

OUR PLACE *News*

The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

MARCH 2023

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Food & Drink • Arts, Crafts & Hobbies • Home & Garden

Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Our Place - The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

Every month, we bring you news and features on; Health & Beauty, Money & Work, Leisure & Travel, Food & Drink, Arts, Crafts & Hobbies, Home & Garden, plus... our Charity of the Month!

Our Place was founded with a mission to connect the mature online community to a world of news, features, offers and life changing products they may have missed out on. Bring them all into one place, Our Place.

What makes us special is that we are a vibrant team of all ages, from 21 to 65 who are all passionate about living life to the fullest irrespective of age. We have built strong relationships with some of the best UK age related businesses with the aim of brokering discounted rates for our Over-50s community.

Become a Friend of Our Place and receive our exclusive newsletters. They are a great way of keeping updated with the latest news and promotions. We aim to bring a smile to your face every time you open your inbox by selecting exclusive vouchers and discounts just for you.

We welcome you and hope you enjoy Our Place.

The Editor - Our Place

PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

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CRUFTS - The world's largest dog show is back! 9th - 12th March 2023 NEC Birmingham

The BIGGEST and BEST dog show in the world is back! Get your tickets now to Crufts 2023 for an unforgettable day out full of furry fun. From 9th-12th March watch over 22,000 dogs compete for the world famous title of Crufts Best in Show Champion, plus enjoy hundreds of trade stands full of wonderful products for both you and your canine pal. You can also watch pawsome pups raise the roof of the NEC with Agility, Flyball, Heelwork to Music and inspiring doggy displays. Thinking of buying a puppy? You can meet 200 different dog breeds at the Discover Dog area, in association with Frontline; say 'hello' to your favourites and get to know the breeds you've never before heard of! It's the perfect family day out AND under 8s go FREE.



- Day 1 - Thursday 9th March - Gundog breeds**
- Day 2 - Friday 10th March - Working and Pastoral breeds**
- Day 3 - Saturday 11th March - Terrier and Hound breeds**
- Day 4 - Sunday 12th March - Toy and Utility breeds**

Each day runs from 8.15am to 6.30pm, though Best In Show is from 4.45pm to 9pm Each day also features an Obedience Ring starting at 8.15am.

Tickets: www.crufts.org.uk

You'll need to leave your pooch at home however, as the only dogs allowed in Crufts are those invited by the Kennel Club, or assistance dogs.

Shopping Heaven - over 400 stands with special treats and offers for you and your dog.

Fantastic Family Fun in the Arena - jam packed with agility, flyball, displays and competitions including the Scruffts final!

Eukanuba Discover Dogs - come meet, greet and discover over 200 breeds.

Best in Show - over 22,000 dogs striving for the title of Crufts Best in Show 2023.



WINTER CAT WARNING

At this time of year please check under your car and wheel arches for cats trying to keep warm, before you set off on your journey!



During the cold winter months cats will often seek out any warm space they can find. One particularly irresistible lure seems to be the cosy confines of a warm car engine. Unfortunately, cats that seek shelter under the bonnets of cars can then be injured or killed when that car is started. Help keep your own and your neighbourhood cats safe this winter by tapping the bonnet of your car before you start the engine.



The truth about caffeine: How coffee really affects our bodies

Every day, around the world, 2bn cups are consumed. But what actually happens after you swallow that first mouthful? Here is everything you need to know.

Coffee. Go juice. Liquid gold. The one with all the psychoactive properties. Once used by Sufi mystics as an aid to concentration during religious rituals, it's now one of the most ubiquitous drinks on the planet: we get through about 2bn cups a day.

It's also one of the most valued and pored-over drinks. One particularly sought-after blend, Black Ivory, which is produced by encouraging elephants to digest arabica berries, retails at more than £2,000 a kilogram, while coffee-making championships attract thousands of spectators.

But what does it actually do to you? You might have a vague idea that caffeine wakes you up, wrecks your sleep and can aid sporting performance, but do you know how much you can drink safely? Considering that a typical americano contains more than 100 biologically active ingredients other than caffeine, what do you know about the drug you are glugging two or three times a day? What is happening inside your body when you have a double espresso in the morning?

How quickly does it act?

The effects may start before you even take a sip. Just inhaling the scent of coffee can improve memory and stimulate alertness, according to a 2019 study of 80 18- to 22-year-olds. Another study, from 2018, found that subjects did better in tests of analytical reasoning after a whiff of the good stuff. That said, the researchers in the 2018 study suggested that the effect probably had a placebo element, with the expectation of improved performance proving at least partly responsible.

What about when you actually drink it? "There's a chance that the use of any supplement will carry a placebo effect," says Dr Mike T Nelson, a researcher and performance specialist who recently co-wrote the International Society of Sports Nutrition's position on coffee. "Many researchers use randomised, double-blinded, placebo-controlled trials to try to ferret that out. And if you look at some of the higher-dose caffeine studies and when they have been compared with a placebo, we still see a performance-enhancing effect of caffeine."

