Almería Living
A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local
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ESTABLISHED 1986
Welcome to our December issue of Almeria Living - the last for 2019.
I CAN SEE!!! It is truly amazing and I am delighted. Many of you will know I have been struggling for some time with my vision (rather a problem for a magazine editor?). I had my second cataract extraction last week and my right eye is now my best buddy. I am a wimp when it comes to doctors and hospitals so, for those who have wrapped me in cottonwool and looked after me (especially Nina), thank you very much.

Don’t forget we have an amazing array of Christmas cards, wrapping paper, diaries, calendars & crackers in stock at C.A.T. Services - as a special offer, crackers can be purchased by the box or individually! Don’t forget you can also send all your parcels and cards with us too - last posting dates for Christmas are on our Facebook page.

Harmony Havens are having a Mince Pie and Mulled Wine morning on Friday 13th - why not pop along and join them and help raise money at the same time. They also have a raffle with some fabulous prizes on display (to be drawn 20th) - tickets are on our Facebook page.

The Team at Almeria Living would like to wish all our readers and advertisers a very Merry Christmas and all the very best for 2019.

Karen (Ed)

Papers, Papers Everywhere...

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Are You Registered at the Correct Surgery

An issue that has cropped up quite a bit recently is trying to arrange a doctor or nurse to make a house visit for someone who is housebound and unable to make it to their surgery.

This is not a problem if you are registered with your local surgery because they can make the house call and carry out the necessary actions to help the patient - even calling and travelling in an ambulance with the person if the need arises.

If you are registered at a surgery in another town or village and find it impossible to get out then you will have to rely on calling an ambulance with a doctor/nurse onboard. This team of professionals are also required for emergency call outs so they are very busy people. They will also not have access to your medical records or know your history like your own GP.

If you would like help with this then give us a call or visit the office.

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Spanish Provinces & their Capitals

There are 50 provinces in Spain, each with its own capital city which usually, but not always, carries the same name as the province. Our next of Spain’s provincial Capitals takes us to Lugo.

Lugo in Lugo

The largest of the four provinces that constitute the autonomous region of Galicia, Lugo is nonetheless penultimate when it comes to inhabitants. Covering an area of 9,856 km2 it has a population of only 331,327 which gives it a population density of 33.61 inhabitants per km2, which is only about a third of the national average.

The province of Lugo lies in north western Spain and borders on the Cantabrian Sea, the provinces of A Coruña, Pontevedra, Orense and León, and the Principality of Asturias.

The highest point in the province is Mustullar in the Sierra de Ancares. It reaches 1,935 MASL and is situated on the border with the province of León.

The province boasts stunning countryside and a host of small, historic villages, each with their own unique past and many quaint buildings.

The coastline of Lugo, which is constantly battered by the Atlantic Ocean, is rugged and wild, and on the Playa das Catedrais (Beach battered by the Atlantic Ocean, is rugged and wild) and so much more

The Chestnut

The chestnut group is a genus of eight or nine species of deciduous trees and shrubs in the beech family Fagaceae, native to temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere.

The chestnut tree is native to Spain and has been cultivated in Andalucía since the 14th century when lands previously owned by the Moors were given to chestnut growers from northern Spain after the Christian re-conquest.

The main chestnut producing areas of Andalucía are Malaga, where an early fruiting variety is available already in September, and Huelva, home to large forests of tall, ancient chestnut trees.

Chesnuts are also widely cultivated in other parts of Spain. On a global basis, about 500,000 tons of chestnuts are produced every year, 120,000 of them in Europe. Spain produces some 18,000 tons, mainly in the regions of Asturias, Galicia, Catalonia and Castilla-León.

The fruits are harvested from September to December, and the chestnut is considered a winter fruit.

The chestnut is a round, shiny brown fruit with white-yellow pulp. It is usually enjoyed roasted, but it has many other uses and presentations, and is, in fact, very versatile.

It can be eaten fresh, roasted or boiled; it can be bought peeled and frozen for cooking, or transformed into flour, confecionery, liqueur, purées and marmalades; one of its most famous guises is marron glacé, a chestnut candied in syrup and glazed.

The chestnut is also appreciated for its health benefits. It is rich in vitamin B and phosphorus and thus helps keep the nervous system healthy. It is highly recommended for people suffering from physical and mental stress. It contains tryptophan amino acid which is relaxing and can help you sleep.

Unfortunately, the chestnut is also greatly loved by worms, and to avoid residue, the cultivators try to limit the use of insecticides.

The most favoured way of dealing with unwanted consumers is leaving the chestnuts in 50°C warm water for 45 minutes, which helps control fungus and at the same time enables the producers to eliminate chestnuts with worms, as these will float on the surface.

Over recent years, the Spanish chestnut production has suffered from the influx on the market of chestnuts from China, which are sold at a price that is hard to compete with. True chestnut lovers will appreciate the difference in flavour, though, as the European chestnut, Castanea sativa is far superior to the Chinese genus, Castanea mollissima.

The Chestnut

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The Three Kings, whose most important job, it seems these days, is to bring presents to Spanish children, may not be kings at all!

They were definitely magi, or wise men, and Iraq; they were a class of priests, who kings at all!

The Jews had spread word all over the Middle East that a Messiah was coming, the King of Jews, who would, like all great persons, have a star which would predict his fate.

The Three Wise Men saw the star and followed it, riding their camels, to Bethlehem, where it stopped above the stable where Jesus had been born.

The Three Wise Men called it the Star of Jesus and said that they had seen it in the Orient and had come here to worship him.

According to the legend, the Three Wise Men brought presents for Jesus: Melchior, an old man with a long beard, carried gold, as befits a present for a king; Gaspar, young and hairless, carried incense (a resin based perfume which was burned in the temple) to pay homage to the divinity of Jesus; and Balthazar, of the black race, carried myrrh, a perfumed powder which was mixed with oil and used for consecrating celestial bodies interpreted as having an influence on human affairs and the natural world.

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But were the Three Wise Men really kings?

There is no historic proof that they were, and it has been thought that the reported royalty was bestowed upon them because of the rich presents they brought. Also, in the Book of Psalms, Psalm 72.10, they are referred to as kings: May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts.

And were they really three?

In graphic representations there have often been just two, as for example on a fresco from the Roman cemetery San Pedro and San Marcellino; and on a vase which can be seen in the Kircheniano Museum in Rome, there are no less than eight!

But in the majority of depictions, there are three, and this number is also supported by other facts. They carried three gifts: Gold, franciscense and myrrh, one present from each. They have also been thought, according to scripture, to represent the three original races generated through Noah’s 3 sons: black African the people of Ham, Arab the people of Shem and White European or Oriental Asian the people of Japheth.

But at the end of the day, all this is just speculation.

The fact remains that today there are Three, and they are definitely Magic Kings!

And they are very busy kings, especially in the months of December and January. Throughout the month of December they are occupied reading the many letters from Spanish children who tell them how good they have been all year long, and also (now there’s a surprise) what presents they would like.

In early January the Magic Kings rush around to all the cities, towns and villages of Spain and sit in public places and let children climb onto their laps and listen to their wishes.

On 5th January they participate in parades from north to south, sometimes on their camels or, when the camels are tired, at the back of lorries filled with sweets, which they throw to the excited children along the route. And then comes the really exhausting bit: They now have to hurry round to all the homes in Spain and put the correct presents in the correct shoes (or bags) which have been put out ready for their visit.

And when 6th January dawns, they’d better have finished, because the children will be up very early to look for their presents.

The Magic Kings have then done their duty for one more year, and most homes will have left milk and turrón out for them to help them recover before their journey back to the Orient, where they have a few months to gather their strength before next year’s rush.
CORA'S DIARY
They Told Me to Go into Rehab...

Hoooolaaa, it’s mee-heee - Stiff Cora!

I just got mum to read out to me how far I’d got last month with updating you on my muscle problems, and it seems like I haven’t talked to you for ages!

So much has happened, and I’ve become quite the seasoned traveller and I’ve been keeping mum busy and I’ve met Grass and...

Sorry! I’ll stop right here and start from the beginning!

I don’t know if you recall that Uncle Javier (My Personal Physician) had shown my x-ray to the Specialist, but he had. And just when we were going to see him on the Tuesday, Auntie Daniela (Uncle Javier’s Personal Assistant) phoned to ask whether mum could bring me on the Monday instead for The Specialist to meet me In Person.

I reckon he must have noticed how good-looking I was (am!) and that was why.

So mum cancelled work (I’m glad to see she has her priorities in order!) and we went over to the Clinic Monday morning. Both Uncle Javier, Auntie Carmen and The Specialist were standing on the pavement waiting when we arrived, and it made me feel very important!

They asked mum and me to walk up and down the pavement so that the Specialist could see how I walked. I tried my best to walk beautifully, but my right back leg let me down, and it became my usual, slightly twisted gait.

We then went inside and The Specialist examined me closer, it was all really nice and I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and Auntie Carmen made quite a fuss of me.

The Specialist, whom I have now come to know as Uncle Alejandro (My Personal Physiotherapist), told mum that the problem is that the inner muscle on my right back leg is turning into fibre and thus getting less flexible. That was all mumbo-jumbo to me, but I did understand when he said that I’d never be as good as new, but he should be able to stop it from getting worse. I suppose you have to be grateful for small mercies, but I’m a bit upset to think my agility days are over...

Continued on page 10 .....
So he and mum agreed that I should go to his place for some treatment which mum called Rehab, but I’ve trained her to call it Physio because I think that sounds as very important as it actually is.

When I got home Bru was there to greet me, completely unaware of the importance of my morning out although I’d tried to get it through to him before I left. But alas, to no avail. Where have you been? he whined. I’ve been bored, can we play now? I sighed. Sure, I said, but do try not to harge into me when I’m running. What, he teased, are you getting old? In no way, shape or form, I said, but I have had a very painful examination of my sore leg (this was a white lie, it hadn’t really hurt), so it’s a bit wobbly. Bah, he said, it’s always wobbly! Well yes, I replied, but it’s a bit wobblier than usual. Now, shall we play or not?

And out we ran to play and we had a great time, and it made me feel like a puppy!

On the Thursday, both mum and dad came home from work early, and both me and Bru got really excited. And I don’t know which one of us got more surprised when mum proceeded to lifting me into the car and telling Bru to stay home with dad. (Bru has never actually been alone at home without me, which is a bit pathetic really, so this must be why dad came home).

I love being in the car alone with mum, although it frustrates me that I must be why dad came home). But thankfully mum knows this and I never have to suffer long before she stops.

We soon stopped for me to do my business – I always have to go as soon as I get into the car, although I can’t feel the least urge before. But thankfully mum knows this and I never have to suffer long before she stops. But when we got back in the car we weren’t going to Uncle Javier as I had imagined, she turned onto a big road and drove and drove before she stops. Mum, who had been asked to hold my other leg up a little so he could get to the sore one, was so tense that I thought she’d pull it off, so I protested and tried to get down and mum was so surprised when mum proceeded to letting me into the car and calling me ‘Pequeña’, which I really liked, and he took my mind somewhat off the heat. All the while Uncle Alejandro talked to me and called me ‘Pequeña’, which I really liked, and he took my mind somewhat off the heat.

We went onto the field, and it was all soft and spongy and smeet wonderful! And I realised that this must be the Grass that our Chrissie used to tell me about when she had been on holiday to Denmark. I absolutely loved it, and decided that I wanted to come here every day and play and run around!

Soon Uncle Alejandro came and he called me over. I trusted him immediately and went straight to him and he made a fuss of me and told me how beautiful I was (am!).

So as you can imagine, we hit it off straight away having immediately found common ground and something we could really agree on! He then invited me and mum into a small building – and things went downhill after that!

He sat mum on a low sofa and she then asked me to lie down on a mat at her feet. Sure. I said, no problem. Not on that side, Uncle Alejandro said, I really need the bad leg to be on the book; Now, I don’t mind lying down when I’m told to, but I do take exception to being told that I have to get up and tie down again. But I’m also a Good Girl, so I did as I was told (slightly grudgingly) and my treatment began.

First Uncle Alejandro massaged the stiff muscle, and it was a bit uncomfortable but not too bad. He then said he would use laser to warm up the muscle, and proceeded to asking me and mum to wear goggles before he put his own on.

He moved a little stick up and down my leg and at first it felt quite nice and warm, but it soon got too hot and I protested and tried to get up, but mum told me to stay, so I did, ‘cos I’m good like that.

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Finally, he gave up and had to put me back on the floor, and I immediately and went straight to him and he made a fuss of me and told me how beautiful I was (am!).

Afterwards he told me how beautiful I was (am!), which I really liked, and he took my mind somewhat off the heat.

Mum, who had been asked to hold my other leg up a little so he could get to the sore one, was so tense that I thought she’d pull it off, so I protested and she noticed what she was doing and tried to relax. But to no avail. Where have you been? he whined. I’ve been bored, can we play now?

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Mum, who had been asked to hold my other leg up a little so he could get to the sore one, was so tense that I thought she’d pull it off, so I protested and she noticed what she was doing and tried to relax.
I don’t know whether to be pleased or disappointed - I adore running on the grass before the session, and I really like Uncle Alejandro, but mum says that there are also other considerations, such as money. Not my problem! Is all I have to say to that.

We also do physio at home every night, and although I get quite sore, I do feel so much better when we are out on walks and really fancy a good run - only mum won’t let me! I’m allowed to canter calmly along the track, but no off-the-track mid-subit-chase-rumination or anything fun like that. But Bru is allowed, and it gets quite frustrating sometimes, but then I just try to remember how it hurt before from time to time, and I don’t want to get like that again.

Soon it will be Christmas, and I shall ask Father Christmas for a new muscle for my back leg. And a new brain for Brutus, now I get to think of it... Hmmm, that’s an interesting thought! Wonder whether he’ll oblige!

And now all that remains is wishing you all a very happy Christmas!!!

