs.es) I have used them in the past and have always found them reasonable and reliable.

**The Post Room and Phoenix Computers** at Via Park 111, is also open on reduced hour 9:30am to around 1:00pm, Mondays to Saturdays. They offer a wide range of helpful services from mobile phones and computer repair to private postboxes, newspapers, cards and a mailing service to the UK. Recently I dropped a small parcel off there for posting to the UK on a Tuesday or Wednesday and it reached its destination in the UK Midlands on the Friday! Not bad during this crisis! Tel: 965 31 96 65



"Then, to stop the spread, they burned the village and sent me home."

I have just read an interesting article by a 41-year-old woman in the U.S. who has just served two 10-year-terms in prison. When she was released and after her GPS ankle bracelet was removed later, she was very disappointed that this coincided with the lockdown, which now restricted her travelling. She finished her article with "I ran my hands over the walls of my small apartment and knew they would either transform into a prison cell or a refuge. I decided that a refuge sounds nice right about now." Good advice!

I made the missus wake up with a wonderful smile on her face this morning. I just love felt-tips!

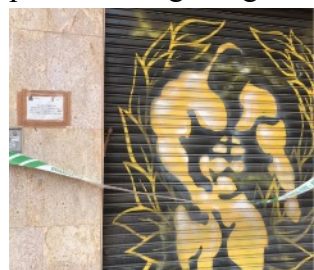
## LOCAL STUFF!

One of a number of problems locally (or challenges as politicians call them) since the outbreak, has been the **lack of information** relating to the incidence of Covid-19 in the individual municipalities in Valencia. This is because the regional health ministry would not allow a breakdown, only providing figures for the Valencian Region as a whole, fearing a panic. A couple of weeks ago, the PP mayors of Orihuela and Torrevieja, Bascunana & Dolón complained formally about this saying that 'they were being treated like children' and that people deserved more precise information so that the various municipalities could take appropriate or remedial action. Fortunately, that information is now being made available.

With lockdown, not a lot has been happening. The various police forces have been very diligent in maintaining it with thousands of fines now issued in the province, with many multiples for regular Covidiot.

### **This is a handful of some local cases:**

Under the guise of a grocery trader, an 18-year-old Dominican woman was operating as a bar and was feeding a customer with lunch at the time the Guardia inspected the property. When they went into the kitchen they also found 10 doses of cocaine and 45 blister packs of Viagra together with account books noting the drug sales and €1,358 in cash!



Then on March 20, the Guardia found a gym in Torrevieja which was still open to members. The front shutters were down, photo, but clients were able to access the facility using a code and lifting the

blind. Photo. Following complaints from neighbours, the Police monitored the building for two weeks (!) before acting. The gym did not possess any sanitary items such as masks, gloves or antibiotic cream.

A 22-year-old was arrested after being caught absconding the restrictions six times! On four occasions he was cautioned and arrested twice! The second arrest was made only hours after the first, in quite a far place from his home. He was finally put in preventative prison. Yet another Covidiot! They are flourishing!

A 32-year-old man was stopped by police in the city of Orihuela at 4:20 in the morning of April 1. When questioned the man said he was going to the pharmacy. When he eventually named one, the police stated that it was closed. Checking their records, police then found that this man had been stopped and fined on four previous occasions! He was then arrested and detained, the first such arrest in the municipality of Orihuela. He now faces a year in prison (won't be served) and a fine of between 300 and 1,000 euros, which probably will not be paid! Question: What is one doing if walking about the streets at 4:20am? Answer: Up to no good!

But **one very unusual case** in Torry is worth a mention. This 62-year-old boasted through a video on the social networks that he arrived from Madrid with 4,000 other Madrilenos during the lockdown to spread the coronavirus pandemic. He said he had the virus and insulted and threatened the people of Torrevieja, adding that he had destroyed the stocks in the local supermarket so the the locals 'would starve.' Now the police in Spain do trawl the social networks for miscreants and it was not long before this jerk was arrested and brought before a judge. During the hearing it was revealed that this nut-job had actually been in his holiday home in Torry since January. He told the preliminary hearing that 'It was all a joke and he was sorry.' The judge then banished him from the Vega Baja until the formal case was heard (may be some time!), withdrew his passport and banned him from leaving the country. This Covidiot now has to return to his home, probably Madrid and look forward to a good roasting when the case comes to trial.

There has been **fierce criticism of the toll company** Ausur when it decided to increase the toll price during the Easter period on the Orihuela Costa stretch of the AP-7 from €2.25

to €4, one of the most expensive sections of motorway in Spain. It is used almost exclusively by vehicles on long trips, those



from Madrid; lorry drivers etc, residential tourists with housing on the coast tend to avoid it. This 10 km stretch of thw AP-7 is the only one carrying a toll charge. The free sections have a passing frequency of 20,000 vehicles a day and drivers in the region try by to avoid the toll, which barely exceeds 7,000 a day during peak times. Ausur, which has not commented on this latest controversy, was awarded the highway concession in November 1998 for fifty years! So the toll will remain until 2048 unless the company is paid off by the government, i.e. the taxpayer.

Keep a look out for the **chancers and opportunists** locally. My good mate and roving reporter Alby was speaking to a retired lady in the short queue outside Consum this week. She told him she went to Gama to buy two chicken breasts for her cat and was charged €16! Also this week, I popped down to one of the *farmacias* in Los Balcones. After I got by prescriptions, I was asked if I wanted a facemask - pensioners plus the most vulnerable are entitled to three free masks. The lady then asked if I would like a better one - cost €7 plus and not washable! A pharmacist in San Javier is being investigated for selling facemasks for €10 each.

My wife met me at the door wearing a see-thru negligee.....Unfortunately, she was just coming home!

Rodney Dangerfield

## MORE LOCAL NEWS

The **illegal sale of animals** on the internet is a dark business that is increasing in Alicante. The Civil



Guard detects an increase in the trafficking of dogs, cats and other species

through web portals that facilitate purchases between individuals. Organized networks import litters from Eastern Europe to maximize profits and these animals are kept in crowded and dirty conditions. This photo from an illegal kennel in Alicante.

The illegal trade in animals in the province transcends the domestic pet market, as it has been proven in many different operations of the Civil Guard. For example, in mid-2018, 40 protected species of reptiles were seized in a house in Alicante, among which were a four-meter anaconda, several pythons, alligators and even a crocodile in the compound of a single-family house in the capital. Alicante. This operation led to another that ended with the seizure of 93 reptiles and five turtle specimens (four of black turtles and a leper turtle, both endangered species), of which their legal origin could not be accredited.

In the Calle Mayor, at La Mata, a supermarket of the Unide cooperative chain, **the owner tests the temperature**

of customers about to enter, photo. One has to be under 38 degrees to enter. In 18 days he has



rejected only two. Customers also get a squirt of hydrogel to clean their hand and gloves before they enter. Thousands of residents from all corners of Spain (mainland Spain and the Basque Country above all) and Europe live there. Many second homes began opening at the beginning of the confinement.

