



Issue 10
A food special

The Shrieking Violet

FREE

The Manchester Egg ♦ Wild Food ♦ Illustration ♦ Creative Writing
Cake Map ♦ Damson gin ♦ Chinese food culture ♦ Food co-ops ♦ Nettles ♦ Becoming vegan



THERE ARE many, many things I love about food (which is why Issue 10, the 1st anniversary edition of the Shrieking Violet, is a food special!).

Eating is one of life's fundamental pleasures — eating (and cooking) ranks with sleeping, walking and swimming in the open air as one of my favourite, but simplest and most inexpensive, hobbies.

One of my pet hates is people saying they can't (or can't afford to or don't have time to) cook. If you can't cook, then make the effort to learn! Cooking is not only useful but pleasurable, and it's not hard to follow instructions in a cookery book. In no time at all you'll be experimenting and trusting your own instincts. There's also no reason why cooking should be expensive if you shop around and plan ahead (also try buying less food, but of a higher quality) — if there's just one of you, make a dish in large quantities then save the rest for lunch or future dinners (in fact, many meals, including curry, taste better when eaten as leftovers the next day), and cooking from scratch does not have to be any more time or energy consuming than heating up a ready meal or ordering a takeaway.

Food has so many functions about from just providing sustenance. Food can be comforting — for example, having a favourite meal to fall back on, or a way of rewarding yourself with a treat. It demonstrates tradition and custom, but is also subject to experimentation, fusion and innovation, as Hayley Flynn describes in an article about the Manchester Egg. It's a way of exploring and having adventures, trying new things and finding out about other cultures (Alan Smith gives a guide to picking your own food, and Rachel Cranshaw recounts a trip to China and discovering its food culture).

Food can help you connect with other people, from socialising over picnics, dinners and lunches to taking others to your favourite café or restaurant. Food can be romantic and is a good way to get to know people. It can be a way of bonding, over group baking sessions (for example, entering baking contests with — or against! — your friends), and Morag Rose describes the social function of cake. Food also lends itself to being shared, whether literally, by passing recipes from friend to friend, family member to family member or generation to generation, or by teaching someone else how to make something.

Culinary skills are often a point of pride, and sometimes a statement of individuality — showing off with your own signature dish or carefully guarding a secret ingredient.

Choosing what to eat and where to eat can also be a moral, ethical or political act, as Aziza Mill explains in an article about the difficulties of becoming vegan, and Rebecca Willmott has written about plans for a food co-operative at Manchester Metropolitan University.

What all these have in common is that eating should not just nutritious, but always enjoyable!

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The Epicure Ate Egg

by Hayley Flynn

2



I'M SURE at some point most of us have experienced some sort of culinary epiphany; salt and vinegar crisps and a mouthful of milky chocolate or maybe something more savoury? Super Noodles tucked into a slice of bread, for instance. For Ben Holden a pickled egg, a nibble of black pudding and a handful of Seabrook's paved the way for a much more gourmet delight; the reanimation of the Fortnum and Mason Scotch Egg.

Epicureans delight! Behold! The Manchester Egg!

Best served with Manchester Relish (a blend of Vimto and onion that is still in development) it's the new bar snack that's on everyone's lips. In Ben's words, "A glorious egg-shaped legacy for Manchester."

Up until now whenever I've seen a jar of pickled eggs settled on the bar, eyeing me up and bobbing around like polished brains in formaldehyde, I balk at the idea of ordering one but there's something strangely appealing now that the pointed zing of the egg lies tucked into a rich blood sausage shell and coated in crispy breadcrumbs.

Conceived in The Castle, Oldham Street, there has been steady demand for the delicacies, demand great enough that Ben has trained staff at The Soup Kitchen on Spear Street to recreate his recipe. Heralded by some as "the perfect pub snack"; tasty and filling, could this hybrid of an egg move on up the ranks from humble bar snack to a fine dining experience?

Who knows but so far I've yet to hear a bad word said of the creation. Quite honestly I've yet to hear a mediocre word. Thumbs, the town over, are whole heartedly pointing upwards.

A lovely robust snack could have no better birth place than The Castle, a gregarious haunt that looks exactly the kind of place in which you would while away the hours debating meat whilst eating slippery things from jars. This is a good thing. The Manchester Egg, I assure you, is a great thing.

Over the years our other local 'delicacies' have not always been the subject of such rave reviews. Sure, Eccles Cakes and Lancashire Hot Pot, they've done well, they're stood the test of time but what about the Rossendale Sad Cakes, sometimes known as Desolate Cakes? My heart breaks a little just knowing there's such a thing. How about Rag Pie? Rag Pie, this decidedly limp but meaty treat, doesn't fare so well as George Augustus Sala, a rather great Victorian journalist (and interestingly the author of a very rare pornographic novel - yes, a rag mag), told the world in 1859...

"There was a dreadful pie for dinner every Monday; a meat pie with ... horrible lumps of gristle inside, and such strings of sinew, alternated by lumps of flabby fat. We called it kitten pie-resurrection pie-rag pie-dead man's pie. We cursed it by night, we cursed it by day: we wouldn't stand it, we said; we would write to our friends; we would go to sea."

Oh dear, thumbs down on the Kitten Pie then?

Find more information on Mr Holden's Manchester Egg at

<http://manchesteregg.com/>



3

Manchester cake map by Morag Rose

THREE THINGS I love are cartography, cake and Manchester.

Maps have always fascinated me; not only are they beautiful but they can have so much power; naming places, giving them new meanings, shaping perceptions, choosing which details to include, creating borders. Cartography is powerful stuff. As well as 'official' maps, I love DIY and imaginary versions which show the glorious wonkiness of the world and individual perceptions of it. (If anyone else shares this delight and fancies a natter please get in touch)

Cake makes (most) people happy, it brings folk together for a sweet moment in hectic lives and, as a vegan, I see it also as a stealth weapon in smashing stereotypes; my baking is not dour or about deprivation; I demand decadent treats people won't guess are cruelty free.

Manchester is made of so many stories, all of them true and many of them false; I want to listen to the myriad tales and get under the pavement to the soul of the city which I find fascinating, frustrating, contradictory and full of wonder.

