

THE PERILS OF CLICK AND COLLECT

By David Jones

One of our more fascinating experiences before Christmas, and probably for the foreseeable future, has been our venture into that uncharted territory otherwise known as click and collect.

Sometimes, over lockdown, it has been an experience almost as exciting as a walk to the bottom of the garden.

Still residing in our freezer, thanks a click and collect order which went pear-shaped, is a 22lb frozen turkey. If you've ever tried to shoulder charge a monster turkey into a freezer compartment clearly too small for it, you'll probably have guessed by now that it's every bit as challenging as it sounds.

"Feeds up to 26," it said on the label. Which sounded like a fabulous feast on the looming festive menu. Except that there were only two of us. The other Christmas family guests pulled out, for obvious reasons. Covid-19 has a lot to answer for, though an over-large frozen turkey is not exactly one of the virus' more serious ramifications.

To be more precise, click and collect is to blame. Pre-pandemic, Mr and Mrs J had never used click and collect before, but with the virus on the rampage on Sheppey, and with idiots just arrived from Mars still not wearing face masks in some local supermarkets, we decided to give the aisles a miss about a month before the festivities started.

All our hopes to avoid slow starvation rested with click and collect, because more slots were available than with delivery. As it turned out, speculation over what would, or would not, turn up in our click and collect containers, proved time and again to be one of the week's highlights, apart from the occasional garden stroll or tidying up the garage.

Sometimes, the excitement was almost too much to bear – two bags of Maris Piper potatoes instead of the one we ordered, two jars of pickled onions instead of one, a jar of apple sauce – how that got there we don't know- and, even more mysteriously, a stray pack of pork and black pudding sausages.

The piece de resistance, however, came with the aforementioned turkey. "Let's order a small to medium," said my wife.

For those of you who have never enjoyed the heady excitement of supermarket click and collect, substitute items will be provided if the exact product you ordered is not available.

Our small to medium turkey was not available, so an extra large bird was substituted at the same price. I could have rejected the turkey, of course, but who in their right mind is going to turn down a bargain. I almost had a hernia lifting it into the boot.

Driving home, a frightening thought suddenly struck me. This looks way too big for our freezer. Heart in mouth, I emptied the largest of the freezer compartments and attempted to ram in the 22lb monster. It wouldn't go. Panic set in. We can't eat this giant ourselves. Have a I got the nerve to ask a neighbour to lovingly care for it until further notice?

No, I decided. So, summoning up all my strength – such as it is – I placed the turkey at the freezer compartment opening, held it steady with one hand and shoulder charged it. It wouldn't budge. So, I tried again.

Somehow, accompanied by ominous creaking sounds from the compartment's sides, it went in. And there it has stayed.

It will remain there until, we decided, until we have the stamina to tackle a giant roast turkey, followed by a month or so of every permutation of turkey meals our imaginations can dream up, from cold meat and salad, to turkey and ham pie to turkey curry, until the day comes that we are through sick of any mention of turkey.

Or, we can wait until that happy day arrives and we can host a roast turkey dinner for 26 guests, or 13 guests with very large appetites.

The way things are going, that should be sometime around 2023. But I hope no