Now is the time!

The fight for women’s rights is a story for the ages. So why isn’t it bigger on TV? P4-5

Cover Story

Showbiz

I am boring, I spend a lot of time studying foreign policy.

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**SERIES TO BINGE WATCH ON AMAZON PRIME**

**Mozart in the Jungle**  
**DIRECTION:** Gael Garcia Bernal, Lola Kirke, Saffron Burrows  
**CAST:** Gael Garcia Bernal, Lola Kirke, Saffron Burrows  
**SYNOPSIS:** Love, money, ambition and music intertwine in *Mozart in the Jungle*, a half hour comedic drama that looks at finding yourself and finding love while conquering New York City. A brash new maestro Rodrigo stirs up the New York Symphony as young oboist Hailey hopes for her big chance.

**Luther**  
**DIRECTION:** Neill Cross  
**CAST:** Idris Elba, Dermot Crowley, Michael Smiley  
**SYNOPSIS:** John Luther is a police detective, and a very good one. He deals with murder cases, often involving serial killers, and has a knack for getting inside the mind of the killer. However, his methods, personality and troubled private life often get him into strife with his superiors, leading some to regard him as the problem rather than the solution.

**The Good Wife**  
**DIRECTION:** Michelle King, Robert King  
**CAST:** Julianna Margulies, Chris Noth, Josh Charles  
**SYNOPSIS:** Alicia Florrick (Julianna Margulies) is the wife of a former state's attorney for Cook County. He has been imprisoned after a corruption scandal. Alicia must deal with the public humiliation. She must also fend for her two children. After years of being a housewife and mother, she returns to work as a litigator at the law firm Stern, Lockhart & Gardner. She must now prove herself in the courtroom.
Swimmer’s itch is an itchy rash that can occur after you go swimming or wading outdoors. Also known as cercarial dermatitis, swimmer’s itch is most common in freshwater lakes and ponds, but it occasionally occurs in salt water.

Swimmer’s itch is a rash usually caused by an allergic reaction to parasites that burrow into your skin while you’re swimming or wading in warm water. The parasites that cause swimmer’s itch normally live in waterfowl and some mammals. These parasites can be released into the water. Humans aren’t suitable hosts, so the parasites soon die while still in your skin.

Swimmer’s itch is uncomfortable, but it usually clears up on its own in a few days. In the meantime, you can control itching with over-the-counter or prescription medications.

**Symptoms**

The itchy rash associated with swimmer’s itch looks like reddish pimples or blisters. It may appear within minutes or days after swimming or wading in infested water.

Swimmer’s itch usually affects only exposed skin — skin not covered by swimsuits, wet suits or waders. Signs and symptoms of swimmer’s itch typically worsen with each exposure to the parasites.

When to see a healthcare provider

Talk to your doctor if you have a rash after swimming that lasts more than three days. If you notice pus at the rash site, consult your doctor. You might be referred to a healthcare provider who specialises in skin conditions.

Causes

The parasites that cause swimmer’s itch live in the blood of waterfowl and in mammals that live near ponds and lakes. Examples include:

1. Geese
2. Ducks
3. Gulls
4. Beavers and
5. Muskrats

The parasite’s eggs enter the water via their hosts’ faeces. Before infecting birds, other animals or people, the hatched parasites must live for a time within a type of snail. These snails live near the shoreline, which explains why infections occur most often in shallow water.

Swimmer’s itch isn’t contagious from person to person, so you don’t need to worry about catching swimmer’s itch from someone who has this itchy rash.

Risk factors

The parasites that cause swimmer’s itch live in the blood of waterfowl and in mammals that live near ponds and lakes. The more time you spend in infested water, the higher your risk of swimmer’s itch.

Children may have the highest risk, since they tend to play in shallow water and are less likely to dry off with a towel.

Some people are more sensitive to swimmer’s itch than others are. And, your sensitivity can increase each time you’re exposed to the parasites that cause swimmer’s itch.

Complications

Swimmer’s itch rarely leads to complications, but your skin can become infected if you scratch too vigorously. Try to avoid scratching the rash.

Prevention

The parasites that cause swimmer’s itch live in the blood of waterfowl and in mammals that live near ponds and lakes. To reduce the risk of swimmer’s itch:

1. Choose swimming spots carefully:
   - Avoid swimming in areas where swimmer’s itch is a known problem or signs warn of possible contamination. Also avoid swimming or wading in marshy areas where snails are commonly found.
   - If you’re a strong swimmer, head to deeper water for your swim. You may be more likely to develop swimmer’s itch if you spend a lot of time in warmer water near the shore.
2. Avoid the shoreline, if possible:
   - If you’re a strong swimmer, head to deeper water for your swim. You may be more likely to develop swimmer’s itch if you spend a lot of time in warmer water near the shore.
3. Rinse after swimming:
   - Rinse exposed skin with clean water immediately after leaving the water, then vigorously dry your skin with a towel. Launder your swimsuits often.
4. Skip the bread crumbs:
   - Don’t feed birds on docks or near swimming areas.
5. Apply waterproof sunscreen:
   - This has been reported to protect the skin from the parasite that causes swimmer’s itch. — Mayo Clinic News Network/TNS

CONTROL: Swimmer’s itch is uncomfortable, but it usually clears up on its own in a few days. In the meantime, you can control itching with over-the-counter or prescription medications.

PREVENTION: Waterproof sunscreen has been reported to protect the skin from the parasite that causes swimmer’s itch.
The rise of Senator Kamala Harris could be a made-for-TV drama. Joe Biden’s newly minted running mate, the child of Indian and Jamaican immigrants, is now poised to become the first woman and first person of colour to hold the office of vice president.

The historic moment lands in tandem with the anniversary of another breakthrough for women in American politics: the right to vote. The largest expansion of voting rights in US history happened 100 years ago this month, when the 19th Amendment was finally enshrined in the Constitution.

The dramatic fight to cast a ballot of one’s own is a slice of history packed with the sorts of heroes, vigilantes and avengers that TV loves to resurrect and reinterpret for prime-time, prestige viewing. And what better time than a centennial anniversary to recall the best of cable’s action-packed dramas featuring Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, network classics depicting the fierce Susan B Anthony, or streaming’s irreverent

One hundred years and one Kamala Harris later, there are still very few TV series about first- (or second-) wave feminism in the vault. You can count on one fist in the air the number of major network series about suffrage, writes Lorraine Ali

"The fact that it has not been told a million times would indicate that somebody was not interested in hearing the story. That’s why we need better representation and diversity in the ranks of executives and people who make these decisions. People who greenlight. Women.

– Lorraine Ali, television critic"
suffragist superhero shows starring half of Hollywood as Alice Paul, Ida B Wells, Mary Church Terrell and Mabel Ping-Hua Lee. If only they existed.

