



# The Dangers of Home-Sickness.

By Sal Avalon

We were living in Manila, in one of the walled villages where the well-to-do middle and upper classes live.

My wife was away, and as it was the weekend, and, as we liked our privacy, our staff had the weekend off. It was just me and the dog in the house, and we were fending for ourselves.

It was soon going to be time for lunch, and it suddenly occurred to me to have a go at making a Toad in the Hole. This is one of those dishes that form part of a Briton's cultural foundation. If you don't know what it is – fear not – no Toads or Frogs are involved. It is simply pre-fried sausages submerged in a Yorkshire Pudding batter and baked until the batter is risen and cooked.

Sausages are a problem in the Philippines. Our local deli had German sausages – the white ones you have to boil – and all the supermarkets had nasty pink frankfurters. Neither of these cut it as a cooked sausage whether it is fried for breakfast, barbecued beside the pool or roasted alongside the turkey at Christmas. So we had no sausages.

The trouble was, I'd thought of it now. I've always fancied myself as a bit of a cook so the mad crazy idea came to me in a flash. Make the sausages from scratch!

"What do you reckon?" I asked the dog. I looked at her. She clearly approved, her ears as pricked as a Spaniel's can be pricked, and tail wagging madly. "You're on", I said.

So off we went to the kitchen – me salivating at the prospect, and the dog salivating because good things tended to happen when I went to the kitchen generally. Perhaps a raw egg might get dropped. You never know. It's happened before. Have you ever noticed how dogs live in a perpetual state of optimism?

"Right", I thought, "British sausage is basically pork and breadcrumbs and seasoning, and we've got all that, so here goes". I got the lean pork out of the fridge, and some bacon (at which the dog started paying very close attention), and an egg.

I minced up the pork and finely chopped some onion and the bacon. The onion went into the frying pan with the bacon, very low, and cooked until the onions were just transparent. I went to the freezer and got out the little plastic bag of home-made breadcrumbs I'd seen there earlier, and went to the garden to pick some thyme and oregano. I chopped all this up, and then mixed the now-cool bacon and onion mixture, minced pork and breadcrumbs and herbs. A bit of seasoning and then I mixed some beaten egg into the mixture to bind it together. This was all looking very professional. "Cordon Bleu sausages", I said, talking to myself, the dog shamelessly eavesdropping, wagging her tail. "And hand-made. These are going to be great". The dog was nearly beside herself by now. Culinary telepaths, dogs.

I formed the mixture into several stocky torpedo shapes, brushed them lightly with our finest Spanish olive oil, and then into a hot oven to roast.

20 minutes later, a look through the oven door revealed that my home-made sausages were looking good. So good in fact, that as time was pressing, I decided to eat them without further ado. Both I and the dog were hungry. So a quick heat-up of a can of Baked Beans (I said Cordon Bleu, did I not?), and we were ready for the feast.

I took the baking tin of sausages and the bowl of baked beans outside, the dog trotting alongside, looking keen. I went back to get knife, fork and plate. One has to maintain standards.

I cut into the first sausage. Perfect texture, just done inside, not dry at all. Lifted it to my mouth and took a slow, deliberate, savouring bite; and made the appalling discovery that the bag of breadcrumbs in the freezer was nothing of the kind, but instead shredded dessicated coconut.

I was trying to eat pork macaroons.

The dog wouldn't touch them either.

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