This is why the effects really kick in some time after you start drinking. While a 2008 study found that the effects of a cup of coffee can occur just 10 minutes after ingestion, it said peak caffeine concentration in the blood occurred after 45 minutes.

How does coffee wake you up?

Caffeine acts as a central nervous system stimulant - making you more alert and focused, but potentially also more irritable and anxious. It's all to do with your body's adenosine receptors, which help to regulate your heart rate, blood flow and sleep-wake cycles. When adenosine - an organic compound that occurs naturally in your body - binds to these receptors, it triggers physiological responses that lead to a decrease in cellular activity, often promoting drowsiness and sleep.

Caffeine can fool your nerve cells and bind to these instead, preventing adenosine from doing its thing. This promotes increased alertness, while also allowing the brain's stimulating neurotransmitters (such as dopamine) to run wild. This makes it a mood-booster for many people, but can also lead to anxiety after high doses. While your body adapts to caffeine's effects after a while, different people can have very different responses to the same amount of it.

Can it really boost athletic performance?

It certainly can. A 2020 study of amateur cyclists found that coffee improved performance by an average of 1.7%. This may not sound like much, but it's a big deal for even moderately competitive athletes. An older British study reported a dose-related improvement in tests of reaction times, memory and visual-spatial reasoning among coffee drinkers.

Most of these performance benefits come from caffeine, which is why coffee isn't always the best option. A recent analysis by the consumer group Which? found that a medium cappuccino at Costa contains 325mg of caffeine, while the Starbucks equivalent has just 66mg. Even more confusingly, a 2003 study found a wide range of caffeine concentrations (259mg to 564mg a serving) in the same drink obtained from the same outlet on six consecutive days. (The NHS doesn't give an upper limit for daily caffeine intake unless you are pregnant, but the US Food and Drug Administration suggests that 400mg is fine.)

"Beans can make a difference - standard robusta beans are higher in caffeine than arabica beans, for example," says Nelson. "But there are other factors - roasting actually breaks down caffeine, so in general darker roasts will have a lower caffeine content. But even when outlets try to control for beans, brewing method and so on, the variability in caffeine content is still quite high. "This is why, for athletes, if you're using it purely for performance-enhancing effects and you want to be very specific with it, I recommend taking caffeine in a pill form, because you can control your intake better."

"I've worked with some endurance athletes in the past who would just stop and get a normal coffee at any shop before the race - and a lot of times their performance might be a little bit different, probably because the caffeine amount wasn't as tightly controlled."

When should you stop drinking it?

This is hotly contested. Caffeine has a half-life of about six hours, which means that if you have your final espresso at 4pm, half of the caffeine is still in your system at 10pm, when you should be winding down for the night. Plenty of people subscribe to the idea of a caffeine curfew - stopping at 2pm or 3pm, for instance - but that doesn't mean it's open season in the morning.

"It should be a nice, balanced thing," says Nick Littlehales, a sleep coach who has worked with several high-profile football teams. "I see a lot of people who have three coffees more or less back to back in the morning. They're at 1,000-1,500mg before they get to lunchtime - then they stop their intake. That's not a sensible way to do things: it's about keeping it nice and level, with no big ups and downs. Keep track of when you have a little bit of a low-energy lull, then you can actually use your caffeine intake strategically, to help you out at key times."

Is it good for you?

This is where those other biologically active compounds come in. It's also where the science becomes less clear. A few people suggest that excess intake may be linked to increased cancer risk or heart problems, while others say a few cups a day is fine.

It's helpful to look at meta-analyses of many studies - or, even better, an "umbrella review". One of the largest of these, which looked at more than 200 meta-analyses in 2017, said: "Coffee consumption seems generally safe within usual levels of intake, with summary estimates indicating the largest risk reduction for various health outcomes at three to four cups a day, and more likely to benefit health than harm." Another from the same year found that coffee was associated with a probable decreased risk of several forms of cancer, alongside cardiovascular disease, Parkinson's disease and type 2 diabetes.

What about coffee's other long-term benefits? There is some evidence that its mood-elevating effects can be beneficial over the long term. In a 2016 meta-analysis of observational studies, caffeine consumption was found to decrease the risk of depression, while a Finnish study from 2010 found a similar result with coffee. In the Finnish study, the connection was weaker when other caffeinated drinks were consumed - suggesting that there is something in coffee specifically that can affect mood. One theory is that it's the antioxidants, as these tend to correlate with reduced stress overall.

Coffee can also help with burning fat, but it's most effective in conjunction with exercise. "In order to get rid of fat, you have to break it from the cell and then burn it," says Nelson. "Caffeine has been shown to increase lipolysis, or the breaking part." So, having a quick cup before your morning workout does more than just give you an energy boost.

(Article source: The Guardian)

Why owning a pet is good for body and mind

Pet ownership should be recognised as a public health strategy due to the profound benefits for individuals, families and communities, says Steven Feldman



The Guardian reports that Troy Vettese discounts the significant benefits that pets bring to the lives of billions of people worldwide. Scientific research shows that human-animal interactions can have a powerful impact on mental, physical and social health for individuals, families and entire communities.

