

A NEW APPROACH TO COOKING



Read the text and do the multiple choice.

Popular TV presenter and journalist James May shares his unusual ideas on eating habits with readers.

For some time, I've been campaigning for a new departure in airline food.

The gist of it is this. The problem with airline food is that they try to do something a bit posh, with several courses drizzled with extra words, but then give it all to you on a tray the size of a mouse mat. Even at the pointy end of the aeroplane, it's a bit of an elbows-in affair, but if you want to butter a bread roll in the cheap seats your neighbors will have to get up and stand in in the aisle.

So what I'd like to see is healthy, balanced and nutritious food that can be eaten one-handed from one item of cockery. Every nation on earth can provide a "signature dish" for its own airline: stews, hot-pots, casseroles, stir-fries, pasta, bowls of noodles, wraps and the cheeseburger are a few that spring to mind.

Everybody benefits from the scheme. The food is simpler to eat, and, above all, it's more straightforward to prepare and serve. There's more space on the little table for drink, and less packaging to fall on the floor. As there's less equipment involved, there can be more actual food, and clearing up will take no time at all.

But now I wonder if I haven't been, as usual, a bit unambitious.

How often do most people fly? Twice a year maybe, perhaps less. My mate Cookie has never been abroad, and is relatively unfamiliar with the pressurized carton of UHT milk. The idea needs wider social applications for it to work. Now, as I have argued in previous articles, the reason cooking has become so popular, especially amongst blokes, is because so the kitchen is the new workshop. Deprived of the requirement to hone his innate craft skills in wood or metal, the modern man turns to the formica workshop instead - previously this was more likely to be the woman's domain and makes an intricate prawn cocktail. It involves tools, process and planning, and satisfies a natural desire to produce something.

I like fooling about in the kitchen, to be honest. I know you like it, too, because by far the biggest forum response I've ever had to a column (apart from the time you all fell out was when I instigated a debate about the best way to make cheese sauce). The trouble, though, is that I'm really not very good at it. Last night, spurred on by too many visits to over-priced restaurants where I've eaten over-intellectualized dinners, I tried to do something a bit clever with liver, a selection of vegetables and some clever chemistry involving oils, herbs and spices. It was all right, I suppose. I mean, my guest and I both ate it, but in a slightly ashen-faced and awkward sort of way. It was all a bit brown.

I'm hoping to incorporate the notion of garage cooking in a forthcoming TV series and, as usual, would welcome any suggestions; anything suitable for consumption by a man who has one reasonably clean and one coated with something so toxic he'd rather not put it near his face. This is not, in fact, without precedent. I've been in a die-casting factory in India where the blokes baked exotic breads on the tops of hot machines, and they somehow tasted better for being a by-product of industrial endeavor. In former times, the foundry or the footplate of the steam locomotive afforded working men the opportunity to cook with the heat from the raging furnaces they attended. There is a great legacy of one-course one-handed meals for us to draw on.

I imagine the garage café experiment would be very appealing to production engineers in car companies. It might also dispel the myth of men's inability to multi-task. What's the point of waiting for something to boil? In the garage, you can be stripping something down while that's going on. This way, the artificial division between the kitchen and the garage - both workshops after all - will be demolished, although "her in the main bit of the house" might not be so keen on the idea.

I've made a start already. "Tonight I've had an oil and filter change with a side of chain adjustment accompanied by beans and sausages.

13 The writer's main objection to airline food is that

- A does not taste as good as it should.
- B is described in over complicated language.
- C comes in too small portions.
- D is presented in an inappropriate way.

14 The writer's main argument for his airline food suggestions is that

- A airlines could serve food typical of their own country.
- B airline meals would be better for passengers' health.
- C it would make things easier for the crew.
- D there would be benefits for the environment.

15 The writer argues that men are increasingly interested in cooking because

- A they find it more enjoyable than making things with wood or metal.
- B they have fewer opportunities to create things than used to be the case.
- C it is now more socially acceptable for men to spend time in the kitchen.
- D women are generally spending less time cooking than they used to

16 What do we learn about the meal the writer prepared?

- A He used a recipe for a dish that he had eaten in an expensive restaurant.
- B His meals are usually much more successful than this one was.
- C It looked considerably better than it tasted.
- D It was a waste of time that he could have spent more usefully.

17 Why does the writer refer to "Strength though Simplicity"?

- A It is the principle he intends to apply to cooking.
- B It suggests a masculine approach to cookery.
- C It reflects the simplicity and strength of his ingredients.
- D It is the name of his future TV series.

18 The writer uses the example from India to illustrate that

- A skills learnt in a factory can be applied to cooking a meal.
- B meals have previously been prepared in unusual workplace settings.
- C food cooked in this way tastes as delicious as that from a kitchen.
- D his inspiration came from a country well-known for its tasty food.

19 One reason why the writer says he likes his idea of garage cooking is that it will

- A show that men can do two things at the same time.
- B please his wife that he is helping with the cooking.
- C give him opportunities to improve his cooking skills.
- D enable him to spend more time in his garage.