I forget where it was in the Vega Baja, but when this particular chap was returning from shopping, the police stopped him. They checked his shopping bag and found he had bought some chocolate, a can of Coke and a pack of sausages. They felt that this was just a 'curiosity trip' and issued him with a **€601 fine!**

While Spain continues in lockdown there is a tendency for other issues to be sidelined or even forgotten, but very recently there was a reminder that in Murcia the condition of **the Mar Menor lagoon** remains a major concern although the national government recommended tripling the width of the proposed "green belt" around the lagoon, which was never done! This would mean restrictions on agricultural practices including the use of fertilizers being extended to all locations within 1.5 kilometres of the shoreline, and the recommendation comes at a time when the latest water quality measurements make for worrying reading: the average depth of visibility in the Mar Menor was just 0.84 metres on 27th March, as opposed to 4.47 metres a year ago; the level of chlorophyll in the water is around 25 times higher than 12 months ago and the lagoon's salinity is almost exactly the same as that in the Med' whereas in "normal" conditions it is between 15 and 20% higher. After several year's warnings, nothing positive has been achieved or done to remedy this disaster - it has just been left to happen! This is due to the failure of the local politicians to act. No doubt in a year or so we will all be asked to donate money to 'save' the lagoon while the **politicians protect the large farming interests.**

Mayor Eduardo Dolón of Torreveja has announced a battery of measures to help lessen the economic impact of the pandemic in the city to the value of **5 million euros**. Details of the 15 measures being introduced can be found here -

<https://www.diarioinformacion.com/vega-baja/2020/04/06/torreveja-asegura-reducira-25-ibi/2253439.html>

One of these measures is to reduce the IBI by 25% to merchants and individuals who have been affected by the crisis. We've heard nothing from Orihuela!



"I should warn you that the kitchen staff may contain nuts."

Why do the English make better lovers than the Germans?

Because the English are the only ones who can stay on top for 45 minutes and still come second!

## What's happening elsewhere?

**Drug dealers** are having to resort to creative measures to continue distributing while under lockdown. In Alicante, two dealers were arrested after posing as a delivery service on scooters for food such as pizzas etc. They carried containers identical to the real courier services, photo. When police searched their containers they found cocaine and cash. The Guardia Civil were monitoring the car park in a shopping centre in the Alicante town of Novelda when they observed some suspicious behaviour between the occupants of two cars in the parking area. They checked the vehicles and found half a kilo of marijuana in one of the vehicles and scales and pots in the other, but no pizzas. After the men were arrested the police searched one of the houses of the dealers. There they found 558 marijuana plants in different stages of growth and distributed throughout the house. They also found 15 kilos of plant buds. Two years ago the same guy was arrested with 16 kilos of marijuana buds in his possession.



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The Guardia Civil were monitoring the car park in a shopping centre in the Alicante town of Novelda when they observed some suspicious behaviour between the occupants of two cars in the parking area. They checked the vehicles and found half a kilo of marijuana in one of the vehicles and scales and pots in the other, but no pizzas. After the men were arrested the police searched one of the houses of the dealers. There they found 558 marijuana plants in different stages of growth and distributed throughout the house. They also found 15 kilos of plant buds. Two years ago the same guy was arrested with 16 kilos of marijuana buds in his possession.

The cancellation of most flights in Spain and also in the rest of the European airports will cause the Alicante-Elche airport, according to estimates, to **lose around six million passengers this year** and drop to the traffic level of 15 years ago. The terminal is practically closed to commercial traffic with only three flights per week from Barcelona, which is currently operated by the Vueling company. Aena has reduced the space in the terminal by 75%. One of the services that remains open in the terminal from early in the morning until 23:00 is the pharmacy!

The board of staff of the Alcoy health department has reported that a funeral home is **refusing to pick up the deceased** inside the Virgen de Los Lirios Hospital while in the midst of the coronavirus crisis. This is increasing the work of health personnel.. According to the information provided, They will only collect them outside the hospital.

The obdurate Catalans are at it again.. The Spanish Military Emergency Unit (UME) has been sent to Catalonia (and other regions) by the national government to mainly **disinfect nursing homes** in the area. You will no doubt be aware that the ruling separatist coalition regional government don't want anything to do with Madrid nor the Spanish establishment. The Army have now formally complained of the lack of cooperation and coordination from the region's government. Rather than have the national army do the job, the region's lunatic president, Quim Torra, ordered private companies and even the fire brigades to disinfect the relevant nursing homes, which the army was instructed to do. When the army did eventually get entry to some of the nursing homes, they found that the disinfection carried out by the private companies was negligible and unsafe.

The national daily El Pais visited the ICU at the at Vall d'Hebron Hospital in Barcelona, the following being just a short piece from their disturbing report: "The ICU is a hostile place. It's not right for everyone," nor are ventilators a cure-all, according to the experts.

Here, **the nursing staff are exhausted**, perspiring heavily under their plastic PPE and wearing three pairs of gloves for security. The latter they say made it very difficult to choose intravenous points. .Regarding a controversial instruction from the Catalan Medical Emergency System, **which endorsed limiting the intubation of people over 80** depending on clinical criteria, the healthcare director at Vall d'Hebron explains that "it is not a question of rights or age discrimination. Entering the ICU is a tremendous challenge; you have to be very strong to spend three weeks there. It is not a question of abandoning anyone, but of offering the most dignified treatment we can, and often that dignified treatment is not about wiring you up to the hospital's machinery.

People come here and think they can be saved from anything, and it's not true. If the treatment is not going to help them, it's better not to do it."

### Groan Joke Number 3.

Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great were rivals for the position of First Consul of Rome. They spoke before the Senate, putting forward their cases for election to the post, by recounting their deeds in the service of Rome.

"When the Gauls attacked Rome, I defended the city," Pompey said, "and drove them all out killing 100,000 Gauls." "I invaded Gaul," Caesar said, "and I too slew 100,000 Gauls."

So the Senate gave the position to Caesar because in Europe away Gauls count double.

This African bloke walked up to our back door the other day holding a bucket. He handed me the bucket and said, "Can you fill this up with water please?" I said, "Bloody hell pal, how many miles have you walked for this water?" He said, "None, you cheeky bastard, I'm your window cleaner."

## Don't Nag Your Husband During Lockdown, Malaysia's Government Advises Women!

Malaysia has the largest number of COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asia with more than 2,900 and counting. This week, Malaysia's government also had a serious public relations issue after an ill-conceived plan went online. Malaysia's Ministry for Women, Family and Community Development issued a series of online posters on Facebook and Instagram with the hashtag #WomenPreventCOVID19. It advised the nation's women to help with the country's partial lockdown by not nagging their husbands.

The ministry also advised women to refrain from being "sarcastic" if they asked for help with household chores. And it urged women working from home to dress up and wear makeup.

"(It) is extremely condescending both to women and men," Nisha Sabanayagam, a manager at the advocacy



group All Women's Action Society, told Reuters.

"These posters promote the concept of gender inequality and perpetuate the concept of patriarchy."

The posters drew swift ridicule online. "How did we go from preventing baby dumping, fighting domestic violence to some variant of the Obedient Wives Club?" wrote @yinshaolong.

"Avoid wearing home clothes. Dress up as usual, put on make-up and dress neatly. OMG! This is what Rina, our Minister of Women, Family & Community Development thinks is important during the #COVID19 lockdown?" tweeted @honeyean.



Five months into his coma, Brad's wife finally finds the words to bring him back to life.

After this torrent of abuse, the ministry abruptly relented late Tuesday and abandoned its campaign. It said its suggestions were simply aimed at "maintaining positive relationships among family members during the period they are working from home."

The ministry acknowledged that the advice could have offended some people and promised to "remain cautious in the future."

