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LIST
2024**

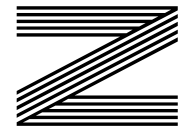
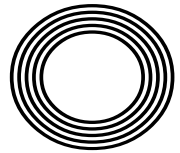
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SWEET EMBRACE
Dulux Colour of the Year 2024

TOP DESTINATIONS
for adrenaline junkies in the New Year

MERLIN GRIFFITHS

Master mixologist and First Dates star opens new pub



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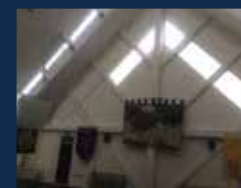
AFTER



AFTER



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER





Editor's notes...

DECEMBER 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Rayleigh Wickford. Recently, I had an eye-opening conversation at a local networking event. As we discussed our respective businesses, it struck me just how impactful our print editions have been over the years.

Since the launch of our very first **VISION** magazine in Brentwood back in June 2016, we've embarked on an incredible journey. Today, we proudly publish 14 monthly editions across Essex and East Herts.

These 14 editions combined boast a monthly print run of more than 91,000 copies.

But, when I reflected on the bigger picture, I couldn't help but be amazed. Since 2016, we've put our heart and soul into this venture, and the numbers tell an incredible story: more than five million copies printed! I'm particularly proud that our magazines are 100 per cent recyclable.

In a world increasingly dominated by digital content, this impressive figure is a testament to the enduring power of high-quality printed media. There's still a place at the table for the tactile, the tangible, and the timeless. I hope you enjoy reading this month's edition... and have a very merry Christmas!

Nik Allen

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The harmonic voice of ALED JONES

From the almost impossibly angelic beginnings of teenaged Aled Jones MBE's first steps into the limelight, the Welshman has forged a career well beyond *Walking in the Air* and the limitations of chorister melodies.

Now 52, the presenter and actor has presence and popularity... and retains the ability to knock out a chorus or two!

Aled Jones was the 15 year old with the pitch-perfect voice whose icy vocal tones enchanted the public when Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* was released back in 1982.

Walking in the Air was a track that became a festive anthem every bit as perfect and poignant as *White Christmas* or *Jingle Bells*, sitting as a symbol of childhood enchantment for an entire generation.

While others have confronted fame early, only for it to fade away, this was just the start for Jones. In adulthood, he gained acclaim hosting programmes such as *Songs of Praise*, where his likeable persona and warm, engaging demeanour endeared him to audiences.

In radio, Jones found a different but equally impactful avenue for his talents. As a presenter on Classic FM, he has brought the genre to a broader audience, with a tone that's knowledgeable yet approachable.

The star, who is married to Claire Fossett with whom he has two children, Emilia and Lucas, has also presented *Cash in the Attic*, *The One Show*, *Daybreak* and *Weekend* on terrestrial television.

Despite such a prolific and diverse array of work, Jones still strives to capture new audiences – as well as satisfying his loyal fans – and his latest musical endeavour is arguably his most innovative yet.

The Welsh singer recently released an album, *One Voice – Full Circle*, that transcends mere songs; indeed, it harmonises both his past and the present in that he duets with his younger soprano self.

The result is a hauntingly beautiful collection of tracks that showcases the evolution of an artist, proving beyond doubt that the singer has lost none of his talent along the way. From *Bright Eyes* to *Ave Maria* and *Scarborough Fair*, the mix of innovation and imagination is real.

"This project was like a journey through my own life – revisiting the voice that introduced me to the world, but with the perspective I have now," he explains. "It's a celebration of how far I've come and the enduring love I have for music."

Looking ahead, Jones, who appeared on *The Masked Singer* in 2022, is set to embark on a tour next year to promote the new project.

"Music is a very personal thing to a lot of people, and most of us listen to music by ourselves, and that is a lovely thing because it feeds our own interpretation and imagination in what we hear.

"Ultimately, though," he continues, "when the time comes to share songs and immerse ourselves in the collective celebration of music, we reach much further into our understanding, and from that can draw out very special memories.

"That's the thing that keeps me coming back!"

THE ULTIMATE FESTIVE FLICKS

TAKING A LOOK AT THE TOP FIVE HIGHEST-GROSSING CHRISTMAS FILMS OF ALL TIME

Christmas movies have long been a staple of holiday cheer, embodying the spirit of warmth, family and festive joy. Many films have graced the silver screen, but a select few have transcended typical holiday fare to become phenomenal box office successes.

(All figures adjusted for inflation)

ONE: HOME ALONE (1990)

Box office takings: £1.1billion

Kevin McCallister, a mischievous and resourceful eight-year-old, is accidentally left behind by his family during Christmas vacation and turns his home into a fortress to fend off bumbling burglars.

This family comedy, starring Macaulay Culkin, blends slapstick humour and holiday warmth, becoming a perennial favourite and the highest-grossing Christmas film ever.

TWO: HOME ALONE 2: LOST IN NEW YORK (1992)

Box office takings: £915.95million

The sequel to the original hit follows Kevin as he mistakenly boards a flight to New York while his family heads to Florida. In the Big Apple, he again encounters his previous assailants and must outwit them in this hilarious, uplifting adventure.

THREE: DR SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS (2000)

Box office takings: £587million

This live-action adaptation brings the whimsical world of Dr. Seuss to life. Jim Carrey's portrayal of the Grinch offers a perfect blend of comedy and emotion, exploring the true meaning of Christmas beyond the commercial frenzy.