One hundred years and one Kamala Harris later, there are still very few TV series about first- (or second-) wave feminism in the vault. You can count on one fist in the air the number of major network series about suffrage. Throw in those subsequent milestones in the fight for women's rights and you'd be hard-pressed to put on a 24-hour marathon about the battles and victories that irrevocably changed our lives, the lives of our ancestors and the destiny of our daughters.

Documentary series are the exception, of course. PBS has dedicated the summer to a slate of multiplatform content “honouring US women’s suffrage, the feminist movement and modern-day change makers.” The lineup includes American Experience’s The Vote, which chronicles the campaign waged by American women for the right to vote; And She Could Be Next, a POVs miniseries following women of colour candidates and activists during the 2018 midterms; and a host of other, previously released docs about remarkable women such as Toni Morrison.

Pop culture’s most recognisable suffragist is still the flirty Mrs. Winifred Banks, as played by Glynis Johns in the 1964 Disney classic Mary Poppins. Her participation in women’s marches and protests is a well-heeled hobby, and her sily feminist streak has rendered her a neglectful mother who needs a nanny to raise her kids. Thank goodness for Mary.

So: Thanks to the rare television titles that tackle the fight for voting rights head-on. They include HBO’s 2004 Iron Jawed Angels, and Timeless, Downton Abbey and Boardwalk Empire each featured characters and an episode or two with suffrage as a backdrop. And, of course, there’s Schoolhouse Rock’s 1976 classic, Sufferin’ Till Suffrage: “Susan B Anthony (yeah!) and Julia Howe, Lucretia Mott (and others!), they showed us how. They carried signs and marched in lines. Until at long last the law was passed.”

The latter lesson was tucked inside a marketing effort to sell more Lucky Charms, but at least it was highlighting a chapter of history that other gatekeepers have mostly chosen to ignore. A handful of other productions over the years are worth rewatching too, such as Hélènchey Circle, following Britain’s female codebreakers after World War II; Amazon Prime’s Good Girls Revolt, about pioneering female journalists at an American newspaper at the end of the 1960s; and AMC’s Halt and Catch Fire, which uses one of TV’s most indelible partnerships to explore the role of women in early tech. It’s hardly possible to produce a comprehensive picture of women’s history by connecting these dots, though — particularly if that history is to include women of colour and global movements for rights.

But an interesting thing happened on the detour around her story and the industry’s long-standing fear of women who march and demand things other than sex from a male lead. Female creators and producers are telling those tales from myriad angles, and increasingly on their own terms.

Dickinson showrunner Alena Smith is behind the award-winning Apple TV+ dramedy about the 19th century poet Emily Dickinson. “History is power, and the way we tell it is a form of how power is wielded,” Smith says. “What we are really doing is reclaiming and restaging history. We have to retell the narrative of who we are and how we got here. We have to put ourselves at the centre of it. We’re making a story that’s relevant to us.”

The series, which premiered last year, opens up the stuffy parlour and imbues the writer and her female companions with some present-day freedoms, such as cursing and twerking. “With Dickinson we give (them) consciousness of a contemporary young woman, but they live in a reality where they’re not allowed to vote or own property,” says Smith, whose series has already been renewed for a second season. “That’s part of the whole experiment: We show that they weren’t any different from us but they lived under these brutally different circumstances. Whereas if you just had everybody talking in quaint period language, that point would not be driven home as effectively.”

Dickinson is part of a nascent wave of current or recent TV programmes beginning to dig deeper into women’s fights for equality, reproductive rights and racial justice, though the long arc of those political movements is often reflected in fictional-future dramas such as Hulu’s The Handmaid’s Tale or biographies like Netflix’s Self Made: Inspired by the Life of Madam C.J. Walker. In other series like Better Things, Fleabag, P-Valley, Vida and I May Destroy You, female writers, directors and stars have placed contemporary women’s lives front and centre — and at the forefront of the art form — even if their subject matter is not “political” in the electoral sense. FX’s recent Mrs. America is one of the few productions that dares to set its story at a critical juncture in modern feminism. The 1970s-era drama, starring Cate Blanchett, chronicles the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment, another major upheaval for American women that barely has been represented onscreen, let alone in public school history books. The popular series exposed the rigours of tackling a movement that TV has generally left to late-night comedians.

Even that Emmy-nominated limited series has elicited criticism for not telling the whole story: In a guest column for The Times, Eleanor Smeal and Gloria Steinem (the latter portrayed in the series by Rose Byrne) lamented the inaccuracy of the TV adaptation of their efforts to ratify the ERA. “Mrs. America has described deck chairs on the Titanic but lied about why the Titanic went down,” they wrote. “The result: It has given us the Catfish Theory of History.”

But as Dickinson’s Smith suggests, getting to the point of being criticised by feminist icons requires getting it made in the first place — and for too long the subject of women’s history in pop culture has been overlooked, neglected or rejected by men.

“The reason why you couldn’t (successfully) pitch a suffragette story to Les Moonves is because he actively didn’t want to hear it,” Smith surmises, referring to the former chairman and CEO of CBS Corp., who resigned in 2018 after numerous allegations of sexual misconduct. “He actively didn’t see himself in it. And so that history gets suppressed. But a story that’s as dramatic, and matters as much, as women getting the right to vote? The fact that it has not been told a million times would indicate that someone was not interested in hearing about it.”

That’s why we need better representation and diversity in the ranks of executives and people who make these decisions. People who greenlight. Women.” — Los Angeles Times/TNS
Indian ambassador meets managing committee of Indian Cultural Centre

Dr Deepak Mittal, Ambassador of India, who is also the Patron of Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) in Qatar, recently met the Managing Committee of ICC for the first time after his arrival in Qatar. He was joined by Xavier Dhanaraj, First Secretary of Consular and Community Affairs, at Embassy of India, who was also recently nominated as the Co-Ordinating Officer of ICC by the embassy. Hemant Kumar Dwivedi, First Secretary of Culture and Education, at the Embassy of India, was also present on the occasion.

The Managing Committee Team was led by Manikandan AP, President of ICC. The managing committee included Vinod V Nair, Vice President; Seenu Pillai, General Secretary; Anjan Ganguly, Joint Secretary; Rajesh Singh, Head of Finance and Sponsorship; Jaffar Khan, Head of Human Resources; Premises and Sports; Nayarla Weigh, Head of Cultural Activities and Education; Nirmala Shanmugapandian, Cultural Co-ordinator; Ramachandra Shetty, Head of In-House activities; Bhumeshwar Padda, Head of Consular Services and External Events; and Paramabhati Kandhi, Head of Associate Organizations and Membership.

