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Relationships

OUT THERE

How to cope with life in the emotional jungle

Hoping to put the pasta behind me



CIARA FERGUSON

I'M FAT. Just eight months married and I'm fat. I was warned about this first-year phenomenon. That wouldn't happen to me. I thought. I like nice clothes too much. (And to think, back then, my Italian identity card still stated "nubile".) Yet here I am with a mysterious few extra kilos already. But it's not marriage that did it — it's Italy. I've been away too long and have been busy reacquainting myself with my senses. Oh, the tastes...

Tighten your belts while I run a few past you. In the morning, first thing, a *caffè latte* and a warm flaky pastry filled with golden, sweetened rice; mid-morning, a melt-in-the-mouth soft almond biscotti; lunch, perhaps fresh egg-pasta filled with ricotta and spinach, or linguine with creamy white ragu; pizza slices so crispy thin you can slide a whole one into your mouth before you can say boo; multi-flavoured gelato made with fresh fruit. Not to sound cheesy but... soft buffalo mozzarella, pecorino with honey, melting taleggio over buttered asparagus and nutty parmigiano. Oh, and amazing olive oil like an elixir of liquid gold... with everything. And that's before my daily habit — a crooked slab of cremino handmade praline. Mmmmm.

It seems now that I am married. I'm just a gal who can't say no. But it's gone too far. As of yesterday, all that is in the pasta, you might say.

Today is streamlined. I'm not going to give up the tasty delights in favour of flavoured gum, but, instead, I've taken to the city walls. Twice a day for an hour I walk and find that *la dolce vita* can appear in more than one guise. It's springtime and meaty Italians are out to play in skin-tight jogging gear stretching those legs like wild horses (wouldn't drag you). Sweet things indeed.

Taking a pot shot at incorrect attire



ELEANOR GOGGIN

I SUPPOSE because I was reared in the city, I never got involved in the whole huntin' an' shootin' scene. In fact, my knowledge of same is abysmal. One of my social gaffes of many years ago springs to mind. I was staying in a rural retreat in Galway, and the owners asked myself and a friend if we would like to go clay-pigeon shooting.

I displayed my ignorance by making it quite clear that I thought clay pigeons were birds, and had to suffer the mirth of my friend for the rest of the weekend. He continued to mutter things like clothes horse, kitten heels, hot dogs, zebra crossing, monkey puzzle — and would then go into peals of laughter.

I had chosen to forget all of that until I went to Ballynatray Estate in Youghal the other day for a spot of said same clay-pigeon shooting and a wonderful lunch. Of course, as usual, I didn't wear the correct clothes and it became quickly apparent that my linen jacket would not suffice. Enter the chivalrous owner, Henry Gwyn Jones, with his corduroy coat.

So, now I had wellies, a cap, protective glasses, yellow sound-protectors sticking out of my ears and a man's coat. Not the most beguiling sight.

Other females managed to look quite fetching in pink pashminas and the like. Will I ever get it right? Tony, my very patient shooting instructor, told me that because I had played tennis, I should be good at shooting. Not so. Annie Oakley I ain't. I hit a mere one clay or pigeon, or whatever the correct terminology is. The girl next to me hit three. I can be very competitive and if Tony hadn't been controlling my every move, I might have turned the gun on her. Wild-looking woman in strange attire goes mad in Ballynatray...

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Dates need to hit right snooze button



ANNE MARIE SCANLON

SOME dating websites are very big on matching people using compatibility. What are your political views? Do you want children? What are your feelings on pina colodas and downpours? The theory goes that if you tick all the appropriate boxes and have that vital chemical spark, then, bada-bing, you're set for life (or the next couple of months, at least).

Unfortunately, the place where your compatibility is tested the most is in bed. I'm not talking about intimate relations, but sharing a bed and sleeping together. That's where it all starts to fall apart, no matter how much you both like downing sweet alcoholic beverages in bad weather.

Snooring can, and will, ruin your life. Ditto insomnia, which I deal with by switching on the light and reading — an act some people find as offensive as clubbing baby seals to death. I can get up to go to the loo in the wee small hours on automatic pilot without disturbing my sleep. But, apparently, it can, and does, disturb the sleep of others. All of this can be overcome with eye masks and ear plugs, but there is no defence against the ultimate deal-breaker — the snooze button.

The world is divided into two types of people — snoozers and non-snoozers, and the twain should never ever share a bed. At best, this scenario will end badly. At worst there will be bloodshed.

I am a snoozer. I can spend an hour hitting the snooze button (even though the alarm becomes increasingly loud and irate every time I do), before eventually stumbling out of bed. A non-snoozer finds this both baffling and abhorrent behaviour. While I fully understand the objections, this lady is not for turning — unless it's over to hit the snooze button again.