

ODD COUPLES

by

Ian Alexander

Cheese and pineapple (served sumptuously on, well actually, a stick!). Gammon and pineapple (still the height of fine dining in some parts – always preceded by Prawn Cocktail, and followed by Black Forest Gateaux; fancy, foreign food if you ask me, but itself an odd Germanic Franco coupling.) Well broccoli and pineapple then. Why not? Who decides what foodstuffs sit together?

Nouvelle Cuisine. ‘Small portions at extortionate prices’ is the literal translation from the French. Look it up if you like. I once had a steak – really good – that came with six, count them, six chips, presented in a Jenga style tower arrangement.

Who really wants to eat a pate of partridge and pigeon served on a coulis of crushed kiwi – the latter doubtless drizzled onto the former? By the way, if Eskimos have 21 words for snow then did you know the English are the same when it comes to drizzle? Light drizzle is driffle, and you really can look that one up!

These strange pairings are not just confined to food. Take drink. Cider and blackcurrant. Who came up with that? Lager and lime, even, though this one takes twice as many to get up to the magic ‘five a day’ fruit intake.

Similar bizarre partnerships happen everywhere. A pub conversation I was a part of, in West London, near to the Isleworth HQ of Sky TV, went down the route of inventing odd sports we would like to see. That’s how pub conversations go, or at least the ones I am involved in. My personal favourite was Underwater Show Jumping, clearly more entertaining than the land based original. I don’t know about you, but I would pay good money to watch horses in giant snorkels and flippers.

Lo and behold, and this might be coincidence (yeah, right!), Sky had a programme aired weekly, and fronted – in every sense of the word – by the estimable Helen Chamberlain. It was voiced by the bloke who did the ‘Top Bombing!’ adverts featuring Peter Kay, for John Smith’ Bitter.

I think it was called something like ‘Real Sport’ – a bit like ‘Real Tennis’, odder sibling of the ‘Lawn’ version. It included such events as the Under Hurdles Race, where contestants ran around a conventional athletics track ducking under rather than jumping over the hurdles. They even had ‘World Records’!

So, any two random things can go together. Phones that take Photos. Bring on a camera that makes calls.

Odd coupling, indeed!