ICC President explained about the history of the Indian Cultural Centre since its inception in 1991. He highlighted community supporting activities, including consular services for the entire week and entire day, classes for classical and cinematic dance, chess, karate, kalari, music and language.

He also mentioned about ICC’s various meeting and programme halls and the committee’s plan for expansion of the Ashoka Hall. The General Secretary highlighted the over-ISO strong ICC co-ordinated board delegation for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2017 and 2019, with Qatar delegation to Bangalore PBD in 2017 being the highest ever-on and before 2017. The Managing Committee members updated the ambassador about the past, current and the planned future activities of the Indian Cultural Centre. The also explained about the benefits of ICC to the Indian Community in general and privileges provided its members.

The ambassador thanked the Managing Committee for the hard work rendered towards the community during the difficult Covid-19 times. He lauded their efforts in managing the sale of tickets for the Vande Bharat flights. He confirmed maximum co-operation and support from the embassy to the centre in all their community activities.

AMUAAQ conducts webinar on ‘New Education Policy 2020’

Aligarh Muslim University Alumni Association Qatar (AMUAAQ), an associate organisation of ICBP under the aegis of the Embassy of India, recently organised a webinar on New Education Policy 2020 via Zoom. Professor Faizan Mustafa, Vice-Chancellor, NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, was the chief guest and speaker of the webinar. The webinar was moderated by Dr Zahidul Haque, Associate Professor at University of Hyderabad India. Dr M S Bukhari, Chief Patron of AMUAAQ, along with Professor M M Sufyan Beg, Principal of JH College of Engineering and Technology and Chairman of AMU Alumni Affairs Committee AMU Aligarh also attended the session.

Speaking on the occasion, Professor Faizan Mustafa said that “a new door for liberal education has paved a path and the choice based credit system of UGC will lead to a new era where the students will have a medium to pursue their passion. The liberal education era will be the one to bring a considerable change.”

“Focus on the flexibility of subjects with interdisciplinary courses along with teacher training is a good move. Syllabus reduction by 30% is commendable. Direct admission in PhD is well appreciating and “Focus on the flexibility of subjects with interdisciplinary courses along with teacher training is a good move. Syllabus reduction by 30% is commendable. Direct admission in PhD is well appreciating and wishful thinking,” he added. Dr M S Bukhari requested all AMU alumni to work towards the benefit of their alma mater. “The Covid-19 outbreak has disrupted regular gatherings and events but people have turned to the digital world to stay connected and these online events have become the new norm till the virus fades away,” he said.

Jawed Ahmad, President of AMU Alumni Association Qatar welcomed the gathering and briefly spoke about about the efforts to support the community during this pandemic. Ahmad said that it is important to use technology for continuing our activities as people may be observing physical distancing but they are virtually together. He thanked his managing committee and supporters.

The webinar was moderated by Dr Zahidul Haque, AMU alumnus. The webinar kicked off with the recitation of the Holy Qur’an by Mohamed Farman Khan, General Secretary of AMUAAQ, which was followed by an awareness session on precautionary measures against Covid 19 by Dr Ashna Nusrat, Chief Co-ordinator of AMUAAQ. Mohamed Faisal Naseem, Vice President of AMUAAQ proposed a vote of thanks.

The webinar was attended by over 650 people, including Dr Nadeem Jilani, Shahabuddin Ahmad, Professor Atif Iqbal, Dr Ammanullah Khan, Irfan Mohamned Khan, Attab Pathan, Tanweer Aalam, Rizwan Ahmad, Himanshu Kumar Sharma, Dr Shadab Ansari, Dr Ashratuzzaman Chowdhury, Archana Das, Dr Choudhary Mohamed, Najmul Hassan Khan, Sumira Fadi, Nigar Akhtar, Dr Sabha Hasan, Dr Taufif Attamasi, Mominoo Ahmad Bangash, Ahmad Imtyaz, Irfan Ansari, Gufran Ali Khan, Abhay Patil, Dr Khushveet, Saurav Singh, Anwar Nafees Khan, Dr Gita Chowla, Mohamed Abuzzor, Sheeba Khan, Dr M S Hassan, Anwer Sultana, Professor Taiseen Fatma, Jawed Aisam, Shagufta Khanum and Saba Anees.

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Staycations or charity work? Ideas for a Covid gap year

The traditional gap year may be up in the air, with uncertainty over travel and student jobs, but volunteering will remain a viable option, writes Kit Macdonald

Coronavirus has put those choosing between university and a gap year in a real quandary. Take a place at uni at a time of unprecedented disruption to the university experience? Or defer and grapple with a situation in which every aspect of a typical gap year – working, volunteering, travelling – has changed completely? One thing’s for certain: a successful gap year in the age of Covid-19 is going to require imagination and lateral thinking. Here’s your guide to the options.

Working
Jobs are in short supply right now, with 600,000 having been lost in the UK between March and May, and fears of more losses to come. Consequently, jobs that might previously have been seen as easy options for gap-year employment – supermarket or call centre work or fruit-picking, for example – may now be harder to land. Resources such as Save the Student and Student Job can help you assess your options. Remember to make sure that any prospective workplace conforms to government guidelines on working safely during coronavirus.

Remote internships such as those offered by Start Me Up Careers are another option and provide the chance to gain experience in fields as diverse as tech, social enterprise and conservation. Working holidays in the UK can also be found on websites such as Workaway, which links up hosts with travellers. The traveller helps the host out for a few hours a day in return for food and a place to stay, and sometimes a wage.

Despite Covid-19’s dire economic impact, many workers who have retained their incomes have used the reduced opportunities to spend during lockdown to save hard. If you can find a job, the situation may at least mean heading to university with that rarest of student commodities: a financial cushion.

Volunteering
How possible it will be to volunteer abroad in the near future is of course shrouded in uncertainty. However, as Dr Peter Slowe, the founder and chairman of Projects Abroad, says, when things do start up again, student volunteers will be needed more than ever. “Charities are going to have less money and government aid budgets are going to be cut, so young volunteers will be in huge demand to help fill the gaps,” he says.

For now, volunteering in the UK is far more viable. Working in a food bank via the Trussell Trust, delivering supplies to people who are shielding, or joining the NHS Volunteer Responders are great ways to help.

For something that uses your academic skills, the Coronavirus Tutoring Initiative connects students with young people who are in need of free remote tutoring in pre-GCSE, GCSE, or A-level subjects, while Studenteer sets up voluntary work with hard-pressed charities, good causes and small businesses.

Travelling
Though “air bridges” have opened up the possibility of foreign travel again, anywhere in the world could suddenly become a Covid-19 hotspot until a vaccine is found. A wait-and-see approach is the way to go, advises Charlotte Hindle, author of Lonely Planet’s The Gap Year Book.