In fact, the benefits of pets are so profound that Vettese should consider making a full U-turn - we should have more pets and we should view them as a low-cost, high-reward public health strategy.

Pets can buffer stress and help address social isolation. Health professionals are increasingly recommending pets and incorporating them into the long-term management of mental health conditions. Think about the cost of heart disease and obesity.

Research demonstrates that pet owners have lower blood pressure, are more likely to achieve the recommended levels of daily exercise and are less likely to be obese. In addition, children with pets are more likely to be physically active.

Pets benefit from their close relationship with people just as much as we do. Pet owners consider their pets to be an important part of the family, and are willing to make significant lifestyle changes for them. According to a survey, 61% of pet owners would change housing to accommodate a pet, and 45% would change jobs to have increased time with pets at home. Most importantly, international research conducted in nine countries shows that strong bonds result in better veterinary care for the pets we love.

Environmentally, pets help prevent waste, reducing agriculture's footprint. Ingredients produced during human food processing that would otherwise be discarded are safely used in pet food.

Scientific research tells the real story. The right headline should be: "Get a pet for good health at both ends of the leash!"

(Story source: *The Guardian*)

Getting good sleep could add years to your life, study suggests

The findings indicate simply getting enough sleep is not good enough, and that the quality of sleep has an important role to play, researchers say.

Silver Surfers reports that getting good sleep could see men live almost five years longer, and women more than two years longer, than men and women who sleep badly, new research suggests.

Sleeping well can play a role in supporting heart and overall health, and according to the new study, it may even impact how long you live.

Researchers found that young people who have better sleep habits are less likely to die early. They say the findings indicate simply getting enough sleep is not good enough, and that the quality of sleep has an important role to play.

Good sleep was based on five different factors: ideal sleep duration of seven to eight hours a night, difficulty falling asleep no more than two times a week, trouble staying asleep no more than two times a week, not using any sleep medication, and feeling well rested after waking up at least five days a week. Additionally, the findings suggest that about 8% of deaths from any cause could be attributed to poor sleep patterns.

Frank Qian, an internal medicine resident physician at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Centre in Boston, America, said: "We saw a clear dose-response relationship, so the more beneficial factors someone has in terms of having higher quality of sleep, they also have a stepwise lowering of all cause and cardiovascular mortality."

The clinical fellow in medicine at Harvard Medical School and co-author of the study, added: "I think these findings emphasise that just getting enough hours of sleep isn't sufficient. "You really have to have restful sleep and not have much trouble falling and staying asleep."

Each sleep factor was assigned zero or one point for each, for a maximum of five points, which indicated the highest quality sleep.

Dr Qian added: "If people have all these ideal sleep behaviours, they are more likely to live longer. "So, if we can improve sleep overall, and identifying sleep disorders is especially important, we may be able to prevent some of this premature mortality."

The researchers included data from 172,321 people (with an average age of 50 and 54% women) who participated in the National Health Interview Survey between 2013 and 2018 - which looked at the health of the US population and included questions about sleep and sleep habits.

People were followed for an average of 4.3 years, during which time 8,681 died. Of these deaths, 2,610 (30%) were from cardiovascular disease, 2,052 (24%) were from cancer and 4,019 (46%) were due to other causes.

The study found that compared with people who had zero to one favourable sleep factors, those who had all five were 30% less likely to die for any reason, 21% less likely to die from cardiovascular disease, 19% less likely to die from cancer, and 40% less likely to die of causes other than heart disease or cancer.

Dr Qian said these other deaths are likely due to accidents, infections or neurodegenerative diseases, such as dementia and Parkinson's disease, but more research is needed.

Among men and women who reported having all five quality sleep measures (a score of five), life expectancy was 4.7 years greater for men and 2.4 years greater for women compared with those who had none or only one of the factors.

For the current study researchers estimated gains in life expectancy starting at age 30, but they say the model can be used to predict gains at older ages too.

Dr Qian said: "Even from a young age, if people can develop these good sleep habits of getting enough sleep, making sure they are sleeping without too many distractions and have good sleep hygiene overall, it can greatly benefit their overall long-term health."

More research is needed to determine why men had double the increase in life expectancy compared with women who had the same quality sleep.

One limitation of the study, presented at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Scientific Session Together With the World Congress of Cardiology, is that sleep habits were self-reported and not objectively measured or verified.

(Story source: *Silver Surfers*)

How to look after your health at 50 and beyond

A healthy lifestyle is always important - but do your needs change at different ages?

Silver Surfers reports that living well is important at any age, but experts say our health priorities can change as we get older.

While the principles of exercising regularly, eating well and managing stress will always be relevant, there may also be specific things you can do - at each milestone decade - to make sure you're harnessing your full healthy potential. So, what are they? We asked health experts to share their tips for happy, healthy ageing, post 50...