Women's groups around the world have warned that the lockdowns could result in a rise in domestic violence, and some governments are reaching out to women in need. The latest World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap index puts Malaysia at 104 out of 153 countries when it comes to women's political empowerment and economic participation.

But, the ministry's advice to women was not the only governmental misstep as it confronted the coronavirus. The country's movement control order on March 18 specified that only the "head of the household" should leave the house to purchase necessities. While the order did not indicate whether that person was male or female, men took it upon themselves to brave the grocery store. It didn't work out so well for many! Facebook posts showed male heads of households having a tough go of it in the aisles, either staring in confusion at lists in their hands or taking instruction over their cellphones from central command back home.

The supermarket chain Tesco Malaysia recognized there was a problem and swiftly came to the hapless male shopper's aid with a how-to guide.

It proclaimed, "Now all husbands can shop." And assured them, "Here at Tesco, we have your back!"

In the week or so since that announcement, men may be getting a little better at the supermarket. And with the swift climbdown on its original announcement, the women's affairs ministry is apparently learning, too.

### The Farm Trip

My wife is a primary school teacher, and related this tale after another class returned from a trip to a working farm: My wife asked little David if he had enjoyed the trip. "Yes it was great - we saw sheep, horses, goats, and fuckers."

Wife: "Er, fine, fine. I know what the sheep and the rest are, but what is a fucker?"

David: "Oh, they're the animals that give us milk."

Wife: "But who said they were called, er, fuckers?"

David: "That was our teacher. Well, actually she called them "effers," but we all knew what she meant."

### The Scouser.

The dependant stood defiantly in the dock and said to the judge: 'I don't recognize this court.'

'Why?' barked the judge.'

Because you've had it decorated since the last time I was here.'

# SLUGGISH RESPONSES TO PANDEMIC

## The Virus and the Spanish Minister of Health!

However it is lockdown and the Covid-19 virus which is dominating life here at the moment.

Looking back at the last couple of months, it is fair to say that the Spanish government's response to the virus has been very sluggish, with some of the regions, namely Madrid and Valencia leading the pack.

On February 3, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the EU to collect medical supplies during the early stages of the coronavirus expansion. The government **ignored the advice and did not see the need** to make additional purchases of material to "guarantee that health workers are protected."

Then on February 11, the government **did not see it pertinent** to take advantage of the "window of opportunity" of which the WHO warned on February 11 to buy a remnant of equipment - masks, gloves, protective glasses, respirators, surgical gowns or beds, among others - that would allow them to face a possible massive contagion that finally did come true four weeks later, in early March.

The Socialist Executive also did not follow the conclusion reached by the 27 partners of the European Union on February 13: "Monitor the risk of shortages of medicines and equipment imported from China ." Spain's Minister of Health, stood out that same day from those who wanted to stock up just in case: "Spain has a sufficient supply of personal emergency equipment at this time." The ministry added a phrase in the statement detailing the minister's position: "And work is underway to continue securing stocks in the event of an outbreak expansion."

But the truth is that it was not done, and it was not until **after the announcement** of the state of alarm - **March 14 -**, that the ministry began to order masks and gloves on a large scale in the Chinese market. Spain's Minister of Health, is Salvador Illa. What is unusual, even for the current 'Frankenstein' government, is that Illa has never worked nor received any qualification in the medical profession!

## Grandma, the Oracle.

Little Tony was nine years old and was staying with his grandma for a few days. He'd been playing outside with the other kids for a while when he came into the house and asked her, 'Grandma, what's that called when two people sleep in the same room and one is on top of the other?' She was a little taken aback, but she decided to tell him the truth. 'It's called sexual intercourse, darling.' Little Tony said, 'OK,' and went back outside to play with the other kids.

A few minutes later he came back in and said angrily, 'Grandma, it isn't called sexual intercourse, it's called Bunk Beds! And Jimmy's mom wants to talk to you.'

First, the doctor gave me the good news: I was going to have a disease named after me.

Steve Martin

Illa, photo, has been in a paid political position since the age of 21. Considered by the media as 'a manager', it is fair to say that his managerial skills during the current crisis have been abysmal. He fits in well with the rest of the current Spanish government. (Matt Hancock, Britain's Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, is an economist by profession and has also never worked in any type of health service.)



## Britain's response also sluggish.

But Spain is not the only slacker in acting quickly. **Britain missed three opportunities** to be part of an EU scheme to bulk-buy masks, gowns and gloves and has been absent from key talks about future purchases, as pressure grows on ministers to protect NHS medics and care workers on the coronavirus frontline. The UK government has previously said it was unable to join the EU's procurement schemes as it had not received the email, which is a bit like saying 'the dog ate my homework.'

As a result, the UK government missed out on mass procurement of medical ventilators, and has now called on UK manufacturers to build tens of thousands more. But it has also not been involved in two rounds of bulk purchasing of PPE, which were launched by the EU on 28 February and 17 March.

The UK has now scrapped plans to buy thousands of ventilators from Formula One group - Renault and Red Bull F1 teams - as clinicians feared the device was not sufficiently complex to be suitable for treating Covid-19. Efficiently functioning devices must be switched to different settings while the patient's lungs are being cleared and the proposed 'F1' machine did not lend itself to frequent changes.

There are still many other big names in the UK having a go, but this should have been done many months ago and will still take some time.

## Spanish Covid-19 Statistics 12:52pm, 18/04/20

Cases in Spain:	Deceased:	Recovered:
191,726	20,043	74,662

Cases in Valencia:		
9,795	1,042	4,306

Cases in Vega Baja: (Includes Torrevieja & Orihuela.)		
455	52	(as of 17/04/2020 16:06)

The Orihuela Health Department has the lowest incidence of the disease in the Valencian Community, according to data from the Department of Health.

## MAINLY SPAIN!

The national government in Spain have taken advantage of the 'state of alarm' to **neutralize the Transparency Portal**. This tool, intended for any citizen to ask the Administration for accounts of their management, is currently empty of content. In this way, the Executive has no obligation to report, unless it wants to do so "on its own.", on aspects as relevant as the costs and beneficiaries of the contracts it grants to companies in the health sector in the midst of the coronavirus crisis.

At the regular government press conferences, the government also **tried to provide the questions to be asked!** Hundreds of journalists rejected this control at La Moncloa Palace briefings defending their 'Freedom to ask.'

**Real Madrid players have agreed to take a pay cut of 10-20%** due to COVID-19. The Madrilenos players, along with the coaches and 'main directors' will take the pay cut in order to help the club in this troubling time. The Los Blancos said: "The decision to reduce wages was taken by players, coaches and employees to avoid traumatic measures that affect the rest of the workers."

Meanwhile, **Arsenal players reject a 12.5% pay cut** to aid the club, which would also apply if they did not qualify for the Champions League when football restarts. The majority of the players (and obviously their agents) demand a wage deferral with no conditions relating to the Champions League. The announcement that Arsenal's executive team will waive more than a third of their earnings over the next year would appear to place the ball firmly in the players' court. All the executive team are well remunerated but none earn close to a top-end Premier League salary. The club also made it clear they are "not currently intending" to furlough staff and nor are they considering sackings.

The business association, Confecomerc, estimates that **20% of businesses in the Alicante province will close** after the coronavirus crisis. Rafael Torres, president of the association says "Aid from the central and regional administrations is not enough and will be received far too late. It is needed now."