“My view is that it is going to be difficult to travel for a long period of time to multiple countries during your gap year, and you might want to wait until a vaccine is found,” she says. “Countries that are safe now may not be in the future, travel insurance is tricky, and new lockdowns can happen anywhere at any time, potentially leaving you stranded. What happens if you catch the virus while you’re away? How do you isolate in a hostel dorm, or get back home?”

Day trips or staycations are less fraught with such dangers, though, as Hindle points out, whether at home or abroad, it’s much harder to be safe when you’re travelling.

Some much-needed good cheer comes from Delilah Pearson and Isabella Inga, both 18 and beginning gap years. They see plenty of possibilities in the year ahead in spite of everything. Inga has deferred a fine art degree at Loughborough for a year and will take a foundation diploma in art and design at Buckinghamshire New University. “My diploma will be quite full-on,” she says, “but I also plan to earn money working and selling my art. If it’s safe I will travel in Europe, and I want to properly learn Italian, something I’ve been pursuing over lockdown and would like to continue.”

Pearson, meanwhile, plans to volunteer, run a half marathon and climb Mount Snowdon on the way to completing her Gold Duke of Edinburgh award. If possible, she’d also like to spend time in a French-speaking country as part of her prep for a languages degree. “Despite the cliche, I’m hoping to find some more clarity about the direction I would like to go in,” she says. “The sudden pause of lockdown has been a benefit because it has allowed me to explore my interests, and ensure that when I go to uni I will be pursuing something I am truly passionate about.” — The Guardian
Have a good break: Work-

By Nigel Slater

I work from home, but I refuse to eat at my desk. It is one of those small rules of life I have upheld for as long as I can remember. Lunch neither refreshes nor recharges unless I am several feet from my place of work. Even if this, often the shortest of all meals, only takes 10 minutes, I always move to another room to enjoy it.

It is all too easy not to stop for a break. To pick at something as you type or talk. But I believe we should stop, even if just for a few minutes. It is crucial for our wellbeing and probably good for our work too.

OK, I need little excuse for a bite to eat. A sandwich perhaps, a hastily thrown together fridge-raid piled on a piece of thick bread. As such it is fine, but I think we can do better.

You can toss a few prawns in a quickly made marinade, or some pieces of chicken into a bowl of buttermilk, and they can sit calmly doing their thing, until you are ready to cook. The hard part is partially done by the marinade as you work.

Pastrami, cucumber, mustard and dill mascarpone

I have a fondness for the cardboard-wrapped delights of the takeaway sandwich shop. Those layers of soft bread and peeping fillings have more appeal to me than that of simply convenience. At home I am more likely to make an open sandwich, adding a curl of smoked salmon or whatever comes to hand in the fridge. What appeals to me is having something more interesting than butter or mayonnaise to spread on the bread. Ricotta with mint and chopped radish; a spicy apple chutney stirred through mayonnaise; grated beetroot folded through cream cheese with poppy seeds and a sprinkle of celery vinegar, perhaps.

For an open sandwich of pastrami I made a spread of cream cheese and grated cucumber. I could have added chopped gherkins and capers too. If mascarpone isn’t around, try ricotta or a full-fat cream cheese. Such a recipe, light, well-seasoned and spreadable, is suitable as a dip too. A bowl of soft cheese and herbs in which to dip a freshly picked, pencil-thin carrot.

Makes 6 small sandwiches

Ingredients:
- cucumber 300g
- dill a small bunch
- mascarpone 250g
- grain mustard 2 tbsp
- salt and pepper to taste
- radishes 8
- dill a small bunch
- mustard and dill

Method:
1. Slice the cucumber in half lengthways and scoop out the seeds with a teaspoon. Coarsely grate the cucumber, place in a sieve balanced over a bowl and leave for 15 minutes.
2. Finely chop the dill. Put the mascarpone in a bowl, add the dill, mustard, salt and pepper and mix briefly. Slice the radishes into rounds.
3. Squeeze the grated cucumber with your hands to remove much of the water, then stir the cucumber into the mascarpone. Spread this thickly onto the slices of rye bread, then lay a slice of pastrami on to each one. Add a few radishes and a twist of ground pepper.

Crispy-fried kefir chicken with rosemary and garlic

I like having something partially prepared, waiting calmly until I’m ready to take a break from work. Chicken, soaking in a marinade, will sit quietly in the fridge until you feel like tossing it in seasoned flour and frying it till the inside is juicy, the skin crisp as ice. I make a batch, eating some hot and setting the rest aside to eat cold. Chicken, marinated in buttermilk, is an American classic, but buttermilk is less than easy to find. Thawed once again, but with my mind set on fried chicken, I decided to use kefir. The resulting batter was light, crisp and deliciously fragile. Blessed with the same tang as the traditional recipe, I would do it again. Kefir is certainly easier to track down than buttermilk nowadays. (If neither can be found, you could add a squeeze of lemon juice to a tub of natural, unstrained yogurt.)

The chicken can marinate overnight. The frying and frying and subsequent baking will take 45 minutes. You can have most of the chicken for dinner and keep a couple of pieces back for lunch the following day. I make a salad of shredded white cabbage to go with this, seasoning it lightly with white wine vinegar and dill while the chicken crisps. We used large free-range thighs, finishing them in the oven to cook them right through, keeping the batter crisp. This has the advantage of making them less greasy too. If you have small chicken thighs, then you may find they are cooked after the initial deep frying. Keep the oil at 170C-180C and check carefully that the chicken is thoroughly cooked to the bone.

Serves 3

Ingredients:
- chicken thighs 6, bone in, skin on
- kefir 500ml
- garlic 4 cloves
- olive oil 3 tbsp
- rosemary leaves 1 tbsp
- sea salt 2 tbsp
- sunflower or groundnut oil about 200ml
- plain flour 150g
- smoked paprika 2 tsp
- ground chilli 2 tsp
- red or orange peppers 2, large

Method:
1. Put the chicken thighs into a deep bowl and pour the kefir over them. Roll the thighs to completely coat them, then cover and place in a fridge for anything up to 24 hours.
2. Peel and thinly slice the garlic, warm the olive oil in a sauté pan, then add the garlic and fry for 3 or 4 minutes till it starts to colour, then add the rosemary and continue cooking for 1 minute. Lift the garlic and rosemary out with a draining spoon.
3. Fry the chicken for about 4 minutes until the underside is golden, then turn carefully and cook the other side. Secure a rack or cooling tray over a roasting tin. Lift each piece of chicken from the pan with a draining spoon and place on the rack. Continue frying the remaining chicken, then place the chicken in the oven for 25 minutes till deep golden and cooked right through to the bone.
4. Cut the peppers in half from the pan with a draining spoon and place on the rack. Cooling tray over a roasting tin. Lift each piece of chicken from the pan with a draining spoon and place on the rack. Continue frying the remaining chicken, then place the chicken in the oven for 25 minutes till deep golden and cooked right through to the bone.
5. Warm the remaining oil in a sauté pan, add the peppers and fry them for about 10 minutes till soft and giving. Lift out, set aside and discard the oil. Lay the peppers on a serving dish then place the chicken on top and season with the salt and garlic mixture.
from-home lunch recipes

Noodles, prawns and cucumber

If you toss together a marinade in the morning, your seafood, meat or vegetables can steep quietly while you work.