Next time I talk to you it’ll be a Brand New Year, and we’ll all be belching after our Christmas indulgences - don’t you just love it!!! And then I’ll tell you how I’m getting on with my physio, and what I got for Christmas, and whether Bru got a new brain!

Until then, woof woof!
By Bill Riley

Yes, the joint is in the oven, the potatoes are peeled, the pigs are in their blankets, the Cava is nicely chilled – time to get the glasses out! Lovely as it is on its own, let’s liven the Cava up a bit this year. Here are a couple of suggestions:

Kir
Invented by Canon Felix Kir, Mayor of Dijon in the Burgundy region of France, Canon Kir was a hero of the French Resistance who, when the Nazis stole all the red Burgundy, added Creme de Cassis (blackcurrant liqueur) to ordinary white wine and Kir was born. The result resembled red wine – an act of defiance. A ratio of four parts wine to one part Cassis is about right. If sparkling wine, such as Cava, is used the Kir becomes Kir Royale. In the absence of Creme de Cassis one can use blackcurrant cordial.

Bellini
It originated in Harry’s Bar in Venice – a watering hole frequented by the rich and famous. Giuseppe Cipriani was a barman who in the 1930s lent money to an American, Harry Pickering. After the war, a grateful Mr. Pickering returned and financed Guiseppe in opening his bar and hotel – hence the bar’s name. Guiseppe subsequently invented the Bellini – a blend of sparkling wine and peach puree. A quick way to make the peach puree is to simply blitz a couple of peaches in the food processor and add a little sugar syrup. A ratio of one part puree to three parts Cava is fine.

Mimosa
Popular in Spain, a Mimosa is a variation of Buck’s Fizz with a hint of Cointreau or brandy to give a slight kick to the orange juice and Cava. Only freshly pressed orange juice should be used. One part juice to three parts Cava is fine though some prefer 50:50.

Many cocktail recipes stipulate using Champagne in the above drinks but there really is no point in lashing out unnecessarily when excellent Cava is available at a third of the price of Champagne. Once the juice or liqueur has been added, it is impossible to identify the identity of the sparkling wine, so save your money!

Use either Brut or Brut Nature Cava – demi-sec is too sweet, especially when the juice or liqueur are added.

Merry Christmas! © Bill Riley
SANTA’S WORKSHOP

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Wishing all our customers a very Prosperous New Year

See our main advert on page 70
Beer from Belgium, our national pride!

By Peter Rappoort

Since last month we now know that the right glass belongs to the right beer, but it is important that the beer must end up in that glass in the correct way. Just like there are wine sommeliers, there are also beer sommeliers: but the pouring of beer is much more complex than wine because depending on the type of beer, a specific pouring method also has to be used.

The Zythologist (beer connoisseur)

This is a real profession that requires training for several years, this training has received more candidates in the last few years. Those who also succeed in completing the training are often attracted by highly sought after brewery experts, and every self-respecting restaurant will employ a beer sommelier because beer is also a welcome and popular product in the culinary world.

Easy pouring without "shaking"

Ideally, hold the glass at a 45° angle under the bottle. The process is easy to start, however the foam is different for every beer. If you want a little more foam while pouring, just raise the bottle a little higher.

As soon as the beer approaches the top edge of the glass, gradually straighten the glass. It is important not to let the bottle "clock" while pouring, because then the yeast residues can come loose from the bottom and cloud the beer. So, take time to pour the beer into the glass! Also avoid any contact between the glass and the bottle while pouring.

We can almost assume with certainty that if a person pours out a Trappist beer or Duvel without the necessary knowledge, it will usually end in catastrophe.

Tapping a good beer is not obvious.

It is not for nothing that there are competitions in which beer tapping is central. Competitions such as the NK Beer tapping have proven that.

Tapping beer is more than just opening the tap, tilting the glass under it and closing it at the right time. There is more to it.

Here are eight simple steps for tapping the beer.

Rinse glass

Rinse the glass in a container with running water. The cooler the rinse water temperature, the better.

Drain

Take a few seconds to drain the glass. No rinsing water may remain in the glass.

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Faro: has a sweet-sour taste and an alcohol percentage between 4.5 - 5.5%. It is made by adding candy sugar to Lambic. Because of this sweet addition, Faro used to be especially popular with women and children. From 1885 Faro was made with Lambic of lesser quality, which reduced the popularity. The best Lambic was used from then on for Geuze beer. Interest increased again from the early 1970s.

Geuze beer: is a mixture of old and new Lambic that ferment further in the bottle. This mixing is called "sticking.” This sparkling beer is supplied in champagne bottles. Curious about the whole story behind this? Then read more about Geuze beer.

Kriek beer: also known as "Cherry Lambic", is created by adding sour cherries to Lambic beer. This was once started because the sour Lambic was not loved by the general public. The addition of the sweet flavours changed this. Meanwhile, other fruits were also being added, such as apple, banana, raspberry and peach. These drinks are known as fruit beer.

Would you like to taste the unique taste of Geuze beer or the refined sweet taste of Kriek beer? Then visit us at:

El Mirador in Albox
Plaza Nueva 2

The best breakfast in Albox from 3€
A great selection of pasties all freshly baked on the premises. They are the best quality & value in the area.

See you here soon!

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**Puzzle Time**

Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row of each 9x9 cube must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

**Rosetta**

A Rosetta is made up of a centre coloured hexagon encircled by 6 white hexagons. To complete the puzzle, fill in all 7 Rosettas with each number between 1 and 7 in no particular order while ensuring that:

1. No number is repeated in a horizontal row
2. Each number from 1 to 7 are represented in the 7 grey coloured hexagon cells

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Those of you that know me also know that I only said that for fun! I do adore Christmas and all the wonderful food, drink and treats that come with it.

Nevertheless I shall, just like last year, treat December like an ordinary month, `co's although we eat a lot of Christmassy food this month, there also have to be some normal food days.

And that’s where Cooking with Me comes in...

**Danish Plum Cake**

This recipe actually lends itself to any soft fruit, and it is really wonderful food! So if you suddenly get a sweet tooth, this is a quick and easy way of satisfying it with whatever fruit you might have knocking about.

The recipe is for eight but can obviously be halved if need be. But it also freezes and reheats really well, so you can make a great, big cake and eat it little by little. Brilliant!

**Ingredients for eight:**
- 100g butter
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 3 eggs
- 1 ½ tsp cinnamon
- 150g cane sugar
- 6 plums, deseeded and cut into wedges
- A few drops of vanilla essence
- 200g plain flour
- 50g hazelnuts, chopped

Preheat the oven to 180C.

Melt the butter in a saucepan over low heat. Using an electric hand mixer, whip the eggs and sugar to obtain a fluffy, light mix, then add the vanilla essence.

Mix the flour, baking powder and cinnamon and sieve them into a bowl. Add the eggs and sugar mixture. Mix everything, then stir in the melted butter.

Grease a 22 cm diameter spring form pan with butter and sprinkle the egg mixture. Mix everything, then stir in the melted butter.

Grease a 22 cm diameter spring form pan with butter and sprinkle it with sugar. Pour the cake mix into the pan and distribute it evenly. Press the plum wedges well into the dough - don’t worry if it gets busy, the dough rises around them and sometimes even covers them.

Sprinkle the chopped hazelnuts all over the surface and bake the cake in the oven for 30-35 minutes until it is a beautiful golden colour.

Serve it, preferably still warm, with ice cream or crème fraîche.

**Aubergine Layers with Tomato Sauce and Cheese**

**Ingredients for four:**
- 2-3 large aubergines, cut lengthwise into 1 cm slices
- 2 tsp salt
- 200g breadcrumbs
- 75g plain flour
- 2 large eggs, whipped
- 150ml olive oil
- For the tomato sauce:
  - 1 red onion, chopped
  - 5-6 cloves garlic, chopped
  - 2 tbsp olive oil
  - 2 tbsp tomato purée
  - ½ tsp chilli flakes
  - 100ml red or white wine
  - 2 tins chopped tomatoes
  - 1 tsp dried basil
  - 1 tsp dried oregano
  - Salt and pepper
  - For the cheese mixture:
    - 1 bunch fresh basil, finely chopped
    - 1 bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped
    - 100g parmesan cheese, grated
    - 100g cheddar, grated
  - Topping:
    - 125g fresh mozzarella

Place the aubergine slices on pieces of kitchen roll, or tea towels, and sprinkle them with salt. Put another layer of kitchen roll or tea towel on top and weigh them down with a baking sheet with something heavy on top. Leave them like that for an hour.

For the tomato sauce, fry the chopped onion and garlic gently in olive oil for 5-8 minutes. Add the tomato purée and chilli, stir and cook for another couple of minutes. Add the wine and let it bubble until the alcohol has evaporated. Throw in the tomatoes, fill an empty tomato tin with water and add that as well. Bring it to the boil and let it simmer for at least half an hour, preferably an hour.

Mix the fresh herbs with the grated cheese and half the grated parmesan. Mix the other half of the parmesan with the breadcrumbs.

Pat the aubergine slices dry and turn them first in the flour, then the egg and finally the parmesan breadcrumb mix. Fry them in batches in the olive oil and reserve.

Grease an oven proof dish (approx. 20x30 cm) with olive oil. Spread a little tomato sauce over the base, put a layer of aubergines on top and then a layer of herby cheese. Repeat the layers, finishing with sauce and cheese. Cover with alu foil and cook it in the oven at 180C for 45 minutes until it bubbles happily.

Take the dish out of the oven, remove the alu foil and put slices of fresh mozzarella over the top.

Return it to the oven and let it cook for another 15 minutes. Turn off the oven and leave the dish to settle for at least 15 minutes.

Serve the layers with crusty bread and a leafy salad. A lot of work, and more than worth it!!!

Some people think that food without meat is automatically boring. Others think that it is automatically healthy. Both camps are wrong, although the first more so than the second one. This dish is DEFINITELY NOT boring, and although it’s not actually UNhealthy, it is not particularly healthy either, just ordinary wonderful food!
Vegetable and Chickpea Soup

If you want to be a bit kind to your body before starting the Christmas indulgences, do make this quick and easy little dish (if you use pre-cooked chickpeas) which is also a nice warming and tasty soup!

Ingredients for 2

- 300g cooked chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 2 carrots, diced
- 3 sticks of celery, diced
- 1 courgette, half diced, half cut into thin strips
- 50g roasted red pepper (from a tin), diced
- A small handful of fresh herbs of your choice, chopped
- Olive oil, salt and pepper

Heat the oil in a saucepan and throw in the carrots, celery and the diced courgette. Let them cook for a minute, season and pour over ¾ litre of water. Bring to the boil, cover and let it simmer for fifteen minutes.

Add the red pepper, chickpeas and herbs and let it bubble gently for another five minutes.

Serve with crusty bread.

Pork Bourguignon

This is a cheaper version of the famous French dish, Beef Bourguignon, and in my opinion just as tasty! (Mind you, I am a piggy for pork, so it's just up my street!)

As far as the wine that you cook it in is concerned, a Spanish chef once said, 'Don’t use wine for cooking that you wouldn’t drink’. So in other words, it’s well worth it using a decent wine, but don’t go over the top either!

Ingredients for four:

- 1 kg shoulder of pork, diced
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 150g smoked bacon, diced
- 250g small mushrooms, wiped and left whole
- 300g shallots, peeled and halved if they are very large
- 200ml beef stock
- ½ l red wine
- 1 bouquet garni
- Olive oil, salt and black pepper

Place the meat in a large plastic bag with salt, pepper and the flour. Shake well to cover the meat all over with flour.

Heat the oil in a large casserole dish, add the meat and seal it on all sides. Add the bacon and cook until it’s golden then return the meat to the pot.

Pour in the wine and bring it to the boil. Let it boil unlidded for a couple of minutes, add the bouquet garni, lower the heat, cover and let it cook for half an hour.

Add the beef stock, bring back to the boil, lid loosely and let it simmer for at least an hour and a minute or until the meat is tender, stirring from time to time.

Adjust the seasoning and thicken the sauce a little if you like. I put a little gravy browning in as well to make the colour a little less purple...

Serve this delicious dish with mashed potatoes decorated with a few breadcrumbs fried in butter, and a vegetable of your choice. And a glass of red wine, of course! Bon appétit!!
Roscón de Reyes – Day of the Kings cake

This traditional day of the Kings sweet is a lengthy process, but well worth the effort. This particular recipe has 5 rises in total so put a day to one side. The key to the soft fluffy texture, which is a cross between bread and cake, is achieved by the pre-fermentation process. The amounts below are enough to make 2. One for you and one for a gift! Remember you need a nice warm kitchen for this to work!

Stage 1 - Pre-fermentation:

- 200 ml of just warm milk
- 120 grams of plain flour or bread flour
- 5 grams of salt
- 1 medium egg
- 1 tablespoon of honey
- 1 tablespoon of Orange blossom water (Agua de azahar)
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- Grated zest of 1 orange

In the bowl of a stand mixer place the flour,酵母 and salt. Add your butter to the flour along with all the other dough ingredients.

Mix it all together gently including the wall of flour that was left in the bowl. It is quite a soft dough, almost sloppy, so don’t panic.

Once combined, tip it all out onto the side and start to knead (here you can use the extra flour you kept on one side). As you knead (about 10 minutes or so) you will feel the dough change texture.

Now put it back in a bowl cover with cling film and leave to rise in a warm place until about double in size.

When it reaches the top of the jug, beat it back down with a whisk and after another half an hour, beat it back again and then allow it to rise one more time, so that is 3 times in total. The rises speed up as you go.

Prepare all your dough ingredients whilst you are waiting.

Stage 2: The dough

Add your flour to a large mixing bowl, make a well in the centre and place a spatula begin to carefully mix the pre-fermentation mixture into the flour, leaving a wall of flour on the outside of the bowl.

Now add your butter to the flour along with all the other dough ingredients.

