

Kath's Kergoric Christmas

Well, the festive season is approaching and like everyone else, we are making our preparations, albeit in our own rather unique fashion. The rest of the British community might be heading back to the UK, (or if they are sensible ; somewhere warm and sunny) but we will not be part of the mass exodus. Our English friends express horror at our solitary existence before filling their cars with festive French goodies and heading for the ferry terminal. "Can we bring you anything back?" they enquire smugly. Well certainly not a hideous head cold like last year, we reply only half joking.

As our comrade's head for the M25, influenza and my personal favourite - the winter vomiting bug, we quietly make our plans for the coming holiday. Our loved ones have already been provided for. Gifts have been winging their way via a combination of cyber-space and the Royal Mail. I know people pull faces when they hear that I use a certain well criticised online shopping organisation but frankly, I don't care. My Christmas shopping experience consists of a comfy sofa, a nice mug of tea and a few clicks of a mouse and more importantly; no shops crammed with people, desperately searching for a Furby, whilst Cliff Richard drones in the background. Plus, I did my Christmas shopping at the beginning of November before the rush and the presents are nestling at the back of my daughters' wardrobe. The grand children's 'Santa list', which this year reads more like a set of terrorist demands, has been completed in record time. But that doesn't mean we can relax.

Our Christmas feast, carefully accumulated over many months and squirreled away in a freezer and store cupboard, will need supplementing from the garden,(the Brussels are doing particularly well). The nettle beer, our substitute for champagne and twice as explosive is resting in the cow shed for health and safety reasons. Materials for making Christmas crackers, recycled from toilet roll cardboard and last years' Christmas cards have been gathered. We'll have to shout bang, I refuse to pay for the snap thingies. All the ivy, holly, mistletoe etc, has been found. So now, it's just the animals to sort out.

Mrs Tickle, our large black and somewhat menacing pig, is very partial to a portion of Christmas pudding apparently, so I have been instructed to make two. The goats - Bramble, Dot and Ivy will be expecting a sack of apples, to be delivered with their feed on Christmas morning. The chickens will turn up at the kitchen door, like a group of really bad carol singers, and demand mince pies. Ed and Eddy, our neighbours horses usually stroll over for a few carrots and a pat, they have simple tastes. The dogs however, are a little more complex. Since the arrival of the puppy, the other two have had to share their toys and beds, so I am expected to sew new cushions for them all to recline on during the festivities. Each will receive a toy, wrapped and kept under the tree

'til Christmas morning as well a doggy selection box and a new blanket.

Christmas day will go something like this. Get up before dawn, prepare lunch. Take Christmas coffee to husband, who is still snoring. At dawn, walk dogs, return to sight of husband in the yard in wellingtons and a Onesie. Feed pig, whilst husband sings 'Away in a manger' and pig grunts in admiration. Let out chickens. Give goats their apples. Goats show their appreciation. Husband retires to shower off hoof prints. Phone sister with seasons' greetings. Skype children. Cannot be heard over the sound of infant screaming. Grandchildren hauled in front of the computer, express gratitude then spend five minutes hitting each other. Daughter looks with envy at our roaring fire and rustic tranquillity. Dogs open their presents. Open our presents. Put on lunch, eat chocolate, watch 'Best Christmas telly moments ever.' Open nettle beer. Commence feasting. Relax in front of log fire and cheesy film. Feed pig remains of feast; husband attempts to pull a Christmas cracker with pig. Pig eats it. Return to fire with a mug of mulled wine and plate of sandwiches. Watch whatever war or disaster movie has been served up for the festive season. Husband walks dogs and sneaks gingerbread to pig. Christmas - done.

A couple of weeks later friends will return home, cars loaded up with cough syrup and Lemsip, with tales of adoring grandchildren and ghastly in-laws. Pityingly, they will enquire what sort of Christmas we had. "Quiet was it?" they'll ask. They'll do this via the telephone because we will have imposed a period of quarantine, obviously.