We did this with prawns this week, letting them sit in a mixture of fish sauce, mirin, vinegar and lime juice. I could have thrown a handful of them on the grill and stuffed them into a soft, flour-dusted bun with some curls of cos lettuce, but used them instead to liven up a bowl of noodles.

A marinade has often done its work once the meat or fish is removed. This time, the liquid was simmered down to a few spoonfuls, which we used to dress the transparent angel hair noodles and green herbs. I used mint and coriander but also basil. I'm growing a pot of Thai basil at the moment, so a handful of its purple-stained leaves went in as well.

Serves 2

Ingredients:

For the marinade
fish sauce 2 tbsp
mirin 1 tbsp
rice vinegar 1 tbsp
limestone juice 100ml (about 2 limes)
red chilli 1, medium raw prawns

For the noodles
angel hair noodles 100g
coriander a handful
mint leaves 12
coriander a handful

Method:

1. Combine the fish sauce, mirin, rice vinegar and lime juice in a medium-sized mixing bowl. Finely chop the chilli and add to the bowl. Put the prawns into the marinade and leave for an hour or so.
2. Peel the cucumber, slice in half lengthways and remove the core with a teaspoon. Cut the cucumber into short lengths and then into large matchstick-sized pieces, then put them in a bowl with the mint leaves and coriander.
3. Put the noodles in a heatproof bowl, pour a kettle of hot water over them and set aside while you cook the prawns.
4. Warm the groundnut oil in a shallow pan. When it starts to sizzle, add the prawns and let them cook for 2 minutes. Remove the prawns, then pour in the marinade and leave it to bubble for a couple of minutes until it has reduced by about half.
5. Drain the noodles and add to the cucumber and herbs.
6. Add the prawns, then the marinade and toss everything together.

Roast aubergine with spiced chickpeas

Of all the useful things to have around for a casual lunch, a bowl of aubergine puree takes first prize in my house. A spread for warm flatbread; the heart of a pasta sauce; a condiment for grilled lamb cutlets; or something in which to fold chopped tomatoes, coriander leaves and fried onions.

You bake an aubergine or two, scoop out the silken, honey-coloured flesh within, and mash it with a fork. It is a blank – though delicious canvases to which you can add your own seasonings. For which, read: a drop or two of olive oil, a fistful of mint, some pomegranate seeds or a scattering of toasted sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Shredded basil and a crumbled block of feta; chopped cherry tomatoes and sautéed courgettes; brandy soaked golden sultanas and soft fried onions are all good too.

A roasting tin of aubergines takes about an hour to cook to melting softness. It’s a quick task to slit the skins open and scoop out the centre with a spoon. And there it can stay, in a bowl in the fridge, until you are ready. This time, we used it as a spread for toasted baguettes, scattering the surface with crisp, spiced chickpeas and a handful of toasted seeds.

Serves 4

Ingredients:
aubergines 3 medium
olive oil 4 tbsp
garlic 1 head
chickpeas 500g, tinned or bottled
ras el hanout 3 tsp
sunflower seeds 1 tbsp
groundnut oil 2 tbsp
tomatoes 200g, assorted
dried thyme 2 tsp

Method:

1. Cut the aubergines in half lengthways, then remove the soft, creamy flesh within.
2. Separate the head of garlic into cloves then squeeze each one in turn to remove the soft, creamy flesh within.
3. Remove the aubergines from the oven, break them open and scoop out the soft centre of each into a bowl and discard the skins. Reserve the oil in the roasting tin. Stir the garlic cream into the aubergine.
4. Rinse the chickpeas and add them to the reserved aubergine oil in the roasting tin. Stir in the ras el hanout, then bake for 20 minutes, till the chickpeas are sizzling.
5. Finely dice the tomatoes. Remove the chickpeas from the oven and mix with the tomatoes.
6. In a dry, shallow pan, toast the pumpkin, sesame and sunflower seeds for 5 minutes or so over a moderate heat till fragrant, shaking the pan regularly as they cook. Add the thyme and salt, then set aside.
7. Split the aubergine in half lengthways, then cut each half into two pieces. Toast the cut sides. Spread the aubergine mixture over the toasted surfaces, top with the chickpea and tomato mixture, then 4. Fifteen minutes before cooking, toast the cut sides of the bread under a hot grill for 8 minutes or so, until they are golden and lightly crisp. The aubergine mixture is part cooked already, so this process simply finishes them off. Spread them with garlic cream, then scatter over the chickpeas.

Raspberry burrata focaccia

I am not sure whether this is sweet or savoury – or even if it matters. The idea was inspired by the classic treatment of sheep’s cheese, apricots and honey I have eaten all over Greece and the Middle East. Soaking the bread in honey (I have used maple syrup too) produces simply gorgeous toast: deep gold and crisp on the outside, saturated with syrup within.

You should probably make sure it’s a plain or herb version rather than one studded with olives or sun-dried tomatoes. If you have no raspberries, use apricots or blackberries, or, as I did the other afternoon, deep red cherries.

Makes 4

Ingredients:

For the burrata
plain focaccia 250g
maple syrup or liquid honey 6 tbsp
burrata 2 x 250g balls
raspberries 150g
pistachios 2 tbsp, finely ground

Method:

1. Cut the focaccia in half horizontally and then into 4 squares. Put them on a baking sheet, cut side uppermost, and trickle with the maple syrup or honey. Place under a heated overhead grill for 8 minutes or so, until they are golden and lightly crisp.
2. Break or slice the burrata and divide between the focaccia, then cover each with raspberries. Dust the surface with ground pistachios and serve. — The Guardian
The sea beneath us

Freshwater tends to float on top of denser saltwater. As the ocean rises, saltwater infiltrates under the groundwater zone and pushes it up.

When the sea pushes groundwater up

Groundwater table before sea level rise

When the sea rises, it moves further inland and pushes the groundwater up

Impacts from rising groundwater

Basements and drainage systems could flood

Roads and other structures weaken

Flooding and stream overflows increase

Damage to pipelines and sewage systems

Source: U.S. Geological Survey

Graphic: Lorena Elebee, Los Angeles Times/TNS
Bathrooms are already transforming from a purely functional area into a self-pampering space, like a private spa or a personal wellness space. The movement is towards sensory experiences and harmonic design concepts, which create a visual tranquility. So make sure you are following the trend. Chirag Parekh, Chairman & Managing Director, Sternhagen and Shantanu Jain, President – Sales & Marketing, Stonelam Surfaces Pvt. Ltd explains how to convert your bathroom into luxury bathroom statement.