FOUR: A CHRISTMAS CAROL (2009)

Box office takings: £552million

This animated rendition of Charles Dickens' timeless classic uses state-of-the-art motion capture technology. It narrates the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge's transformation from a miser to a kind-hearted man after being visited by three supernatural beings on Christmas Eve.

FIVE: THE GRINCH (2018)

Box office takings: £544million

Illumination's 2018 adaptation of Dr Seuss' classic tale reimagines the iconic green recluse with a heart two sizes too small. Voiced by Benedict Cumberbatch, the Grinch's journey from a Christmas-hating hermit to a holiday hero has charmed audiences worldwide.

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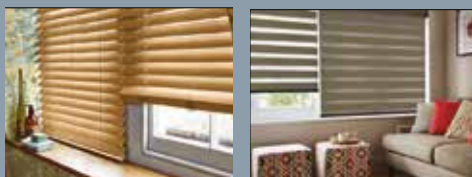
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HOME & DIY

Dulux Colour of the Year 2024

Sweet Embrace



This is one of the most greatly anticipated announcements in the world of interior design: Dulux Colour of the Year 2024 has been revealed as Sweet Embrace.

What colour is Sweet Embrace?

Sweet Embrace is a delicate pale pink that is both soft and comforting. A metamer colour, meaning it changes tone with the light, in the early morning it appears crisper before turning into a more blush pink as the day goes on. Referred to as a 'modern neutral', Sweet Embrace can help to unite the different elements in a room and create an uplifting atmosphere.

Why was Sweet Embrace chosen?

This colour was chosen by the experts at Dulux as a shade that represents the global mood and a universal need for clarity and joy. Marianne Shillingford, colour expert and creative director at Dulux, said: "While being a beautiful stand-alone colour, it's a hue that matches perfectly with so many other shades, so that decorators can use it as

a backdrop to build a totally individual space upon."

Ways to use Sweet Embrace in your home

1 Paint your window frames
As a metamer colour, Sweet Embrace is a perfect colour choice for painting your window frames, enabling you to capture its light-changing qualities throughout the day.

2 Colour-drench a room
Colour-drenching involves drenching a whole room in one shade to create a sense of calm cohesion. This means painting all the surfaces rather than just the walls, and it can make a room appear more spacious and contemporary.

3 Update your woodwork
This versatile shade is ideal for use as an alternative to white to update the woodwork in a room, such as the skirting boards and door frames.

4 Embrace the ombre paint technique
Ombre is making a big comeback in 2024 and, as a neutral colour, Sweet Embrace has the ability to seamlessly blend into other soft shades to create a stunning sunset effect.

Photo credit: duluxdecoratorcentre.co.uk, AkzoNobel

INTERIOR DESIGN PROFILE

MADDUX CREATIVE



Sophisticated, playful, beautiful. That's how Maddux Creative describes its decorative style. Full of life and colour, each space it creates is unique, with designs that have won acclaim all over the world.

If you love bold colours, patterns and textures, then Maddux Creative will serve as the perfect inspiration to bring your interior aspirations to life.

THE STORY BEHIND MADDUX CREATIVE

Maddux Creative is run by Scott Maddux, originally from Tennessee, and Jo Le Gleud from the UK. They met on a dancefloor in the 1990s, and brought their shared creative experience together in 2011 when they founded their Peckham-based studio.

The pair describe their work as "an alchemy of design: an intricate tapestry of form and texture. A celebration of colour." Throughout their designs it's clear that these elements are central, using the features of the room to create spaces that are striking and unique. They take inspiration from a range of influences, which keeps things wonderfully refreshing.

RECREATING MADDUX CREATIVE'S STYLE

What's great about Maddux Creative's aesthetic is that there are no set rules, allowing you to recreate

their style in your own home. Some tips to give you a dash of inspiration include:

- > Be brave with colours and textures. Mixing and matching styles can add a quirky touch that keeps spaces fun and unique, so choose the pieces that you're drawn to and which reflect your personal style. Popular colour combinations include pinks and greens, blues and yellows, and reds with greys or gold.
- > Tonal looks can make a striking impression. Choose a solid base colour such as blue or green and add lighter/darker accents in the same shade – using furniture and accessories in different shades to create a multilayered look.
- > Plants and flowers add life and can make your space feel more lived-in – an affordable way to transform your decor.
- > Floral patterns add a classic touch that still feels modern in the right setting. From patterned lampshades to tapestries and cushions, you can use florals or stripes to add some individual touches that will bring the different styles in your space together.

Wonderfully unique and making colour popular again, Maddux Creative provides the perfect inspiration to go bold and have fun with your interior design.

Photo credit: madduxcreative.com



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Midas Touch

ADDING A TOUCH OF GOLDEN GLAMOUR TO YOUR HOME THE AFFORDABLE WAY

Looking to add a touch of contemporary sparkle and charm to your Christmas decor? You're in for a treat! In this DIY project, we'll show you how to transform plain glass vases, jars and votives into dazzling gold masterpieces. The best part? You don't need any special skills, though a steady hand is useful! And it's an ideal project to do with older children.

Get ready

YOU WILL NEED:

Gold foil sheets | Gold foil adhesive | Adhesive brush | A large brush (like a powder brush) for removing excess gold foil | Small glasses or votives (make sure they're clean and dry – washing-up liquid and a piece of dry kitchen towel should do the trick).

All these items are available online or in most arts and crafts shops.

Apply the adhesive

Carefully apply the gold foil adhesive to the areas on your glasses where you want the gold foil to stick. The adhesive will need some time to become tacky.

The time can vary with different makes, so follow the instructions on the packaging carefully.