According to Spanish Ministry of Health, **more than 25,000 health workers had contracted the disease from work, of whom 31 have died.** Meanwhile police unions and associations estimated last week that 14,000 officers had been infected. But for the remaining 130,000 cases there is no clear information about the source of the infection. What's more, there are no detailed figures on how many senior care residents and care workers have been affected by the virus. The minister however, has warned of another "important" site of infection: the home.

The coronavirus cases identified now correspond approximately to infections that happened between 10 and 15 days ago – the average time between a person getting the disease and experiencing such severe symptoms they need to be taken to the hospital or emergency room, which is when they are included in the Health Ministry's tally. **This means that the infections occurred after the first phase of the lockdown**, which was implemented on March 14 after the government declared a state of alarm, and before the total shutdown of all non-essential activity, which came into effect at the end of March.

**Spain's Balearic Islands** will take a €1.8 billion tourism hit and face 400,000 job losses. As many businesses opt to implement ERTes, a temporary lay off of workers, some 400,000 people are expected to be impacted. This prediction by the General Workers Union (UGT), represents an astonishing 80% of the islands' labour market. Over 50% of hotels in Spain's Balearic Islands will NOT open this year as owners accept that 2020 will be tourist-free.

On April 15, the Minister of the Interior, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, has sent the government delegations a communication with the instructions to process the sanctioning procedures for infringement of the Law on Protection of Citizen Security during the state of alarm. The document also establishes the way in which the police must fill in the reports and the amounts of the different fines for violation of article 36.6, including **€601 for unauthorized movement without other circumstances, 1,500 euros for going to the second residence without justification** or 10,400 euros for "inappropriate attitude of the offender" or "organization or participation in common activities", such as parties. There are 12 different categories of offence with fines ranging from €601 to €10,400. Some fines could have reached up to €30,000, but the minister kept the highest level at €10,400. Most of the offences fined in the province of Alicante have been for disobedience or resistance to the authority or its agents in the exercise of their functions. These can attract the highest fines.

### Turkey.

Turkey passed a bill to temporarily release 45,000 prisoners. Parliament approved the measure to ease overcrowding in jails in an effort to avert a coronavirus outbreak in the detention facilities. Opposition parties criticized the law for excluding those held on terrorism charges, including journalists and politicians.

A recent poll conducted by Exceltur showed that 58% of people in the UK and 40% of people in Germany will **not go on holiday this year** due to fears over the virus. (I think the percentages will be much higher.) Moreover, airlines operating in the European Union have on average grounded 98% of their fleets.

## Spanish Writer Spills Beans on UK's Saucy Secrets

Continental Europe may long have looked, askance and appalled, at Britons' ability to hit the sauce on an empty stomach, and then to keep on hitting it. Before hitting it some more.

But, equally baffling to foreign eyes, noses and stomachs is the UK's consumption of a rich and strange array of actual sauces.

Handily for Spaniards, one of the country's eminent cultural diplomats and noted gourmands has just produced a guide to what to expect – and what to reject – when confronted with the conundrum of the UK's many condiments.

Ignacio Peyró, a journalist and author who is also the director of the Instituto Cervantes in London, begins his 1,000-word piece for Spanish Esquire with a wily disclaimer: "Railing against British food is a passion capable of bringing together not just visitors to these isles but also the locals themselves ... whether justified or not, the bad reputation of English food remains one of the most dependable things in this world."

From there on, things are appropriately



bittersweet. English mustard – "the most patriotic" of all British sauces – harbours "such a devastating

strength that it scorches the unsuspecting palate as thoroughly as the most spiteful chilli". Ditto horseradish sauce.

Peyró has the grace to acknowledge that Marmite isn't really a sauce before dismissing it as "filth", and moving on to mint sauce. Perhaps, he suggests, the herbal accompaniment is used to disguise the advanced age at which people in the UK like to eat their lamb. In Spain, he adds, they tend "more towards infanticide when it comes to matters ovine".

Branston pickle is "a classic snack for drunk people", while HP sauce is "a sickly-sweet, unsophisticated" barbecue-sauce-style affair consumed in "its hectolitres" with Sunday morning English breakfasts across the land.

There are, however, exceptions. Piccalilli – aka "mustard with other stuff", aka "that noble Anglo-Indian spiritual creation" – is great with ham, he concedes. Bread sauce, meanwhile, is a "splendid and vital accompaniment to a good Scottish partridge", and Peyró can't for the life of him fathom why "it's had less success abroad than Ringo Starr's solo career".

And then there is the brown alchemy contained in a bottle of Lea and Perrins, which demands to be unleashed and applied liberally to a piece of Welsh rarebit – "as it is by all good Britons".

For all his ribbing, Peyró, who has lived in the UK for two-and-a-half years, is enthusiastic and knowledgeable when it comes to UK produce and cooking. He is a fan of its kippers, soups, fresh raspberries, oysters, fennel, "really, really good eggs", and what he calls its "extraordinary range" of beers – even if many would not suit a Spanish summer afternoon's drinking.

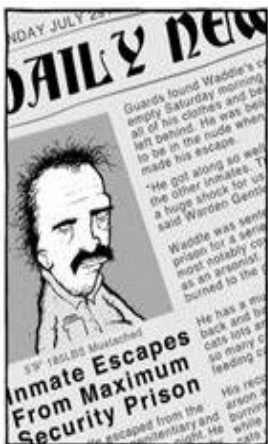
"I always defend British food and I think it's not as well known as it should be," he told the Guardian.

"You've got wonderful things, such as pies – chicken and leek pie, for instance, is a marvellous thing – which are lovely because they're sort of ancient foods; a bit like Henry VIII's tupperware. And besides, a pie is always something special.

Then you have the roasts. You just can't argue with roast beef."

But, as with his heretical stance on Marmite, there are some things he fears he will never get his head or mouth around.

"To be honest, I don't think anyone from the continent ever gets used to rhubarb," he admits. "People say, 'Oh, but it's such a beautiful colour!' But no. You do what you can, but it's impossible." (Sam Jones in Madrid, The Guardian 9/4/2020)



Everyone wants to save the earth. No one wants to help Mom dry the dishes.

P.J. O'Rourke



# ARE THE REPORTED PANDEMIC STATISTICS FROM SPAIN ACCURATE?

According to Spain's Health Ministry, fatalities from Covid-19 reached xxxxxxxx on But authorities in towns and cities around the country paint **an even darker picture** in which the extent of the outbreak's devastation could be far larger than official figures suggest due to an under-diagnosis of the virus.

The Health Ministry's official figures reflect the deaths of patients who have been tested for Covid-19, probably in a hospital. But in private homes and care homes around the country, many more are dying from the effects of the virus, often undetected.

Isabel Ayuso, Madrid's regional president, revealed that some 3,000 out of Madrid's 52,000 care home residents died in March, triple the number that would normally be expected in the month. Most were never tested for Covid-19 before dying – there simply wasn't time - and their deaths did not feature in the Covid statistics.

Compiling figures released so far from regional authorities across Spain up to Friday, at least 3,600 elderly care home residents have died due to Covid-19. Spain's government has ordered that autopsies should only be carried after deaths caused by violence in a move aimed to save on vital medical resources.

Spain's National Epidemiological Centre is tracking civil registry death notifications, with its latest report from Friday suggesting that deaths in the past two weeks were up by almost 8,000 on an average nationwide figure for this time of year, in keeping with official statistics on diagnosed Covid-19 cases.

