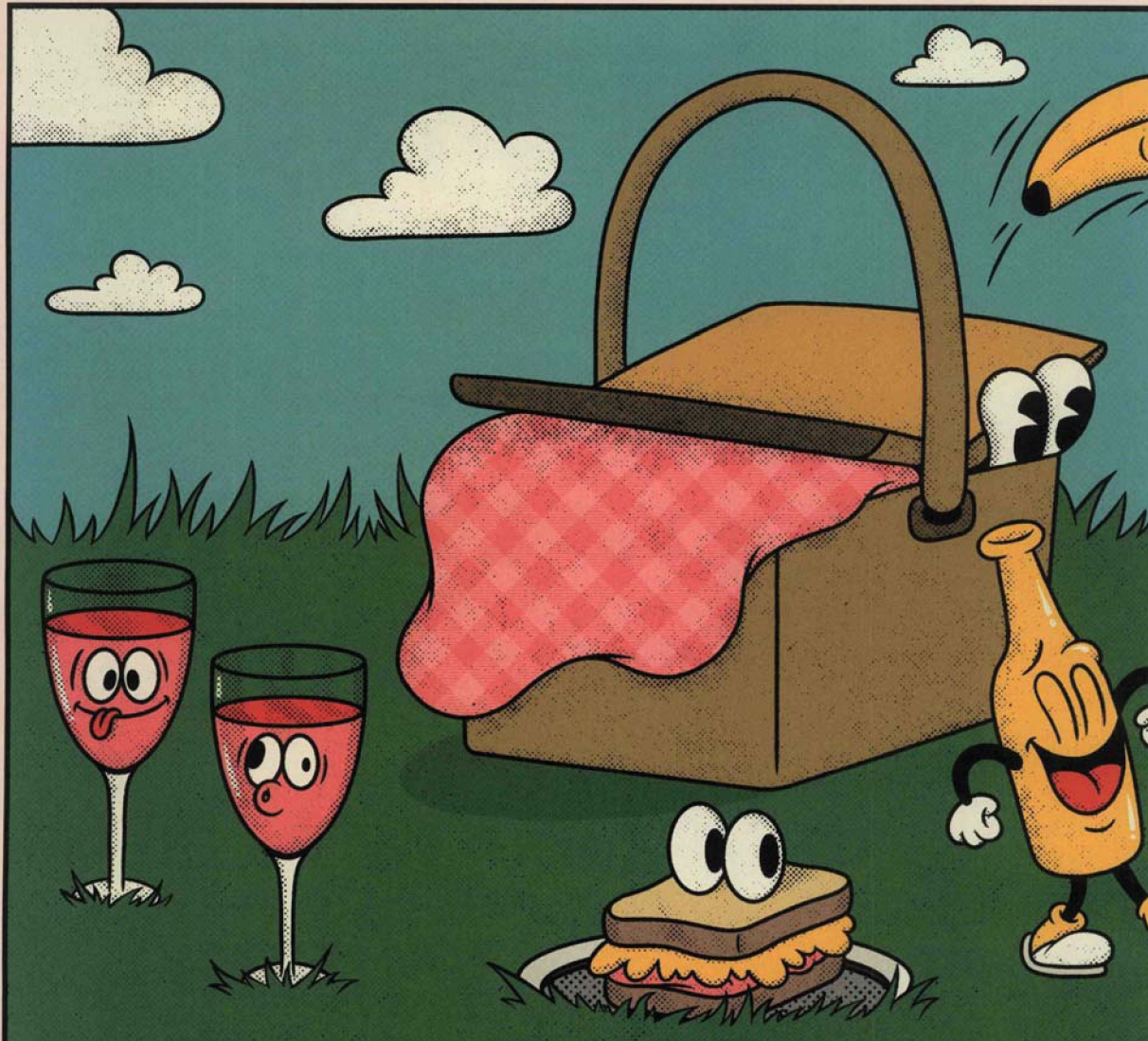


120

RECLAIM!