Mix it all together gently including the wall of flour that was left in the bowl. It is quite a soft dough, almost sloppy, so don’t panic.

Once combined, tip it all out onto the side and start to knead (here you can use the extra flour you kept on one side). As you knead (about 10 minutes or so) you will feel the dough change texture.

Now put it back in a bowl cover with cling film and leave to rise in a warm place until about double in size.

Once risen remove the dough and knead it again for about 2-3 minutes to knock the air out of it. Line a baking tray with baking paper. Place an upturned bowl (a soup bowl is fine) in the centre of your baking tray. Take half of the dough and split into 8 equal sized balls. Work quickly, you want it to stay warm. Arrange the balls around your bowl spaced equally apart. Cover with a damp, warm, clean tea towel and leave to rise one last time until doubled in size and the balls of dough are now touching.

Stage 3 – Decoration

Mix the decoration sugar and orange blossom water in a small bowl. Cut a few of your cherries in half and cut your peel into squares and the orange flavoured sugar and arrange the candied peel and cherries on the top last.

Bake in a preheated oven at 180 - 190 deg C in the centre of the oven for about 20-25 minutes, you want it pale golden in colour so don’t overbake. Remove from the oven and leave to cool on a wire cooling rack.

Once completely cool, if you wish, you can split it horizontally in half. Whip up some double cream along with some icing sugar to sweeten it to your own taste and then fill the bottom half with cream (I used a piping bag and a nozzle).

Traditionally it has 3 gifts hidden inside. I added a little baby Jesus and a king, made out of fondant and a dried bean, each wrapped in foil separately.

Now, carefully lift the top half back on and voila! There you have your very own Roscon de Reyes. Time consuming, but so worth it!
The History of Wine

The history of wine runs parallel with the history of mankind. Wine, as we know it today, is an alcoholic drink produced from fermenting grape juice, which is possible thanks to the natural yeast present in the grapes’ husk. The name wine comes from the Latin vinum which is thought to come from the Greek oinos or even the Sanskrit vīna.

Although certain evidence points to grapes having been cultivated and their juice having been used for drinking as long as 6,500 B.C., what we consider wine is thought to have been first deliberately produced in the Bronze Ages (3,000 B.C.). Archaeologists have found indications of the first harvests of grapes for wine having been in Sumeria in the fertile areas irrigated from the river Tigris in the Middle East, in the old Mesopotamia. From Sumeria it moved on to Egypt where it was in competition with the beer that the Ancient Egyptians produced. Vines were cultivated on the banks of the Nile and a whole industry developed around the growing and harvesting of grapes and the production of wine. The Egyptians fermented the juice in large clay vessels and produced red wine. The wine soon became a symbol of social status and it was used in religious rites and pagan festivities. The pharaohs were buried with jars of wine and in the pyramids religious rites and pagan festivities.

The elaboration of wine started in Italy in the year 200 B.C. The Romans adopted the Greek wine god, but changed his name to Baco, symbol of the festivities connected with the consumption of wine. The Romans demonstrated great ability and technology when it came to wine making and even back then more than 50 different wines were produced from places such as Lebanon or Palestine. The pharaohs were buried with jars of wine and in the pyramids religious rites and pagan festivities.

Archaeologists have found pictures that symbolize the growing of the vine, harvest and elaboration of wine and the pleasure gained from wine in festivals and religious acts. The fact that the vines are so easy to grow made them spread all over Europe, the east and even China. It is thought that wine arrived on the Iberian Peninsula before the Phoenicians around the year 3,000 B.C.

In the year 700 B.C. wine arrived in Greece. The Greeks drank their wine watered down and it was used in religious, funeral and popular rites, and they even gave the drink its own god: Dionysus, who is always depicted with a chalice in his hand. Soon wine was produced in many regions of Greece, and there are even documents that show that wine was imported from far afield, from places such as Lebanon or Palestine. And it usually ended up on the tables of the noble families.

From Italy, the growing of vines extended to France. The Gauls imitated their northern European neighbours who used wooden barrels for their beer and used them for storing wine. The Visigoths took over Roman wine agriculture and a third of old Europe was planted with vines, and wine was produced in Germany, France, Italy, Spain and other countries.

In the Middle Ages land, and with it the cultivation of vine, became property of the Church and aristocracy, and the production of wine was confined to monasteries and castles. By now, wooden barrels were used all over for storing wine, and the first wine cellars appeared. In that period the wine cellars really were underground, beneath monasteries and castles, in order to protect the wine, a most valuable commodity, from looting.

In Spain, the Catholic Monarchs were conquering the land back from the Moors, and wine was planted in the conquered areas. Once the whole territory had been won back, vines were planted in the areas of Rioja and Ribera del Duero. And in the 12th century areas of Catalonia and Jerez were producing wine as well, and the first vine was planted in the Canary Islands in 1497.

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The wine soon became a symbol of social status and it was used in religious rites and pagan festivities. The pharaohs were buried with jars of wine and in the pyramids religious rites and pagan festivities.
H is for Hibiscus

I’m sure all of you know and possibly many of you grow, Hibiscus. That glossy leaved shrub with large, open flowers in stunning, bold colours.......what’s not to like? This Hibiscus, H. rosa sinensis to give it its correct name, is among one of the most well-known shrubs available here in Spain.

Hybridisers have gone mad on it and the flowers on some plants, available from specialist breeders, have to be seen to be believed. How they breed those wonderful colour combinations into the flowers is a mystery!

Needless to say, Spain is a bit lagging behind in bringing these exotic colours to the marketplace, but we can live in hope. Meanwhile there are still some beautiful new colours filtering steadily in. Hibiscus doesn’t like minus degrees as it’s originally a tropical plant and is not found in the wild so it’s exact origin may remain a mystery, but Asia seems to be its original home.

Wherever it’s from we should all be grateful it made it to Europe. It was first named by Carl Linnaeus in 1753. The flowers of the red Hibiscus are used in various ways, either as a colourant or to make into a delicious tasting tea which is said to have all sorts of health giving properties such as reducing blood sugar levels, lowering blood pressure, depression as well as being a useful diet aid. I don’t know how effective it actually is though, so maybe just enjoy it as a tasty tea or use it as a dye or colourant for food. There is one type of Hibiscus where the tea is reputed to be of serious health benefit and that is the Hibiscus sabdariffa. The dried petals of this shrub make the well-known Jamaica Tea. I am growing this for next year so will be able to see if it does what it’s supposed to! One can also buy packets of the dried H. Sabdariffa petals to make your own brew.

Continued on page 32 .....

By
Valerie Fuller
Another large flowered one is H. moscheutos, some varieties have some in a huge tub and some in the ground. They only last a day but keep on coming. I have drought-stricken part of Spain. It can grow tall, but despite this it grows wonderfully well in my few months after sowing. It prefers damp soil USA. It grows easily from seed and flowers a

Mallow or H. Coccineus, a native of south east I have grown a few different varieties over the annuals, some are perennials, and many have the many other varieties of Hibiscus. Some are beautiful fully double red flowered variety but do

family. I only have one of these in my garden, a Hibiscus available, there are many varieties in this

Hibiscus varieties is that the leaves and flowers are great food for tortoises!

Hibiscus rosa sinensis isn’t the only variety of Hibiscus available, there are many varieties in this family. I only have one of these in my garden, a fully double red flowered variety but do have a few other varieties of Hibiscus. Some are annuals, some are perennials, and many have the trademark, big, brush flowers.

I have grown a few different varieties over the past few years and my favourites are the Swamp Mallow or H. Coccineus, a native of south east USA. It grows easily from seed and flowers a few months after sowing. It prefers damp soil but despite this it grows wonderfully well in my drought-stricken part of Spain. It can grow tall, over 2 metres and comes back each year. The flowers are bright scarlet with a long stamen. They only last a day but keep on coming. I have some in a huge tub and some in the ground. Another large flowered one is H. moscheutos, some varieties have flowers the size of dinner plates. Again, this is a perennial, coming back each year and available in various colours. It is easy from seed and flowers a few months after sowing. I have some in pink and also in a deep sort of plum colour. This variety also likes a damp location, but I found that as long as I kept them watered, they all performed perfectly. Hot sun can tend to burn the leaves though so maybe a cooler afternoon spot might be better. That’s the beauty of growing in pots—they can be moved if location is wrong! These two varieties make for people stopping flower power!

Another variety I grow is Hibiscus ferrugineus. This is a native of Madagascar so again, won’t tolerate very low temperatures. It is nothing like the other varieties in that is has small, pale orange flowers and its growth is different with many small branches coming off the main stem. It doesn’t grow very tall so is good in a tub. It likes drier condition. It too is easy from seed and flowers a few months after sowing.

More of a large shrub than a border perennial is Hibiscus syriacus. It can reach 3 metres in height with almost the same in spread but is amenable to trimming and pruning. They are easy garden shrubs with a long flowering season and a positive magnet for bees. Their flowers can be either single or double and come in various shades of blue, white, pink or a mixture of all three. 4/7 I lost my pink flowered one this summer due to a serious lack of water!

Another Hibiscus to try is H. acetosella. Like many others, it is easy from seed and is a vigorous grower with beautiful red or plum coloured foliage and pinky red flowers and is drought and heat tolerant. It can be left to grow and can reach over 2 metres in height, but I think it’s best cut back each winter to then regrow with vibrant new colour in spring. Seed of all these other varieties can be bought online from most UK seed suppliers. I have limited seed available of H. coccinus and H. Ferrugineus so if anyone wants to try growing these plants PM me for my address and I’ll send you some seed to try, at no cost apart from a stamped, addressed envelope!

Apart from their beautiful flowers, another reason I like to grow Hibiscus varieties is that the leaves and flowers are great food for tortoises!

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Aerosport de Palma de Mallorca

Reading through last month’s article (I do that to see how many mistakes I have made!) I noticed that I had omitted to mention something that I had intended to include. Barcelona is a mecca for plane spotters.

Beneath the approach path to runway 25L is a purpose-built viewing area with a number of concrete “chaise lounges” to enable spotters to lay back and watch planes take off or land!

There is also a raised observation platform adjacent to the B203 road, which runs along the southern edge of the airport.

Before I look at another airport I would like to clear up a misunderstanding that is circulating on social media, to the effect that no flights are operating from Murcia during the winter! This most definitely is NOT true!

Some routes have been suspended over the winter, however.

The confusion seems to have arisen because when people search for flights to/from “Murcia” the search engine still recognises this as the old San Javier airport which, of course, does not have any flights. Unfortunately, searching for “Corvera” does not produce any results either. The full name for Corvera is Región de Murcia International Airport or Aeropuerto Internacional Región de Murcia. A search for flights to/from “Murcia International” should produce the desired result. Alternatively, try using the International Air Transport Association (IATA) code for the airport - RMU. This is the code you find on the label fixed to the handle of your suitcase when you check it in.

To move on to fields anew. Wikipedia divides airports up as major International, minor International, domestic and unscheduled. Of the seven major international, determined by passenger numbers, three are on the islands.

In fact, the third busiest airport in Spain is Palma de Mallorca International Airport (Aeropuerto de Palma de Mallorca). During the early 1920s, two airfields were constructed close to Palma. One was at Son Sant Joan and the other was at Son Bonet. However, the first real flights were operated in 1921 by Aerromarítima Mallorquina as a seaplane service from Barcelona. This was a postal service.

In 1934 there was a plan to fly tourists to the island and flying schools were established at both airfields.

In May 1935 Líneas Aéreas Postales Españolas (Spanish Postal Airlines) was established and in August began flying between Madrid and Palma with an intermediate stop in Valencia, using Son Sant Joan field.

The airline exists to this day and is now known as Iberia. A year later the route was changed to operate from Barcelona.

Continued on page 34 ....

By Mike Woolnough
Three years later Iberia and Lufthansa began operating out of Son Bonet. For several years Son Bonet was to become the civilian airport and Son Sant Joan was handed over to the military. During the Civil War, Son Bonet became a dual-use civilian/military airfield. A division of the Italian Air Force was there for a short time using it as a base to bomb the mainland on behalf of Franco. During 1946 San Bonet was provided with Customs facilities and became able to handle international traffic.

In 1954 Son Bonet received its first big groups of foreign tourists flown in mainly by BEA and Air France. Meanwhile, over at Son Sant Joan they were lengthening and paving the runways to enable F86 Sabre Jets to use the base.

However, in 1958 it was all change. It had become obvious that Son Sant Joan would be moved to Son Sant Joan. A terminal no way that its runways could be extended so the decision was made that civilian flights would be relegated to Son Sant Joan. A terminal and civilian apron were built to the south of the military area. On 10th October, the airport was due to despatch 877 aircraft to 64 airports in 17 different countries.

Not to forget Son Bonet, it is still there but is relegated to private flying and light commercial traffic.

I mentioned at the beginning that the first flight to Mallorca was a seaplane. There is still a seaplane base on Mallorca, it is a military base situated at Port de Pollença.

In recent years there has been an annual “splash-in” when seaplanes from all over Europe drop in on the base. This year the event was cancelled at the last minute. The Air Force blamed the local council who had voted against a plan to allow commercial flying into the bay. The town council says they have no wish to stop events such as the “splash in” which is a major tourist attraction. It remains to be seen whether next year’s event takes place.

After the 2015 event, the aircraft flew to the Mar Menor and landed in the bay. The town council says they have no wish to stop events such as the “splash in” which is a major tourist attraction. It remains to be seen whether next year’s event takes place.

In 1962 passenger numbers reached one million for the first time and had doubled by 1965 and in that year work on a new terminal began. It opened in 1972 and two years later a second runway (06L/24R) opened parallel to the first. By 1986 passenger numbers had risen to 10 million and another new terminal became necessary. Work began in 1993 and what is now the terminal block opened in 1997 by which time passenger numbers were approaching 20 million. The terminal comprises four modules, A and B are the two old terminals. C and D are the two new units. The airport can handle 25 million passengers a year (12,000 per hour). Last year it saw 29 million, so one wonders how long it will be before yet another module is required especially as numbers are increasing by over 10% per year!