Apply the foil

Once the adhesive is tacky, apply the foil directly from the paper it comes on. Press the sheet onto the glass where you've applied the adhesive. Then, carefully remove the paper backing, leaving the gold foil attached to the glass. If necessary, use your fingers to smooth it out.

Brush away excess and leave to dry

Using the large brush, remove any excess gold foil and let your decorated objects dry for a few hours. For extra protection, you can seal them with a suitable clear sealant or varnish specially made for glass and delicate surfaces – following the manufacturer's instructions.

Once complete, fill your glass items with a candle, fairy lights, flowers, winter twigs or pine cones. Sit back, admire your creations, or consider giving them as gifts to help spread the festive feeling.

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'Essex has always been a part of who I am'



LOCAL FEATURE

While Adam Woodyatt owes much to his long-standing role as Ian Beale in the BBC soap opera *EastEnders*, we reveal why the actor likes to heap equal praise on the influences of his childhood, and in particular, his time spent in Essex.

Adam Woodyatt was born in Walthamstow in 1968. Although the Victoria Line suburb had renounced its ties with Essex three years previously, the outgoing schoolboy would soak up the influences of Chingford and South Woodford in his early life.

Perhaps it is an appreciation for that simple 1970s suburban upbringing – Woodyatt attended Forest School in Epping Forest, before the family relocated to Wales – that permeated so perfectly into his authentic portrayal of the rugged, pessimistic businessman Ian Beale.

"Essex has always been a part of who I am," he begins. "It's in my blood and has significantly shaped my approach to life and acting. I love its honesty!"

The actor, who is half Welsh, frequently travelled to London for castings as an aspiring young actor, and was working as a butcher when the call to join *EastEnders* came. Since 1985, his portrayal of Beale has captivated viewers, and his return to Albert Square this year excited fans.

"Ian is hapless in many ways, though ultimately always trying to do the right thing, and I think there's a fair amount of that in me too," says the actor, who recently volunteered to work in a fish and chip shop in Southend-on-Sea to pass the time.

Beyond the confines of Albert Square (and serving up cod), Woodyatt's versatile talent has illuminated stage and television screen alike. And recently, his stint away from full-time acting has offered the star the chance to tour his native Essex... in a camper van, no less!

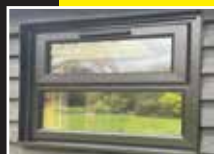
He said: "Feeling free, getting on the road, and hunting out all those childhood places of old, has been a magical ride for me, and one I want to continue taking."



Photo credit: BBC/Jack Barnes/Kieron McCarron



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Tracing its origins to the ninth century, the church's earliest timbers, dating to around 1060, mark it as a distinguished survivor from before the Norman Conquest. These timbers, visible even today, underscore the church's enduring presence and historical significance.

Originally a modest structure, perhaps built for a Saxon nobleman, Greensted Church has evolved through the centuries. It bears the marks of various architectural styles and religious practices that have influenced its design over time.

The church's walls, crafted from vertically set split oak trunks in a technique known as 'stave construction', are particularly

noteworthy. This method is complemented by the 19th-century brick chancel and Victorian restorations, together presenting a harmonious blend of various historical periods.

Greensted Church's connection to St Edmund, the martyred king of East Anglia, further elevates its historical importance. As the site where his body reputedly rested in 1013 en route to burial, the church has long been a focal point for pilgrimage and reflection.

More than a religious site, Greensted Church stands as a cultural beacon, embodying the continuity of faith and community. It serves as a serene witness to the evolving landscape and societal changes surrounding it.

Venturing into this sacred space, visitors are transported beyond the confines of the present. Each step within its walls is a journey through time, connecting the present to a past that remains vibrantly alive. Greensted Church is not just an architectural marvel; it's a living narrative of faith's resilience and the understated elegance of history.



LOCAL FEATURE

YOUR LOCAL EVENTS

ENLIGHTENED LIGHTS TRAIL

Barleylands Farm Park, Barleylands Road, Billericay, CM11 2UD
Friday, December 1, to Sunday, December 24, various times



Photo credit: Enlightened

Enlightened will transform Barleylands Farm Park into a kilometre-long trail of wonder and light for the whole family to enjoy. A specially crafted route will immerse visitors in the magic of Enlightened and is bursting with interactive and awe-inspiring installations, including a 50-metre digital tunnel of light.

Tickets cost £20 for adults and £15 for children aged three to 15. Children under three years old go free. Tickets can be booked at www.enlightenedmoments.co.uk/events/barleylands-2023

THE ELVES' CABIN CHRISTMAS MARKET

The Mill Arts & Events Centre, Bellingham Lane, Rayleigh, SS6 7ED
Sunday, December 17, 11am – 4pm

The Design Cabin Community C.I.C Christmas market is back for its biggest and best event yet, featuring 30 stalls and live entertainment. Special thanks go to Rochford District Council for sponsoring the event.

Find out more at www.thedesigncabin.community/rochford-events/theelvescabin

LEARN TO JIVE DANCE CLASS

Rawreth Village Hall, Church Road, Rawreth, SS11 8SH

Thursday, December 21, 7.30pm – 10pm

Learn to jive to the sounds of Elvis and Bill Haley along with modern day rock 'n' roll bands.

No booking or partner required. Tickets cost £6 on the door. Bring your own refreshments. Beginners always welcome.

TOY FAIR

The Sweyne Park School, Sir Walter Raleigh Drive, Rayleigh, SS6 9BZ
Thursday, December 28, 9.45am – 1.15pm

This toy fair will showcase a wide range of toys, trains, sci-fi collectables, and more. Explore the latest trends and discover unique items in the world of toys.

