



Leftovers and Hand-me-downs

Economizing does not mean accepting second best

An early TV series *Upstairs Downstairs* portrayed the lives of an upper-class English family and their servants. When eventually hard times came, even to them, the lady of the house did her best to uphold former standards, economizing where she could. At the dinner table one evening, she dished up a meal which was different to the usual. The head of the family quite liked it and he asked what it was. "Cottage Pie," replied his wife; then she made the mistake of adding: "It's made from leftovers." Hearing this, her husband declared adamantly that there was no way he could eat leftovers!

Although it sounds pompous and ridiculous, some people are like that. Understandably, for those who are relatively well off, they may not consider using whatever was left over from one meal to use as part of another – they'd simply bin it. For the other half, they can't afford to throw away good food; and they don't need to. Healthy, tasty dishes can be made from a few vegies and some cooked meat that wasn't touched before, merely consigned to the fridge. I do it frequently, not because we are on Poor Street, but I don't like waste; and thinking of how best to utilize the odds and ends of previous meals, I quite often create an entirely new recipe; and if it tastes okay, it goes on the website. A couple of days ago I pulled out some diced pork from the freezer and braised it along with some vegies in a sauce I'd strained off from a Panang curry that was a bit too liquid. It turned out great served with white rice. In fact, Recipe12 – Encore Pie is about making a new meal from yesterday's leftovers.

No-one is averse to buying a second-hand car; and people pay good money for pre-owned goods, especially those considered to be antiques. These are often purchased as an investment with a view to selling on at a later date when they have appreciated in value. It isn't a problem if someone else has sat in a particular chair; and it's a bonus if that someone was historically famous. As for ordinary furniture, we are still using a bedroom suite bought second-hand over forty years ago; and it will be good for a few more yet.

When it comes to items of clothing, many are reluctant to wear something that has been on another person's back. Is it down to pride, disgust, or what? When I was at art school, quite a few of the students bought their clothes from the opportunity shop, as did I. So it was second-hand, so what? For the ones finding it hard to make ends meet it was cheaper than new gear, and it looked okay; yet, for a couple of divorced ladies who could easily afford new designer clothes, they went out of their way to buy Op Shop stuff, believing there was a certain kudos in making the statement, false or not, that their public images were those of "struggling" artists.

Kids can be really fussy about what they wear. They tend to be influenced by their peers;

and if Sally has a pair of designer label sneakers, they want them too. I recall an incident with our young granddaughter. She was complaining that her runners were tight and hurt her feet, so she wanted a new pair. I suspected discomfort wasn't the case and she was merely hoping for a more fashionable replacement. Her mother suggested they'd sort it out later and she should wear an old pair in the meantime. Immediately after her daughter had gone to school, she popped the runners in the washing machine. As it happened, the original box they had come in was still in the bottom of the wardrobe; so, once the runners were dry, in the box they went. This was presented to her daughter on her return from school. "Oh, Wow!" she said. "Thanks Mum." She tried them on, walked around with pride; and when asked how they felt, she replied: "Fine, they're great." In effect, she was quite happy to wear pre-worn shoes, despite being in ignorance of the fact that it was her own feet that had already been in them.

One last anecdote... Many years ago I attended a posh dinner – formal wear obligatory. I was there in my second-hand tuxedo chatting to a bunch of musician-friends of my father's while watching the new arrivals. On the arm of her accompanying partner, a lady flounced in wearing what looked to be a white flowing Roman-style dress. No doubt it was new and had cost a small fortune; and she obviously thought she was the Queen of Sheba. A few minutes later, another lady entered wearing the exact same dress. You can imagine the venomous looks exchanged. Soon, however, they were focused not on each other but a third lady wearing – yes, you've guessed it: the by-now infamous and not-so-exclusive gown. By the time we were eventually sitting down for dinner, there were no less than five extremely peeved ladies-in-white glaring daggers at each other. Perhaps if four of them had swallowed their pride and maybe worn last year's dress; or ducked into an Op Shop for someone else's designer hand-me-down; then all of them might have enjoyed the evening far better. As for me in my second-hand tux, I had a ball. And, thanks to five white-robed show-pony ladies, it was definitely a night to be remembered.

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