

cuisine.

Don't mess with perfection

JAM drops were the first thing I actually remember cooking. It used to be one of my favourite things to do with my mum when I was barely tall enough to look over the kitchen table.

The best part about making jam drops was when mum would let me climb onto a kitchen chair and sit on my knees, which was a big no-no, and poke little holes in the tops of the soft, golden dough. My fingers were far too small though, so I used a spoon with a really deep scoop that I received as a gift when I was christened. It was the perfect size for giving the jam a little home.

Over the years I have seen some horrid things done to jam drops.

I remember one occasion in high school food technology class when a recipe for jam drops called for the addition of custard powder. Before this occasion, I had never seen custard powder, which is something I am now kind of



Anastasia Vlastaras

proud of. When I asked what it was when I was 13 though, I was laughed at by more than one classmate.

The custard powder ended up giving the little, defenceless biscuit these horrible red flecks and a slightly metallic taste but I assume it was to add texture and a creamy flavour. Being the kind of person that doesn't see the point in messing with perfection, I didn't make that recipe ever again.

When I was making these biscuits with my mum, from an ancient recipe card that had tattered corners and had gone yellow with age, we would always use raspberry jam in half of the biscuits and fruits of the forest in the other half. For some reason, we never strayed away from those flavours.



Old-fashioned jam drops

Ingredients

- 125g butter, softened
- 100g caster sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 200g self-raising flour
- 115g (1/3 cup) strawberry or raspberry jam

Method

Pre-heat your oven to 180°C and line two baking trays with baking paper.

Using an electric mixer, beat the butter, sugar and vanilla extract until very light and creamy. Add the egg and mix until

well combined.

Proceed to sift flour into the creamed butter mixture and fold everything together until you have a soft but useable dough. If you find it's sticky, add some flour a little at a time until you reach the correct consistency.

Using floured hands shape a teaspoonful of dough into a ball and place on a baking tray a few centimetres apart. Using your floured index finger pierce the centre of each ball to make a well. Spoon half a teaspoon of jam into each biscuit.

Bake in the oven for 15 minutes or until the jam drops are nice and golden (shouldn't be more than 15 mins).

wine.



■ Stefano Lubiana (Tasmania) Pinot Noir 2008, \$50. It was just the smallest morsel of duck but Ms L still insisted on a pinot. Went just as well with the roo and the chook. 9/10

Going off about online



PEOPLE worry the internet is killing retail – rich people like Gerry Harvey. Then they realise the internet isn't so bad and actually has advantages.

But they still don't get it and frankly most things in shops shouldn't be there, while many things on the net should be in shops.

You don't need a shopfront to sell computers for instance. No-one needs some pimply-faced, nerdy youth saying you need better graphics, because you don't.

The image quality of one cartoon hoodlum shooting another or stealing a car is irrelevant and the quality of most porn is so poor better graphics won't help.

So 97.3% of the population don't need better graphics, and they don't need a salesperson, sorry, customer relationship officer, to sell them a washing machine either. All whitegoods look the same, come in the same two colours and do the same job.

Ditto cars, most of which look like washing machines nowadays anyway.

However where the commercial world really needs to take a good hard look at itself, whatever that entails, is the service sector, notably the insurance industry.

You can spend days filling in online forms only to find your request cannot be completed because: A. You didn't finish the form quickly enough; B. You missed one question (which you cannot find); C. They don't offer that type of

insurance; or D. Your graphics aren't good enough.

Furthermore, insurance is the most complex and convoluted thing anyone will ever buy and it is impossible to read all the fine print that says you are not actually insured. So no-one does.

There should be insurance shops stacked with people who used to work at Harvey Norman, telling us to feel better about not being insured, and pay them anyway.

But there's not. Meanwhile, there are shopping centres the size of Tasmania filled with stuff that shouldn't be there.

But you try getting some insurance.

Try reading the fine print on these instead:



Mount Eyre Warrumbungle Shiraz 2008, \$25. Boasting rare grapes from Coonabarabran, I am unsure whether the exotic, unexpected flavours are terroir or oak but, whichever, this is a strikingly different and enticing shiraz. 8.8/10.



Willow Creek Chardonnay 2009, \$40. Fair bit going on here, lots of oak, lots of creaminess and lots of nuttiness, perfect for around here. 8.7/10.



Voyager Estate Shiraz 2009, \$38. With a name like Voyager you'd think this was all about the journey, my least favourite word after absolutely, but it's not. It's all about wine, and good wine at that. 8.8/10.



Dindima Orange Chardonnay 2006, \$24. This is the same age as Grange upon release, although somewhat cheaper. Indeed you can get two cases of this for the same price as the venerable Penfolds 'bragship'. Tough decision. Another creamy, nutty 8.8/10.



Yarrowood Tall Tales Cabernet Sauvignon 2006, \$18. How many times have you heard "Lemme tell ya a story", and wished you'd had a bottle handy? This would improve any story 50%. 8.5/10.