

Aisle Be Back (Oh no, I won't) The Perils of the Supermarket



One of the many plus points about the internet is the emergence of on-line shopping. I don't just mean the occasional splashing out on a luxurious item such as a television, computer or some other electrical gadget. I mean the hum-drum exercise that is getting food on the table and other household necessities. In years gone by I grew to detest the trail round the supermarket and the weekly battle for groceries. Now I shop from home via the websites of the likes of Tesco's, Sainsbury's and ASDA. Generally, they're pretty good – they usually turn up when they say they're going to and usually deliver everything I order. However, the other day, I opted to head to a supermarket and fight my way through the crowds. And my visit merely reminded me how much I hate shopping...

If some people drove their cars the way they steer their shopping trolleys there would be carnage on the roads. The danger begins before you even enter the building, merely by obtaining a trolley from outside and making for the entrance. On my visit, I appeared to be the only person who knew where they were going. Without wishing to be sexist – okay I will be sexist – it's mainly women who are the main offenders here. It's the same with any kind of shopping. Men know what they're going for, know where to get it, get it, pay for it and head home. A relatively simple modus operandum but one which appears far too complicated for the some women who just amble around aimlessly. Worse still, they appear happy to do so.

Getting a clear run down one of the countless aisles is damn near impossible. And it's nearly always the shopper with the trolley overflowing with goods who leaves said trolley in the middle of the aisle while they consider whether to buy free trade coffee, decaffeinated coffee (decaffeinated coffee – am I the only one who doesn't see the point of this?) or the cheapest brand coffee. While their unruly offspring wreak havoc with the store and other shoppers (usually me) and scream incessantly.

Then there are the 'Hello! I've not seen you in ages, how are you?' shoppers who decide to block up the aisle and regale each other with meaningless episodes in their sad little lives over the last five years. They appear oblivious to the words 'excuse me please' while they chatter about how Shona is pregnant again and did you not know she left her man last year and it's little Johnny I feel sorry for...All I want is access to a four pint carton of milk.

And that's another thing. How many types of milk are there these days? Full cream, semi-skimmed, super semi-skimmed, half fat, organic...Jeezo, I just want some bloody milk.

On the plus side, actually going in person to the supermarket means you can actually pick your own fresh meat, fruit and vegetables and not have tonnes of the produce delivered with the small detail revealing that the sell by date is tomorrow.

On the negative side there are the 3 for £5 stickers adorning so many products. So your intention to purchase just one block of cheese is trumped by the fact that you can get three for spending just a pound more. What a bargain! For who, I'm not so sure...

Having fought your way through the platoon of screaming brats, direction less women and pensioners who might have forgotten why they're there in the first place, you finally stagger to the checkout. Trying to work out what will be the quickest

checkout is a skill worthy of a SVQ (Supermarket Vacating Queue) qualification. It's not merely a case of heading for the shortest queue. There will be some old dear who has to hand over £45.63 in pound coins, ten pence pieces and coppers and the woman who opts to pay by credit card but, inevitably, can't remember her pin number. And there's another thing that irritates me. Self-service checkouts.

Remember the days when you could go to the corner shop and have a blether with the shop owner behind the counter? That was replaced by the supermarket culture of the 1960s. At least you might have been lucky enough to get a grunt or two from the spotty-faced youth scanning your goods before rolling them down the counter for you to frantically throw into plastic bags. Now, in 2014, we are being 'encouraged' to scan the items we wish to purchase ourselves using automated self-service checkouts. I don't like them. I prefer human interaction. I don't get much of a response from a machine when I ask if it's been a busy day. I just get a 'beep'. And when I ask 'are you going to the Hearts game?' I get a 'BEEP, BEEP, BEEP!' – another sign of the times...

To save further anguish from this shopping hell, I think next time I'll stick to what I've become accustomed to these last few years and get my groceries from the comfort of my own home.

Going back to the battlefield that is the supermarket? I would need to be off my trolley...