During the summer months, the airport handles as many aircraft movements as Gatwick and on a really busy day, it can be in the region of 1,100 movements coming close to those of Heathrow! Over 70 airlines use the airport over the course of the year, many are summer visitors only.

Of the 10 busiest international routes, 7 are to German cities. Gatwick and Manchester at 5th and 6th are the top British routes and Zurich (10th) completes the top 10. For the 7 days commencing 14th October, the airport was due to despatch 877 aircraft to 64 airports in 17 different countries.
Bradley, Tracy Angela & Janice would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas & an Inspired New Year.

Come and Join us on Saturday 14th December at our GRAND OPENING EVENT 10am – 2pm. Cava, Mince Pies and a Open Day Raffle. All proceeds to MACS.

NEW RANGES Arriving Regularly.
The Chameleon

The common chameleon (chamaeleo chameleon) is a reptile endemic to the south of Cádiz and Málaga, the coast of Granada and the south and east of Almería. Single specimens or small populations can also be found in Huelva, Córdoba and Seville provinces. It has an arched body with long, slim limbs that end in strong hands with claws, excellent for gripping. The head is hard and pointed towards the back, the eyes prominent and able to look at different places at the same time (stereoscopic vision). It has no external ears, and the nostrils are very small.

The tail is prehensile and usually measures between 50 and 75% of the length of the body. The chameleon cannot lose its tail to confuse predators like lizards can, and if it loses its tail by accident it will never grow back.

The chameleon’s tongue is kept folded inside a special cavity in its mouth, and it can be as long as the whole of the rest of the animal, up to 25-30 cm. It uses its tongue for catching its prey by shooting it out at dizzying speed, and because the tip is sticky, the victim has no chance of escape once hit.

The colour of the chameleon is variable according to its mood, its surroundings and its status amongst its peers. It can be green, yellow, brown and even bluish or completely black. No matter the prevalent colour, the chameleon always has spots of a different colour on its body.

The pointed back of the head is more prominent in males than in females, and their tails are proportionally longer. However, the females are of superior size overall and they are much more robust than the males. When they have been impregnated they boast a number of yellow spots on a blue or black background to let the males know of their condition.

The mating period goes from July to September, and during those months the males get very aggressive with one another, especially in the presence of a female. When they copulate, the male holds the female in place by biting her back or stomach, however without drawing blood.

The female digs a deep hole for laying between 6 and 24 eggs after a gestation period of 20-30 days. The eggs hatch after 6-9 months and the new born chameleon babies measure 5-7 cm.

The chameleon’s staple diet is any insect that will fit in its mouth, except those who have an exceptionally hard shell. Large chameleons can even eat the newly hatched chicks of certain bird species.

Chameleons are strictly daytime animals and they spend all their time on branches in trees except when the females go onto the ground to dig holes for their eggs. When they move on the ground they walk extremely slowly with their tails in the air.

Their preferred habitat are dry areas close to the coast, obviously always wooded, which are sadly becoming few and far between as humans encroach upon the same areas for building holiday villages and urbanizations.

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Kevin gave a long slow blink. ‘To pick something up.’
coming up behind me.

‘The Post Office? Why?’ I hadn’t noticed Cyril and Mrs Worsley

‘You could be here for some time. You need to go to the Post Office.’

‘So what?’ I felt a wave of paleness pass over me.

‘It might be a long job, so……’

‘H’m.’ Kevin’s pale blue eyes met my midnight blue almost black
eyes. ‘It might be a long job, so……’

Ermentrude’s bonnet, so he didn’t hear.

It juddered and clanked, but fortunately Cyril had his head deep in

We put our hands on its side and Kevin explained where it was to go.

‘Oh yes. It has a C3PO application installed.’

He asked.

‘Let’s get it off and into the workshop. Does it understand English?’

I turned back to Kevin.

‘And Ermentrude is its personal

identification name.

and Ermentrude is its species name,

Traveller is its species name,

I suppose Morris Minor

car.

apparently it is the name of her

I looked round for Ermentrude;

she wanted to give me more

of a rattle – can you come and

and Mrs Worsley broke in. ‘I can take her there now, but how will

No, Neila has to get it herself.’

Kevin looked at Mrs Worsley and

blinked again.

‘Something like that.’

‘And they’ll have it at the Post Office?’

Kevin turned his attention to Cyril. ‘No, it has to come from the

Post Office.’

‘Better get on and order it, then.’

‘It doesn’t need ordering. It’s already there.’

Cyril scratched his head. ‘Go on then. Take the truck, you’ll be

back before lunch if you go now.’

‘No, Neila has to get it herself.’

Mrs Worsley broke in. ‘I can take her there now, but how will

Neila identify herself? They might not let her have it if she
doesn’t have proof of identity.’

‘It’s exactly because she doesn’t have proof of identity that will make them

give it to her.’

All four of us were silent.

‘Go as soon as possible.’ Kevin urged.

‘But what is it?’ Mrs Worsley insisted.

‘Is it big, or heavy? Or expensive?’

Kevin answered.

‘Something that makes it possible for her to stay on Earth without getting ill,

like an oxygen converter, or whatever?’

Mrs Worsley was speaking to

time to speak to Kevin.

As we enter December, Dream Homes Almeria approaches its 9th month of trading.

What a hectic, challenging and exhilarating 9 months it has been.

I would like to say a huge thank you to all of our clients, both buyers and sellers, my team,

family and friends and all those that have

6000€

without them this would not have been possible.

A very Merry Christmas and a very Happy 2020 to you all.
Maurice and I were chatting recently about music, likes and dislikes and he asked if I was musical, whether I played any instruments. I mentioned I studied the piano when I was a kid and played guitar now and then.

“How about you?” I asked.

“Well, I always liked blue grass music,” he said. “And, yes, I have a banjo I am teaching myself to play, not very well, but I enjoy it. The only problem is I am not allowed to play it in the house.”

“So, where do you practice?”

“In my shed, which is fine for my wife, but not so good for the neighbours!”

The last time we talked, Maurice mentioned that his career took a surprising change of direction following an unexpected phone call. It was a Swedish Recruitment Company asking if he would be interested in attending an interview for a job with a company starting a new venture.

“I was curious as they didn’t really specify who it was for or what the job entailed. Anyway, I went along and met the MD and HR Manager and found out they were looking for a Health and Safety Officer for Euro-tunnel. I’d heard about the plan to build a tunnel under the Channel, of course, but didn’t really know much more than anyone else.”

“So, you were head-hunted?” I remarked.

“Yes, pretty much. When I was working for Trinity House, I took a Health and Safety Course which I passed and apparently did so well in the assessment, these people thought I would be a good candidate for what they had in mind. It was mostly my Man Management skills which they were interested in and they offered me the job. “

“So, from a life spent on the water, you went to a life underneath it.”

“Yes, and this was 2 years before construction started. I needed training, of course, particularly on Computers, since I had no experience while at sea. I had my own office, just outside Dover and a Secretary who worked part-time. I was responsible for writing all the training manuals for all the staff who would be running the operation, from the people manning the ticket booths when vehicles arrived, to the loading and unloading of cars and trucks and everything else in between. I was also involved in interviewing new staff. It was a big job.”

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Maurice remembered one lady who came for an interview who could not read or write. Despite that handicap, Maurice saw something in her, recommended she be hired and persuaded his boss that he could train her in the aspects of Health and Safety which everyone had to adhere to. “I did it, in a week,” he said proudly. “At the end, she understood everything which was required in her work as far as Health and Safety was concerned.”

Since he had to be everywhere at once, he had a company car which was especially necessary one particular day when he was called to Platform 6. “When I got there, I found two ladies fighting! They were really going at it! I managed to get between them and calm them down but had no idea what the scrap was about and I still don’t.”

Almost every day, Maurice had to deal with illegal immigrants coming in hidden on trains. In one incident he was called out to find 40 people sitting on a platform, all in the pouring rain.

“It did have its amusing side though. One guy I remember, jumped off an incoming train, ran across two tracks and platforms and eventually climbed on to another freight train. I didn’t chase after him, I just waved at him as the train departed into the tunnel and back to France! I called the French side and told them to look out for another one on his way back!”

On another occasion, he was called to review a carriage which had raised someone's suspicion. The manifest indicated it contained a brand new coach on its way to a customer in the UK. It did indeed contain a Coach, with every seat occupied by an illegal passenger! They had arrived in style.

One incident in particular stuck in his memory. As vehicles were being unloaded a lady jumped out of her car, screaming for help. “I rushed over and she cried that her child was choking. The poor kid was turning blue. Anyway, I managed to help to stop the choking and start breathing again, normally. They drove off and I didn’t think any more about it until a few weeks later when a letter arrived from the grateful parents, thanking me for what I did.”

Maurice was there for 11 years in all but it had become very stressful. “I was contracted to work 12 hours a day but it was often many more, as the job required,” he recalled. “I did 4 days on and 4 days off. However, during my off days I got bored.”

“Didn’t you have any hobbies to occupy you?” I asked.

“No, not really, so I took on another job, working as a nurse in A&E at the local hospital. I had preliminary training of course and became a Nursing Auxiliary. Believe me, the staff were grateful for the help.”

It was during this time that Maurice and his wife began to consider moving to Spain. Christina also had a stressful job and a quiet retirement started to look very inviting. As it happened, a tempting Retirement Package was on offer from Eurotunnel.

“It came at about the right time for both of us. We had never been to Spain, but our son told us it was fantastic, so we took the plunge. I took the retirement package, we made trips over to look at properties and that was that.”

But, never one to let the grass or seaweed grow under his feet, Maurice took a job valuing houses not long after arriving and then became a DJ on a local radio station which was to last three years. But, as he has often found in life, things can take a turn.... and not always for the better.

“We had been here about 11 years when I was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. I’d been to see the doctor and was referred to Huercal Overa Hospital for tests. I couldn’t believe it at first when they told me. A friend of mine had come with me and when I came out from the Consultation asked me what had happened. I told him I had Parkinson’s disease. He didn’t quite get it and said, ‘What do you need Parking Sensors for?!’

Maurice is one of those people for whom the glass is always half full. With the aid of medication and the devotion of his family and friends, he leads a full life. Yes, he has bad days but then, so do a lot of us. He can only drive for short journeys, but apart from that, fills his time bowling occasionally, sea fishing (he’s never too far away from the ocean) pottering around his house and garden and, of course, let’s not forget the banjo!

So, from a young boy of 15, running off to sea, his life has been full of travel and adventure, laughter and tears. Here’s wishing you many more my Friend........
Flamenco Dance, Different Styles And The Role Of The Male Dancer

By Francesca Girone

As I have stated in a previous article, the origin of flamenco is a subject of disagreement. Out of all the numerous theories regarding its origin, the most popular states that flamenco was developed through the cross-cultural interchange between native Andalusians, Romani, Castilians, Moors and Sephardi Jews that occurred in Andalusia (the original name for Andalucia). The early 20th century poet Federico García Lorca wrote that the presence of flamenco in Andalucia significantly predates the arrival of Romani people to the region. What is certain is that the gypsy community took the various musical elements which already existed, and created an incredible rhythm, giving the whole genre a new, raw exciting form.

I always like to emphasize the importance of the singing (‘cante’) in flamenco. The song existed way before the guitar and the dance. Historically it was sung with an accompaniment of clapping or “knocking” of beats via the knuckles on a table. This method is still considered preferable in the intimate flamenco get togethers known as “juergas”. Juergas are magical parties which these days are less common but take place when a group of people who all have something to offer artistically get together to sing and dance.

Flamenco dance is known for its emotional intensity, and expressive use of the hands (more so in female dancers) arms and rhythmic stamping of the feet. As with any dance form, many different styles of flamenco have developed.

In the twelfth century, flamenco danced informally at gitano celebrations / juergas in Spain was considered the most “authentic” of flamenco. The arms are noticeably different from classical flamenco, curving around the head and body rather than extending, often with a bent elbow. The hands are not a focal point, they are obviously extremely important, but they are natural, not forced.

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“Classical flamenco” is the style most frequently performed by the aforementioned Spanish flamenco dance companies. It is danced largely in a proud and upright style. For women, the back is often held in a marked back bend. Unlike the more gypsy influenced styles, there is little movement of the hips, the body is tightly held, and the arms are extended, more like a ballet dancer. In fact, many of the dancers in these companies are trained in Ballet Clásico Español more than in the improvisational language of flamenco (the improvised style we call ‘flamenco de tablao’).

ROLE OF THE MALE DANCER

In the 1950s Jose Greco was one of the most famous commercial male Flamenco dancers, performing on stage worldwide and on television and reviving the art almost singlehandedly. A male flamenco dancer will always be able to demonstrate more strength than a female dancer, this is not a sexist comment, it is just a fact based on physical differences. For example, in the last few years, it has been "fashionable" for certain, more effeminate famous flamenco dancers, namely the incredible Manuel Liñan, to dance with female elements such as the "manton" (large, heavy shawl) and the "bata de cola" (the long tailed dress). Both the manton and the bata de cola are extremely heavy and difficult to manage.

When Manuel Liñan started this trend everyone said "Wow, he does it much better than a leading female dancer". Having seen him do it, I agreed too, until a male co dancer of mine at the time pointed out to me the unfairness of the comparison; inevitable a male will always have more strength than a female.

Coming back to the non classical, traditional flamenco form, firstly a male would never use these feminine elements (even if in their personal life they may have other persuasions).

In traditional flamenco the male dancer is macho and assertive. He is not required to have beautiful hand movements, but he excels in many ways.

The strength of the footwork, the distinctive male movements which creates great excitement for the spectator.

There are many incredible male flamenco dancers, it is impossible to name them all. Amongst the gypsy dancers of the modern era "Farruquito" is considered to be one of the best, coming from a legendary dynasty.
The Almeria Living Team wish all our Readers and Advertisers a very Merry Christmas and a fantastic 2020.

