

More than what it says on the tin

I was shopping in my favourite local store Lidl when I spied some rather delicious looking blackcurrant cheesecakes. Three of them in a pack cost just over one pound so I thought why not. My wife and I had one each but we found them to put it politely a little bit difficult to digest.

I decided to look on the label, I'm not talking about the nutrition information but talking about the ingredients which consisted of the following, and I have to wear that this is a short list compared with some other lists I have seen printed in minute type.

49% cheesecake (51% full fat soft cheese)

water

inulin

tapioca starch

sugar

palm kernel oil

emulsifiers

Mono and DiGlycerides of Fatty Acids

Stabiliser

carbomoxmethyl cellulose

Wheat fibre

Acidity regulator:Lactic acid

30% blackcurrant topping

Modified maize starch

Acidity regular – acetic acid

Flavouring

Colour – anthocyanins

Biscuit base:

What flour, sugar, palm oil, invert sugar syrup, Demarara sugar, Whey powder

Raising agent – sodium carbonates

I ask myself, are all these ingredients absolutely necessary? My bread consists of flour, yeast, salt, butter, water. It is lovely. I don't want to make a fake taste or preserve its life or save a few pennies or make it superficially more attractive.

And off to see two people who want their gardens cleared. The first lady is going to sell her house, sounds a bit distant on the phone but actually warmed up when she met me, speaks mysteriously about a bonfire of personal papers that must happen resulting from the passing away of her husband, had two dogs that were supposed to be friendly but I found a bit intimidating. She wants the front garden changed to make a favourable first impression on visitors.

The second person was an eccentric lady who was a hoarder. I have seen worse but not much worse. There was a little path to walk through the living room which was otherwise cluttered with papers and objects. She has two sons, both serving in the Army. One is married and was told that he is moving from Scotland to somewhere in Europe leaving his wife behind in a desolate place where there's only houses and sea. She tells us that the Army doesn't care about people.

The garden is such a mess that I can hardly get into it. She says she would do the work yourself but the spark plug on her Mountfield petrol mower has broken otherwise she would do it herself. I feel that is impossible but that's what she wants to believe. She thinks it will take a couple of days to clear the back garden. The question is as she says, 'how long will it take and how much will it cost?'

I find gardening fascinating because you get a temporary look into people's lives. No two people's life are ever the same, although they may appear to be at first glance.

The weather this weekend is going to be pretty horrible, what

with wind and rain. I was going to take my son to a local folk and blues Festival, but I don't think there's much point in paying 30 quid a head when you're mainly sheltering from the rain. We may go to the movies, but we could as well sit at home and read and watch TV.

I have had a bad experience with my stomach where if I ingest any alcohol or have any sweet material particularly artificial sweeteners, I can keep no food down. It's a real bore but I have to stick to vegetables, fish, soup, bread, biscuits, tea and fruit. I think I can just about manage. Gone are the days when I could eat anything and not suffer.