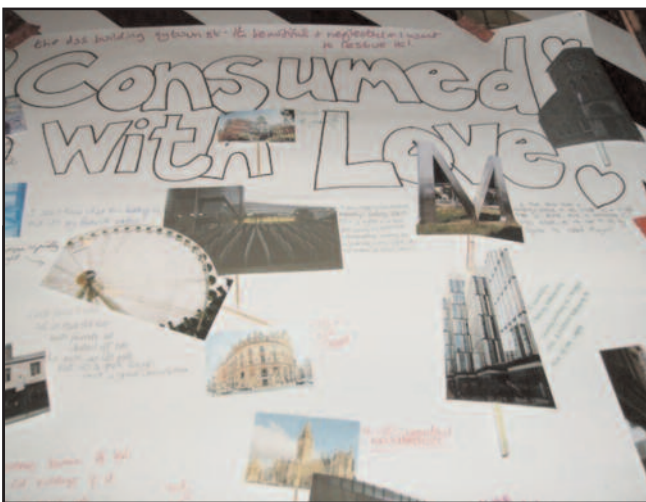
The LRM (Loiterers Resistance Movement) is a collective devoted to exploring the psychogeography of the city and discovering the magick in the Mancunian rain. They helped me realise a vision I had to combine my passions and create the (not terribly imaginatively titled) cake map of Manchester.

A sea of cupcakes appeared in The Green Room last December during the Larkin About festival of play. Each one was topped with a picture of a building in the city or a blank space to draw a missing place. People were invited to choose a cake to eat and then let us know why: was it consumed with love or devoured with hate or maybe they were just curious to know what somewhere tasted like.



This was an opportunity to truly shape the redevelopment of the city; our scrumptious diorama was also an almost scientific consultation tool, it certainly involved more open questions and active participation than many more official such exercises

We collected a diverse range of comments; more than 100 people told us what they considered to be the edible heart of the city and why. They ranged from funny to poignant, personal and political.



The full spectrum of stories will be revealed at a future LRM event and we hope to recreate the cake map in different locations; invitations and ideas are very welcome.

These are a few of the thoughts participants shared:

Great Northern Warehouse. What greater symbol of Manchester's former glory and industrial might – the Beetham Tower of its day but now 500 parking spaces, 16 screens of Hollywood slop and a row of arsehole bars – what greater symbol of Manchester's runaway regeneration?

UMIST Tower – along with the rest of Umist campus an oasis of calm and serenity in the middle of the city. Lovely murals.

Mancunian Way: A symphony of phlanges, grouting and concrete and bearer of the delightful 1968 concrete society awards plaque.

Castlefield Arena. Looks like 3 boobies! - I went on a date and we ended up drinking wine on these steps – magical.

Deansgate Locks. My idea of hell on a weekend night

Library Walk – I love that moment when you get half way round – it feels like you're transported to another country

Harvey Nichols. Why is all the new stuff made of that horrible grey cladding that looks like plastic?

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who took part, whether in making or scoffing the spectacle. Incidentally, Urbis was the most cherished building; many people wanted to protect it but alas too late; its specialness has gone although of course the shell remains. The map is not the territory; buildings are more than architectural structures and all art, especially if edible, is ultimately shit!

To find out more about future cake mapping adventures or to blether about the joy of maps please email loiter@hepzombie.co.uk or join the facebook group '*the loiterers resistance movement*'.



5

Urban foraging

by Alan Smith



YOU MIGHT think the “food for free” ethos promoted by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Ray Mears is pretty much useless in a big city like Manchester, but you’d be wrong. Foraging for wild food is a simple pleasure that isn’t limited to those who are lucky enough to live in the country. Our gardens, parks, riverbanks and roadsides are full of food if you know what you’re looking for. And I’m not talking about obscure, bitter tasting herbs and suspect toadstools. Over the next couple of months there will be a glut of sweet, tasty and nutritious fruits and berries just waiting to be picked by clued-up urban foragers. Foraging for food is a great way for city dwellers to get in touch with the natural world and seasons, which cities seem almost designed to alienate us from.

For this introductory guide I will be sticking to some of the commonly found fruits that can be picked between late summer and late autumn and a simple way of preserving them. However, the range of wild food that can be found in the urban and suburban environment is huge and not just restricted to this most fruitful of periods. There are a whole variety of herbs, flowers, fruits, nuts and fungi that can be found at different times throughout the year. The number of ways of using them is just as diverse, from flavoured booze to delicate salads, fruit fresh from the stalk to wild mushrooms dried then used in risotto.

Some common foraging fruits

Blackberries/Brambles – delicious fresh and in pies. They also make nice jellies and jams although they need a little extra pectin.

Cherries – very common as ornamental cherries are popular due to their spring blossom. Eat fresh or use them to make your own cherry brandy.

Crab Apples – look like miniature apples. Pick them when they are nice and red. Although too tart to eat raw they make delicious jelly – lovely on toast or as an accompaniment to roast pork. They contain plenty of pectin and can be added to other jellies to help them set.

Elderberries – clusters of small black berries. Good in apple pie or added to blackberries when making jelly.

Rosehips – the orange-red fruits of wild roses (look out for the thorns!) They can be used to make syrup or jelly with a distinct sweet floral flavour.

Rowan berries – clusters of small orange berries. Use them to make a jelly – sharp/bitter like good marmalade – nice with lamb and game such as venison.

Hawthorn berries (haws) – dark red berries. They make a delicious jelly good with cream although they need a little extra pectin from some crab apples. Beware the thorns!



Making fruit jellies

One of the simplest and most versatile ways to preserve these fruits is as a jelly. Not the wobble-wobble jelly on a plate, this type of jelly is best described as jam without the bits. That is, jam made using just the juices of stewed fruit. Both jams and jellies set because of the action of pectin. Pectin occurs naturally in fruit and, when cooked with sugar and the naturally occurring acid in the fruit, thickens and sets the preserve. Some fruit is lower in pectin than others. Fruits high in pectin eg apples, damsons and redcurrants can be added to fruits low in pectin. Or, add a few squeezes of lemon juice.

Instructions

Pick over and wash your fruit, discarding any leaves and stalks along with any fruit that looks bad. A good rinse in cold water will get rid of any bugs, dirt and natural yeasts.

