

Contra Al Fresco

Phil Mellows

The sun's come out. I know what's going to happen now. People, normal, sane temperate people, are going to suggest we eat outdoors. Let's go down to the beach, they'll say. We could have a picnic . . . or a barbecue! Yes, a barbecue on the beach!

Now, I do like a barbecue, but I can't help feeling they'd be better indoors. And as for the beach! Whoever it was designed beaches didn't design them with comfort in mind. Brighton, as you know, has pebbles instead of sand. And pebbles are hard. They wouldn't have it any other way. So they hurt when you sit on them. True, you get used to the pain after a bit but this is purely numbness. Can you feel anything at all below the waist when you get up? No. This is your bottom's way of telling you not to sit on stones.

I've seen people spreading out towels to recline on. This is the inverse of the Princess and the Pea fable. Somehow they think a single layer of material is going to protect them. Did they also believe that public information film that suggested hiding under a school desk will shield you from a nuclear blast?

But what about deckchairs, you ask? You're not thinking this through, are you? Let's assume you're able to properly erect your deckchair. A large assumption for me, but we'll let it go. You've sat down. Which requires a certain leap of faith, not to mention a certain leap of bottom. And are you sitting comfortably? No, you are not. You are listing precariously towards Kemp Town or Shoreham and shifting your weight to reach for a beer is going to hurl you straight back onto the stones. Deckchairs are for decks. The clue is in the name. They are not designed for stones any more than your bottom is.

And while you smile through all this because, after all, the sun has come out, I shall be sunk into a nice comfy chair in the womb-like gloom of the pub. Think about it.