In your 50s you should... check your breasts and prostate regularly

Giles Davies, lead surgeon and director of breast surgery at Cromwell Hospital, says it's really important for women to check for the signs of breast cancer in their 50s.

"Women should check their breasts from a young age - ideally in their late-teens or 20s - but it becomes even more important as you get older," he notes. "Around 80% of breast cancers happen in women over 50, so it's important you attend your screenings.

"It's also vital you know the signs of breast cancer, so you can act on any concerns. One of the most common signs is a new lump in the breast area or armpit, though women may also experience nipple discharge, skin changes, or a change in size or shape to either one or both of the breasts."

Men should also get regular prostate checks. Professor Hashim Ahmed, consultant urological surgeon at Cromwell Hospital, says: "Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer amongst men in the UK and mainly affects those over age 50. "Problems with urinating can often be one of the first signs that something is wrong, especially if the cancer is pressing on, or growing near the urethra. Other common indications may include needing to pee more frequently, often during the night, or finding it more difficult to start or stop urinating."

These symptoms don't always mean you have cancer. However, getting things checked out quickly is always sensible. And in some cases, cancer doesn't cause any symptoms so it's important to keep you with regular health checks.

In your 60s you should... look after your joints

Joint pain is very common as we get older, and it's often caused by osteoarthritis, or wear and tear. Lifestyle measures may help prevent these problems worsening, as well as helping ease flare-ups.

Keeping physically active can still be very important. If you are concerned about joint pain and exercise, speak to your GP and perhaps a physiotherapist for tailored advice.

Kaura adds: "In winter, many individuals with joint conditions find their sensations of pain can become more frequent. For those experiencing heightened joint pain in winter, a cod liver oil supplement may help. "Research has shown that omega-3 fatty acids helps support the body's anti-inflammatory response, which can in turn help to prevent joint conditions such as arthritis from deteriorating. There has even been research that cod liver oil can help reduce the number painkillers those with arthritis take."

In your 70s and beyond you should... keep active

Experts say even people in their 70s should look to undertake some form of exercise every day, but it doesn't need to be anything as intense as marathon running.

Lin Seeley, wellbeing co-ordinator at Bupa Sandhills Court care home, says: "Light activity, such as a brisk walk or a bike ride, will still provide good benefits, and people should try to clock up about two-and-a-half hours of this a week. "I always recommend that older people work on strength and balance training. This is really important, as it can help keep us mobile into old age, while also preventing falls. "Some great exercises for this can include gentle weightlifting or aerobics. Yoga and Pilates are also great options and can easily be adapted to suit anyone's ability."

(Story source: *Silver Surfers*)



The London neighbourhood that's got it all: 10 reasons why you need to live in stylish Stratford

East London's Stratford has been on the up ever since the Olympic Games transformed the area - and it's only getting better. Rhiannon Evans, who has lived there for six years, tells us why it's the place to be.

It's been 10 years since the magic of the Olympic Games set the whole of the UK aglow - but one area that was especially illuminated was the east London neighbourhood of Stratford, where a new Olympic village sprang up.

That special feeling still remains in the area, and much of the legacy infrastructure is now filled with a buzzing and diverse community.

As more and more people discover one of London's urban treasures, its development continues apace, driven by a strong demand for homes. If you're looking to experience the best of modern city living, here's why you need to put Stratford at the top of your list...

The right connections

Whether you're up for exploring or enticing friends and family to come visit, the exceptional transport links in Stratford will win you over. The Central and Jubilee underground lines, the DLR, the Overground and the new Elizabeth line make the Stratford area one of the most connected in London.

There are also National Rail services to Essex and Norfolk, and Stratford International has seven-minute trains to London's St Pancras International, as well as high-speed services to places in Kent, such as Folkestone, Canterbury and Margate.

Do yourself a flavour

Stratford's culinary offering is vast - Westfield Stratford City has a fantastic choice of restaurants, including Wahaca and Popeyes, as well as cafes and eateries for quick stops, light snacks and confectionery - plus everything you need for your household groceries. Central Stratford has local gems such as Sawmill, while in Stratford's East Village you can enjoy artisanal bakery Signorelli's pistachio croissants or fantastic pizzas at Santi. Work and leisure space Hackney Bridge also has plenty of new food stands - it's currently home to Japanese specialists Rainbo and south Indian street food stall Tamila, among others. Close by in Hackney Wick, you can get a taste for ethical eating at zero-waste restaurant Silo.

Rhythm of the night

There are lots of bars and nightspots to enjoy too. Roof East is a complete night out package - food stands on rotation, cocktails, and activities from open-air cinema (watching Blade Runner surrounded by Stratford skyscrapers was a highlight) to mini golf and individual karaoke booths. In the East Village, bars such as Tina, We Salute You, Mother Kelly's and Roots should have you covered. Still going? Stumble less than a mile (walking across the bridges with views of the Olympic Park) to Hackney Wick for local faves Crate and Number 90.