THE GREAT BRITISH PICNIC

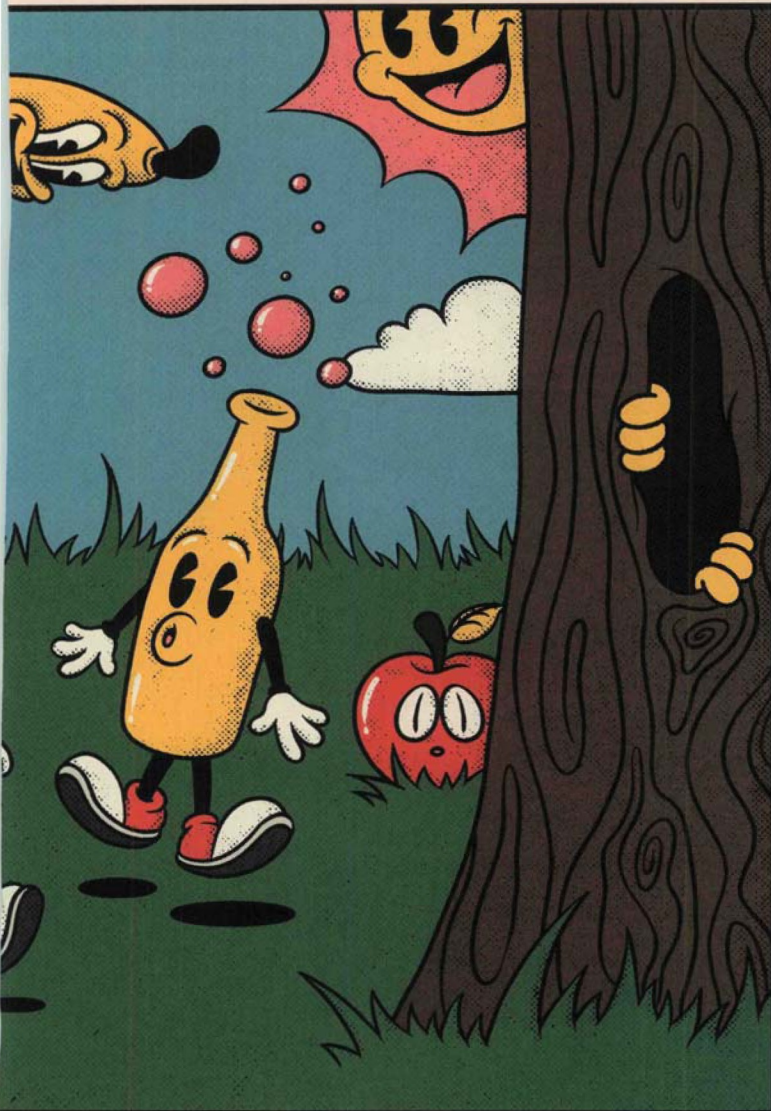


When simply going outside is scary, the idea of *eating* outside becomes a chilling ordeal. But it needn't be: in fact, lunch al fresco is one of the best ways to stop and smell the roses, both figuratively and literally. The word "picnic" has a bit of an ick about it, but it needn't. Loads of little bits of delicious food — some cocooned in shortcrust

or swimming in mayonnaise — plus a few cold beers, maybe a flask of something stronger... all splayed out on a rug, in the sun-dappled shade of a tree. Bask, Caligula.

The picnic's hype-man-in-chief is Max Halley, founder of Max's Sandwich shop in north London and author of *Max's Picnic Book*, a new guide to

getting the most out of a meal without walls. (We also put his "Ham, Egg 'n' Chips" sarnie on the cover of this very magazine last year.) He thinks we've turned our back on the power of the picnic and it needs reclaiming from the clutches of the gingham brigade. We agree, which is why we asked him to give us his guide to picnic supremacy.



1. BE PREPARED

A picnic can be as spontaneous as you are, and given the UK's meteorological indecisiveness, one should be ready to dine at a moment's notice. "Replace all the rubbish you never use in your car's glove compartment with a picnic kitbag," says Halley, "it comes in useful all the time." Halley packs sauces, seasoning, plastic plates, a Swiss army knife and "napkins galore".

2. DO IT PROPERLY

Halley's emergency kit bag also features "proper" cutlery, mini Duralex glasses and plates that won't wilt under the duress of a cherry tomato. And don't be a snob: "A charity shop is the errant picnicker's closest friend," he says. "They have cutlery, the occasional thermos, old glasses... even Champagne tastes crap in a plastic cup."

3. YOU HAVE TO THINK BEYOND THE SANDWICH

Just because you're outside, lunch needn't be formulaic. If it can be wrapped, stoppered or Tupperware'd, it's picnic-able. Consider filling a flask with hot beef consommé and tortellini, suggests Halley, or even last night's leftover curry. "Lunch in that lay-by will never have been so good!"

4. BUT KNOW THAT THE SANDWICH IS KING

Halley's current pick is an all-day-breakfast "shooter". Cut the top off and hollow out a loaf of bread, slather the interior with condiments and fill it with cooked sausage, bacon and eggs, before replacing the "lid". Wrap the loaf in foil and let it compress under some form of weight overnight. "In the morning, you can unwrap it, slice it like a cake and go and get drunk in the park with a piece wrapped up in your pocket!" he says. Happy picnicking. CT

Max's Picnic Book by Max Halley and Ben Benton is out now (Hardie Grant; £17)