Pack the prepared fruit into a preserving pan or large, heavy-bottomed pan and add just enough water to cover. Bring to the boil and simmer gently until all of the fruit has broken down. For fruit low in pectin, add the juice of one lemon per 1kg of fruit. You might need to give the fruit some help with a wooden spoon – be prepared to simmer for up to half an hour for harder-skinned fruits.

Now you need to separate the juice from the seeds and fibres. Allow the stewed fruit to cool slightly then pass it through a muslin cloth or old pair of tights hung over a fresh pan. This can be rather time consuming as most sources recommend you leave it hanging overnight to extract all of the liquid. I'm always too impatient and just give it a light squeeze until most of the juice is out. This is supposed to result in cloudy jellies but I've never had this problem. When fully strained, measure the volume of liquid and return it to your clean preserving pan over a low heat.

Next, add the sugar – 500g (1lb) of preserving sugar for every 500ml (1 pint) of juice. Stir carefully until the sugar has dissolved. Now turn up the heat for a rolling boil, stir well with a long-handled wooden spoon and skim off any scum from the surface – be very careful at this stage, the sugary liquid gets extremely hot! A jelly will form when the mixture reaches 105C (221F) on a jam thermometer. If you don't have a jam thermometer, put a drop of the mixture on a cold plate and check to see if it produces a skin. You'll know the jelly is done when you can drag your spoon through the test sample on the plate and doesn't run.

Carefully transfer the mixture to jam jars that have been washed in hot soapy water, thoroughly rinsed and sterilised in an oven (130C/250F/Gas ½ - for 15-20 minutes). Screw the lids on tight straight away but be careful as the jars will be very hot. Leave them to cool and they should vacuum seal themselves. All you need now labels, an inventive name for your creation and a little patience as jelly tends to improve with a couple of months maturation in the jar.

Further reading and a final word

The best foraging guide I know of is Richard Mabey's classic "Food for Free". First published in 1972 it has never been bettered. Collins gem publish a pocket sized version that is perfect for taking on foraging expeditions.

It should go without saying really – only eat fruit you are 100% sure of. There are some berries out there that can give you a bad stomach ache or even worse. Take care!



7

Lips

“Lips that taste of tears they say, are the best for kissing” –

Dorothy Parker

The Lips are one of the most sensitive parts of our body, and one of the most erotic. They can be covered in red lipstick, or natural, full and pouting. We communicate all our emotions through our lips, curled over a smile, pouting in disarray, turned down in distress. We explore with our lips, taking us through journeys of warm or cold, they are our tactile sensory organs, and they help us convey speech. Babies are always constantly putting thing up to their mouths, not touching them, not nearly eating them, running them along the nerves in their lips.

Lips always look better dressed up. Jerry Hall once famously said that she would never leave the house without lip-gloss on. In science, the more estrogen a woman has, the hormone that attracts our mates, makes our lips fuller and bigger (there is a reason Angelina Jolie is revered for her lips) and women can cheat at this. To wear red lip stick, to make our lips darker, is basically screaming sex to testosterone. It has even been said, that lips are so beautiful and sensual because they mimic a woman's sexual organs. In certain women, their lips with swell when they are sexual stimulated. They are a secondary sexual organ, that we can paint and present to the world.

Kissing is an amazingly intimate act. Kissing can be dangerous, it can be soft and tender, and it can show deep felt emotion or none at all. Romeo and Juliet were doomed with a kiss. A kiss can be a start and an end to a day; a kiss can stop an argument or start one. Kissing can sometimes be more intimate than sex itself. After all, in the film “Pretty Woman”, there's a reason why the Hooker won't kiss. Kissing is emotional, and more intimate in a way than sex can ever be.

Stomach.

“All goodness is poison to thy stomach” –

William Shakespeare

Scientifically speaking, the stomach is an organ that produces enzymes, and bile's that breaks down our food after the act of mastication. It is broken up into four different parts, it has its own layers and glands and its own secretion rate. It is filled with acid that can break down nearly everything we throw at it; the stomach can expand, or even decrease depending on usage.

Do you know what it feels like to be so hungry it hurts? Do you know what it feels like to be so full it hurts? Ever had an unexplained stomachache, where all you can deduct is that it's painful? The stomach is our insides; it lets us know what to do to continue functionally, to continue living. The stomach is sometimes such a worry that people neglect it, they starve themselves. Sometimes people fill it too much, too often and the stomach stops digesting properly, starts storing. Our stomachs are more primitive than the rest of our bodies, the rest of our organs.

Have you ever had food poisoning and been sick so much you are vomiting nothing but bile? Have you ever been ill, and just wanted your mothers cooking, your mother's soft words to heal you from the insides?

The stomach is nearly a command point to how we look and feel. People judge others of their weight, the 'washboard stomach', the 'skinny waif', and 'fat pig'. The stomach is a relatively small organ, nestled just above our small intestines, but it seems to be one of our organs that gets the most abuse, the most hatred, or the most love.

Have you ever had heartburn? Have you ever known anyone with a stomach ulcer, the stomachs answer to curing itself?

The stomach can at times rule our heads, and at others rule our hearts. Society places great importance on our social standing to this body part, Elizabeth Hurley claims she often goes to bed hungry. This woman fasts, when there are others starving. The stomach is a body part that sometimes gets too much attention. Then, there is nothing better than eating your favourite meal, drinking your favourite drink, and luxuriating on a nice full belly. Don't believe me? What are your plans for Christmas Day?

Kate Thorburn



Eating leaves (Stinging nettle soup) by Natalie Bradbury

I DEVELOPED an interest in the culinary possibilities of leaves in soup (as a central ingredient, as opposed to the odd bay leaf or herb for flavouring) during a long, snowy winter's obsession with soup-making, when every meal I ate was blended into pulp. I experimented with new components and combinations, daydreaming each working day about what I was going to try that evening, before freezing any leftovers for defrosting later as lunch.

As a single person, often cooking for one, soup is a easy way to get rid of leftover ingredients before they go bad. One day, this happened to be spinach which, whilst not unpleasant when liquidised, doesn't make for the most interesting of soups. The next week, I bought a tub of wild rocket from the fruit and vegetable stall but, try as hard as I could to plough through it in sandwiches or as a side on my plate with dinner, there was just too much of it for one person to eat before it wilted. So, rocket soup it was, which I envisaged as being bitter, peppery and spicy. Unfortunately, whatever I did (overcooked it, possibly), the results were disappointing — the stock completely overpowered the rocket and it was more like leaves floating in watery broth than an intensely-rockety tasting soup (during a later attempt, however, I discovered that making plum tomato and rocket soup brings out the best in both ingredients).