Home is where the art is

Stratford is fast becoming a cultural heavyweight. The Line, London's first dedicated public art walk, starts at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and runs through Newham, Tower Hamlets and Greenwich, following the Greenwich meridian, with an evolving programme of art installations and events. Taking about four hours to walk, you can see works by the likes of Tracey Emin and Antony Gormley. The Theatre Royal Stratford East is on the doorstep, and you've got two cinemas (a Picturehouse and a Vue) too. The London College of Fashion and Sadlers Wells Theatre are due to open here in 2023, and the V&A in 2024.

Young at heart

Having had children in Stratford, I can vouch for its family-friendly status. There are local baby groups and clubs aplenty. For the older kids there are many playgrounds for differing age-ranges - Tumbling Bay is a favourite, as are the fountains near London Stadium in summer. The Discover Children's Story Centre is a guaranteed win, especially with its series of new exhibitions. The local library, recently decked out like a tube carriage, is a great place to let kids' imaginations run wild too.

Hitting the right note

Trek to Wembley no more: Stratford is now one of the best places to see some of your favourite acts. Many of the biggest artists - from Beyoncé to the Rolling Stones, Foo Fighters and more - now choose to play at the London Stadium. The groundbreaking ABBA Voyage hologram show is in residency at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and MSG (as in Madison Square Gardens) Sphere London is also proposed for the area.

Be a good sport

It's really a special feeling diving into the pool where so many medals were won at the London Aquatics Centre - and there are diving courses too if you want to be the next Tom Daley. As a total cliché of a lockdown runner, I can assure you, the area's many running routes can keep even the most reluctant runner going, whether it's along the canals, around the nearby marshes or, of course, in the Olympic Park itself. For added motivation, go past the giant RUN sign outside the Copper Box, which has some of the many gyms and sports facilities in the area. Or, if watching is more your thing, the London Stadium is now home to Premier League football team West Ham, and both venues regularly host an array of other sporting events.



Our better natures

There are so many trails and waterways to explore that you easily forget you're just minutes from the A12. The Jubilee Greenway is a 37-mile cycle route that loops from Stratford all the way around London's Olympic sites, and the London Blossom Garden is a living memorial to the city's experiences during the coronavirus pandemic. If you fancy a (water)bird's eye view of Stratford, treat yourself to a swan pedalo (yes, really).

All over the shop

Three words: Westfield Stratford City. Imagine the ease of having more than 350 stores on your doorstep. Christmas shopping and being home in minutes is a dream - while you'll never worry about having "nothing to wear" again.

Eastern promise

Walking around the area, there's no doubt you're part of a community on the up. In the past 15 years, more than 10,000 new homes have been built in the neighbourhood. And investment continues - the £1.1bn East Bank project is being constructed, bringing universities and arts and culture institutions to the area, and the new Coppermaker Square residential development is set to launch in the heart of Stratford, bringing a truly premium experience to modern renting.

(Article source: The Guardian)



Giving up something for Lent? Experts explain why the sacrifice is so tough

Starting on February 22nd and concluding on April 6th, this year Lent stretches over 43 days. So, if you've decided to go cold turkey on your favourite food or drink, you may be in for a rough ride.

Six weeks (and one day) is a long time to give up anything, but have you ever wondered why some culinary pleasures - think alcohol, caffeine, sweet treats and junk food - are harder to ditch than others?

Here, experts explain what makes it so hard, and offer advice on how to stay the course...

Caffeine

"Caffeine is a stimulant, which is why so many turn to their mug of coffee or tea for that spring in their step," says Professor Denis Kinane, founding scientist of health and wellness services provider Cignpost.

Whether you love a latte, an Earl Grey or a matcha, that buzz is what makes caffeinated drinks so addictive.

"Like any other stimulant, when you stop taking it you may experience withdrawal symptoms, which can make it harder to quit," Kinane explains. "Caffeine affects the central nervous system, so you may get shaky, irritable, and suffer with headaches."

To lessen the severity, try weaning yourself off in the days before Lent starts. "Start slowly, each day consuming a little less to make the transition easier," he suggests.

Alcohol

As opposed to alcohol addiction (for which you should seek medical help), if you struggle to quit moderate drinking for Lent, it's likely to do with the lifestyle aspects.

"Alcohol is often seen as a way to relax and socialise," says Melissa Kuman, nutritionist at X-Pilates. "It's also everywhere, so it is hard to forget about!"

Therefore, you'd do better to reduce temptation by avoiding activities that revolve around booze.

"Remembering that there are other ways to unwind - such as listening to music, reading a book or socialising with friends who are also staying sober - can be really helpful," says Kuman.

"If you're looking for an alternative, consider non-alcoholic drinks, such as non-alcoholic gin and mocktails, which can be equally as tasty and satisfying."

Meat

From bacon sarnies at breakfast to roast dinner with all the trimmings on Sunday, meat-based meals are seriously tempting for carnivores.

"Many people find meat incredibly enjoyable to eat, due to its savoury flavour and satisfying texture," says Kuman. "It's also incredibly convenient, since it's widely available and easy to prepare."