Entrance fee is £2.50 for adults and under-18s go free. Find out more at www.srptoyfairs.co.uk

NEW YEAR'S EVE @ THE BILLERICAY THEATRE

The Billericay Theatre, 34 Radford Way, Billericay, CM12 0DX
Sunday, December 31, 7.30pm

This year, the team is holding an extra special New Year's Eve event, including a Blues Brothers tribute show, disco and party, a delicious buffet, and a free glass of bubbly.

Tickets cost £50 from www.tickettailor.com/events/thebillericaytheatre/940688#

GILES STELFOX

The Hawk, Hawk Hill, Battlesbridge, Wickford, SS11 7RJ

Sunday, December 31, 9.30pm

This special performance will celebrate the end of 2023 and welcome in 2024.

Independent artist, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Giles Stelfox creates the music of a solo artist with the sound of a band, using the art of real-time live looping. He builds his own arrangements of original songs and classic covers from scratch, whilst still showcasing his charisma and energy.

Come down to The Hawk to celebrate New Year's Eve in style.

Find out more at www.bit.ly/47xKh10



Photo credit: Giles Stelfox Facebook

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For more detailed information, go to the two Equity Release pages at

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The magic of MERLIN

FIRST DATES BARMAN MERLIN GRIFFITHS HAS A RENEWED TASTE FOR LIFE

It's perhaps slightly crass to state that many a romantic liaison has been made comfortable with the aid of an alcoholic loosener, but the evidence is there in pubs, bars and restaurants the length and breadth of the country, every day of every week.

One dining space in particular – that of the *First Dates* restaurant – has used the expertise of a master mixologist to great effect. This responsibility fell to Merlin Griffiths, who this year celebrated a decade on our screens.

"The time has flown by in a haze of romantic splendence," jokes the 48 year old. "I've seen thousands of people pass through, and it's a thrill to witness a happy ending."

And many there have been – a recent study found that three per cent of first dates ended in marriage, with the Channel 4 show boasting numerous weddings and even the patter of tiny footsteps.

As the trusty barman charged with easing the nerves of hopeful romantics, Griffiths – who has a wife, Lucile, and young child – knows his role is significant; though as a pub owner himself, he is used to the responsibility bestowed on a good host.

"It's an underrated occupation, I think. It's a job that requires you to be present, engaging, interesting, knowledgeable on a wide range of subjects and, on occasion, firm with how punters are behaving! There are also extreme antisocial hours and it's a physical job where you're always on your feet, but I love it."

Griffiths' sense of perseverance was put to the test in 2021 when the *First Dates* barman was diagnosed with bowel cancer. He underwent surgery and recently celebrated the milestone of a year 'all clear'.

"It has been a tough road, but one I am now emerging from. While there have been some very sombre moments in there, what the experience has done is to reinforce in me a desire to appreciate everything around me, to fight, and to achieve."

Treatment has meant Griffiths has been unable to engage in one of his favourite hobbies. A keen cyclist, he previously completed the John O'Groats to Land's End cycle ride in nine days. Many years ago, before his big break, he was a cycle courier in London.

"I love cycling" he comments. "It was a great way to stay fit, but you were taking your life in your hands on a daily basis."

"Dealing with a rowdy pub customer or a feuding couple of *First Dates* seems tame in comparison!"

Griffiths' taste for innovation was played out at Royal Ascot last year when he launched the first no-alcohol bar.

He's also set his ambitious sights on opening a new pub, The Dog & Gun in Walton, which is expected to open soon.

He says: "It seems to be a time when opportunities are coming along, and for the first time in a couple of years I can fully commit to them."

"I am lucky that I work in an industry that will always be here. We are social creatures – certainly in this country! – and there's nothing better than watching people converse and interact."

To keep up to date with everything Merlin is up to and ship his bar kits, visit www.merlingriffiths.com



January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Plan and prepare for the year ahead.<input type="checkbox"/> Take stock of inventory (seeds, pots, etc) and assess your garden layout.<input type="checkbox"/> Put out water and seeds for the birds.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Start sowing seeds indoors, such as tomatoes, peppers and aubergines.<input type="checkbox"/> Add compost or organic matter to your garden soil.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Sow cool-season crops such as lettuce, spinach, carrots and beetroots directly in your garden.<input type="checkbox"/> Protect tender plants from late frosts.<input type="checkbox"/> Clean and tidy your greenhouse.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Transplant seedlings that require a longer growing season, such as tomatoes, peppers and herbs.<input type="checkbox"/> Plant perennial flowers and pot-grown fruits, such as strawberries.<input type="checkbox"/> Turn over the soil in your garden to loosen compaction.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Regularly water your garden and apply mulch around your plants to conserve water and stop weeds.<input type="checkbox"/> Use bedding plants to fill your garden with colour.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Monitor your garden for weeds and remove them.<input type="checkbox"/> Regularly fertilise your plants with organic fertiliser.<input type="checkbox"/> Water and mow your lawn frequently.
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Water your plants deeply and less frequently.<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor plants for aphids and spider mites.<input type="checkbox"/> De-head bedding plants.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Harvest your summer crops, preserving excess produce through canning, freezing or drying.<input type="checkbox"/> Start planning your autumn garden by removing spent plants and amending the soil.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Directly sow seeds of salad greens, rocket and Swiss chard.<input type="checkbox"/> Harvest mature summer crops.
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Prepare your garden for winter by harvesting the remaining autumn crops, removing any debris and dead plants and adding compost or organic matter to replenish nutrients.<input type="checkbox"/> Trim and shape your hedges.
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Clear up fallen leaves, especially from lawns, ponds and beds.<input type="checkbox"/> Plant tulip bulbs for a spring display next year.<input type="checkbox"/> Wrap young plants and trees to protect them from frost.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Reflect on your year's gardening journey and plan for the year ahead.<input type="checkbox"/> Order seeds and supplies for the year to ensure you have everything you need.