However, there has been a log-jam in data being revived from many civil registers.

Spain has only one fully sealed off area - the Catalan town of Igualada, which has a population of 70,000 under quarantine. The town's mayor, Marc Castells, commented "We have had 140 deaths in March, compared to an average of 46 over the past five years. The health department has confirmed 40 deaths from Covid-19. It just does not add up, and common sense tells us that the other 50 or so did not die for the sake of it."

On March 6, The Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, has confirmed that the nursing homes and inmates infected by Covid-19 are more than those recorded by the Generalitat of Catalonia, since "practically no tests have been done" in the centres. Colau asks the president, Quim Torra, to send material and troops to the residences, as well as guidelines on possible transfers, since, as she points out, "the situation is not

## **An Oldie but a Goldie!**

An Englishman, a Scotsman, and an Irishman walk into a pub. They proceed to each buy a pint of Guinness. Just as they were about to enjoy their creamy beverage a fly landed in each of their pints and became stuck in the thick head. The Englishman pushed his beer away from him in disgust. The Irishman fished the offending fly out of his beer and continued drinking it as if nothing had happened. The Scotsman too, picked the fly out of his drink, held it out over the beer and then started yelling:

"SPIT IT OUT, SPIT IT OUT YOU BASTARD!!!"

under control."

Relevant data from burials in Castilla-La Mancha indicate that the death toll from coronavirus is much higher than the official one. During March 2019, there were 1,691 deaths in the region. In March 2020, the total deaths came to 3,319, but only 708 were reported to be from the virus. The Superior Court of Justice there stated that in the first days of deaths from coronavirus, this cause of death "did not always appear" in documents, "mainly due to the failure to submit many of the people affected to tests or analytics that duly accredited said contagion. " And this despite the fact that "all the signs and symptoms of the pathologies immediately causing death pointed to said infection as the main or determining cause of it."

The Health Ministry Coronavirus death total for Castilla la Mancha on March 31 was 708. On April 7, the regional High Court certified 1,921 there up to that date. The total the Spanish government gave for that day in that region was only 36.9% of the real total! Spain Health Minister says govt. will use definition of Coronavirus death they have been using and that he has spoken to regional health minister in Castilla la Mancha about the issue.

The president of the PP of Extremadura, José Antonio Monago, confirmed on April 1, that "many more people die from a coronavirus than is said", as there is, as he added, "an order" to "hide the real number" of deaths. In his opinion, in Extremadura, a little more than 130 people have died from coronaviruses and "it is not true," since the Government, through a directive from the Ministries of Health and Justice, "is cancelling the autopsies and indicating that the death by coronavirus without test should be noted as unconfirmed. Through a press release, Monago explained that said directive maintains that "if a person dies without having undergone the test, in the death part, the last one considered correct, that is, multiple organ failure, must be included as immediate cause, respiratory stress or acute respiratory failure." In addition, the intervention of forensics has been limited and **autopsies will only be performed in cases of violent death or in which there is a clear suspicion of criminality.**

"We still do not know the number of infected and deceased by coronaviruse because they have not been massively tested," added Monago, who believes that "without evidence there is no curve to overcome by not knowing today the number of infected or deceased." Great! If , as well as not counting the Coronavirus dead properly and spending weeks trying to control the story, the government is now going to deny reality,

## WORTH KNOWING

### If you need to complete a Will now....

The Spanish Civil Code allows you to make your will from home in the event of a pandemic like that of Covid-19. Normally a will is made before a notary. But now this can be somewhat difficult due to the quarantine. Fortunately, the law provides for an exception so that a person can grant an open will without the presence of a notary: Article 701 of the Civil Code provides that "in the event of an epidemic, the will can be granted without the intervention of a notary before three witnesses over the age of 16", as reported by the law firm Dpj. If you choose to make a will in this case, it is important that the will be written. If this is not possible, either because the witnesses do not know how to write or because they cannot at that time, the will would be valid, even if it is not written, as long as the witnesses included in the law are present. However, given the technological moment in which we find ourselves, it is advisable that the will of the deceased be clear and we could, for example, record that will by voice or video.

### How to obtain and download the draft of the Income Tax document for 2019

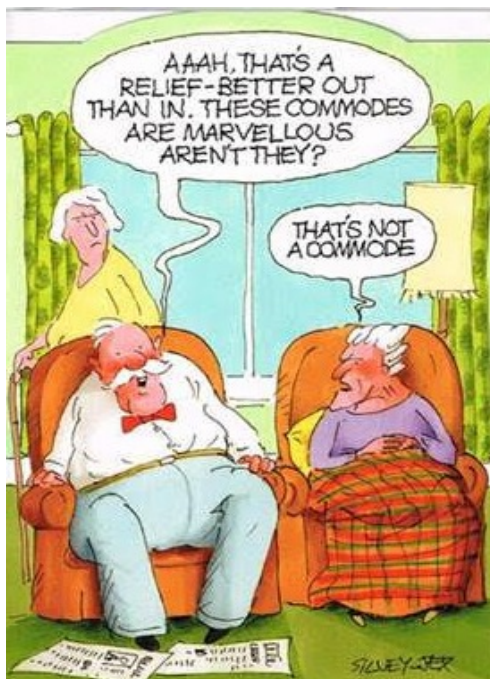
Getting the document and completing the declaration is very simple on the Tax Agency website

<https://www.agenciatributaria.es/AEAT.internet/Renta.shtml>

This website is also available in English.

The following website gives you a step-by-step guide to completing the form in Spanish. You can of course translate it online.

[https://www.diarioinformacion.com/especiales/declaracion-renta/2018/04/obtener-descargar-borrador-renta-n372\\_30\\_42956.html](https://www.diarioinformacion.com/especiales/declaracion-renta/2018/04/obtener-descargar-borrador-renta-n372_30_42956.html)



Sue Robinson

Housework? The way I figure it, when my husband comes home, if the kids are still alive, I've done my job.

Roseanne

### British to Get New ID card - in Due Course!

British residents will be able, in time, to apply for a 'biometric residence document' from the Spanish and other EU governments. The European Commission has adopted a decision that ensures governments issue UK nationals living in the EU, who are covered by the Withdrawal Agreement, with 'simple and uniform' documentation (TIE) that meets high security standards, making it difficult for counterfeiters. This is likely to be an identity card with a facial image and some personal information, valid for possibly five to ten years.

A spokesperson for the British Embassy said **'Anyone who is legally residing in Spain by the end of this year will be covered by the withdrawal agreement. The important thing to remember is that, whether someone has the green certificate or the new TIE once it is introduced, both will be proof of a person's residence and their status as a beneficiary under the Withdrawal Agreement. It's also important to be aware that there will be no deadline by which time UK nationals already in possession of a green certificate must have a TIE, so there is no need to panic.'**

The Embassy also stated that they will provide information on when the TIE will be introduced and the process for applying when it has been provided by the Spanish government. So, no rush!

So, whatever happened to Brexit? At this stage I cannot see the UK adhering to the cut-off of end December 2020.