Thank you for your continued support.
The Tale of the Poinsettia

Poinsettia flower

There are certain plants that play important and often mysterious roles in holiday traditions and celebrations all over the world. From the Egyptians who decorated trees during the winter solstice to the Pagans and Druids who used Mistletoe in their winter rituals, stories of ritualized plant use span continents and history and have become infused into the mythologies that span generations.

The poinsettias story is just as unique as the rest, and despite this celebrated plant prominence during the holiday season, its story remains largely unknown—until now.

The story of the poinsettia is one that spans hundreds of years and contains countless twists and turns as it wound its way into our holiday canon. Although it does pre-date Christianity like its Christmas counterparts, the holiday season would not be the same without the reds and greens of the poinsettia.

Cuetlaxochitl

For us to begin, we have to go all the way back to 14th century where the plant had a long history of medicinal use in pre-Hispanic Mexico. It was said that its milky white sap, called latex, could be used to reduce fever symptoms. The plant was so highly prized in Aztec culture that Cuetlaxochitl, as the plant was known, was also used to create red and purple dyes for clothing and textiles. It is said that Montezuma, the last of the Aztec emperors, was so captivated by the plant that he would have caravans of poinsettias shipped to the capital city of Teotihuacan because the plants could not grow at the high altitude.

However, it wasn’t until the 17th century that Cuetlaxochitl, now an established decorative plant in Mexican tradition, began its journey into Christmas traditions.

The journey began in the small town of Taxco de Alarcon, Mexico where Franciscan monks began using the shrub in their Nativity processions. Coincidentally, it is also around this time that the Mexican legend of Pepita and the Flowers of the Holy Night began, forever tying the red and green shrub to Christmas folklore.

Pepita and the Poinsettia

As legend has it, a young girl named Pepita was traveling to her village to visit the Nativity scene at the chapel. Pepita did not have enough money to buy a present to give the baby Jesus at the services, however, and so she gathered a bundle of roadside weeds and formed a bouquet.

She was upset that she didn’t have more to offer, but she was reminded by her cousin that even the most humble gift, given in love, will be acceptable in His eyes. Upon entering the chapel and presenting her bouquet to the Nativity Jesus, the bouquet of roadside weeds miraculously turned into a bouquet of beautiful red flowers that the locals knew as Cuetlaxochitl.

Continued on page 54....
Joel Roberts Poinsett

During this time, the poinsettia association with Christmas was almost entirely confined to small Mexican towns and their local folklore. It remained in relative obscurity for almost two centuries before a man by the name of Joel Roberts Poinsett would introduce it to the United States and forever change theway we decorate for the holidays.

Joel Roberts Poinsett was a man of many talents. He was not only the first person to introduce the poinsettia to the United States, but he was the first U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, and was also a skilled and passionate botanist who co-founded the institution that we now call the Smithsonian Institute.

During one of his diplomatic trips to Mexico in the winter of 1828 on behalf of President John Quincy Adams, he visited the Taxco area where he wandered the beautiful countryside and became enchanted by the brilliant red leaves of an unfamiliar plant. Poinsett had kept a greenhouse on his property in South Carolina and began shipping the blooms back to his home where he studied and carefully cultivated the plants. It was not long before he began sharing the plants among his friends and colleagues around Christmas time when the upper leaves of the shrub would turn red. The reputation of the enchanting Christmas plant spread and soon a Pennsylvania nurseryman by the name of Robert Buist began to cultivate poinsettias. Buist would be the first to sell the plant to the public under its botanical name of Euphorbia Pulcherrima, and played a large role in helping to establish the plants Christmas reputation.

It was not until about 1836 that the plant formally attained its popular name of Poinsettia after the man who first brought the plant to the United States and ignited a holiday tradition that continues to this day.

In the early 1900s the poinsettia began to gain in popularity on a wide scale, when Paul Ecke Sr. developed the first poinsettia plants that could be grown indoors in grow pots. He began selling them at roadside stands in Hollywood, California, and in 1923 founded the Ecke Ranch that today provides the nearly 80 percent of the plants that are bought and sold in the country.

Today, the poinsettia is the most popular plant sold during the holidays and the best-selling potted plant in the United States. Within a six-week period leading up to Christmas there are over 70 million poinsettias sold and nearly $250 million in poinsettia sales accounted for.

In July of 2002, the United States Congress created National Poinsettia Day on December 12th to honour the late Joel Roberts Poinsett who played a crucial role in making the poinsettia into the Holiday fixture that it is today.
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REF: ME 2006  PRICE: €165,000
Lovingly ground floor apartment in the Urbanisation Spirit of Mojácar with an oasis style swimming pool and tropical gardens, located 300m from the beach and amenities. 2 bed / 2 bath. Centralised AC / heating and an inside parking space and store room that are both on the same level as the apartment. Built area: 86 m².

REF: ME 2045  PRICE: €150,000
A brand new, completely refurbished and modernised, apartment on 2 floors for sale on Balcones del Mar on Mojácar Playa only 100m from the sea. Wonderful views of the sea and the mountains. 2 bed / 2 bath / cloakroom / WC. AC/ heating. Solidly furnished plus new white goods. Communal pool. Built area: 70 m².

REF: ME 2093  PRICE: €249,500
A modern, comfortable townhouse on the residential Torres urbanisation of Macenas Golf Resort with lovely mountain views and only 300 metres from the beach. 2 bed / 2 baths / 1 cloakroom / WC. Solidly furnished with centralised AC/ heating. Covered parking space for 2 cars, 2 communal pools. Built area: 109 m².

Mojácar Playa

REF: ME 2128  PRICE: €120,000
Lovely ground floor apartment with a large terrace looking out to sea and mountain views for sale in Marina de la Torre golf resort. Golf course and beach are within easy walking distance. 3 bed / 2 bath. Sold fully furnished with white goods. Centralised AC / heating & mosquito nets. 2 communal pools. Built area: 106 m².

REF: ME 2127  PRICE: €115,000
First floor apartment on the Terrazas del Golf on Marina de la Torre Golf resort, with stunning views over the golf course and to the mountains beyond. Lift, communal pool, poolside court, gardens and children's park. 2 bed / 2 bath. Centralised AC/ heating. Large store room & underground parking space. Built area: 68 m².

REF: ME 2129  PRICE: €269,000
A lovely villa in a unique position with stunning views of the coastline and only a minute walk from the sea, shops and restaurants. The villa is detached and very private with all day sun and enjoys unbeatable sea views from every room. 3 bed / 3 bath / cloakroom / WC. Solar water heater. Parking space. Built area: 107 m². Plot: 364 m².

REF: ME 2131  PRICE: €345,000
Charming detached villa, recently renovated, with extraordinary views and a massive terrace. 3 bed / 3 bath / cloakroom / WC. On 2 floors, with bedrooms and bathrooms downstairs. Spectacular views from all rooms. Parking in the driveway. Very private. AC / heating. Built area: 125 m². Plot: 520 m².

REF: ME 2136  PRICE: €170,000
A country house on the outskirts of Turre, with a large plot of land and for renovation. 2 bed / 1 bath. Fully set on 2 floors with a large roof terrace and views of the Sierra Cabrera mountains. This is a renovation project with lots of potential! Built area: 145 m². Plot: 2323 m².

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Levante
Spain’s Christmas celebrations begin on December 22nd, when the massive lottery draw of ‘El Gordo’ takes place, and lasts until January 6th, the day Los Reyes Magos bring presents for the children.

However, Spain, being the country of fiestas, makes room for more celebration between Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve. This celebration is called El Dia de los Santos Inocentes or “Holy Innocents’ Day”, and it is a day in which everyone young and old becomes wary that they may be the innocent soul that gets duped by friends.

Dia de los Santos Inocentes – Jokers Day!

28th December is a day of practical jokes, similar to what the UK celebrates on April Fool’s Day. Day of the Holy Innocents is a religious holiday named in honor of the young children who were slaughtered by order of King Herod around the time of Jesus’ birth. These young victims were called Santos Inocentes because they were too young and innocent to have committed any sins.

In earlier times celebrations would have been similar to Halloween, collecting sweets and treats door to door but today Spanish children play simple pranks like putting salt in the sugar bowl or sticking paper cut-outs on people's backs, practical jokes calledled Inocenditas.

However, unusual celebrations stemming from ancient traditions continue to be held, such as the “Flour Battle” that takes place in the streets of Ibi, Valencia and the most unusual celebration that takes place in Setiles in connection with the Devil.

Setiles is a tiny town in Castilla-La Mancha and according to their website, the festival includes noisemaking the night before, a mass, a dance, an auction and a man dressed as the devil – complete with horns, a goat’s beard, a wooden sword and a tail.

The day is known as “Devil’s Day” and the children follow the devil around the town all day, trying to get close enough to pull his tail. The young men of Setiles go from house to house collecting food “donations” for a feast of their own.

Apparently, the “devil” helps the young people convince any reluctant townspeople to donate.

Go Easy On The Booze

If you are firmly ensconced at home over the festive period, those alcohol units can really mount up. Mulled wine on Christmas eve, Bucks Fizz with breakfast, wine with dinner, Baileys, brandy… the list goes on! So, do try to keep tabs on how much you are drinking, and intersperse alcoholic drinks with soft ones.

Don’t Give Yourself A Christmas Stuffing!

Recent research suggests that we consume around 3,000 calories in our Christmas dinner – more than the entire recommended daily intake for a grown man!

The huge feast not only contributes to weight gain but also to indigestion and heartburn – not to mention lethargy for the rest of the day, reducing the chances of you burning much of it off.

Instead of gorging yourself on Christmas dinner, eat a normal-sized meal and then take a 20-minute break to see if you are still hungry (it takes this long for the brain to register that the stomach is full). The more activity, the better, so take along any new outdoor gifts, like bikes, scooters, footballs or Frisbees, or play old-fashioned games.

Try our top tips for a healthier Christmas.

How To Have A Healthier Christmas

Christmas is notoriously a time to indulge, but don’t let this be the green light to overindulge! You can still enjoy all the festivities of the season and get through the Christmas period without too much impact on your health and waistline.

1. Cut down on alcohol. Alcohol units can really mount up. Mulled wine on Christmas eve, Bucks Fizz with breakfast, wine with dinner, Baileys, brandy… the list goes on! So, do try to keep tabs on how much you are drinking, and intersperse alcoholic drinks with soft ones.

2. Don’t stuff yourself. The day is known as “Devil’s Day” and the children follow the devil around the town all day, trying to get close enough to pull his tail. The young men of Setiles go from house to house collecting food “donations” for a feast of their own.

3. Go easy on the booze. If you are firmly ensconced at home over the festive period, those alcohol units can really mount up. Mulled wine on Christmas eve, Bucks Fizz with breakfast, wine with dinner, Baileys, brandy… the list goes on! So, do try to keep tabs on how much you are drinking, and intersperse alcoholic drinks with soft ones.

4. Don’t give yourself a Christmas stuffing. Recent research suggests that we consume around 3,000 calories in our Christmas dinner – more than the entire recommended daily intake for a grown man!

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Keep Colds At Bay

Colds are rife at Christmas, partly because many of us travel around the country, exposing ourselves – and others – to different cold viruses. Minimise your risks by maintaining a healthy immune system (eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep and not smoking will help), so you are more able to fight off any viruses.

Don’t Stress

‘Tis the season to be jolly’ but jolly is the last thing many of us feel with overspending, cooking, cleaning, endless ‘to do’ lists and visitors we could do without.

Try to keep a sense of humour and proportion. Is it really the end of the world if the carrots are overcooked or if the mantelpiece is a bit dusty?

Do you really care about Auntie Mary’s disapproval of the fact that you and your partner are living together and aren’t married?

Remember, Christmas is just one day out of 365 and it isn’t worth stressing over.

Eat Fruit

Let’s be honest, most of us get through the entire Christmas period eating no more fruit than the satsuma in the Christmas stocking. It doesn’t really feature on the Christmas menu. But at this time of late nights, overindulging and partying, it’s more important than ever to get your vitamins and minerals, to help you stay in good health.

Ensure that your Christmas shopping list enables you to fill up the fruit bowl and get your recommended daily portions of fruit and veg.

Remember, Christmas is just one day out of 365 and it isn’t worth worrying about. Though a general guide is around 7 - 8 hours for an adult.

Sleep deficiency has been linked to depression, suicide, and risk-taking behaviour, and is linked to an increased risk of heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke.

Sleep deficiency also increases the risk of obesity, and can decrease your body’s ability to fight off infections, and affect how well you think, react, work, learn, and get along with others.

If you’re not getting enough, good quality sleep……… If PAIN is stopping you from dropping off at night because you just can’t get comfortable, or you’re being woken up throughout the night due to discomfort……why not see if Osteopathy can help?

Sleep plays a vital role in health and well-being throughout your life, and your ability to function and feel well depends on whether you’re getting enough total sleep, and enough of each type of sleep.

The two basic types of sleep - rapid eye movement (REM) and non-rapid eye movement (NREM) occur in a regular pattern of 3–5 cycles each night.

The amount of sleep you need each day will change over the course of your life. Though a general guide is around 7 - 8 hours for an adult.

Struggle to sleep?

Finding it difficult to cope?

How well you think, react, work, learn, and get along with others.

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Do Something For Others

Christmas is a time of plenty, and with nuts, chocolates, mince pies and baking some extra mince pies for an elderly neighbour, inviting an acquaintance who doesn’t have family around them to your home or helping out with a local Christmas fete or carol service.

Think Before You Eat

It’s hard to avoid the consumerism that has overtaken Christmas in the western world, but it doesn’t all have to be about giving or receiving gifts.

Try to do something for others this festive season, whether it’s baking some extra mince pies for an elderly neighbour, inviting an acquaintance who doesn’t have family around them to your home or helping out with a local Christmas fete or carol service.