To curb your cravings, try experimenting with meat alternatives. "Consider plant-based proteins, such as tofu, tempeh, Quorn and seitan," Kuman says.

"It's also worth exploring various vegetarian meals to find ones that you find delicious. Spaghetti Bolognese with Quorn mince and shavings of parmesan is a favourite of mine."

Chocolate and sweets

"Studies have shown that chocolate can be as addictive as hard drugs by momentarily tapping into the same pleasure centre," says Kinane.

"However, 'momentarily' is the key word here. When you eat chocolate, your brain responds but that response only lasts a few minutes, which is why it leaves you craving more."

Likewise, sweets and lollies cause a spike in blood sugar and a subsequent 'crash', which makes you want to grab more goodies.

"If you're looking for an alternative, consider healthier snacks, such as dried fruits, which have a chewy, sweet texture or creamy yogurt, whipped with peanut butter," Kuman says.

Citrus flavours - such as water with a squeeze of lemon or lime - can zap sweet cravings, and it helps to stock up on nutritious foods, she adds: "Keep fruit handy for a natural sweet treat, and eat little and often to avoid reaching for sugary foods when you're hungry."

Fast food

The reason burgers, fish and chips, fried chicken and other high-calorie takeaway favourites are so satisfying apparently relates back to caveman times.

"Evolutionarily, getting calories on board is extremely important for survival when food is scarce," Kinane says.

"That can go some way to explaining why we find fast food so enjoyable. (They are) high in refined carbohydrates and fats, making them rich in calories."



That doesn't mean you have to eat rabbit food all Lent, though. "Many of your favourite takeaway classics can be made healthier and cheaper at home," he says. "Particularly those with high satiety, which will make you feel full quicker - foods high in protein can be great for this."

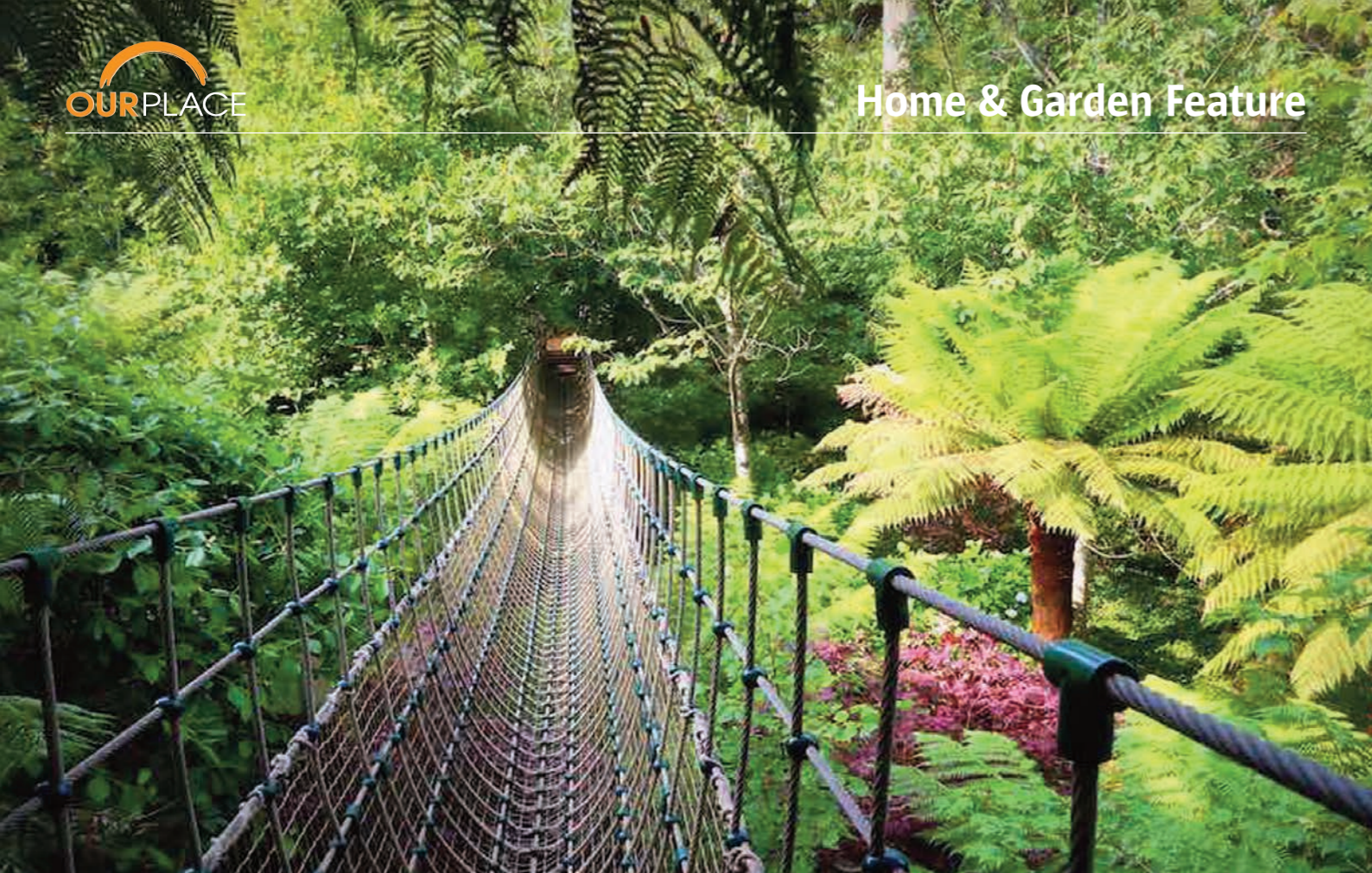
Kuman also recommends batch cooking, so you've got healthy meals on hand.