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

**All emergencies in Spain: Call 112 (Can speak to you in English)**

**Ambulance (ambulancia) and health emergencies Call 061 or 112**

**Fire brigade (cuerpo de bomberos) Call 080 or 112**

**Local police (policía municipal) Call 092.**

**Civil Guard (guardia civil) Call 062.**

**National Spanish police (policía nacional) Call 091**

**Red Cross 24/7 Helpline 900 100 333**

**Gender violence: 016 and 900 116 016**

**Costa Blanca Samaritans [www.samaritansinspain.com](http://www.samaritansinspain.com) | 900 525 100**

## IDIOTS & ODDITIES OF THE MONTH.

The current crisis and lockdown certainly seems to bring out the best and the worst in people. Here, we'll mention a little about some of the worst.

A 21-year-old nut-case appeared on local TV in California issuing stupid challenges to be recorded in social media. He decided



to meet one of the challenges himself by licking the rim of a toilet bowl and putting it on Twitter. Just a week later,

this genius found himself in hospitals with the Coronavirus. Be thankful he is not over here and dating one of your daughters!

A 47-year-old man was arrested in Almoradi for multiple crimes. He was denounced for skipping the lockdown on five occasions without justification. He was also charged with two robberies, one the theft of high-pressure machine which he was seen and videoed by local residents as he was dragging it through the town streets. When arrested he had a dangerous dog with him and he threatened and tried to intimidate the police. No doubt he got a good talking-to at the police station later.

Dying for a fag? Well this French chap almost did! He set off by car from his home in Perpignan, France, to drive to Spain for some cheap tobacco. But as he was heading for the Spanish town of La Jonquera, he was turned back by border guards who were enforcing coronavirus restrictions. And here it was that it all went horribly wrong. Instead of driving home, he decided to walk to his destination along a hiking path across the mountains that separate France from Spain - the Pyrenees, no less. His misfortunes began when he fell into a stream. After climbing out he continued to wander – cold wet and shivering – off the path and straight into a bed of brambles.

At this stage, he was completely lost but he did still have his mobile phone, which he used to call for help. Mountain rescue teams scrambled a



helicopter for the search which quickly found him “exhausted, shivering with cold and lost” above the border village of Le Perthus. Unfortunately, his bad luck did not end there as the Gendarmes slapped him with a €135 fine for breaching France's coronavirus lockdown rules. I suppose he was very lucky he wasn't charged for the helicopter rescue.

A motorist called Astin Martin has been handed a driving ban after being caught doing 93mph in a 30mph zone. The driver from Northumberland, whose full name is Astin Martin O'Brien, 30, led police on a dramatic chase before being jailed for eight months. The vehicle he chose for his high-speed escape bid? A Ford Fiesta!

A large fire broke out in a farm at Bramham, near Leeds, on Saturday after a pig swallowed a pedometer. The device – used to prove that the pigs are free range – was eaten, then excreted; its battery reacted with the pig's excrement and dry hay in the pig pen. North Yorkshire fire and rescue service was called to put out the 75-square-metre blaze. It said that it had successfully managed to “save the bacon”.

A pensioner in France who was given a surprise flight in a £70 million fighter, the Rafale-B jet, photo, as a retirement present was flung out at 2,500ft after grabbing the ejector seat handle to ‘steady himself.’

The pensioner had ‘never expressed a desire to take part in a flight like this, and especially not in a



Rafale,’ reads the report by the Paris-based BEA (Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis). Despite this, his colleagues at the defence contractor where he had worked, set up the flight at the Saint-Dizier airforce base, in north-west France.

The pensioner, meanwhile, had expected a gentle ascent, but the plane ‘climbed at 47 degrees’, compared to around 10 to 15 degrees for a standard passenger plane. This was when the Frenchman reached out to hang on to anything to steady himself and pulled the ejector handle. There was a loud bang, with the force of the ejection tearing his unsecured mask and oxygen mask away. He also lost his helmet as it hadn't been securely fastened as he was hurled into the air. His anti-g force suit had also become loose. Fortunately, his parachute opened automatically and he landed in a field close to the German border. The pensioner suffered some back injuries but nothing major. The pilot managed to land the aircraft with some cuts to one of his hands due to the broken canopy.

It seems that the Covid-19 lockdown has baffled a large herd of goats in Wales. Normally the goats remain in the Great Orme and only venture down in stormy weather, but they have now ventured down to the streets and gardens of Llandudno in droves. Normally they are very shy of humans, but the lack of people now walking around has encouraged them. The locals now see them as entertainment, even though these Kashmiri goats are eating the flowers and bushes from their gardens.



### Sound Advice!

A man arrived home from work to find his wife in bed with his friend.

Angered by the betrayal, the husband rushed into his study, produced a gun and shot him dead.

His wife shook her head in disgust and said: ‘If you keep behaving like this, you'll lose all of your friends.’

## CARE HOMES - A DISASTER!

There are approx. 5,500 care homes in Spain. Two thirds of them are privately owned. During the latter part of March, the Spanish army were instructed to go and disinfect them. On reaching some of the homes, the military found that some of the homes had been abandoned with the residents being left on their own.

They also found in some that residents who died in their beds were just left there. There followed an outcry and cover-up, with the government promising that those workers who abandoned their charges would be found and brought to justice. Good luck with that. Even before the pandemic, the Spanish legal system was progressing as its usual snail's pace. When, post pandemic, other activities begin to return to normal, the pace of Spanish justice will be even slower.

In care homes across Britain, a silent crisis is unfolding. While the Government has focused its attention and resources on protecting the NHS, the 433,000 older and vulnerable people living in social care have largely been abandoned. Care homes wanted to impose lockdown restrictions as early as March 3 but government guidance did not come until March 13<sup>th</sup>. The true scale of that neglect was laid bare during the second week of April, when the chief medical officer, Professor Chris Whitty, admitted that outbreaks had occurred in 13.5% of the nation's 11,000 care homes. Sir David Behan, a former chief executive of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and now the executive chairman of Britain's largest care home operator, HC-One, has said the figure could be

higher. Some 232 care homes run by the firm – two-thirds of the total – have confirmed or suspected cases of Covid-19.

Remember that the number of Covid-19 infections and deaths in care homes in both Spain and the UK are not



added to the national figures. It is the same with the Covid-19 related home deaths. This is mainly because of the lack of testing. Fortunately, the Spanish experience in the British care homes has not been repeated, although the relevant staff and residents have little or nothing in the way of personal protection equipment, some very brave and caring staff remaining in lockdown with the residents.

It is interesting that in Ireland the fatalities reported also include those from nursing homes and the community (homes). EU figures suggest that half of all deaths may take place in care homes, and their exclusion from the daily UK figures is puzzling.

Adjusted for population, there have been 7.4 deaths in Ireland for every 100,000 people. In the UK, there have been 17 deaths per 100,000. In other words, people are dying of coronavirus in the UK at more than twice the rate they are dying in Ireland, noting that the Irish figures also include the deaths in care homes and at home.

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# SWEAT PANTS/TRACKY BOTTOMS!

*Okay, I have to say from the outset that I am not a fan of them socially and when I see people wearing them in bars and restaurants, I think it is pure laziness. As Sean Macaulay in The Daily Beast wrote, "Sweatpants are the universal wardrobe shorthand for sloth and lassitude." But we are both obviously in a minority. So, is it comfort over style, or both?*

30%: Share of respondents to a 2019 survey who said they don sportswear only for sporting purposes

60%: Share who wear it as athleisure

9%: Rise of the athleisure market in 2019

\$167 billion: Value of the athleisure wear industry

39%: Increase in sold-out sweatpants from Jan. 1 through March 16, 2020

40%: Increase in sweatpant sales at Net-a-Porter in the first week of Covid-19 lockdowns

\$800: Price of sweatpants at the very highest end of the market

\$100: Approximate cost of materials and labour for \$800 sweatpants

## BRIEF HISTORY

1920s: France's Le Coq Sportif founder Émile Camuset invents sweatpants as a comfortable sportswear option for athletes.