Tis the Season to be Jolly

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Do Something For Others

Christmas is a time of plenty, and with nuts, chocolates, mince pies and cheese straws wherever you look, it would be rather Scrooge-like to suggest that you don’t eat any treats over the festive period!

But rather than mindlessly popping whatever is in front of you in your mouth, spend a moment thinking about whether you really want it, or are just eating it because it’s there.

And most importantly, have a happy, healthy festive season!
Christmas Gear

By Jacey Canovas

bottles of water used as weights at home, they all have a place.

Benefits of Exercise Equipment

What these have in common is their purpose: to add something to your regular exercise routine, and in so doing to improve the results. The primary benefit provided by the various options is resistance, which, when correctly utilised, improves the strength and conditioning of the muscles involved.

Our Suggestions for Your Gift List

These are all easy to find, easy to use, and easy to store:

• A pair of walking or trekking poles. These are fantastic for country walkers and ramblers (of which I am one). They assist in balance over rough spots, and give an ongoing workout to the arms. Top of my list here are Nordic poles, designed specifically for the technique known as Nordic walking. (We’ll be talking about this next year). A set of hand weights, with pairs of dumbbells ranging between 500g and 2kg. These are what we use in the deltoid and triceps workouts we’ve been discussing over the past couple of months.

• A Swiss ball - a favourite when we work on the core muscles. Plus the arms. Top of my list here are Nordic walking. (We’ll be talking about this next year).

• A set of hand weights, with pairs of dumbbells ranging between 500g and 2kg. These are what we use in the deltoid and triceps workouts we’ve been discussing over the past couple of months.

We will be picking them up again next year as we concentrate on the biceps.

• A Swiss ball - a favourite when we work on the core muscles. Plus which, they present us with alternatives to floor-based movements - a bonus for those who have difficulties lying down or getting up.

• Resistance bands which can be used both for legs and for arms.

• A good quality exercise mat.

• To go in the greetings card, how about a membership voucher for the advice of a licensed health care professional.

The primary benefit provided by the various options is resistance, which, when correctly utilised, improves the strength and conditioning of the muscles involved.

What Counts as Exercise Equipment

When we say exercise equipment we’re talking about the wide range of apparatus that can be used to assist in an exercise program. The options available are as varied as the people and the types of activity they enjoy.

From a professional gym with a staggering range of techno-controlled bikes and futuristic machines, right through to a couple of controlled bikes and futuristic machines, right through to a couple of

Last December we encouraged you to spoil yourself a bit, and offered some tips about what to wear for your upcoming year of exercise. If someone should ask you what you would like to find under the tree this year, you could drop some hints about useful exercise equipment - just don't ask how they plan to wrap a treadmill!
Herbal remedies are natural and have been used for centuries, but you still need to use them with care. Herbal remedies have few side effects but this does not mean you can take them freely and without care.

Herbs are the basis of some modern drugs: for example, quinine came from cinchona bark, digitalis from the foxglove, and aspirin from willow bark. Today, an estimated 25% of all pharmaceuticals came from cinchona bark, digitalis from the foxglove, and aspirin from willow bark.

Herbs have been used as remedies over many hundreds of years. They still come directly from plants. Herbs have been used as remedies over many hundreds of years. By their very nature, herbs are complex, each one comprising tens if not hundreds of individual chemical compounds, so identifying the active components is not a simple matter. Herbs are classed as dietary or nutritional supplements. Manufacturers cannot say their active components is not a simple matter. Herbs are classed as dietary or nutritional supplements.

Herbs may be called “specifics” or “tonics”. A specific targets a particular symptom, such as valerian taken for insomnia. They are usually taken only for short times or when the symptoms occur.

A tonic works on the whole body or organ: ginseng slowly strengthens the immune system. Tonics are taken long-term, sometimes with a specific herb.

Herbs may increase the effects of other sedatives. Siberian ginseng may increase the effects of antibiotics and valerian may increase the effects of other sedatives.

Combination products can be convenient and may be cheaper, but you may not have all the information you need about them to make an informed choice. For instance, is there enough of each herb to have the desired effect? Or does it contain a herb you don't really need? Some products combine the significant actions of each herb at a lower dose.

Taking herbs safely
Be well informed - find out about the herbs you plan to take. Don't just follow a friend's advice unless they have some experience or particular knowledge about herbs.

Follow the directions on the label.
Some herbs take several weeks to have positive effects. Make sure you know what to expect and how long to take them for.

Start with the lowest dose and watch for side effects such as rashes, nausea or headaches. If you have side effects stop taking the herb immediately.

People over 65 become more sensitive to medicines and so need to stick to lower doses.

If you are already taking prescription medicines you should consult your doctor or a suitable health professional before taking herbs.

Compare products by looking at the amount of active ingredients in each one; note the number of capsules you need to take per day, and the cost.

Buy a quality product from a reputable source. Good products have clear expiry dates, batch numbers and manufacturer contact details. Buy a quality product from a reputable source.

Many people mistakenly assume that because they are natural they are harmless. High doses taken for a long time can cause problems, and some cause allergic reactions or other symptoms. Herbs have the potential to be very effective, but they need to be used responsibly.

The quality of herbal remedies varies, depending on a number of factors. Their growing season, the climate, soil conditions, whether they are organic or farmed, when they are harvested, storage conditions, length of storage and so on, all make a difference to their quality. This means that the potency of the product will not be as precise as a man-made drug.

Some herbs interact with drugs, other herbs and foods; for example, garlic and ginkgo may increase the side effects of blood-thinning drugs; Echinacea may counteract immunosuppressive drugs; Siberian ginseng may increase the effects of antibiotics and valerian may increase the effects of other sedatives.

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Most herbal remedies are sold as capsules or tablets containing dried herbs or standardised extracts. Dried plants have lost most of their oils and waxes, so they may need to be reconstituted with water or alcohol to release the active ingredients. Dried plants have lost most of their oils and waxes, so they may need to be reconstituted with water or alcohol to release the active ingredients. Extracts are made by soaking the herb in alcohol to extract the chemical components from the plant.

Some products give their strength as a standardised extract of the active ingredients, for example: Bilberry with 25% anthocyanocides, Garlic with 5.4mg of allicin, and Ginkgo biloba with 24% ginkgo flavone glycosides.

As well as the range of single herbs, there are many combination products available. Single herbs have the advantage that you can choose the ones that may be right for your symptoms and identify any that cause side effects or allergic reactions.

Combination products can be convenient and may be cheaper, but you may not have all the information you need about them to make an informed choice. For instance, is there enough of each herb to have the desired effect? Or does it contain a herb you don't really need? Some products combine the significant actions of each herb at a lower dose.

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Benefits of Sunglasses for Eye Health

Sunglasses are more than a stylish accessory – they’re a crucial tool in ensuring your eyes remain healthy year-round.

Whether you’re enjoying the outdoors during the summer or driving to work in the winter, you should never leave your sunglasses at home. Here’s why:

Sunglasses Are Designed to Protect
The most important job your sunglasses have is to protect your eyes from the harmful UV rays of the sun.
Our eyes are extremely sensitive to sunlight, and even short-term direct contact can create painful or irritable symptoms.

Sunglasses Protect Your Eyes from the Elements
We don’t see a lot of snow but if you’re planning to leave town for a ski trip in the Sierra Nevada, don’t leave your sunglasses at home. A fresh blanket of snow can reflect 80% of the sun’s UV rays directly into your eyes and burn your corneas. When you’re walking down the beach without sunglasses, grains of sand can get in your eyes and cause permanent damage. Everyday dust blown by the wind can also irritate and potentially damage eyes and increase dry-eye problems.

Sun Exposure Can Bring on Migraines
Bright sunlight can really get to your head. Aside from the possibility of developing a bad headache, sunlight exposure can strain your eyesight, making your day much less comfortable.

You’ll See Better
If you’re at the ballgame or the beach you’ll want to be able to take in everything around you. If you’re driving, you’ll be more in tune with your surroundings and be safer on the roads.

What Kind of Sunglasses Should I Buy?
You should love your sunglasses! Find a pair that matches your style and looks good on you. But most importantly, always opt for sunglasses that provide UVA and UVB protection. Polarized lenses reduce the amount of reflected light that enters the eye, reducing glare and making images appear sharper and clearer. Polarized lenses also reduce the amount of strain on your eyes so you’ll find yourself squinting less than you would with standard sunglasses.
Consult with an eye care professional to help determine the best pair for you if you require prescription lenses.

Sunglasses Are Designed to Protect
The most important job your sunglasses have is to protect your eyes from the harmful UV rays of the sun.

Our eyes are extremely sensitive to sunlight, and even short-term direct contact can create painful or irritable symptoms.

Sunglasses Protect Your Eyes from the Elements
We don’t see a lot of snow but if you’re planning to leave town for a ski trip in the Sierra Nevada, don’t leave your sunglasses at home. A fresh blanket of snow can reflect 80% of the sun’s UV rays directly into your eyes and burn your corneas. When you’re walking down the beach without sunglasses, grains of sand can get in your eyes and cause permanent damage. Everyday dust blown by the wind can also irritate and potentially damage eyes and increase dry-eye problems.

Sun Exposure Can Bring on Migraines
Bright sunlight can really get to your head. Aside from the possibility of developing a bad headache, sunlight exposure can strain your eyesight, making your day much less comfortable.

You’ll See Better
If you’re at the ballgame or the beach you’ll want to be able to take in everything around you. If you’re driving, you’ll be more in tune with your surroundings and be safer on the roads.

What Kind of Sunglasses Should I Buy?
You should love your sunglasses! Find a pair that matches your style and looks good on you. But most importantly, always opt for sunglasses that provide UVA and UVB protection. Polarized lenses reduce the amount of reflected light that enters the eye, reducing glare and making images appear sharper and clearer. Polarized lenses also reduce the amount of strain on your eyes so you’ll find yourself squinting less than you would with standard sunglasses.
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Indalo Partners at C.A.T. Services:
Indalo Partners will be in the C.A.T. Services offices every Tuesday between 09:30 and 14:30 to provide the following services:
• Spanish Resident & Non-Resident Tax Returns
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• Modelo 720 (Declaration of worldwide Assets)
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• Wills
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• Services at the Tax Office (Agencia Tributaria)
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It’s a satisfying thing to make your own decorations, and when Christmas is upon us, what is nicer than to walk up to your front door and be greeted by a unique Christmas wreath made by your own fair hands.

There are many things you can use to create a wreath, greenery from the garden is a particularly popular choice, but let’s have a look at a few other ideas to add a sparkle to your front door this year that will not break the bank.

1 Enchanted Wreath
Greet guests with this magical decor!
1. Nest a 14” embroidery hoop inside an 18” one and attach with strong tape at the clasps.
2. Cover the tape with a loop of wide ribbon (you’ll use it for hanging later).
3. Secure faux greenery, white berries and glittery ornaments along the bottom of the hoops with thin green floral wire.
4. Create the fairy door from an 8” x 4” piece of balsa wood: First, trace an upside-down cereal bowl to make a rounded top, cut out with scissors, and use a brown pen and a ruler to draw vertical lines for wood slats. Punch a metal paper fastener through the wood for a doorknob and hot-glue miniature hinges on the opposite side.
5. Attach twine or thin rope around the outside of the door, then use hot glue to secure it to the inner hoop.

Continued on page 72....

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Buying a Spanish property in a rural village offers an idyllic setting for starting your life abroad, but it’s not without its challenges. Do you really know what you’re getting into? Before buying, renovating or building a Spanish campo, you should understand the quirks of the Spanish property market to avoid any pitfalls.

Is the entire area fully represented on the escritura? If there is a property on the land, does it appear on the escritura (or even on the Catastro)? Find a local interpreter that knows the area, to help you understand properly anything being dealt with in Spanish. Ask for recommendations from neighbours to help you make an informed choice.

If you intend to renovate or build, is it likely to be feasible? You need to know something about the local requirements and restrictions.

Finding a builder: To source the tradesmen, insist on seeing their work and talking to their previous clients. Word of mouth is not enough. Be sure that they will be compliant with your requirements, including materials and methods.

If you’re thinking of buying a Spanish rural property, here are a few things you need to consider!

---

2 Pretty Purple

Who says red and green are the only festive colours this time of year? Play with purple this Christmas by weaving it into a traditional fir-trimmed wreath.

Materials
• Hot-glue gun and glue sticks
• 3 yards of 2”-wide purple ribbon
• 18” Styrofoam wreath form
• 2 of 24-gauge floral wire
• 3 dozen purple ball trios with fir detail and 2” picks

1. Glue one end of ribbon to back of wreath form. Wrap ribbon tightly in overlapping layers to cover form; glue remaining end to back of wreath.

2. Fold floral wire in half to create a loop for hanging. Wrap the doubled wire once around top of wreath; twist securely in the back, leaving a little loop free.

3. Apply glue to the tip of a purple ball pick and insert into inside ring of wreath. Attach ball picks in rows to cover wreath, working your way from the inner ring to the outer edge, and along the side.

3. Under Wraps

Presents don't just belong under the tree! Put them front and centre with this charming wreath, decked with mini gift boxes that are wrapped and riboned with care.

• 12” piece floral wire
• 16” double rail wreath ring
• 25-30 small (2”-8” wide) gift boxes
• Scraft wrapping paper
• Tape
• Scissors
• Hot-glue gun and glue sticks
• Scrap ribbon

Directions
1. Fold floral wire in half, wrap around form and tie in a knot, leaving a loop to hang the wreath.
2. Wrap all boxes with paper (without ribbon for now).
3. On a flat surface, arrange 8 to 10 of the largest boxes on wreath form to cover most of the wire of the form. Glue onto form.
Who Doesn’t love a Christmas Carol

We all know the traditional English Christmas songs and carols, many off by heart, some are fun whilst others carry the biblical message. What about here in Spain.