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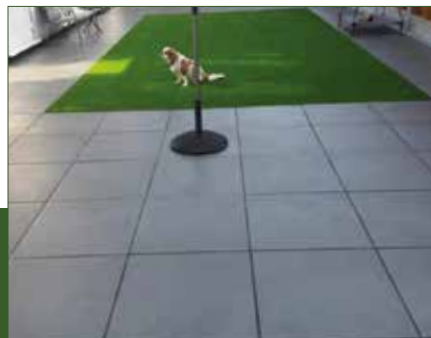
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KIDS



If you're after a tempting but simple festive cookie to make this Christmas, look no further than these cute melting snowmen biscuits. They taste delicious and are a great way to involve kids in the kitchen – but be prepared to get sticky! The below recipe makes 10 biscuits.

YOU WILL NEED:

For the biscuits: 100g butter | 100g caster sugar | ½ tsp vanilla extract | ½ a beaten egg (about 2 tbsp) | 200g plain flour (and a bit extra)

For decorating: 10 standard white marshmallows (not the mini ones) | 100g icing sugar | A tube of black writing icing | Some ready-to-roll orange fondant icing | Chocolate beans

HOW TO MAKE THE BISCUITS:

- Heat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6 and line a baking tray with parchment paper.
- In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar together till smooth using a wooden spoon. Then beat in the vanilla extract, egg and finally the flour to make a dough. Chill in the fridge for 15 minutes.
- On a floured surface, roll out the dough with a rolling pin to roughly 5mm in thickness.
- Using a 9cm biscuit cutter or the rim of a 9cm glass, cut out 10 shapes.
- Bake for 8-10 minutes till golden, then cool.

HOW TO DECORATE:

- Put the icing sugar in a bowl. Add cold water, a teaspoon at a time, till the icing is just runny.
- Spread the icing on the biscuits and pop a marshmallow near the edge of each one.
- Use the black icing pen to draw the arms and eyes.
- Use the orange fondant to create a carrot nose.
- Then add the chocolate beans for the snowmen's buttons.



Photo credit: recipesfromapantry.com

UNUSUAL SPORT:

DODGEBOW®

The classic 2004 box office comedy film *Dodgeball* involved what most people thought was a new sport, yet its roots actually go right the way back to the turn of the 20th century.

And yet, there is now a new take on the idea that has emerged in recent years. Utilising foam-tipped arrows that are fired from low-poundage bows, competitors created something of a hybrid between dodgeball and archery – dodgebow.

The sport was invented by three friends from Montreal, Canada. The trio had played combat archery and wanted to develop the idea further. Subsequently, the company Dodgebow was created. The sport sees two teams of up to 12 members battle for 45 minutes in a weapon-laden arena filled with inflatables which can be used as obstacles or objects to hide behind.

The aim is for the teams to gather weapons from the centre of the arena, position themselves strategically, and then eliminate each of the

opposing team's players by shooting them. A player can bring back an eliminated teammate by catching an arrow.

Dodgebow, also known as archery tag, is a rapidly growing sport and is already played in more than 30 countries around the world.

There are also extensions to the game, including Bullseye (all opposing team targets can be hit instead of striking out players), No Loyalty (a 'Blue on Blue' hit means the receiving player must change teams), and Capture the Flag (one of three opposing team flags must be taken back to your own base).

Using safe equipment means dodgebow is fun and exciting to play, with emphasis on both working as a team and individual brilliance.



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MINCE PIE *Mania*

In the 13th century, Crusaders returned to Britain from the Middle East with a novel pie idea: minced meat, dried fruits, spices and wine. By Victorian times, the meat had vanished, and the modern mince pie emerged. To create your own version of these timeless treats, follow the recipe below. Remember, as well as the ingredients, you'll need a standard 12-hole muffin tin and two round pastry cutters — one measuring 9cm in diameter for the pie bases and one measuring 7.5cm for the lids.

MINCEMEAT

YOU WILL NEED: 225g mixed dried fruits (raisins, currants and sultanas) | 110g Bramley apple (peeled, cored and finely chopped) | 110g shredded vegetable suet | 150g demerara sugar | Zest and juice of 1 orange and 1 lemon | ½ tsp ground cinnamon | ¼ tsp ground nutmeg | ¼ tsp ground cloves | 2 tbsp brandy or rum (optional)

1. Mix dried fruit, apple, suet, sugar and citrus zest in a bowl.
2. Add citrus juice, spices and alcohol (if using) and mix well.
3. Cover and let it sit in a cool place for a day or two to enhance the flavours.

PASTRY

YOU WILL NEED: 175g plain flour | 85g unsalted butter, cold and diced | 2-3 tbsp cold water | A pinch of salt | A little extra flour for rolling

1. Combine the flour and salt in a large bowl.
2. Rub in the butter until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs.
3. Gradually add the water, mixing until the dough forms.