Which leads me onto stinging nettles. I'd heard about rocket growing in the wild but didn't know where to look. Common stinging nettles are everywhere, and nettle soup seemed like a simple starting place (although, as a friend pointed out, 'It seems like a lot of effort to go to. Most people just buy nettle tea.').

Unsure about picking polluted city nettles, I waited until a last-minute bank holiday outing to the countryside just outside Manchester with my overexcitable friend Dave. We tramped downhill from Broadbottom station past steep rows of pretty, grey terraced houses to the muddy River Etherow ('ooh, like ethereal', said Dave), which flows alongside bits old mills in the woods. Although it was late spring, the weather was unpredictable — we had to shelter from hailstones in the greenhouses of a nearby garden centre — so Dave had a pair of thick gloves, which I borrowed to pick the nettles, along with a spare carrier bag. I'd read that the young leaves, which I took to mean the brighter, glossier, smaller shoots near the top of the plants, are best.

On the train back, the bag was disproportionately pungent for the amount of leaves it contained; it already smelled like a hearty meal was wafting upwards. Once home, I washed the leaves then improvised a basic recipe as follows:

(serves 2)

Fry an onion in a tablespoon of butter with a large clove of garlic. When it starts to look cooked, add one medium potato, cut into cm cubes. Gradually stir in vegetable stock (just under 600ml) then add the nettles, thoroughly washed. Simmer for 10-15 minutes then blend. Season to taste and grate some nutmeg on top.

At first taste, nettle soup is metallic and almost meaty, but mildly and inoffensively so. But then there's a sudden kick, a very bitter, tangy, almost spicy aftertaste. The contrast between the immediate taste and the after effects is so pronounced it's like two culinary experiences in one, and it's certainly an acquired taste.

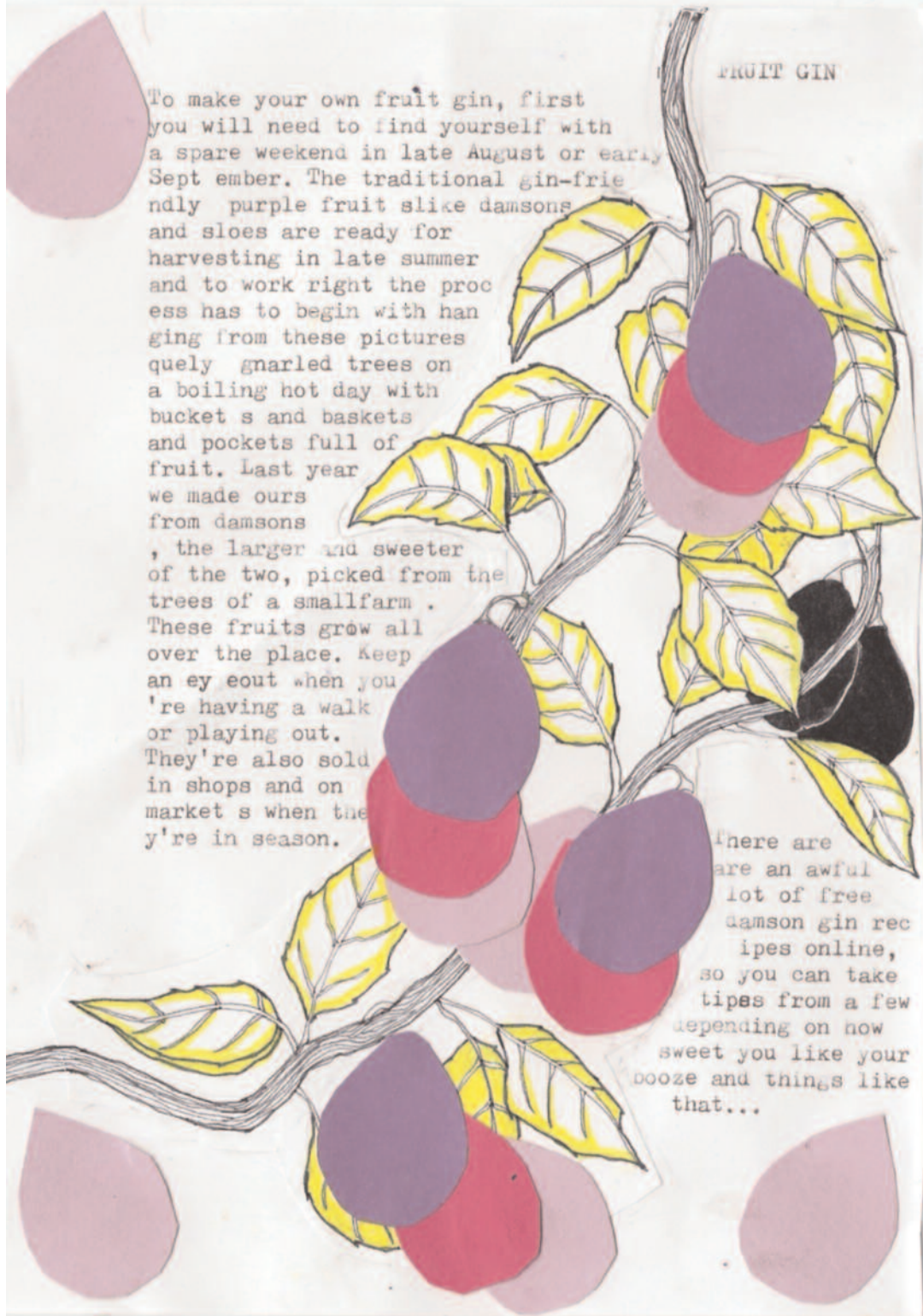
Nettles are best in early spring and summer so, although my soup-making obsession has passed and I have fallen back in love with more solid food, I guess I will have to wait until next year to try nettle pesto or risotto, the other foods to which nettles apparently lend themselves.

In the meantime, though, I would definitely recommend an outing to Broadbottom.