Christmas in Spain is a magical time filled with music as carolers sing traditional Spanish Christmas carols, known as villancicos, in city plazas and churches. The tradition dates back hundreds of years, and today the familiar melodies of Christmas carols wafting out of shops and markets are often the first sign that the festive season has arrived.

Los Peces en el Río

Translates to “The Fish in the River”, is a peaceful, humble song that describes the Virgin Mary as she washes her child’s clothes in a river.

Canta, Rie, Bebe

One of the more modern tunes – translates to “Sing, Laugh, Drink”, is a happy carol that encourages listeners to celebrate Christmas with joy. “Sing, laugh, drink because today is Christmas Eve / in these moments there’s no need for sorrow,” the song instructs its listeners.

Vamos, Pastores, Vamos

Translates to “Let’s Go, Shepherds, Let’s Go”, tells of shepherds as these moments there’s no need for sorrow, “Let’s get to Bethlehem to visit the Baby Jesus on the day of his birth. “Come on, little donkey”, goes the chorus. “Let’s get to Bethlehem to visit the Virgin and her child, too.”

Continued on page 76....
Hacia Belén va una burra, rin, rin
A favourite of young children, translates to “Towards Bethlehem goes a donkey, jingle jingle”. The song tells of a steadfast donkey on its way to visit Baby Jesus in the manger.

Campanas de Belén
Translates to “Bells of Bethlehem”, celebrates the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem: “Bell after bell / and after bell, one / Go to the window / and you will see the child in the crib.”

Arre Borriquito
Another children’s favourite, translates to “Come on, little donkey”, is a cheerful and mischievous carol that begins with the lyrics, “In the doorway of my house / I’m going to set a firecracker / to laugh at anyone who comes / singing carols and asking for treats.”

Ya Vienen los Reyes
According to Spanish tradition, the Three Wise Men bring children gifts on 6 January. So the carol Ya Vienen los Reyes is extra special for children, with its lyrics reminding listeners that the royal trio are on their way: “The kings are coming / over the hills of sand / They are bringing the child / a beautiful nappy.”

25 de Diciembre, fum, fum, fum
This song is a simple tune that celebrates the birth of Baby Jesus: “A very beautiful child has been born in a stable / with a pink little face, like a pretty flower, fum fum fum.” The verses often repeat, making this carol easy to learn for visitors.

Blanca Navidad
Another classic, this famous song set to Irving Berlin’s familiar melody describes the beauty of a white Christmas and the thrill experienced by children as the special day approaches: “Oh, white Christmas, snow / a white dream and song / you will remember your childhood / when a white Christmas arrives.”

Noche de Paz
This is actually the Spanish translation of Silent Night, a tune originally written by the Austrian priest Joseph Mohr in 1818.
Marshall Amplification “Play it Loud, Play it Proud”

Better aspect of my job, is working on and fixing valve amplifiers. And, there seems to be a steady increase in equipment coming through the door, especially from the Spanish. Meet some good musicians. Marshall is a name synonymous with such gear, so I thought I’d give you a little focus on that.

Gentleman Jim Marshall was in fact a good drummer. In the early ’60s, he had a little shop in Harwell, London, selling drum kits and all the stuff associated with making a noise. He was also into electronics. It goes that the likes of budding guitarist Pete Townsend and Ritchie Blackmore used to hang out in the shop along with other musicians and continuously badgered Jim into designing amplifiers that had to be “Loud”.

Brands of amplifiers that dominated the scene included British made VOX and U.S. owned Fender. Both lovely amps, but at the time, a little expensive. Over a burger in a Wimpy bar one evening, Jim, along with an ex EMI engineer and a couple of others, worked out that they could make an amplifier to retail for less cost than the VOX and Fenders. The team used the Fender “Baseman” amp as a benchmark, but using European equivalents of valves. British ECC83 valves were used in the pre amp stages (U.S. equiv was a 12AX7) which had higher gain and would give the “Marshall Crunch” distortion sound when driven hard, that guitarists liked. The design was eventually dropped in favour of the classic 4 x 12” cabinet, mainly due to transport hassles. The big amps came with “Y” splitter leads so that amps could be connected together in order to give power and volume required. This created the famous “Marshall Stack” image that has become the trademark of Rock bands. The bigger the stack, the better the band. Well… Marshall did supply empty cabinet options for those bands that wanted to portray an image above their standing!

Build costs were rising and Jim started using different valves, components and manufacturing techniques. The KT66 output valves were replaced with Muillard EL34s, giving a slightly different sound. Jimmy Hendrix walked into Jim’s shop in ’66 and spent hours playing guitar through various amp combinations. Expecting that Hendrix would be asking to have the amps for nothing, Jim was astonished to hear that Hendrix would buy a healthy quantity of amps at full retail, on the basis that his road crew would be trained to maintain the gear on tour. Jim shook his head off. Well, not literally, as that would have somewhat upset his guitar players!

Many different models have been added since the ’60s. More hand wiring, some made in the Far East etc… But, the brand image that has become the trademark of Rock bands.

Jim was determined to drive costs down and entered into collaborations with transformer makers, Drake and Dagnell. Up until then, the output valves were the American 6L6Gs. Jim changed to the British KT66, which had similar specifications and were interchangeable, but sounded harder. A young Eric Clapton used to sit in Jim’s shop playing this new amp and loved the sound it made. He asked Jim to make a variation with a Tremolo feature and small enough to fit in his car. Jim did what he was told and the classic “Bluesbreaker” model was created. Clapton said it was this amplifier that gave him the great guitar sound heard on the ’66 Beano album.

Jim listened to the up and coming musicians. Pete Townsend and John Entwistle (The Who) were early adopters of the Marshall gear. They wanted more and more volume. Jim and his engineers set about designing a 100 watt amp. Basically, 4 output valves were used instead of 2, wired in parallel push-pull configuration. Bigger mains and output transformers fitted. This became known as the Super Marshall Lead model. Always wanting to go one better, Townsend asked Jim to build bigger speaker cabinets, which of course he did. These were massive and housed 8 x 12” Celestion speakers and packed a punch. The design was eventually known as the Super Marshall Lead model. Always wanting to go one better, Townsend asked Jim to build bigger speaker cabinets, which of course he did. These were massive and housed 8 x 12” Celestion speakers and packed a punch. The design was eventually known as the Super Marshall Lead model.

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Please be careful when ordering as most of them are not included on Amazon as they offer Prime delivery in Spain (it does work). Many of the most popular items will be stocked across Europe. I have chosen Amazon as they offer Prime delivery in Spain (it does work). In a nutshell; have a look at the UK version of Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk) and see what you want to order. You can then change to Amazon Spain (www.amazon.es) and go through the order process.

I have found that using a Google Chrome web browser makes this a lot easier as the Translation function is fully integrated. If at any time you want to translate the screen just right click on an empty portion of the screen and choose the “Translate to English” option from the drop-down box.

Please remember though, that a lot of these items will need to be set up before use and anything “TV” orientated will benefit from having a VPN installed so that UK TV services can be reliably accessed (see my July 2019 article in Almeria Living Magazine). Please ensure that, if you do so, the VPN is compatible with all TV services. I have heard reports that Netflix does not always play via some VPNs.

If you have an Amazon Prime membership then you can also access their streaming services for free. Again, some setting-up is required as these services are Geographically restricted.

Having said all of that, I am about to contradict myself in a big way...

Recent years have seen the demise of many high street retailers in the UK. Toys ‘R’ Us, BHS and C&A have all closed. This is a direct result of the changes in our Shopping Habits. Many Tech items are also available through local Spanish retailers at a competitive price. The decline of the High Street has largely yet to reach Spain as the Spanish are somewhat resistant to change (as many of you will probably be aware).

So why not use the internet for researching your purchase and buy it locally?

This is not applicable for everything, but where possible it should give you that warm, fuzzy feeling that you are doing your bit for the local economy, rather than a faceless offshore Corporation.

There are also organised shopping trips available for those who would like to travel further afield. Regular excursions to Almeria and Murcia are available throughout December. Check your local social media for details.

Anyhow, may I take this opportunity to wish all of Almeria Living’s Readers a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Eat too much, drink too much and laugh too much!
As well as the hens we have had eggs from geese, turkeys, guinea fowl and ducks, in fact at one point we also had quail, so it was lovely selection.

Our favourite eggs I must admit are duck eggs but following our 2 fox attacks last year when we lost all but one of them, they have been in short supply. Unlike a chicken who lays virtually all year round, ducks lay in batches of about 10 or so, usually 2 or 3 times a year, so when it is laying time, they are prized, believe me!

Hens eggs come in all colours, well the shells do, inside they are all the same! We have had dark brown ranging in shades to pure white. We had a couple of Andalucian and Americana hens which lay beautiful blue eggs and it was our white star hens which lay pure white. If you fancied buying a particular bird for a particular colour shell, then you can order the birds from your local farm store, there are a number of local breeders who supply the birds to the shops.

We often get asked what duck eggs and goose eggs taste like! Well, rest assured they taste of egg, albeit much creamier and of course power that can reach the hen houses, plus we want to let them lay naturally and have a break as nature intended.

You have to be careful not to saw into the yolk, but it is far easier can saw through the shell and the incredibly strong membrane which took me a while before I realised that by using a serrated knife, you will have realised these are not easy to crack open. It is quite amusing at bedtime find the perfect branch where they feel safe.

When we had the guinea fowl, they often laid 2 a day, which was always a thrill and possibly not the norm.

Hens however lay one egg almost every day. A hen egg takes 24-26 hours to form which is why there are odd days when she will not lay. The creation of the shell takes up most of the time in forming the egg, around 20 hours.

The hens also need a certain amount of daylight to produce eggs. Here in Spain, we have found we get the most eggs around Springtime and late Summer / early Autumn. As the days get shorter egg production slows down.

Around Christmas time when we want more eggs for baking, we can have a couple of weeks where we don't get any at all. I usually freeze some whilst production is at an all time high and they come into use when I need them.

Commercial breeders use lights to keep production on top form. The light needs to be kept on in the hen houses for around 14 – 16 hours.

This isn’t possible here as we do not have any of the hens to lay, it just means the eggs will not be fertile.
Sad Hill Cemetery

‘You know in this world there’s two kinds of people, my friend. Those with loaded guns and those who dig. You dig.’

This is one of the most memorable quotes from the unforgettable film ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’, which almost everybody has seen at least once, and which most consider a true classic of the Western genre.

We all know that Sergio Leone fell in love with Almería and put it on the map when he filmed the majority of his famous ‘Dollar Trilogy’ there.

What is largely unknown is that many scenes from ‘The Good, the Bad and the Ugly’ were actually filmed in Burgos in Castilla y León. And the most memorable of them all, the final scene in the circular cemetery ‘Sad Hill’ was one of them.

The cemetery was constructed in 1966 – by soldiers from the Spanish army, which the Franco government had put at the disposal of Sergio Leone for this purpose, and as extras in the battle scenes. Nobody has ever been buried under any of the 5,000 crosses that were erected in a circular pattern in accordance with Leone’s vision of a ‘circus of destiny’ for the epic 20 minute scene which has gone over in history as a monument to human emotions.

Once the filming had finished, the cemetery was abandoned, fell into disrepair, was reclaimed by nature and it all but disappeared.

Then suddenly in 2015, somebody realised that the following year would be the 50th anniversary of the filming, and a decision was made to restore the cemetery to former glory – and preferably in time for the anniversary.

Today, Sad Hill is a popular tourist attraction which has worked wonders for the economy in Contreras in Burgos where it is situated, and the beautifully restored cemetery is well worth a visit.

For 15 euro anyone, anywhere could have their name, nickname or initials inscribed on a cross. So apart from being the setting of a lot of backbreaking work started, carried out by volunteers from all over the world who cleared the site to reveal the famous stone circle and its hidden graves.

One of the ways of raising money was offering the crosses for sale: For 15 euro anyone, anywhere could have their name, nickname or initials inscribed on a cross. So apart from being the setting of a ‘monument to human emotions’, Sad Hill is also the only cemetery in the world where you can visit your own grave.

The efforts inspired Spanish film-maker and cinema fanatic Guillermo de Oliveira. He had always had a passion for visiting the sites where famous movie scenes had been filmed, and when he visited Sad Hill he decided to make a documentary about the project.

Apart from filming the efforts of the volunteers as they painstakingly moved decades’ worth of dirt to unearth the stone circle and the crosses, Oliveira also interviewed Ennio Morricone, who composed the unforgettable soundtrack, and famous fans such as Gremlins director Joe Dante and Metallica front man James Hetfield.

And after ten months of phone calls, he also finally managed to interview the only surviving star of the film, Clint Eastwood! Apart from conceding to the interview, the film legend also sent a message of thanks to all those who had worked to recover Sad Hill.

Today, Sad Hill is a popular tourist attraction which has worked wonders for the economy in Contreras in Burgos where it is situated, and the beautifully restored cemetery is well worth a visit.

When researching for this article, I fell over the following extract from Wikipedia, which I thought you might enjoy reading as much as I did.

It refers to Sergio Leone’s slapdash approach to the safety of his employees, and the lack of basic measures and forethought to ensure everybody’s wellbeing:

Wallach and Eastwood flew to Madrid together and, between shooting scenes, Eastwood would relax and practice his golf swing. Wallach was almost poisoned during filming when he accidentally drank from a bottle of acid that a film technician had set next to his soda bottle.

Wallach mentioned this in his autobiography and complained that while Leone was a brilliant director, he was very lax about ensuring everybody’s wellbeing:

‘The film crew, were not aware of the heavy iron steps that jutted one foot out of every box car. If Wallach had stood up from his prone position while Leone was a brilliant director, his neck was severed, the horse was frightened a little too well. It galloped for about a mile with Wallach still mounted and his hands bound behind his back.