Tiles as highlighter:
3D tiles in bathroom can be used as a highlighter for a perfect solution to design a statement wall as they create shadow and texture in geometric shapes, interacting with ambient lighting to provide a unique aesthetic appeal. Available in various colour schemes, 3D tiles help to create a tasteful atmosphere that both stimulates and soothes the senses.

Style your storage area:
Give your bathroom even more cool look with a statement or two artistic look and it evokes the fine beauty of art can be done through a plethora of textured products that you don't have to worry about cleaning or scratches in the long run.

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Artistic wall:
While renovating bathrooms we often ignore the walls because of fear of moisture but wall art can be done through a plethora of textured surface to store towels, and other accessories. Using new age surfaces as shelves helps to organise the products, giving it an uncluttered look to complement the bathroom. Wood and acrylic are giving way to newer zero maintenance products that you don’t have to worry about cleaning or scratches in the long run.

Technology driven bathroom:
Technology in bathroom is a perfect match between functionality and aesthetics and today technology is playing an important part, allowing faucets and shower systems to offer many functions from being water efficient to automatically manage the precious natural resource responsibly. With technologies aimed at saving water and energy, shower systems nowadays complete every luxury wellness experience with an innovative and sensual bouquet of chromo and aroma therapy that makes every shower a luxurious spa experience.

The versatile & textured surface helps to add a graceful depth to this space with its inherent pattern. Space is the key: Nothing is better than a ceiling in bathroom done with exquisitely chosen versatile product that enhances and gives life to the ceiling. Such a ceiling can define one’s own personality and tastes.

Innovative shower:
Today, showers are available with anti-bacterial and infrared germ killing technology that helps to create a spa like experience as bathing goes beyond cleansing the body because they want the spirit to relax, rejuvenate from an increasingly hectic lifestyle and go out feeling very fresh. — IANS

You have a pleasant day ahead. Optimism and creativity prevail. You can avail yourself of all the freedom necessary to encounter new inventions and trends, and you may have an irresistible desire to join an avant-garde group. The old way of doing things seems too quickly! There are plenty of opportunities now. A deep and fundamental change is likely to pay off . In fact, there is some chance you’ll meet an unexplored territory.

Some of the planetary movements are currently helping you be taken off guard by your new spontaneity and sense of adventure. The urge to learn about computers, or a technology guru might take up from your normal activities. For example, a surfer may get a sudden interest in activities that don’t interest most people, including you, where other people tell you to look. If people are urging you to get paid they no heed. You’ll discover treasure all on your own provided you follow your own calling.

You can’t stand working according to the old principles any more. You’re in a heated frame of mind. Be careful about stirring conflict.

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Try to imagine that you’re in your creative workshop and you’ve given up using all your usual tools in order to find new ways to give form to your inspiration. Another completely different creative style will emerge. Your admirers may be surprised, but no one will be more astonished than you.

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Today’s forecast is excellent for you. The celestial bodies can’t help but smile on the tempestuous energy of your character. You would be advised to act on your strong intuition. But be prudent in the execution of your actions lest your impulsive spirit stop you from taking recommended precautions.

There is some likelihood that you’ll have an electrifying emotional encounter today. Some of life’s more mundane details may trigger arguments that, although violent, are cathartic and short. You’ve been thinking that it’s time for more intensity in your life. Whether you know it or not, you’re rethinking all manner of human relationships.

The current astral configuration could be described as a crisis phase, although today’s events won’t be unhappy. Communication proves difficult for you. For a long time you’ve been banking on others noticing and appreciating your talent, but you’re beginning to feel like a sucker for being so patient. This would be a good day to confront the powers that stand in your way.

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**Community Puzzles**

**Wordsearch**

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G C I P I W D H C F C V H V
U I E F S H Y W U D F P T O V
M C T V L I E R L A I N U P S
G G H T E T O E N D P P Y R N
A H E E Y E I D N E W E E I E
Y X R C R F A D E I L T D F W
E M H D Y R I G A N S G R J
W N S A U L Y N I I H L O A A
Y I M S Y A C G W G R E E N C
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L D G C E A H F A L C M A I O
N W O R B R D P O H W B E N N
W I L S O N S K N I G H T L I
S L E W N H G U A V R C D O
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BASS  WELLS  NELSON
HAYES  DE VAUGHN  WINTERS
REEVES  KNIGHT  GAYE
BROWN  WHITE  PENDEKGRASS
ISLEY  FLACK  WITHERS
TEX  MAYFIELD  GREEN
CHERRY  WILSON  REDDING
JACKSON  FRANKLIN

**Codeword**

Every letter of the alphabet is used at least once. Squares with the same number in have the same letter in. Work out which number represents which letter.

**Sudoku**

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Sudoku is a puzzle based on a 9x9 grid. The grid is also divided into nine 3x3 boxes. You are given a selection of numbers and to complete the puzzle, you must fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains all the digits from 1 to 9. No digit can repeat in any column, row or box.

---

**Adam**

- I just think coffee tastes gross.
- No.
- What do you mean, no?
- Just, no.
- Coffee has feelings, Kate. I won’t let you insult it.
- Coffee has feelings?
- I know she’s mean, but you? You are a champion!

**Pooch Cafe**

- Don’t walk under that ladder! It’s bad luck!
- That’s nonsensical. I don’t believe in silly superstitions.
- What if it’s got aason from Friday the 13th standing on it?
- Okay, that one I’ll avoid.

**Garfield**

- Oopie...
- Don’t stand so close to me.

**Bound And Gagged**

- Is that the new buckskin jacket I bought you?
Super Cryptic Clues

Across
1. Hide stones near people (10)
2. Prophetic leader agrees to alter forecast (7)
3. Weak father has to suffer (5)
4. Two officers, one gun (4)
5. No crop is damaged by this insect (8)
6. A car, if taken to the continent? (6)
7. Prophetic leader agrees to alter forecast (7)
8. A capital cigar (6)
9. Sticky sweet? (8)
10. Graduates get hard thumps (4)
11. Country, say (5)
12. The real material? (7)
13. Fruit in trees can change (10)

Down
1. She will shortly show a hard exterior (5)
2. A country I controlled (4)
3. The tongue of a World War One field marshal (6)
4. Diabolical elfin ran off (8)
5. It may be a strain for a Russian empress (7)
6. For seeing sights? (10)
7. Perhaps I learn about money in a northern county (10)
8. In a manner of speaking I'd see a mishap (8)
9. Charter again set free? (7)
10. A tree found in part of London (6)
11. Cricket prize left after fire? (5)
12. Principal sea (4)

Yesterday’s Solutions

Wordsearch

Codeword
The extraordinarily detailed exploration of a failed mission

By Katie Walsh

From legendary documentary filmmaker and two-time Oscar winner (Harlan County, USA and American Dream) Barbara Kopple comes Desert One, the story of Operation Eagle Claw, a failed rescue mission during the Iran hostage crisis in 1980. Kopple weaves together archival news footage and interviews with everyone from hostages to hostage takers, from Special Forces servicemen to ex-President Jimmy Carter. If there’s someone who was involved in this situation, Kopple tracks them down to unpack just what happened — even an Iranian passenger on a bus that the mission accidentally intercepted. It’s an autopsy of the mission itself, the planning, the men involved and what exactly went wrong.

