



The fussy eater

Ariel Leve

I always assume there will be nothing I can eat if I go out. That's when I fall back on almonds and bananas

There are things in life we do not choose but that we come to accept. Being a fussy eater, for instance, presents itself with a multitude of challenges. You have to adjust to the probability you will alienate people: dining companions, chefs, restaurant staff, relatives – the list is endless. You need to be willing to suffer the consequences of your convictions: resentful glares, dismissive snorting and the occasional nod of sympathy. It's a mission.

Most important though, you need to always assume the worst will happen: that there will be nothing you can eat. So you must be prepared for every eventuality. Because of this, I always carry a bag of almonds in my purse.

Almonds are the ideal emergency food. Odourless, compact, they don't melt and can be eaten discreetly while pretending to yawn. My second go-to food is a banana. Easy to find at any airport or petrol station, it doesn't require hand-washing beforehand, the only mild irritant is the leftover peel which, in a car or on a plane when the seatbelt sign is on and it can't be disposed of, feels like a punishment.



Being trapped holding a brown banana skin for more than five minutes is depressing. However, not as depressing as people who carry plastic bags of raw carrots. If you don't have a five-year-old child travelling with you, there is no reason to have sliced carrot sticks or miniature cheese in your purse.

The one place on the planet where I am not worried about what I will eat is Italy. Who knew it was a place where a fussy eater can thrive? The cheeses, the artichokes, the fish, the tomatoes, the olive oil; I've decided I could live on caponata for the rest of my life.

Recently, I came as close as I think I will ever get to my perfect meal. I was on the terrace of the Grand Hotel Timeo in Taormina, Sicily, the restaurant that overlooks Mount Etna

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and the Calabrian coast. Along with the wine list were several options for freshly squeezed juices. These did not arrive in a plastic cup with a straw, but in an elegant crystal glass. As I snacked on the freshest olives I've ever had, I had what was undeniably a proper drink called: My Garden. This mix of fresh tomato, parsley, cucumber, celery and carrots is the closest thing to a garden I'll ever have. And only Sicilian tomatoes can elevate it from a watery tomato juice to a delicious gazpacho.

Waiters are required by law in Sicily to recite the menu like it's an opera. "Burrata di bufala Ragusana con pomodori di Pachino," I loved that everything was so specific. The mozzarella was from Ragusa with Sicilian cherry tomatoes – but when he began reciting the pastas, I had to cut him off: "I don't eat pasta." He looked heartbroken. I explained it's because I can't eat wheat and his expression brightened. They have wheat-free pasta! I couldn't have been more delighted. Even though I ordered fish.

In between there was an appetiser with a Sicilian delicacy, bottarga. The waiter described it as the raw pouch of the tuna. Wait, not raw. Roe. The roe pouch of the tuna is cured and dried with sea salt and served on top of caramelised onions. Naturally, I was hesitant to try it but I went for it.

Everything that was served was so fresh and so tasty, there was not one thing to adjust. The only problem was there was nothing to complain about. It put me a little on edge. **OFM**
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Waitrose



What is it? Some people are addicted to Waitrose, and this app ensures that they're always carrying the brand (iTunes, free).

What's in it? Recipes from the Waitrose magazine, including a few from Delia and Heston, wine recommendations to accompany a meal, a conversion calculator, cooking time reckoner and guides to the various cuts of meat and types of fish available at their counters.

Why do I need it? If you're despairing at the idea of your third beef stir-fry that week, it could point you to the aisles which might help diversify your diet.

Does it work in Asda? Well, our iPhone didn't burst into flames when we dropped in. In fact, there was a transgressive thrill to ignoring Delia's demands to buy Waitrose crème fraîche. Take that ya cheating frump, how many numbskull Norwich midfielders are you going to buy with that, eh?

Calm down Actually, you could say it's a quality app, competitively priced.

THE PIE CHART

The month in food, at a glance

Most expensive UK restaurants in terms of cost per minute

Based on average cost of dinner for two over varying table times