FRUIT GIN

To make your own fruit gin, first you will need to find yourself with a spare weekend in late August or early September. The traditional gin-friendly purple fruit slike damsons and sloes are ready for harvesting in late summer and to work right the process has to begin with hanging from these pictures quely gnarled trees on a boiling hot day with buckets and baskets full of fruit. Last year we made ours from damsons, the larger and sweeter of the two, picked from the trees of a smallfarm. These fruits grow all over the place. Keep an ey eout when you're having a walk or playing out. They're also sold in shops and on markets when the y're in season.

There are are an awful lot of free damson gin recipes online, so you can take tips from a few depending on how sweet you like your booze and things like that...



The things that you will definitely need are...

BOTTLES; the ones that your gin came in are fine to use, or you could get a demijohn. This is a massive glass bottle with little handles on the neck. You can get them from brewing shops or the internet. I liked to use one because it's dead good to contemplate your 5 litres of gin.

GIN; I recommend either Lidl or Makro for this

SUGAR; anywhere between 50 and 150g per 75cl of gin.

FRUIT; somewhere between 400 and 500g per 75cl of gin.

Before bottling you'll need to prick the skin of your fruits, but you can just freeze them instead which is easier. You don't need to remove the stones. Once you're all bottled up find a place out of direct sunlight (so as not to bleach any of the lovely colour out) to store it. For the first week shake the container once a day, and after that shake it once a week for 3 to 5 months. Leaving your liqueur to brew for longer lets out some of the almondy flavour from inside the stone.

Bottled in summer, Damson or Sloe gin will be ready for the mid-winter festivities. You'll need to strain it through muslin into a clean bucket, and then decant into bottles. I ended up using milk bottles with bungs in. You can use the leftover booze-fruit too, it's good with ice cream, or you could make truffles by melting dark chocolate, syrup and cream together to make a ganache, stoning the fruits and then coating them. The gin itself will be very strong and very tasty and sweet, so be careful. It's nice with fizzy water, or in cocktails. However, the true gin lover will have a nip for a nightcap...

Lauren Velvick



11 Chinese Food

by Rachel Cranshaw

THE PROMINENT role that China and its food play in my family dates back to 1983 when my father, Mark, spent a year living in former capital Nanjing, having studied the language intensively for a year prior to that. However, it took a recent trip (my first) to the country to fully recognise and appreciate the prominence of this role. Having yawned my way through viewings of the slides from this year throughout my childhood, cringed my way through arguments with waiting staff in British Chinese restaurants throughout my teenage years (ok, that only happened once) and laughed my way through conversations between my dad and...himself in Mandarin in more recent years, it is safe to say it is something I have always taken for granted. I do recall early instances of interest being expressed from my sister and I; begging him to teach us words and how to use chopsticks – although, ironically, in the end I learnt the latter from the back of a packet in a British Chinese restaurant. Two of my best friends at primary school were Chinese and although the food served on their tables at home to friends was a source of painstaking embarrassment for them, I loved nothing more than an opportunity to devour chicken's feet and huge mussels, and then boast about it to my dad when I got home.

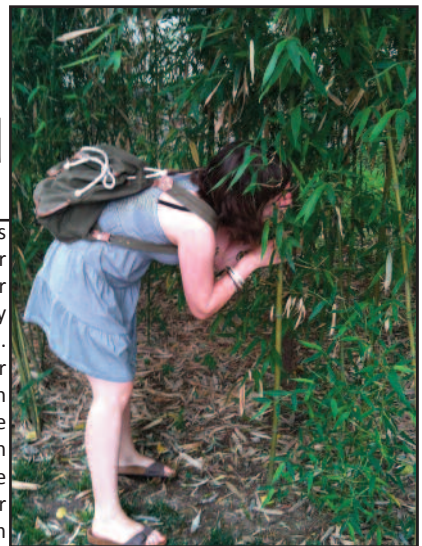
One of them introduced me and consequently my family to Kams Palace, the only Chinese restaurant in Britain we have yet to find that Mark will eat at and even say positive things about. Sunday trips there for dim sum were an occasional and glorious treat; the room stuffed fit-to-bursting with Chinese families having noisy catch-ups over silky cheong fun and steaming cha siu dumplings. However, aside from a policy of unrelenting hostility towards the majority of British Chinese restaurants, China was largely absent from my dad's life until a couple of years ago when he got a job that enables him to travel there roughly five times a year, for several weeks at a time. For his most recent trip it was decided that my mother, sister and I would accompany him two weeks in advance of his work commitments, so that he could show us around.



Dumplings being made by hand

Chinese attitudes to hospitality, particularly in gastronomic contexts. For me to go into detail at this point would be considered grossly offensive by our hosts on this night, so I shall say no more for now!

Many sweltering hours were spent exploring the labyrinth that is Xi'an's Muslim quarter; a charming mixture of markets, street food, cafes and restaurants. Waiters wander around sit-down establishments offering platters



Rachel samples the cuisine favoured by China's lovable but idiotic mascots, the pandas. Bamboo is virtually nutritionally invalid; consequently said animals have to munch on it all day, every day, just to get the energy to...lie around and not have sex with each other. REALLY should have died out a long time ago...

We began our trip in current capital Beijing. The general importance of food in the country becomes apparent virtually on arrival; one does not have to travel to particular areas of the city to find restaurants, rather the capital is one huge sprawl of eating establishments of all kinds, joined up with roads and interspersed with other buildings. Seeing dumplings and noodles being made by hand was fascinating; the latter in particular a learned, complicated technique. It was in Beijing that we discovered hotpots; an experience not far removed from fondues, whereby a vat of fiery (in both senses of the word!) broth is placed in the middle of the table, in which guests are then free to 'cook' their own meat, fish and vegetables. Entire restaurants serving only this not only exist, but are commonplace.

Simultaneously, here we experienced first-hand the rigid



Watching noodles being made in Xi'an

laden with glistening kebabs, the skewers of which are then counted at the end in lieu of a bill. Outside, one can stumble upon all manner of predictable and less predictable exotic delicacies – huge vats of spices and pigs trotters to name but a few.