The thoroughly exhaustive Desert One follows a standard formula. It’s produced by the History channel, so there’s no surprise that the talking heads interviews and sweeping score feel decidedly of that TV military hagiography genre. The second act becomes bogged down in the details of planning and execution of the mission, and the mission itself, which is predominantly rendered with animated sequences. But Kopple carefully threads the needle on connecting the political choice behind the mission, one Carter long kept as a Plan B, choosing instead to pursue a path of diplomacy to free the hostages. That choice, and the tragedy of the mission, cost him his second term, losing to a pro-war Reagan.

What’s almost immediately obvious about Desert One, though, is that it is, indeed, a piece of glossy military propaganda, even though this isn’t necessarily a story of US military triumph, but one of sorrow. We are almost immediately tipped off to that before the title sequence, when a phone call with Carter authorising the mission is advertised with onscreen text as a never-before-heard classified recording. The content of the call isn’t all that shocking, but it signifies to the audience the filmmakers’ access, which has been granted, or perhaps even groomed by the government.

Because the US government and CIA often wage their wars via culture, whenever previously classified information appears in the movies, such as in Award-winning films as Argo or Zero Dark Thirty, one can assume it’s not necessarily due to an enterprising filmmaker extricating it from the vault with an onslaught of Freedom of Information Act requests. Rather, the government has decided to carefully parcel out the information to a trusted filmmaker to dramatise one of these historical moments to burnish the reputation of the military, federal government or the CIA. It’s important context to be aware of in our own readings of films of this nature. The Desert One disaster is a prime historical event for this kind of film: safely in the past, the details previously unknown, tied to a highly recognisable event and perfect to generate sympathy for the military through the loss of life and personal sacrifices made.

Yet this angle feels at odds with Kopple’s investigative instincts, which are clearly drawn away from this story of military tragedy to the larger forces and impact: how the hostage crisis was wielded for political and cultural gain, by both Ayatollah Khomeini and Reagan. That’s the real meat of the story, not necessarily how long the special ops forces trained with night vision goggles. The political and cultural aspect of the film is incredibly dynamic, not so the lagging midsection, bloated with logistics.

But the logistics do serve as a sort of consequence for Carter. When all the media and politicking is swept aside and it’s just the transcripts and the phone calls, you understand the way in which this president, a former naval officer dedicated to his personal belief of peacekeeping, wrestled with the right way to handle this. That morality and willingness to do the right thing, not the political thing, is truly rare to witness in this day and age. — TNS

Crowe drives angry in road-rage thriller

By Michael Phillips

Russell Crowe, Russell Crowe. The man delivers a big box of acting. He can underplay, and let that soothing-on-the-cusp-of-psycho purr take care of acting, over- and under-. While there’s barely a movie there, a year from now, when the multiplexes of the world will either largely be back, be gone or be something in between, we’ve forgotten Unhinged. But we’ll remember who gave it the sauce and — without tweeted recently. It’s not safe for work, and foul-mouthed promo trailer Crowe worked better with a flashback at the 30-minute point, after introducing Crowe out of the blue and in his pickup of death.)

Like Crowe, Pistorius is a New Zealand native. She’s a good, honest actor stuck in a one-note rut in what feels like a two-speed movie that is either standing still or driving crazy. Unhinged takes place in Generica USA, with cars bearing faux America’s Heartland license plates. (The movie was shot last summer in the New Orleans area.) The violence is innately gratuitous, because the premise is an excuse for a simmering kettle of violence to boil over periodically. There’s no mystery (a la Spielberg’s Duel), and minimally effective use of confined spaces (a la the tasty 2012 Wes Craven picture Red Eye, which screenwriter Ellison also wrote).

Even so, I’m glad Unhinged exists, if only because of the exceedingly droll and foul-mouthed promo trailer Crowe tweeted recently. It’s not safe for work, if you still work near other people. But Crowe delivers more and better entertainment in that single minute than many films, including this one, manage in 91. — Chicago Tribune / TNS
Hollywood star Angelina Jolie says she is boring in real life, adding that her children are her creativity because she loves to watch each of them take on a unique personality.

"Oh god, I'm really boring. I spend a lot of time studying foreign policy," Jolie said while talking about how she is artless outside the acting world, during a special virtual press event held before the release of her upcoming movie The One And Only Ivan.

"But I think my creativity is my kids. Because being with them and making up stories before bed or just being silly with them, (I am) really (doing) nothing. Just watching each of them become uniquely who they are and being around them and going into each of their (spaces), whether it be their rooms and talking to them or developing or helping them develop. It's not as much me but my mom was like that, and loved seeing other people's creativity," she added.

Jolie is mother to six children — sons Maddox, Pax, and Knox, and daughters Zahara, Shiloh, and Vivienne. It was one of her kids who introduced her to the world of Katherine Applegate’s bestselling book The One And Only Ivan, and helped her to get associated with it.

In The One And Only Ivan, Jolie has voiced the character of an ageing elephant named Stella, who cares for an abandoned baby elephant named Ruby in a circus show at the Big Top Mall. The actress is also attached to the Disney movie as a producer.

The story follows Ivan, a 400-pound silverback gorilla, who shares a communal habitat in a suburban shopping mall with Stella the elephant, Bob the dog, and various other animals. Ivan has few memories of the jungle where he was born, but when a baby elephant named Ruby arrives, it touches something deep within him, and Ivan begins to question his life and his roots.

The book was inspired by the true story of a gorilla named Ivan who was kept in a concrete cage for over 20 years but learned to express himself through watercolour painting.

"One of my children read the book and said that they loved it. We talked about why it was special and why it meant so much to them. So, I started to pursue where it is being made, what’s happening and started to get involved. I looked at the early drafts and it was very interesting," said the Oscar winning star.