"Salads are a great meal prep dish, as you can make lots of different components and combine fresh ingredients each morning," she says.

"You could also sign up to a food delivery company, which makes healthy cooking easy and convenient."

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

Do you have an interesting story or article about Food Drink? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co



Spring into action! Inspiration from Europe's leading gardens and gardeners

We may still be in the depths of winter, but in eager anticipation of the warmer months, our thoughts are already turning to spring, when our gardens come back to life in a riot of scent and colour.

To help prepare for the season, we've collated ideas from some of our favourite UK gardeners, including Sarah Raven, Rachel de Thame, and Adam Frost, and inspiration from world-leading gardens like Appeltern Gardens in the Netherlands and RHS Wisley here in the UK.

Get the best out of your dahlias

The dahlia display at the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall (above) is a floral masterpiece - so there's certainly a thing or two we can learn from the gardeners there to make our dahlias equally resplendent. Kate Kinnett from the Lost Gardens of Heligan reminds gardeners to dis-bud dahlias by taking out the two smaller buds below the central flower to produce a larger, more impressive bloom for cutting.

There are plenty more tips and tricks to pick up from the gardeners at the Lost Gardens of Heligan on an exclusive guided tour with Heligan's Head of Gardens and Estates. It's part of an exceptional trip to Cornwall in March 2023 with a complete garden focus, visiting six of the county's best gardens just as they begin to bloom.

For more dahlia inspiration, the display at Villa Taranto in northern Italy is a sight to behold. The Dahlia Maze enchants its visitors with 1700 dahlias in over 350 varieties. The impressive Emery Paul variety has a 25cm flower head, sharply contrasting with the Pompons - these tiny globe-shaped flower heads are not quite 5mm in diameter. You can visit these incredible gardens on an eight-day tour of the lakes and gardens of Italy, with departures in April and October 2023.

Design a garden properly

Any good garden designer will tell you that carefully planning a garden will pay dividends in the long run. But sometimes, it can be hard to know where to start - particularly if you're taking on a project yourself. It's something Gardeners' World presenter Adam Frost knows plenty about and he shares extensive advice in his book, *How to Create your Garden*.

Books like Adam's and online gardening advice are excellent sources of garden design inspiration, but experiencing a garden for yourself - the scent, the colour, and the atmosphere - can help you better visualise how you want your own garden to be. In the Netherlands, there's a 'garden ideas' park, Appeltern Gardens, dedicated to different styles of gardens and an unbeatable source of inspiration for gardeners re-thinking their green spaces.

You can visit Appeltern Gardens on a cruise through the Dutch waterways in April 2023, just as the country's magnificent bulb flowers burst into kaleidoscopic colour. What's more, Adam Frost joins the cruise, and you'll receive a complimentary signed copy of his book.

Avoid honey fungus in your garden

RHS Hilltop is the gardening science centre at RHS Garden Wisley, and their work is ground-breaking. Alongside pioneering climate-change-related research, their work helps domestic gardeners too. The damage that honey fungus can inflict is something keen gardeners know all too well, but the RHS has recently shared research about honey fungus, the UK's primary garden disease, and released a list of plants to avoid if your garden is susceptible.

The work isn't all behind-the-scenes. At RHS Hilltop, visitors can listen to free talks, and get expert gardening advice, including how-to demonstrations to try at home, making for a memorable - and exceedingly helpful - day out. You can visit RHS Hilltop on a four-day spring gardens tour around some of the UK's finest gardens - unmissable for keen horticulturalists, particularly as this gives you exclusive members-only access to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Create the perfect cottage garden

According to expert gardener Sarah Raven, a quintessential English cottage garden look is achieved by introducing flowers selected for their romantic feel, subtle delicateness and sheer prettiness. One of Sarah's top tips includes incorporating foxgloves and noting that if you pick the king flower - the main spire - you create lots of prince flowers, and the plants will go on flowering for longer.

For more advice about creating beautifully colourful cottage gardens from Sarah, join a *Secrets of the English Country Garden* tour where you'll hear directly from Sarah, along with top gardeners at Great Comp Garden, Scotney Castle, Lullingstone Castle, Pashley Manor, Great Dixter and Sissinghurst, where you'll have the chance to explore the magnificent manicured gardens before they open to the public.