ASSEMBLING AND BAKING

1. Preheat your oven to 190°C/180°C fan/ gas mark 5.
2. Roll the pastry out until it is about 3mm thick.
3. Using the cutters, cut out 12 bases and 12 lids.
4. Press the bases into the muffin tin and fill almost to the top with mincemeat — no need to grease the tin as the pastry's high fat content will stop it from sticking.
5. Brush the top edges of the pastry bases with a bit of cold water, cover with the lids and press the edges to seal.
6. Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden.





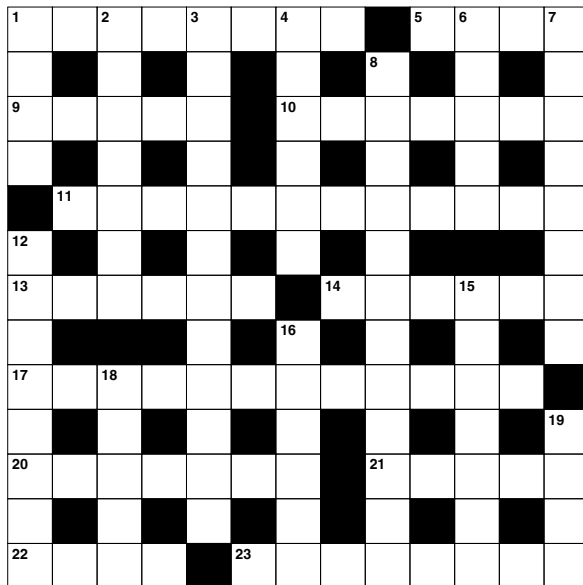
PUZZLES & TRIVIA

ACROSS

1. Object that gives out heat (8)
5. Capital of Norway (4)
9. One side of a gem (5)
10. Guilty person (7)
11. Unfriendly (12)
13. In a careless manner (6)
14. Requesting (6)
17. Importance (12)
20. Flexible athlete (7)
21. Show triumphant joy (5)
22. Obstacle (4)
23. Formal curse by a pope (8)

DOWN

1. Crack (4)
2. Propriety and modesty (7)
3. Relating to horoscopes (12)
4. Hold a position or job (6)
6. Small woody plant (5)
7. Be heavier than (8)
8. First part of the Bible (3,9)
12. Corridors (8)
15. Have as a part (7)
16. Heed (6)



18. Third Greek letter (5)
19. Volcano in Sicily (4)

DID YOU KNOW?

- Reindeer hooves are specifically adapted for their environment. The cloven shape spreads their weight more evenly, helping them to walk across snow and soft ground, while their sharp edges provide traction in icy conditions.
- Some types of reindeer do actually have red noses as a result of densely packed blood vessels, which help to regulate their body temperature.
- In spring, reindeer sometimes form super-herds of 50,000 to 500,000.
- Reindeer fur is hollow, helping to trap air and providing insulation to stay warm. This also makes them excellent swimmers.
- Reindeer migrate an average of 12 to 34 miles per day, travelling as much as 3,100 miles each year in their search for food.

SUDOKU

	3			9				7
1		9	2					4
					6		8	
						4		
9		6		1		2		5
		1						
	7		6					
6					4	8		1
4				5			7	

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HOW TO MAKE A DIY PET

CHRISTMAS CRACKER

Do you like to involve your pet in the excitement of Christmas Day? If yes, then you are going to love making them their very own Christmas cracker complete with edible treats and festive toys.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A toilet paper roll or kitchen towel roll | Tissue paper, wrapping paper or newspaper | String or ribbon | A selection of edible treats and small toys

HOW TO MAKE:

- > Take an empty toilet or kitchen towel roll, depending on how big your pet is and how many treats you want to include. For medium-sized and large dogs, a kitchen towel roll is best as you can fit more in.
- > Stuff your chosen treats/toys into the toilet or kitchen roll. Don't worry about overstuffing!
- > Cut your tissue paper, wrapping paper or newspaper so that you have enough to wrap your roll, leaving 5cm of paper at each end.
- > Twist off the ends and loosely secure with string or ribbon.
- > You could also make a personalised name tag using a small piece of card and a felt tip pen or by writing directly onto the paper.

NB: Do not stick on any embellishments such as bells or plastic decorations as these are potential choking hazards. Make sure you remove the tissue/wrapping paper once they have got to the treats so that they do not try to eat it. Always monitor your pet when they are opening their Christmas cracker, and do not include a "bang" element as this may scare them.

What to put in your DIY pet Christmas cracker

- > Edible treats such as chew sticks, meaty bites and biscuits
- > Small festive toys such as a felt bauble with catnip or a candy cane plush
- > A small paper hat or festive bow and a pet-themed joke.

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Say yes to Yerba mate

Are you looking for a healthier way to get your daily caffeine fix? Yerba mate provides the energy kick of coffee with the healing properties of herbal tea. Plus, it can even help you to lose weight!

WHAT IS YERBA MATE?

Yerba mate is a type of herbal tea that originates from South America and is made by steeping dried leaves from the yerba mate plant in hot water. It can be served hot or cold and, like black and green tea, it contains caffeine which can help you to feel more alert and focused. Yerba mate has a very distinctive taste that can be strong, bitter and slightly vegetal. In terms of aroma, it has been described as having a eucalyptus smell.

HOW MUCH CAFFEINE IS IN YERBA MATE?

Depending on how you brew it, the average cup of yerba mate contains 70mg of caffeine. In comparison, the average cup of coffee contains 120mg of caffeine and a cup of green tea contains around 25mg.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS?

There are so many associated benefits of drinking yerba mate, including:


- > Improved mental focus
- > Enhanced physical performance
- > Protection against infections
- > Weight loss and reduced belly fat
- > Reduced risk of heart disease
- > Lowered blood sugar levels

ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS?