Our next stop, Chengdu, is found in Sichuan province. With said region arguably the gastronomic capital of the country, we knew we were in for a treat, and even my dad hadn't been there prior to this trip. We also knew that our digestive systems were in for a tough few days, although just how tough I personally had no idea – let's just say food was eaten that was so hot and so spicy, it was as painful coming out as it was going down. Part of the reason we were so looking forward to this part of the trip was because it would give us the opportunity to sample the true

version of the very dish that caused the argument in the restaurant in Britain so many years ago – Gong Bao Chicken. Said chicken dish is widely available across China, and to be honest invariably tastes much the same as when cooked in the region of origin. I do have to concede though that my dad was correct in his criticisms of the chef's interpretation of the dish on that occasion – the sauce should indeed be sweet but not sickly, and more importantly the small cubes of chicken should be interspersed with peanuts, not cashews. Tasting the real deal was most satisfactory, having argued blindly about it for about seven years.

Our final destination, Nanjing, provided a reappearance of the overwhelming generosity and hospitality inherent in Chinese culture. Whilst a guest in China, to take a Chinese person out for a



Spices in Xi'an's Muslim quarter.

meal or cook for them would be a laughable offer, and one they would never accept. The understanding is that it is their responsibility to show you a good time, and that should they ever be in your country of residence, you would reciprocate. Whether or not the latter is likely to happen is irrelevant. Consequently, my family owe a few favours! Whilst out for a veritable feast arranged by a Chinese colleague of my dad, I noticed that food was facilitating, as corny as it may sound, the union of our two families (their words not mine!). I suppose this is the case in most cultures, but it really did seem especially prominent in China, particularly with the airs and graces often associated with eating in England abandoned in favour of conversation, laughter, and appreciation of both everyone around you, and everything going into your mouth.

Eating in China was largely a blind experience in the sense that as only my dad could read the menus, food would turn up on the table, and famished from a day most likely involving pounding burning concrete in 37 degree heat for hours, we would devour it. At aforementioned feast everything was pre-ordered, leading to the unfortunate predicament of mistaking a pig's ear for a mushroom, but that was the only experience I had that I would actually describe as unpleasant. The liberation from overly descriptive menus was quite exhilarating, although the few that had English translations were always amusing – I think I'll save the 'husband and wife lung' for my next trip...



Pigs trotters in Xi'an's Muslim quarter.



13

A Vegan Restaurant Column (of Sorts) by Aziza Mills

UPON DECIDING to become a vegan some months ago for reasons too longwinded to explain here, I was faced with a dilemma: how was I ever going to enjoy eating in restaurants again? What do vegans eat when they go out, and haven't had the foresight to bring a packed lunch, I pondered. Bread and fruit, my vegan friend Helen informed me. Actually that might have been what she said vegans eat when they go abroad, but either way there are few situations where this could be considered a satisfactory meal. She also told me I would have to learn to embrace humous, as humous is a vegan's best friend – unfortunately I'm not a huge fan of the beige stuff (no matter what they try and lace it with to make it a nicer colour – red pepper, avocado etc. – it remains among the world's dullest foodstuffs). But this is beside the point: I'm here to talk about the choices available to vegans in restaurants, and in many 'upmarket' dining establishments these are unfortunately lacking, if not non-existent. It was already a struggle when I was a half-hearted veggie (a pescetarian, in fact) – smart restaurants generally don't have hundreds of things on the menu, so I got accustomed to expecting one fish and one veg option. When you turn vegan, it's very likely that even the veggie option isn't an option, so fundamental to British (and much of European) cuisine are cheese and/or butter/cream/egg, and most restaurants aren't likely to give too much consideration to the tricky 0.3% of the population who reject most food items traditionally considered tasty and nice.

So, going back to the day I eschewed all dairy products along with eggs, fish (and supposedly honey, but I tend to turn a blind eye here, as the bees don't look particularly oppressed to me) no longer being able to enjoy 'fine dining' seemed a bleak prospect. This may seem melodramatic, for of course you get used to it before long, and you begin to realise that restaurants are a bit overrated anyway, when you can make all sorts of lovely food at home, and as an added bonus you get to enjoy the smug moral superiority of knowing you don't cause suffering to our fellow beast (I am aware that there are arguments for avoiding all sorts of non-animal derived foods due to the destruction of rainforests and other wildlife habitats, and it's quite possible that scores of monkeys were made homeless by the production of my soya milk and fake cheese, but if I thought about it too much I'd end up just eating out of other people's bins or starving).

So far on my journey into vegan-hood my fine-dining fears have been partially confirmed. I've not really attempted any posh restaurants yet other than exclusively vegetarian ones (but even then the vegan options can be dire, in particular at a certain establishment which I'm not going to name but let's just say it's in West Didsbury and it rhymes with Beans), but on two separate occasions of going for pizza with work I've been a victim of the blandest dining experience known to man. You may have noticed that pizzas that come with no cheese are usually covered in tasty fishy or eggy or meaty things to compensate; take those away and you are left with



14



barely anything of gustatory value (I recently came across a humous pizza in one particular 'Italian' establishment, for which someone should be shot, or at the very least sectioned). Curries are a much better bet, although having to repeatedly ask "do you know if it's got non-vegetable ghee in it?" of various menu items gets tiresome and makes you look ungrateful, particularly if someone else is paying for the meal. However some South Asian places such as the lovely 'Coriander' restaurant opposite Southern Cemetery in Chorlton have a range of good vegan dishes which are specified as such on the menu. This is a trait probably quite unique to Chorlton though, where the absurd preponderance of veggies and vegans is radically disproportionate to the UK at large.

Luckily I am still able to enjoy my favourite restaurant in Manchester, which remains top of the list despite my awkward dietary requirements. It's in no way smart or glamorous, in fact it's dark, dingy, and is decorated with terrible artwork and plastic flowers, and service can be slow due to the fact they never seem to be expecting more than a few customers. But one of the joys of Cedar Tree on Thomas Street is that a large proportion of the menu is obviously vegan-friendly without you even having to ask. I'd recommend not bothering with mains, and instead ordering several small dishes, mezze style. The first seven or eight items on the menu are completely animal-free and you don't have to scroll down far to find many more: along with the obvious things like tabouleh and humous (like me you may choose to spurn this particular item though I'm sure the Cedar Tree's version is infinitely superior to that supermarket pap), are glorious, sometimes spicy, always tasty concoctions of aubergine, chickpea, spinach, okra, broad bean etc. all without an animal product in sight (although watch out for the menu trying to pass chicken livers and lamb kebab off as vegetarian). The menu includes probably the best salad ever invented, fattoush — full of crispy deep-fried pitta bits liberally sprinkled with tangy sumac. If this all sounds a bit too healthy for you and you aren't vegan, the warm haloumi-filled flatbreads and spinach pastries are very nice, and there are obviously plenty of meaty bits to keep carnivores happy. You can enjoy a more than substantial (actually very filling) meal with a few of these small dishes say seven or eight to share between two - and a basket of flatbreads, for around £15 per person (the dishes are £3-4 on average, and it's BYOB which keeps costs down further).