1932: Wool sweatpants are common apparel at the Summer Olympics.

1948: The Italian Olympic team wears tracksuits designed by hurdler and future fashion icon Ottavio Missoni.

1967: Adidas produces apparel for the first time, beginning with a tracksuit promoted by soccer player Franz Beckenbauer.

1976: Rocky is released, featuring the now-iconic training scene with Sylvester Stallone sporting gray sweatpants and a sweatshirt.

1982: Jane Fonda wears fashionable workout wear in her exercise video, including colourful tights and leg warmers.

1986: Run D.M.C. drops the single "My Adidas," a watershed moment in sneakerhead history—but don't sleep on the matching sweatsuits.

1993: Seinfeld jokes that wearing sweatpants in public is basically a sign of giving up.

1998: Entrepreneur Chip Wilson opens the first Lululemon store in Vancouver, branding themselves as the luxury yoga pants store, giving women a more flattering option from baggy sweatpants.

2004: Britney Spears marries Kevin Federline, surrounded by bridesmaids in pink velour tracksuits.

2013: Athleisure wear hits the mainstream markets, as denim sales start to decline.

"A track pant is the single article of clothing as likely to be worn in a refugee camp in Calais, or by a south London DJ, an Asian grandfather on a walk, or a supermodel," writes Ayesha A. Siddiqi in Ssense. "Like denim jeans before them, which were once only strictly for cowboys, we've reached full saturation of the tracksuit."



## Truth will out!

A married couple is driving along a highway doing a steady forty miles per hour. The wife is behind the wheel. Her husband suddenly looks across at her and speaks in a clear voice. "Darling," he says. "I know we've been married for twenty years, but I want a divorce."

The wife says nothing, keeps looking at the road ahead but slowly increases her speed to 45 mph. The husband speaks again. "I don't want you to try and talk me out of it," he says, "because I've been having an affair with your best friend, and she's a far better lover than you are."

Again the wife stays quiet, but grips the steering wheel more tightly and slowly increases the speed to 50. He pushes it. "I want the house," he says insistently. Up to 55. "I want the car, too," he continues. 60 mph. "And," he says, "I'll have the bank accounts, all the credit cards and the boat." The car slowly starts veering towards a massive concrete flyover. This makes him a wee bit nervous, so he asks her: "Isn't there anything you want?" The wife at last replies - in a quiet and controlled voice. "No, I've got everything I need" she says. "Oh, really?" he inquires, "so what have you got?" Just before they slam into the wall at 95 mph, the wife turns to him and smiles. "The airbag, Asshole!"

## The Real Woman's Way!

*This may be ten years old (like the hair in my ears) but it's worth repeating...*

Delia's Way

To keep potatoes from budding, place an apple in the bag with the potatoes.

The Real Woman's Way

Buy Smash and keep it in the cupboard for up to a year.

Delia's Way

When a cake recipe calls for flouring the baking tin, use a bit of the dry cake mix instead and there won't be any white mess on the outside of the cake.

The Real Woman's Way

Tesco's sell cakes. They even do decorated versions.

Delia's Way

If you accidentally over-salt a dish while it's still cooking, drop in a potato slice.

The Real Woman's Way

If you over salt a dish while you are cooking, that's tough shit. Your family will eat it and be grateful for it, no matter how bad it tastes.

Delia's Way

Wrap celery in aluminium foil when putting it in the refrigerator

The Real Woman's Way

It could keep forever for all I care. Who eats it anyway?

Delia's Way

Brush some beaten egg white over piecrusts before baking to give beautiful glossy finish.

The Real Woman's Way

Sainsbury's frozen pie directions do not include time-wasting instructions to brush anything over anything.

Delia's Way

Cure for headaches:

Take a lime, cut it in half and rub it on Your forehead.

The throbbing will go away.

The Real Woman's Way

Cure for headaches:

Take a lime, cut it in half and drop it in 8 Ounces of vodka.

Drink the vodka. The throbbing won't matter any more.

Delia's Way

If you have a problem opening jars, try using latex dishwashing gloves. They give a non-slip grip that makes opening jars easy.

The Real Woman's Way

What do you think men are for?

Delia's Way

Freeze leftover wine into ice cubes for future use in casseroles and sauces.

The Real Woman's Way

Leftover wine???? HELLO!!!!

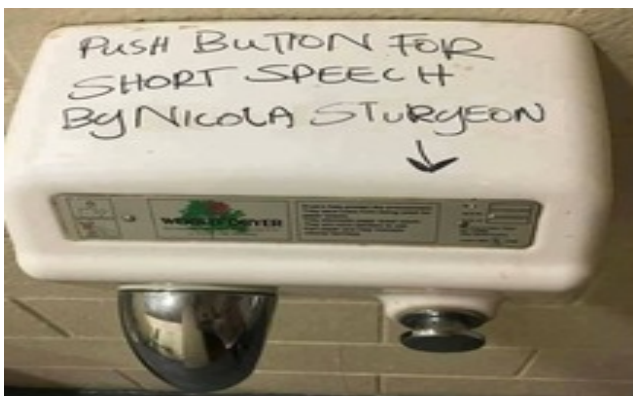
### LET'S HAVE A GO AT THE POLITICIANS!

This Welsh guy (now, he could have been Scottish?) gets shipwrecked on a desert island. The only two other survivors are a sheep and a dog. After a few weeks, the man starts to get sexually frustrated and starts looking at the sheep. He stands on the beach each night with his two companions, but each time he approaches the sheep, the dog growls as if it knows what the man is up to.

After a few more weeks of frustration, a storm hits the island and there's another shipwreck. In the morning, the man finds the only survivor. He's amazed to find that it's Priti Patel - the UK Home Secretary, no less!

After a few more nights on the beach with the dog and the sheep watching the sun go down, he finds Priti eyeing him up and down, licking her lips. She slowly approaches him and in her sexiest voice she asks him if there is anything she can do for him.

The man thinks a bit, smiles at her and replies... 'There sure is, can you take the dog for a walk?'



I'd like to smack smug parents who say, 'Our three-year-old's reading Harry Potter.'  
Well, my three-year-old's smearing his shit on the fridge door.

Jack Dee

# The Food Expiration Dates You Should Actually Follow

(From The New York Times - I think!)

With most of us quarantined in our homes, chances are you've been reacquainting yourself with the forgotten spices and fusty beans from the depths of your pantry. But how fusty is too fusty? When is the right time to throw something out? And what about fresh ingredients? If I'm trying to keep supermarket trips to a minimum, how long can my eggs, dairy and produce keep?

**Here's the first thing you should know: Expiration dates are not expiration dates.**

Food product dating, as the U.S. Department of



Agriculture calls it, is completely voluntary for all products (with the exception of baby

food, more on that later). Not only that, but it has nothing to do with safety. It acts solely as the manufacturer's best guess as to when its product will no longer be at peak quality, whatever that means. Food manufacturers also tend to be rather conservative with those dates, knowing that not all of us keep our pantries dark and open our refrigerators as minimally as necessary. (I, for one, would never leave the fridge door open for minutes at a time as I contemplate what to snack on.)