If you are sensitive to caffeine, you may experience some side effects such as an upset stomach, trouble sleeping, feeling nervous or restless or a faster heartbeat if you consume too much yerba mate. However, studies show that most people can safely drink up to 1.5 litres of yerba mate a day.

HOW TO PREPARE YERBA MATE

1. Add one or two yerba mate teabags to a mug – these can be bought online and at most health food shops.
2. Moisten the teabags with cool water.
3. Fill the mug with hot water.
4. Steep for five minutes and then remove the teabags.
5. Flavour to taste with honey, sugar or sweetener.
6. You can also add mint, ginger or orange peel if desired.



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Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital has a dedicated endoscopy unit that performs a wide range of camera-led procedures to investigate and therapeutically treat conditions.

Why choose Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital for your endoscopic treatment?

The endoscopy unit is home to a team of expert consultants who have many years' experience performing endoscopy procedures.

Following a referral from your GP, your consultant will make arrangements for your procedure in endoscopy. Your dedicated consultant will be with you throughout your treatment journey, ensuring everything goes smoothly.

Endoscopic procedures are performed as day cases, so you won't need to stay overnight. As a day case patient, you will have access to the new Endoscopy Day Unit which will offer you:

- Brand new facility, enhancing the patient journey
- Dedicated nursing in modern comfortable bays
- Direct access to consultants before during and after procedures
- A dedicated team of Endoscopy nurses

- Reduced time in hospital
- Point-to-point care in a safe caring unit

Most procedures are carried out under sedation or local anaesthetic. Your consultant will discuss the options with you as well as any pre-operation instructions to follow.

Typical endoscopic procedures that are carried out at Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital include:

- Colonoscopy
- Gastroscopy
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- Flexible cystoscopy
- Paediatric gastroscopies and colonoscopies

The paediatric gastroscopies and colonoscopies are carried out under general anaesthetic in the operating theatre. In addition to the theatre and endoscopy teams, there is a dedicated paediatric nurse present for these procedures.



Don't put your life on hold

Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital



At Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital our experienced general surgeons specialise in a range of diagnostic and repair procedures. They are experts in their field and can provide rapid access to treatment.

Why choose Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital for your general surgery?

Whether you are seeking results from a diagnostic procedure or looking at treatment options to remove a painful hernia, our team of experienced general surgeons at Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital are experts in their field, providing you with rapid access to a personalised treatment plan.

Some of the general surgery treatments available in Brentwood Hospital include:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| ◆ Appendix removal | ◆ Haemorrhoid removal |
| ◆ Colonoscopy | ◆ Hernia repair |
| ◆ Flexible sigmoidoscopy | ◆ Thyroid surgery |
| ◆ Gall bladder removal | ◆ Varicose vein surgery |
| ◆ Gastroscopy | ◆ Weight loss surgery. |

For more information or to book,



Email brentwood.enquiries@nuffieldhealth.com

Call 01268 955 035

Visit nuffieldhealth.com/brentwood



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Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital

Shenfield Road, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8EH

For any enquiries, to book an initial consultation or to request more information, please contact the dedicated hospital enquiry team at Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital on 01268 955 035.

Website: www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/brentwood

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JANUARY

- 6th Kew at Christmas
- 16th Bluewater
- 18th Essex Countryside with lunch
- 20th Crafting at Sandown
- 23rd Museum of the Home
- 26th Ardingly Quilt Festival
- 27th Norwich

FEBRUARY

- 3rd Saffron Waldon on Market Day
- 8th Horniman Museum
- 11th Birmingham International Tattoo
- 13th Gainsborough & afternoon tea
- 14th Anglesey Abbey Snowdrops
- 15th Bluewater shopper
- 20th Natural History Museum
- 20th Science Museum
- 20th Victoria & Albert Museum
- 22nd Tower of London
- 24th Chippenham Park Snowdrops
- 28th Ruxley Manor Garden Centre

MARCH

- 2nd Norwich
- 5th Polhill
- 6th Ardingly
- 7th Cambridge
- 7th Ely
- 9th Crufts
- 10th Bicester
- 11th Epping on market day
- 14th Mystery Tour
- 17th Festival of Railway Modelling
- 18th Essex Countryside with lunch
- 19th Milton Keynes
- 20th Hever Castle
- 21st & 22nd Stitch Festival
- 22nd & 26th Ideal Home Show
- 24th Columbia Road Flower Market
- 26th Bluewater
- 28th Margate or Ramsgate
- 29th Broadstairs
- 29th Canterbury
- 30th Brighton
- 30th Leamington Spa
- 31st Camden Market

WINTER/SPRING BREAKS 2024

29 th Jan Warners Gunton Hall - 5 days	£247
2 nd Feb Potters 5 Lakes - 4 days	£399
11 th Feb Cotswold Snowdrop Weekend - 2 days	£169
12 th Feb Warners Corton - 5 days	£240
26 th Feb Sinah Warren - 5 days	£346
10 th Mar Llandudno & Snowdonia	£375
15 th Mar Emmerdale weekend - 3 days	£275
18 th Mar Bournemouth - 5 days	£398
18 th Mar Warners Lakeside - 5 days	£260
25 th Mar Eastbourne - 5 days	£445
EASTER 29th Mar - 1st Apr	
Hampshire & Surrey Gardens	£390
Yorkshire Dales	£375
ISLE OF MAN 5th Apr - 6 days	£683
GUERNSEY & SARK 18th May - 6 days	£987
HERITAGE OF SCOTLAND 19th May - 7 days	£725

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LIAISONS

TRAVEL

For many, the thrill of going on holiday is enough. For a proportion of others, though, it's only half the attraction, and venturing away from home to push levels of bravery and bravado is much more the ticket. With that in mind, then, here are four all-adventure destinations for dynamic daredevils to tick off their bucket list.