"One of the things (screenplay writer) Mike (White) did that I think was very special is, I had seen it start to go down a road where it really started to become a light fun, kids, and a simpler story. It was easy for somebody to come in and just try to pick a few threads and make it quite simple and add some action here and to really make it what it is intended to be. And Disney and Mike, and everybody involved really understand that," she added.

The actress continued: "It is not a light film. It deals with heavy issues but it is charming and fun and full of life. But it’s deceptive in kind of what the packaging is. So, I thought it was very important and wanted to get involved. I like the messages in it."

Jolie feels the younger generation cares about the natural habitat, and will connect with the story.

"All of us older people will appreciate it for many reasons. But I know this young generation is really very aware of what is happening in the world, to our natural habitats, to these animals, losing ground, what’s happening with the gorillas and the elephants. And they are angry. They want to really be clear about what kind of treatment is appropriate, what kind of captivity is appropriate, being against poaching. So, I think this represents them. I think that’s strong for them today to see that their actions can make change," she said.

Directed by Thea Sharrock, The One And Only Ivan will release on Disney+ Hotstar Premium in India on August 21.

The live action-animation film also features the voices of Sam Rockwell, Danny DeVito, Helen Mirren, Brooklyn Prince, and Chaka Khan, besides actors Bryan Cranston, Ramon Rodriguez, Ariana Greenblatt, Indira Varma and Eleanor Matsuura. — IANS

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**CONCERNED:** Jolie believes that the young generation is very aware of what is happening in the world and they are angry about it.
Urban gardeners share the ups and downs of growing food

By Kerri Westenberg

When a suspicious-looking sprout appeared in the St. Paul garden of LeAndra Estis, she plucked it. The willful plant popped up again. Instead of pulling it out a second time, the new gardener fired up Google. The would-be intruder was spinach.

“I kept thinking, ‘That’s not right,’” said Estis, who had never seen the leafy green emerge from the ground and was expecting the spinach she planted from seed to look more bushy, like the mustard and collard greens she watched grow as a child.

In Minneapolis, Christopher Lutter-Gardella faced a different problem. He had to sow peas several times because his plants were eaten and chewed down at the base from some unseen force.

“The littlest, humblest critter can bring your whole enterprise crashing down,” he said.

Such challenges have not discouraged these two urban gardeners. Estis broke ground behind her home in St. Paul’s Frogtown neighbourhood, looking forward to teaching her twin daughters — Quaia, 19, and Lonna, 13 — the joys of growing your own food. Lutter-Gardella decided that with more time at home due to the coronavirus pandemic, this was the summer to expand his gardens, including the front yard of his home in Minneapolis’ Powderhorn neighbourhood.

Amid the exciting victories, both gardeners have accepted minor setbacks as an inevitable part of gardening like mad, “Estis said. The same is true in Lutter-Gardella’s gardens. He calls his basil plants looked scraggly, he his basil plants looked scraggly, he

ADVANTAGES: Urban vegetable gardens provide food and strengthen citizens’ commitment to the environment.

that has impressed him most. “The corn is blowing my mind. It’s booming. You know the saying, ‘knee-high by the 4th of July?’ Mine is shoulder-high already and gloriously beautiful,” he said a few days after the 4th.

Disappointing duds

“Have you struggled with the weeds? I planted a tonne but only a dozen have survived,” said Lutter-Gardella. In another unpleasant surprise, only about half of his first planting of carrots germinated, and his pepper plants aren’t producing. He’s not sure why.

Estis has a row of strawberry and tomato plants that seem stunted. When she had no more room in her two garden plots, she added a row on the back side of the garage. “That was just a horrible spot,” she said. “I’m not getting much growth there.”

Eager to taste the fruits of her labor, literally, Estis nabbed a green tomato from a vine to make fried green tomatoes. It turned out to be too firm and lacking juice. She also picked a cucumber too early. “It was bitter. I’m hoping that … if I keep it on the vine longer, it will taste better.”

Lessons learned

“Make sure you lay out what you are planting and pay attention to how much space they need,” said Estis, who is in a quandary about three cantaloupe plants she now knows are far too close together. “I am trying to decide if I should pull the one in the middle and replant it in another spot.”

She also recommends enriching the soil. In her garden plots, she laid down Miracle-Gro garden soil and nitrogen-rich coffee grounds, a trick she learned from her mother, longtime gardener Ann Estis. In those plots, you can hardly see the soil for the greenery. She didn’t amend the soil behind her garage, where the plants are withering. Turn to trusted sources, Estis advises. She gets tips from experienced garden store clerks. She has turned to Google. But her favourite and steadiest resource is her mother, who lives a few blocks away and visits most days to weed and advise.

Estis also is glad she labeled her rows of vegetables. She used simple wooden sticks bearing the names of vegetables—to-come and empty seed packs, which show pictures of the mature plant and also note timelines for harvest. Lutter-Gardella, meanwhile, has been working to protect his garden from animals that are as insistent on living as his plants. Bunnies were nibbling the stalks of the corn plants, so he put up a low fence to keep the hoppers away. He also sprinkles fox urine powder around the base of his plants and sprays a cayenne pepper wax onto plants every two weeks to repel little nibblers.

Beyond those organic protections, Lutter-Gardella has learned that trimming a plant back can enhance its production.

“I am being more bold with pruning,” he said. Cutting branches off his tomato plants encourages air flow, and sends more energy and nutrients to the fruit, he said. When his basil plants looked scrappy, he chopped off their tops, and they rebounded with vigor. “As long as you trim it right above an existing leaf, it will bush out more,” he said.

He also recommends companion planting, in which certain plants benefit each other. The classic example is corn, squash and beans. Corn grows tall, and beans vine up the corn stalk; squash grows low around the corn to keep down the weeds. They support each other.

Both gardeners now know that shade is not necessarily the enemy of gardens. Lutter-Gardella was surprised to find that his squash plants in partial shade look much better than those in full sun. Estis has a few tomato plants that are doing better than the other. She intends to cover the poor performer with a canopy on super-hot days on a bunch that the temporary relief from the heat will aid the plants there.

Excitement grows

When Lutter-Gardella greatly expanded his garden this year, it was with an eye toward the kind of food production that could help sustain his family. He stays busy tending his crops, but looks forward to the future. He plans to can tomatoes and also simply slice and freeze some to be added to sauces in the winter. He planted three varieties of beans. Some will be eaten off the vine, but others he expects to dry, to be prepared long after summer passes, for bean-based dishes such as burritos.

When Estis planted her garden, she hoped her enthusiasm for growing food would spread to her daughters. She now says they do more in the garden than she does, and they post pictures of their green-thumb successes on social media. Each new burst of life — a yellow bloom transforming into a squash, for instance — thrills them. Said Estis, “I come home from work and they say. ‘Mom, Mom, look at this!’” – Star Tribune (Minneapolis) /TNS