

# Juliet's Food Diary – feel the Burns

**For any of us with an iota of common sense, Valentine's Day sucks more than a barnacle on a boulder.**

If there's one concession for restaurateurs being closed during lockdown, it must be the reprieve from the most irksome day of the year.

The only time it's welcome is if it falls on a quiet weekday. If it's a Saturday when you'd be full of the more sane members of society, it simply feels like a slap in the face.

The problem with Valentine's Day and hospitality is your establishment is filled with a high percentage of couples, whereas tables of four, six or larger are necessary for filling the void and creating a bit of atmosphere. When I was in the restaurant biz one Valentine's Day stands out as worse than most – two couples fell out, one woman got wrecked and threw up on the lavatory floor and another couple thoughtfully stole the salt and pepper grinders. Charming.

The following year I went against the grain and announced a singles evening for Valentine's Day which I got no end of publicity for. Unfortunately, despite being able to fill the restaurant with keen lovelorn ladies, I couldn't get a single man to book. However, this sad state of affairs resulted in even more publicity and I even received a Valentine's Day card from an elderly gentleman in Hertfordshire.

If Valentine's Day is one of the dullest nights of the year,

then Burns Night normally shines brightly for me. In fact, I've missed it so much this year that I might have a belated version once Things Are Back To Normal.



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A Burns Supper is the perfect beginner's dinner party, firstly because you can make your mash and neeps earlier and heat them in the oven whilst cooking your haggis. When your guests arrive you can simply enjoy their company whilst serving up a meal that's almost impossible to ruin.

Anyway, thanks to Asda and the Edinburgh New Town Cookery School I did enjoy a virtual Burns shindig. One of Fiona Burrell from ENTCS's recipes was a charming little canapé.

Put 85g Asda Soft Goat's Cheese and 40g Asda Original Soft Cheese into a mixing bowl and beat until combined. Add a crushed clove of garlic, a tablespoon of chopped fresh thyme, grated zest of  $\frac{1}{2}$  lemon and a teaspoon of fresh lemon juice.

Season to taste and serve on pieces of Nairn's Gluten Free Sea Salt and Rosemary Flatbreads and top each with a half teaspoon of Asda Extra Special Onion Chutney. If onion isn't your thing, I found this mixture worked really well with smoked salmon on top.



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On second thoughts, Burns Night has one serious downside – Edinburgh New Town types, who could often make the Queen sound a tad chavvy, take to rolling their R's in a way that might

suggest Harry Lauder wasn't putting enough welly into it. It's the same when you go to the Highlands with these people. They suddenly drink nothing but "drrrrams" and saying "Slainte Mhath" at every opportunity, not to mention sucking up to gamekeepers. It's irritating in the extreme and makes one feel like sticking the haggis somewhere you could really roll your R's around.

I'm very lucky to live near to Leith Links, mainly because I don't believe in buying drugs and am often treated to a free lungful of second-hand marijuana on my rare jogging expedition.

A greater treat was to be found on my recent visit to Leith's Crops area, tucked away near the kiddywink's playground. Los Cardos, a rightfully popular Mexican takeaway on Leith Walk, were treating the public to some samples of their very excellent Salsa – of the jarred kind, not the groin stimulating dancing. I bought a jar of their Roastin' Red. You've got to try it! I found it particularly good atop an oven baked Camembert. I've become quite the addict and will be heading back soon for my next fix.

(We asked Juliet to give us her gift suggestion for Valentine's Day -and as you can imagine it is quirky and food related... [Head over here to find out what she has in mind.](#))