Recreate Cotswolds-style splendour

The magnificent gardens of the Cotswolds are an unending source of inspiration that we can recreate in our own green spaces - whether that is simply recreating beautiful pots, incorporating the large blooms of the Kiftsgate rose into our planting scheme or being inspired by the layout and design of gardens like Hidcote Gardens, which is laid out in a series of outdoor rooms.

The gardens of the Cotswolds are a firm favourite of Gardeners' World and Countrywise presenter Rachel de Thame, who makes a special guest appearance at Bourton House Garden in June 2023 and joins you for a welcome drink to answer your gardening questions. It's part of a five-day tour of the Cotswolds' gardens, where you'll also visit Painswick Rococo Garden, Batsford Arboretum, and Eastleach House Gardens.

Introduce a magnificent magnolia to your garden

Once a magnolia is well-established, like the ornamental ones you'll see in the grand gardens of Cornwall, they need very little TLC. But if you're planting a magnolia in your garden for the first time, it's worth remembering that these hardy plants prefer a sheltered spot with moist but well-drained soil.

While it may be hard to match the splendour of the magnolias at Trewidden House Garden, you can learn more about this triumphant tree from Helen Yemm when she joins a tour of Cornwall gardens in March 2023. Helen Yemm wrote the Telegraph's weekly gardening column for twenty years - so she has a well-established legacy in helping gardeners make the most of their green spaces.

Create an eco-friendly wildflower garden

Rewilding and returning parts of our garden to nature will continue to be a trend throughout 2023, a movement vital to restoring some diminishing ecosystems. Or, if you're not quite ready to put the lawnmower away yet, organic gardening may be your first step towards more sustainable gardening.

Few places can offer more inspiration than Highgrove, the country home of King Charles III. As one of the finest gardens cultivated using wholly organic methods, it's a beautiful opportunity to see a wildflower meadow created on the advice of acclaimed gardener Miriam Rothschild. The King planted an experimental wildflower meadow with 32 varieties of endangered native plants, including ox-eye daisies, yellow rattle, common spotted orchid, meadow crane's bill and ragged robin.

You can visit Highgrove in the company of Gardeners' World presenter Christine Walkden during a four-day tour of the Cotswolds' best gardens, offering an excellent opportunity to learn more about organic gardening methods.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

Please help us rescue and care for vulnerable hedgehogs - **Britain's favourite mammal**

A shocking study has revealed that hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside, with numbers HALVED in the last 20 years.

I am delighted to tell you that Britain's hedgehog has won favourite mammal in a UK poll.

The UK's only spiny mammal won with 35.9% of the 5,000 votes, more than double that of the Red Fox, who came in second place with 15.4%. The Red Squirrel came third with 11.4%, out of a shortlist of 10 charismatic UK mammals.

Unfortunately, hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside as numbers have HALVED in the last 20 years, a shocking study has revealed.

Henry Johnson, hedgehog officer, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) said:

"We Brits seem to love hedgehogs for a whole range of reasons, including their cute appearance, their role as slug controllers and the way they have colonised our gardens with such aplomb. This is why it is so sad to see them decline, with one in three lost since the millennium."

Threats to hedgehogs come mostly from us. In rural areas, our farmland increasingly lacks the diversity of habitats hedgehogs need and the invertebrates they feed on. In towns and cities green spaces are lost to development, paved over or increasingly fragmented. Hedgehogs are also very prone to road traffic accidents.

This is why we have launched this special Annual Appeal to protect Britain's favourite mammal.

At Hedgehog Rescue Rehabilitation and Care Centre we respond immediately to rescue injured hedgehogs. A vet is called in straight away and the hedgehogs are monitored and cared for. Once fit and well they are released back into the wild.

Hedgehog Rescue is now conducting its Annual Appeal. Only by continuing our huge effort and long-life commitment can we give these wonderful animals a safe, happy and contented life.



We care for many hedgehogs here at our rehabilitation centre. Hedgehogs just like these:

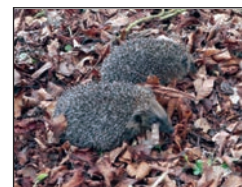
'Julie'



'Julie' (pictured left) came in last Autumn, quite small, out in daylight and had ticks. She stayed a few weeks, put on enough weight, and made a full recovery. She was released back to her own territory by the finder.

Baby Hedgehogs

These 2 hedgehogs came in as very small babies and had stayed with us a few weeks, gaining weight and giving us a chance to sort out their health issues. They had several ticks and needed worming. When they were 100% ready, we released them close to where they were found.



These hedgehogs are some of the lucky ones. Others are less fortunate.

As a friend who knows what a wonder animals can be, I hope you will support our Annual Appeal. Your kind gift will help us rescue and care for many more vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's favourite mammal.

To donate to Hedgehog Rescue, go to:
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hedgehogrescue>
or write to: Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB



HEDGEHOG RESCUE
 REHABILITATION AND CARE CENTRE

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