Let's start with the things you definitely don't have to worry about. Vinegars, honey, vanilla or other extracts, sugar, salt, corn syrup and molasses will last virtually forever with little change in quality. Regular steel-cut or rolled oats will last for a year or so before they start to go rancid, but parcooked oats (or instant oats) can last nearly forever. (Same with grits versus instant grits.)

White flour is almost certainly fine to use, no matter its age. Whole-wheat and other whole-grain flours can acquire a metallic or soapy odor within a few months. This whiter-equals-longer rule of thumb is true for nonground grains as well. Refined white rice, for example, will last for years, while brown rice will last only for months.

This is because unrefined grains contain fats, and fats are the first thing to go off when it comes to dry pantry staples. Tree nuts, typically high in fat, will go rancid within a few months in the pantry. (Store them in the freezer to extend that to a few years.)

For things that go stale, it's the opposite: Shelf-stable supermarket breads made with oils (and preservatives) can stay soft for weeks in the fridge,

but the lean, crusty sourdough from the corner bakery will be stale by the next day and probably start to mold before the week is up. (I slice and freeze my fancy bread, taking it out a slice at a time to toast.)

Dried beans and lentils will remain safe to eat for years after purchase, but they'll become tougher and take longer to cook as time goes on. If you aren't sure how old your dried beans are, avoid using them in recipes that include acidic ingredients like molasses or tomatoes. Acid can drastically increase the length of time it takes beans to soften.

We all make fun of our parents for using spices that expired in the 1980s, but, other than losing potency, there's nothing criminal in using them (unless you consider flavourless chicken paprika a crime).

What about canned and jarred goods? As a rule, metal lasts longer than glass, which lasts longer than plastic. So long as there is no outward sign of spoilage (such as bulging or rust), or visible spoilage when you open it (such as cloudiness, moldiness or rotten smells), your canned fruits, vegetables and meats will remain as delicious and palatable as the day you bought them for years (or in the case of, say, Vienna sausages at least as good as they were to begin with). The little button on the top of jarred goods, which will bulge if there has been significant bacterial action inside the jar, is still the best way to tell if the contents are going to be all right to eat. Depending on storage, that could be a year or a decade. Similarly, cans of soda will keep their fizz for years, glass bottles for up to a year and plastic bottles for a few months. (Most plastics are gas-permeable.)

Oils, even rancidity-prone unrefined oils, stored in sealed cans are nearly indestructible as well (as evidenced by the two-gallon tin of roasted sesame oil that I've been working through since 2006). Oils in sealed glass bottles, less so. Oil in open containers can vary greatly in shelf life, but all will last longer if you don't keep them near or above your stovetop, where heat can get to them.

How do you tell if your oil is good? The same way you would with most foods: Follow your nose. Old oil will start to develop metallic, soapy or in some cases — such as with canola oil — fishy smells. Don't trust your nose? Put a drop on your fingertip and squeeze it. Rancid oil will feel tacky as opposed to slick.

Also from the oil-and-vinegar aisle: Salad dressings will last for months or over a year in the fridge, especially if they come in bottles with narrow squeeze openings (as opposed to open-mouthed jars).

**(Continued on next page.)**

## Continued from previous page - **The Food Expiration Dates**

Mustard lasts forever. Ketchup will start to turn color before the year is out, but will still remain palatable. Contrary to popular belief, mayonnaise — especially when it doesn't contain ingredients like fresh lemon juice or garlic — has an exceptionally long shelf life. (High concentrations of fat, salt and acid are all enemies of bacteria and mould.)

The international aisle is a den of long-lasting sauces, pickles and condiments. I've yet to find the quality inflection point for oyster sauce, pickled chiles, chile sauces (like sambal oelek or Sriracha), fermented bean sauces (like hoisin or Sichuan broad-bean chille paste) or fish sauce. Soy sauce has a reputation for longevity, but I keep mine in the refrigerator to fend off the fishy aromas that can start to develop after a few months in the pantry.

We all know what a rotten egg smells like, right? Why else would it be a benchmark for describing so many other bad smells? But how many times have you actually smelled one: Once? Twice? Never? Probably never, at least according to the impromptu poll I conducted on Twitter. That's because it takes a long time for eggs to go bad.

How long? The Julian date printed on each carton (that's the three-digit number ranging from 001 for Jan. 1 to 365 for Dec. 31) represents the date the eggs were packed, which, in most parts of the country, can be up to 30 days after the egg was actually laid. The sell-by stamp can be another 30 days after the pack date. That's 60 full days! But odds are good that they'll still

be palatable for several weeks longer than that. You'll run out of hoarded toilet paper before those eggs go bad.

We've all accidentally poured some clumpy spoiled milk into our cereal bowls. It seems as if our milk is perfectly fine, until it's suddenly not. How does it go bad overnight? The truth is, it doesn't. From the moment you open a carton of milk, bacteria start to digest lactose (milk sugars), and produce acidic byproducts. Once its pH hits 4.6, that's when casein (milk protein) clumps.

Want longer-lasting milk? Look for "ultrahigh temperature," or "UHT," on the label. Milk in these cartons has been pasteurized at high temperatures (275 degrees Fahrenheit: hot enough to destroy not only viruses and bacteria, but bacterial spores as well), then aseptically pumped and sealed into cartons. Most organic milk brands undergo UHT. (Bonus: In the blind taste tests I've conducted, most people preferred the sweeter flavour of UHT milk.)

And as for baby food — the only food with federally mandated use-by dating — that expiration date represents the latest date that the manufacturer can guarantee that the food contains not less of each nutrient than what is printed on the label, or, in the case of formula, that it can still pass through an ordinary rubber nipple.

If it comes down to it, rest assured that you'll still be able to eat the baby food and gain some nutritional benefit long after the zombie apocalypse.

## **Wearing a Mask with Glasses!**

*Took this from the New York mag - The Cut.*

The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (in the US of A) announced on Friday April 3, that it recommended the use of a cloth face covering for all people in public settings. If you're like me, the first thing you noticed when using a cloth mask was that it caused your hot breath to funnel right into your glasses, instantly making them foggy and useless.

I hate to break it to you, but there is no simple, perfect trick to solve the problem of foggy glasses. But there are a few methods you can try.

- Insert a flexible "nose" into your homemade mask. If you're able to mould your mask around your face using a flexible "nose," you can probably prevent a good amount of fogging. And if you're handy and planning on sewing your own mask, you can use an online tutorial like this one to insert something bendable (like a bobby pin or a pipe cleaner) into a pocket at the top of your cloth mask.

- Wash your glasses with soapy water.

According to a 2011 study released by the journal of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, performed to help doctors whose glasses fogged up while using surgical masks, washing your glasses with soapy water and letting them air-dry before you go out can help reduce fogging.

Your glasses become foggy while you're outside because your hot breath causes condensation on the cool surface of the lenses, and surface tension causes it to stay there. "Washing the spectacles with soapy water," the study says, "leaves behind a thin surfactant film that reduces this surface tension and causes the water molecules to spread out evenly into a transparent layer."

- Move your glasses toward the tip of your nose. This is something I'm doing personally, and it seems to work ... uh, fine. I just move my glasses down the bridge of my nose, so they're less in the direct trajectory of hot breath escaping my mask. It does make it a little harder to see, but not as hard as fogginess does. (By Kelly Conaboy)