The third time Wallach’s life was threatened was during the scene where he and Mario Brega—who are chained together—jump out of a moving train. The jumping part went as planned, but Wallach’s life was endangered when his character attempts to sever the chain binding him to the (now dead) henchman. Tucy places the body on the railroad tracks, waiting for the train to roll over the chain and sever it. Wallach, and presumably the entire film crew, were not aware of the heavy iron steps that jutted one foot out of every box car. If Wallach had stood up from his prone position at the wrong time, one of the jutting steps could have decapitated him.

Who said being an actor is a cushy job?

Advertise in the Almeria Living
17 Weird and Wonderful Car Facts you probably didn’t know!

Because there are so many cars in the UK, we tend to take them for granted and forget just how incredible these machines are. Take a look at some of the facts and statistics about cars, however, and you’ll soon start to remember just how amazing they really are.

1. The world’s first speeding ticket was issued in 1902
   How fast was the offending motorist travelling? A scandalous 45mph.

2. 1 in 4 cars on the UK’s road were made in China
   Which is a lot, given that there are around 35 million cars in the UK.

3. A modern Formula 1 car can drive upside down in a tunnel at 120mph
   F1 cars produce around 3.5G while cornering, meaning they’ve enough aerodynamic downforce to drive upside down in a tunnel.

4. 60 million cars are produced every year
   That’s 165,000 a day, 6,875 an hour and 115 a minute — crazy right?

5. 1 billion cars are currently in use around the world
   Compared to the world’s population, that’s around one car for every seven people on Earth. Amazing.

Continued on page 88 .....
10. Volkswagen owns twelve well-known car brands from 7 European countries.

Including Volkswagen Passenger Cars, Audi, Seat, Skoda, Bentley, Bugatti, Lamborghini, Porsche, Ducati, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, Scania and MAN.

11. The first ever car accident occurred in 1891. This prompted the introduction of better safety equipment for drivers.

12. The largest speeding fine ever produced was €1,000,000. This was levied at a man in Sweden, who was clocked doing 180mph. In Sweden, speeding fines are proportionate to the amount someone earns.

13. The world record for removing and replacing a car engine is 42 seconds. This record was set by mechanics working on a Ford Escort on 21 November, 1985.

14. The odds of dying in a car accident are around 1 in 5,000. Compare that to the odds of dying in a plane crash (1 in 11 million), and driving sounds pretty dangerous!

15. The man who invented cruise control was blind. His name was Ralph Teetor, and he was inspired to invent cruise control by his lawyer, who was apparently a very poor driver.

16. The highest total mileage clocked by a single car is 2,850,000 million miles. That’s equivalent to driving around the Earth 100 times.

17. The Hennessey Venom GT is the world’s fastest production car. It’s top speed is 270.49mph, making it faster than the Bugatti Veyron 16.4.

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Basic techniques for Safe Driving

The key to good driving technique is smoothness, and the secret to smoothness is good preparation.

Driving posture

When you first get a car the take the time to adjust the seat and controls to suit your height and build. Correct driving posture reduces fatigue, improves your control and allows the safety features of the vehicle to operate effectively.

Seatbelts

For seatbelts to work effectively they should be adjusted ‘low, flat and firm’.

Low – placed below your hips to fully secure your body weight
Flat – no twists, turns or folds
Firm – about every 15 minutes when you drive pull the belt firm to remove any slack.

Airbags

Airbags are a supplementary restraining system (SRS) designed to be used in conjunction with seatbelts. To get the most benefit from the driver’s airbag the steering wheel should be adjusted low, facing the driver’s chest rather than the face.

Braking technique

Correct braking is done in two stages, first put light pressure on the brake pedal and pause (set up the brakes), then progressively apply the necessary braking pressure (squeeze).

Two-stage braking (set up and squeeze) improves braking effectiveness, reduces the likelihood of skidding and provides better control.

Harsh or excessive braking pressure may cause skidding and a loss of control, particularly on wet or gravel roads.

Steering technique

There are two main steering techniques, ‘push/pull’ and ‘hand over hand’. Regardless of which method is used some general rules apply - steering must be smooth and progressive.

Reduce speed before steering and wait until the vehicle begins to straighten before accelerating.

When steering keep both hands on the outside of the steering wheel and thumbs along the rim.

Electronic driver assist systems:

Antilock braking system (ABS) - control brake force to prevent the tyres from skidding under heavy braking or when braking in slippery conditions.

Some ABS systems cause the brake pedal to pulse or shudder when activated and although this may feel disconcerting, braking effort must be maintained if the situation requires a quick stop.

Traction control systems (TCS) - stop the driving wheels spinning by reducing engine power or temporarily applying the brakes. This allows the car to accelerate smoothly, even on slippery surfaces.

Electronic stability control (ESC) - detects if a vehicle is not responding correctly to driver steering input. The system selectively applies the brakes to individual wheels or changing engine power. ESC helps the driver to maintain their intended direction.

Emergency brake assist (EBA) - detects an emergency brake application. It provides emergency braking assistance and automatically increases the force being applied to the brakes to minimise the stopping distance. It is also known as “Brake Assist System” (BAS).
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Reverse Word Search

Each of these circled letters is the first letter of one or more of the words on the given word list. Your task is to fill in the grid completely using only the given words. No word will repeat itself. Words can be positioned the same as in a regular word search – horizontally, vertically or diagonally, reading frontwards or backwards. Remember, any starting letter may be used by more than one word at the same time!

- Ached
- Handy
- Participation
- Allays
- Haven
- Peons
- Amiably
- Hazing
- Pompous
- Axiom
- Heartens
- Reset
- Belied
- Highs
- Riser
- Bigot
- Hoist
- Safes
- Binary
- Hutch
- Snort
- Blitz
- Idiot
- Stalk
- Blurs
- Inter
- Steam
- Caulk
- Logarithmic
- Stockholders
- Cried
- Makeshift
- Syndicates
- Coarse
- Meteor
- Tedium
- Cruel
- Mossy
- Theft
- Electrifies
- Obstetricians
- Fiend
- Pairs

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Dec ’19 91
Advanced Vehicle Maintenance

Brake Pads Maintenance

Tools You Need: Lug wrench, C-clamp, open-end or adjustable wrench, hammer

Time to Complete: 30 minutes to an hour

You’ll need to replace most brake pads around every 20,000 miles, but as always, check your owner’s manual for specifics about your model. If you consistently do a lot of “stop-and-go” driving, you’ll need to replace them more frequently. Brake pads are DIY-eligible, but safety is your top priority. Be careful, get everything ready before you start, and if you’re uncomfortable at all, pay a professional to do it for you.

Jack up your car and rest it securely on jack stands.

Break the lugs on your tires before you do anything else.

Remove the wheel.

Remove the brake caliper so that the brake pads slide out through the top. The brake caliper should be at the 12 o’clock position, just above the lug bolts. On the back of the caliper you’ll find a bolt on both sides. Remove the bolts and set them aside. Hold the caliper from the top and pull upwards. Give it a few taps if you need to, making sure not to disturb the brake line (a black hose). Don’t let the caliper hang from the brake line; find somewhere to set it securely.

With the caliper out of the way, the old brake pads should slide right out.

Replace old pads with the new pads, securing them with the same retaining clips that held the old pads in place. If you have an older car, you might need to utilize your hammer here a little bit. Proceed gently!

Compress the brake piston. Get out your C-clamp and put the end with the screw on it against the piston with the other end on the back of the caliper assembly.

Tighten the clamp until the piston has moved far enough to where you can place the caliper assembly over the new pads.

Re-install the brake caliper (the opposite process of what you did when you removed it), and then simply put your wheel back on.

With this project, you’re stepping up to what I consider “DIY 2.0.” If you’re still mastering how to change your oil, you might want to build your confidence level a little before taking on this project.

Continued on page 94 .....
Fuel Filter Replacement

Tools You Need: New fuel filter, new fuel line washers, open end wrenches, rags, eye protection

Time to Complete: 30 minutes

A new fuel filter can protect your engine from very costly damages, so follow the rule of thumb and replace it annually. But keep in mind that like changing brake pads, this is an advanced DIY project. Make sure you’re not in over your head before starting this one. I did it once, and did it correctly, but I definitely paid attention to your head before starting this one. This is an advanced DIY project. If you don’t have a fuel pump fuse on the fuse box, find the relay that operates the fuel pump. If you’re unfamiliar with any of these terms, visit your mechanic for this regular job for you.

Most importantly, start by relieving fuel system pressure. If you don’t, the results can be explosive, to say the least. Locate the fuel pump fuse on the fuse box. If you don’t have a fuel pump fuse, find the relay that operates the fuel pump. Start your car, and with the engine running, pull the fuse or relay out. When the engine dies, you’ll know that you pulled the right one.

Disconnect the fuel lines from the fuel filter. Find two open-end wrenches that are the correct size for your fuel filter fittings (usually you’ll need two different sizes). When the wrenches are in place, put a rag over the fitting to protect yourself in case there is still some pressure in the lines. When the wrenches are in place, put a rag over the fitting to protect yourself in case there is still some pressure in the lines.

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Slide the fuel line off the bolt and set the bolt aside.

Repeat the process for the other side of the fuel filter.

Remove the old fuel filter. Most filters are held in place by a clamp that you can release by using a flathead screwdriver. Be careful here, as the old fuel filter could still have some gas in it!

Change the fuel filter washers, which are located on the bolts that connect the fuel lines to the fuel filter. Make sure to match the new ones up correctly.

Install the new fuel filter, which is the opposite of the process you performed to remove the old fuel filter.

Return the fuel pump fuse or relay before you try to start the car.

This project is another “DIY 2.0” task. Dealing with the fuel system is serious business, so if you’re unfamiliar with any of these terms and don’t know where to start, just visit your mechanic for this regular service.

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**Time to Complete:** 30 minutes

**Tools You Need:**
- New fuel filter
- New fuel line washers
- Open end wrenches
- Rags
- Eye protection

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**Puzzle Time Solutions**

Puzzles pages 21, 77 & 91
Back to the Law

They say a leopard doesn’t change its spots, and I guess the same can be said of me!

After years of alternative pursuits – full time mother, piano teacher, journalist, to name a few – I have come back to my original profession of soliciting (and not on the street corners of La Chanca, I hasten to add!)

I’m proud to say that I will now be working alongside Jose Ramon Cantalejo, one of Almeria’s most established and respected lawyers, to extend his city centre practice to British clients.

I have been thinking for sometime what my next step should be work-wise, after the Costa Almeria News closed down and left me unemployed.

With my years as a solicitor in England, and what I have learnt here, living as a foreigner and reporting on issues affecting the British community, it now seems like a good idea to combine the two and see if I can help expats through the maze of Spanish bureaucracy – especially in the light of Brexit.

Or no Brexit. Or delayed Brexit.

I feel like I’m heading into a whirlpool of confusion, where nobody can tell you what rules apply or when.

But the great thing about starting out again in a time of huge uncertainty and movement, is that I can be at the forefront of any changes, first in line to know the new laws and regulations - and to try them out.

The other thing to remember is that the Spanish law remains the Spanish law on all other types of legal matters – crime, civil actions, family law – and JRC knows how to conveyancing, road accidents, family law – and JRC knows how to try them out.

We’ve also been promised high speed Internet in La Chanca – and then it will be Netflix here I come! I’m holding off getting wifi until then so dvds and terrestrial tele are my only vice. (Of the home cooking programs as the Brits are. But hopefully over time I will get a more balanced view.

Anyway so far I have discovered the Spanish are as addicted to cookery programs as the Brits are. But hopefully over time I will get a more balanced view.

We’ve also been promised high speed Internet in La Chanca – and then it will be Netflix here I come! I’m holding off getting wifi until then so dvds and terrestrial tele are my only vice. (Of the home entertainment variety.)

Actually I’ve had an exceptionally virtuous week because as well as the whole work thing, I sang in a mass with my Spanish choir on Sunday. Next Sunday it’s back to normal with another concert of Spanish love songs, but still, it was a worthy outing.

Anyhow one civilised aspect of the Spanish work culture is that the evening work session is balanced by not starting till 10am! And I’m still always the first in!

What’s happened to my life of tapas trails, city explorations and just generally hanging out?

I can’t complain though, I think I’ve had a pretty good run.

Now when I get back from the office, all I'm fit for is dinner for one in front of the television, and because of that I’ve finally got round to trying out Spanish TV.

I’d like to say that the reason I’ve only come to it now is because I had many more interesting things to do (well I did have a pretty flourishing social life for a while) but actually it’s because I’ve finished my box set of ‘Miranda’.

Anyway so far I have discovered the Spanish are as addicted to cookery programs as the Brits are. But hopefully over time I will get a more balanced view.

As for my current literary life, I hasten to add!

I had many more interesting things to do (well I did have a pretty high profile life – but a private one – and my story continues........

But his 35-year career has spanned all aspects of the law, from the murder of baby Miriam in 2012, or more recently the death of three teenagers in a cave fire connected!

He is a specialist in criminal law and you may have seen him in the Spanish press and television on high profile cases such as the murder of baby Miriam in 2012, or more recently the death of three teenagers in a cave fire connected!

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The other thing to remember is that the Spanish law remains the Spanish law on all other types of legal matters – crime, civil actions, conveyancing, road accidents, family law – and JRC knows how to handle them all (or knows a man/woman who can...he is very well connected!)

He is a specialist in criminal law and you may have seen him in the Spanish press and television on high profile cases such as the murder of baby Miriam in 2012, or more recently the death of three teenagers in a cave fire on the outskirts of Almeria.

But his 35-year-career has spanned all aspects of the law, he is the author of many legal, literary and historical articles, and is the director of the Almeria College of Law magazine.

His only drawback is he doesn’t speak English – so that is where I come in!

So I think I am well-placed – both professionally and geographically to ‘meet and greet’ people for all Almeria business – to give a good service. Let’s see how it develops.

I must say though ‘La Working Life’ is coming as a bit of a shock after all my ‘La Chanca Life’ activities. Especially the Spanish habit of working in the morning, going home for lunch – and then going back for a second late afternoon/evening session!

For more on La Chanca Life go to www.lachancalife.com
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