ONE: Patagonia. Split between Argentina and Chile, Patagonia is a huge area that surrounds the Andes mountain range, showcasing everything from National Parks to glaciers, hikes, caves and volcanoes.

Combining staggering natural beauty with all the risk and reward of different landscapes and a very different culture, going off-piste in Patagonia could just be the most daredevil thing you can do.

TWO: Iceland. A country of extremes, Iceland is as beautiful as it is challenging, and many adventurers cannot resist the urge to hike and climb around glaciers, waterfalls, geysers and volcanoes.

While dealing with the ice or diving deep into the Silfra fissure is a thrill a minute, it's also rewarding to hire a car and venture off on the Iceland Ring Road (also known as Route 1) – an 800-mile highway that circles the country.

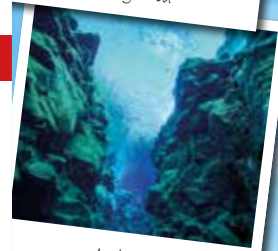
THREE: The Dolomites. We associate Italy with relaxing, restorative experiences around great food and passionate people, yet the Dolomites – and a vast array of climbing, mountain-biking and hiking options – will take you off the beaten track, inviting you to test your mettle against some punishing terrain.

The rewards for adventure seekers are stunning views and crisp-clean air.

FOUR: South Africa. We know Cape Town as a beautiful, cultural city, but it also has a reputation as an adventure junkie hotspot, with surfing, abseiling (off Table Mountain, no less), diving with great white sharks and a prevalence of gyrocopter aircraft flights that can be taken as a way of enjoying the area's stunning coastline.



Patagonia



Iceland



The Dolomites



A WILL WRITER'S WORDS OF WISDOM

WORRYING PROBLEMS

If a married couple dies together, and where there is no Will, the eldest is deemed to have died first, so only the family members of the surviving spouse will inherit

Unless it has a Contemplation of Marriage clause, marriage or re-marriage invalidates a Will, requiring a new arrangement

Without a Will, spouses and civil partners are NOT automatically entitled to all of the estate assets on death, and the Government could inherit your estate if

you die with no surviving traceable relatives

Without a Will, even grandparents have NO automatic Legal Guardianship of their orphaned grandchildren

A beneficiary or their spouse should not be a witness to a Will, or they will disinherit themselves

If you have no surviving parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles or aunts, then under the Intestacy Rules, the whole estate goes to the Crown or the Duchy of Lancaster or the Duke of Cornwall

PEACE OF MIND SOLUTIONS

Always appoint charities as your final beneficiaries, to avoid your estate being claimed by the Government

By the use of a Property Protection Trust, you can ensure that if you pre-decease and your spouse remarries and has more children, your own children benefit from your share of your home, and not the new spouse. BUT if Probate is not completed, the Trust Deed will not be set up and notified at the Land Registry

A Grant of Probate confirms to Executors that they have the authority to act and carry out the wishes of the deceased

If a Named Beneficiary, Executor, Trustee or Legal Guardian changes their name, e.g., on marriage or by Deed Poll, it is not necessary to amend the Will:

documentary evidence, eg Decree Absolute, is sufficient

The estates of current or retired members of the Armed Forces, fire police and ambulance services, and most rescue organisations are entitled to exemption from Inheritance Tax if they die on active service, or if their later death was caused by an injury or disease that was received or aggravated while they were on active service

A properly worded Will could ensure that half the value of your home is potentially protected against Local Authority care home fees

There is no Inheritance Tax liability if the deceased spouse has left their entire estate to their surviving spouse or registered civil partner

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR WILL?

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Winter SURVIVAL KIT

YOUR WINTER CHECKLIST TO ENSURE YOU'RE PREPARED FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

If your car broke down or you got stuck in a really bad traffic situation during the winter months, would you be able to keep yourself and your family warm and safe until help arrived or you were able to be on your way again?

What to keep in your car during winter:

- ✓ A torch and batteries – do not think that you can rely on the torchlight on your smartphone
- ✓ Warm clothes such as a coat, hat and gloves, and blankets
- ✓ Ice scraper and de-icer to keep your front and rear windscreen clear
- ✓ In-car phone charger
- ✓ High-visibility clothing
- ✓ Jump leads or jump-start cables
- ✓ An empty fuel can
- ✓ Food and drink, including a hot drink in a flask
- ✓ Shovel in case of a snowstorm or blizzard
- ✓ Two warning triangles
- ✓ A pair of sunglasses to minimise glare from the winter sun

POWDERY checklist

Before each journey during the colder and darker months of the year, it can be a good idea to go through the POWDERY checklist.

P is for petrol (or diesel). Do you have enough petrol/diesel? Do you know where you can fill up?

O is for oil. Check your oil levels before you leave.

W is for water. Check both your radiator and your screen washer.

D is for damage. Check your wipers and lights for signs of wear and tear. Make sure your windscreen and windows are free from snow and ice.

E is for electrics. Check that your lights, indicators and controls are working as they should.

R is for rubber tyres. Make sure that your tyres are well inflated and free from damage.

Y is for you. Are you fit to drive? Have you slept well? Are you taking any medication that could affect your ability to drive safely?



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