Cedar Tree is fairly typical of Lebanese cuisine, and it's not radically different to a number of Middle Eastern restaurants I've been to outside Manchester; it's the only one of its kind I've been to locally although I'm told there's another Lebanese in Withington. So there you go: becoming vegan is inevitably going to restrict you quite dramatically in terms of where and what you can eat when you venture further afield than your own kitchen. But it's not all doom and gloom — embrace the cuisine of the Lebanon (indeed much of the Middle East) and your taste buds won't miss animal-derived foodstuffs one bit!



15



Scooter Man

by **Craig Lochhead**

The hill was steep and twisted a corner on its way down. The road, flanked by dual pavements was small and busy. He came around without

a care, hurtling downwards at an alarming rate.. A mobility scooter is the common term, used in the main by the old and infirm. He was grey, old, probably not too old to walk but certainly too drunk.

As he finished rounding the corner, his velocity was such that two of his four wheels lifted from the ground. He was unconcerned and maintained his ludicrous speed, nearly colliding with a pedestrian who was attempting to cross the road. Our old scooter man was oblivious to the chaos people saw in him. He had a look of deep serenity in his eyes that didn't sit well with the eerie, half-toothless grin he had spread across his face.

His hair was unkempt and grey underneath a tattered black trilby and he wore standard issue old-drunk clothes; a lumpy suit of washed out blazer and non sequitur trousers. As he drew closer I saw the focus of his attention, the thing that seemed to keep him from panic. There was a circular mirror attached to the handlebars of his scooter by a slender chrome stem and Scooter Man's gaze was fixed rigid upon it. Staring deeply into his own eyes he looked utterly charmed, as though he were falling in love for the first time.

Eat

As I walked down the high street just the other day my attention was drawn to a mother and child. The mother was probably in her late twenties and she pushed her baby along in a pram down the busy street. It began to rain and making her way through the flow of shoppers the mother took shelter under the awning of a grocers.

There was nothing particularly striking about the woman or her behaviour; my desire to watch her was as inexplicable as it was instinctual. It was as I was considering this that she began fumbling with zips and other fastenings on the back of the pram. She placed her hand into a compartment from which she produced a small white paper bag. It was crumpled, shiny in places and displayed the logo of the local bakers. The mother took out a sausage roll from its greasy depths before deftly removing half of the pastry and quickly scoffing it. Noticing his mother's actions, the baby became visibly excited and gurgled happily. I continued watching, intrigued as the mother took a large bite of the sausage-meat and began to chew.

The baby's excitement now reached a peak as he bounced around the softness of the pram. This was soon brought to an abrupt end however, when the mother began to lower her head, moving it ever closer to that of the now still and silent baby, it's mouth agape. The mother then opened her own mouth and began allowing well-masticated sausage meat to tumble generously into the baby's toothless maw. The baby now seemingly satisfied, the mother put the remainder of the sausage roll into the pram and continued on her way.



Frankenstein Forgot The Onions

An afternoon
In a greasy spoon
There's no place I'd rather be
At noon

Taking it easy
With my cheese toasty
Wishing I'd been
Born in a butty
If only I'd have been
That lucky

A man at the counter surveys the options
We're waiting for the big decision
Will it be the Sparky Special
Or just a regular
Cheese and ham?

I bet Audrey Hepburn never thought
She'd be bluetacked at the back
In a greasy cafe
Swapping fame and Hollywood
For watching a tattooed Boris Karloff
Doing the washing up

Soup (without the foam)

Its another one of those vegetable soups
You know,
The ones you eat for speed
They're pretty cheap
With peas
Its kind of like
A wash & go



17

Mark's Gung Bao Chicken – serves four as one dish of a Chinese meal as told by Rachel Cranshaw

Ingredients

4 free-range, organic chicken breasts (Mark would never bother with this, and the idea of an animal having a happy life would make for good stand-up material in China, but I'm overriding as I'm the one writing!)

2 tbsp groundnut oil
4 cloves garlic
A large cube of ginger, grated
5 spring onions (white parts only)
10 dried Sichuan chillies
1 tsp whole Sichuan pepper
75g roasted PEANUTS

For the marinade

½ tsp salt
2 tsp light soy sauce
1 tsp Shaoxing wine
1 ½ tsp potato flour
1 tbsp water

For the sauce

3 tsp brown sugar
¼ tsp potato flour
1 tsp dark soy sauce
1 tsp light soy sauce
3 tsp Chinkiang or black Chinese vinegar
1 tsp sesame oil
1 tbsp chicken stock or water

Cut the chicken into small cubes. Mix the marinade ingredients in a bowl and marinate the chicken. Peel and either finely chop or crush the garlic. Peel and grate the ginger. Wash, peel and chop the spring onions to chunks the same size as the chicken cubes. Finely chop the chillies, removing the seeds. Mix the sauce ingredients in a bowl.

Season the wok (look online if you don't know how to do this properly), then add the groundnut oil on full heat. When the oil is hot but not yet smoking, add the chillies and Sichuan pepper and stir-fry briefly until they are crisp and the oil is spicy and fragrant. Be careful not to burn the spices and remove the wok from the heat if necessary.

Add the chicken, stirring constantly. When the cubes begin to whiten, add the ginger, garlic and spring onions and continue to stir-fry for a few minutes until the chicken is cooked.

Stir the sauce and add it to the wok. When it has thickened, add the peanuts and stir them in. Serve!

This is an adaptation of a recipe from a great book called "Sichuan Cookery" by Fuchsia Dunlop, with input from Mark and myself. Fuchsia concedes that cashews can be used as a contemporary twist, but that peanuts really are far more traditional!



MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY FOOD CO-OPERATIVE

WHAT IS a food co-op? How is it different to any other shop? Well until recently I wasn't sure myself. Whenever I have been to a co-operative shop they always sell an abundance of Suma whole food products and organic soap and other fair-trade loveliness. There is a lot behind the shops titled co-operative. Co-operative cuts out the middle-man. The middleman buys large stocks of produce and then sells it to retailers keeping all the profit for his greedy hands. A co-operative is democratically owned by the people who work in the business and take a share in the profits. By cutting out the middleman the products are fairly priced and fairly imported.

My project is to set up a food co-operative at Manchester Metropolitan University. I aim to set up a food co-operative that offers students very cheap fruit and veg boxes and dry produce such as beans and dried fruit available to purchase from the student union. From this I hope to offer educational cookery days in using the produce offered through the cooperative for students and school schemes. I hope it will be as successful as Leeds university's Green Action, which runs a food co-op shop run by volunteers, offering Fairtrade produce with minimal packaging, fruit and veg box scheme and being strictly not for profit. St Andrews' One World currently offers an online co-operative where students can conveniently shop for produce with the flick of their fingertips. They have also offered weekly food feasts where students can take part in cooking produce from the coop for only £1. Similarly, Food not Bombs in Manchester recently cooked a mass feast from freegan foods for the Riveters women's rights group and gave out the food to passers by of the Manchester University student union.

I will be needing lots of volunteers to help me set up various tasks such as setting up cookery schemes, posters, loyalty cards and setting up a distribution service all in time for the upcoming semester. My next step in my co-operative journey will be a train journey visit to Leeds Green action shop. To get involved email dollwithbigeyes@live.co.uk





19

Good things happening soon

Sunday August 1, *Victoria Baths Open Day*, 12pm. Manchester's water palace opens with guided tours and a circus workshop. Tours every Wednesday at 2pm too. (monthly)

Free bus to Tatton Park Biennial, Knutsford. Contemporary art show in the grounds of the stately home in Cheshire. Bus leaves the Cornerhouse at 9.45am and 2pm.

Loiterers Resistance Movement psychogeographic walk around Manchester, 2pm (see www.nowhere-fest.blogspot.com).

Stuckometer, Ashtray Navigations, Chris Corsano/Mick Flower, Beach Fuzz, Klondyke Bowls Club, Levenshulme. Noisy bands plus a film about Sandy Bull, at a bowling green.

Sundays August 1 and 8, *Quantum Nonsense*, Fuel, Withington. Band night with The Awkward Turtles and David Leach (August 1) and Muzzle Nuzzle (August 8).

Monday August 2, *Jens Lekman*, Deaf Institute. A must see — The Shrieking Violet's favourite Swedish pop star (mashes soul samples with a Scott Walker-esque baritone) with support from dance-pop band The Blow.

Tuesday August 3, *World Atlas*, Saki Bar, Rusholme. Pull Yourself Together and

Underachievers Please Try Harder present the Brooklyn band with support from the Empty Set and downtime.

Wu-Tang Clan, Manchester Academy.

Bonnie Prince Billy, Manchester Cathedral. Dark country with support from Trembling Bells.

Tuesday 3 - Tuesday 24 August, *London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival on Tour*, Cornerhouse. Films from around the world.

Friday August 6, then following Fridays, ***Summer Cinema in the Courtyard***, Islington Mill, Salford, 9.30pm. Films chosen by resident artists include *Tour de France* (August 6) and *Herb and Dorothy* (August 20).

Saturday August 7, *The 'Places Women Love' Walk*, starts outside the Bridgewater Hall, 11am. Manchester Women's Design Groupshare research into how women react to the built environment.

Wednesdays August 11 and 25, *Pull Yourself Together*, Common. Indie-pop night with zines. (twice monthly)

Thursday August 12, *Manchester Scenewipe 100th video celebration*, Deaf Institute. Denis Jones, Cats in Paris and With That Knife play live to celebrate MCR Scenewipe's 100th

Manchester music video. With Underachievers Please Try Harder DJs.

Friday August 13, *Deaf to Van Gogh's Ear*, Kro Bar. Math rock with support from Chrik and Manchester's tap dancing pop band Nuzzle Muzzle.

Saturdays August 14 and 28, *Underachievers Please Try Harder*, Saki Bar, Rusholme. Classic indie disco with live bands The ABC Club, Just Handshakes (We're British), The Bumblebees (August 14) and Laboratory Noise, Insect Guide, The Paraffins, Emperor Zero (August 28). (twice monthly)

Monday August 16, *The Peterloo Massacre Tour - 'Murder on the Way'*, starts at St Peter's Square, 1pm. Manchester historian Jonathan Schofield leads a tour on the anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre. Other August tours include the *Manchester Pub Walk* (Sunday August 15) as well as *Manchester Confidential tunnel tours* (Tuesday August 17) and *Out in the Past, Gay and Lesbian Heritage Trail* (Tuesday August 30) to coincide with Pride. Email jgschofield@bt-internet.com to book.

Wednesday August 18, *Victoria Baths Swimming Club*, 7pm, Levenshulme Baths. Friends of Victoria Baths swim in another Edwardian pool. (monthly)

Friday August 20, *Asparagus Next Left*, Star and Garter. DIY indie disco with This is Uncool nostalgic guest DJs. (monthly)

Saturday August 21, *Cherry Coloured Pop*, Abode, Chorlton. Indie pop disco playing '60s girl groups, soul and indie old and new. (bi-monthly)

Sunday August 22, *Grand Canals of Manchester (East)*. Guided tour out along east Manchester's canals to Eastlands and Philips Park. (www.new-manchesterwalks.com)

Wednesday August 25, *David Dondero*, Dulcimer, Chorlton. Intense Texan singer-songwriter.

Thursday August 26, *Rolo Tomassi*, Night & Day. Noisy punk from Sheffield with support from Deaf to Van Gogh's Ear.

Friday August 27, *Feral Trade Café*, Castlefield Gallery. Castlefield Gallery will serve food sourced via social networks for 6 weeks as part of a project by artist Kate Rich. (Runs until Sunday October 10.)

Saturday August 28, *Manchester Modernist Society*, 142 Chapel Street, Salford, 2pm. Social with tea, cake and a surprise or two weather permitting.

Things that might be in the next issue: DIY media, Feminism, recipes, photographs, creative writing, illustration, music, things to make and do and more.