



THIS IS WHAT 89 LOOKS LIKE

JOSEPHINE LOEWENSTEIN lives in Richmond, South-West London. She is widowed and has three children and two teenage grandchildren.

WRITING THERAPY

I WAS happily married for 57 years before my husband, Rupert, passed away in 2014. Since then, I have found it therapeutic to write about our life together. He was financial adviser to The Rolling Stones for 35 years, so it was pretty eventful!

STRICT WELLNESS ROUTINE

IT'S IMPORTANT to follow a daily routine when you live alone. Every morning, I have breakfast at 8.30am: two tablespoons of granola with yoghurt, or toast with marmalade. Then, I take the dog for an hour's walk. I also do ten minutes of exercises. Lunch is my main meal. Then I have a siesta from 2-3.30pm. I only watch TV after 5pm.

DAILY PIANO PRACTICE

EVERY day, I practise the piano for two hours — despite suffering from sight problems. It is pure escapism, a form of mindfulness. When I was younger, I studied at the Sadler's Wells Ballet School, performing in Covent Garden in 1946, before giving it up when I got married at 26.

BUDGET FACE CREAM

I'VE been using Nivea All Purpose Creme (£1.69, boots.com), every morning and night for as long as I can remember. It feels very nice and sinks in quickly, helping the skin stay moist, without being too thick or greasy. I only wear make-up on special occasions: Max Factor Crème Puff Powder (£7.99) and Dior Rouge Satin Lipstick in a bright pink (£30.50).

AGE-GAP FRIENDSHIPS

I STILL have a lot of friends, most of whom are in their 50s — the same age as my daughter. They help to keep me young. We often go on holiday, and we recently visited friends in Ireland. I'm also a member of two music societies, including The Chopin Society. And I love to give and host concerts at my house. I also organise about three dinner parties a year.

■ *WIND In My Hair*, by Josephine Loewenstein, is out now (£20, waterstones.com).

BY FLORENCE SCORDOULIS

DO YOU look good for your age? Reveal your secrets to inspire@daily.com

Can you go green at Christmas without becoming a Grinch?

EVER since the Daily Mail launched its brilliant attack on single-use plastic, I have been on a mission to cut back.

Our family of five now saves around 190kg of plastic waste each year (enough to fill an entire bathroom), but I know I am going to have to turn up the volume in the next few weeks if I'm going to get on top of the sparkling, crackling, unrecyclable Christmas excess.

Thankfully, this Christmas looks set to be one of the most eco-friendly ever, with supermarkets and department stores offering plastic-free crackers, cards, wrapping and packaging, and big name eco-voices such as Emma Thompson publicly swearing to forgo presents altogether in a bid to minimise plastic waste and help protect the environment.

My family (husband Jonathan and three children aged 17, 19 and 22) happily exist without plastic bottles, bags and takeaway cups. They accept the concentrated cleaning products, dog walk litter picks, paper-wrapped loo rolls, block soap and electric car. But I just can't face subjecting them to nut roast on Christmas Day, or squandering the entire festive budget on a charitable goat.

Yes, I'm committed to minimising my plastic use, but in the face of relentless climate change gloom, it has not always been easy to find an acceptable middle path which allows me to hang on to any semblance of style.

So when I was asked to check out one of the new Zero Waste Christmas Markets that have cropped up across the UK this year, I was keen to find out whether I'd be sucked into a sea of organic cotton and rope-work artefacts, or whether I really could do all my Christmas shopping, plastic-free, in one place.

MEL FISHER, the event's organiser, assures me that plastic-free gifts don't have to be brown, scentless, worthy and dull. 'Independent brands are creating amazing products out of things we would have considered rubbish, such as bottles, tyres and tents. You wouldn't know it, because they're so beautiful.'

The London event is held in a warehouse in edgy Shoreditch. At first glance, it looks like any other craft fair, with stallholders gathered behind tables. There's a distinct 'hippy' vibe, and it is clear the quest to reduce plastic inevitably puts you into a purchasing category that encompasses organic veganism, whether you like it or not.

After resisting the charms of the mulled wine bar (discounted if you bring your own cup, and refusing to be distracted by the smell of marinated tofu and



Zero hero: Louise with a bag made from an awning

LOUISE ATKINSON takes her bag for life and heads to one of the first 'zero waste' festive markets

mung beans, I am drawn to one stall, Greener Habits (greenerhabits.com), selling cotton make-up remover pads in a pretty pink drawstring pouch.

This is great gift for my daughter (I secretly hope it might help cure her of her wet wipe addiction), which I buy, alongside a delicious-smelling solid moisturiser in what looks like a shoe polish tin and a lavender-scented bar that melts into body lotion on the skin (Almighty Balm, £5.50, and Solid Lotion, £7, from zerowastepathshop.com). That's her Christmas stocking sorted.

The joy of a market is being able to touch, sniff and squeeze, but I find I've been stroking beautifully soft, brightly coloured wedges of cloth for quite some time before I realise they are reusable panty liners.

At another stall, I swoon at the delicious smell of body wash sold in aluminium cans (£12,

ksoni.co). It's a lovely idea, and the team behind the brand assure me that if you recycle the can at home, it will be back on the shelf again within four to six weeks. However, you can't reuse the lid once opened. It's a still a work in progress.

I buy a box of conditioning hair mask cubes (£12, boobalou.co.uk) for my mother-in-law; a 25ml glass jar of Fit Pit Man deodorant cream (£4, thegreenwoman.co.uk) for my son, hoping it is suitably manly to lure him away from his Lynx spray, and a knitted bag to keep all the ends of soap together (£7.99, cottonlily.co.uk) for my husband, who is always complaining about bits of soap left in the shower.

Although I am already a convert to solid shampoo, I am persuaded to try a solid hair conditioner (£15.95, kind2.me), which, I'm told, will last as long as two bottles of ordinary conditioner. Just as I'm getting into my

stride, I spot a product which stops me in my tracks: compostable condoms, which, I'm informed, can be popped in the food composting bin (£7.75 for ten, ecco-verde.co.uk).

When it comes to bigger gifts, I can choose between a belt or wallet made by Elvis & Kresse from decommissioned fire-hoses (£41 and £75, uk.buymeonce.com), or a silver faux-leather backpack made from pineapples, but at £350 (luxtralondon.com), it's more of a vegan fashion statement than a plastic-free one. More cost-effective are brightly coloured bags made by Florence Piccinini from off-cuts from her grandparents awning business (£16, awn.uk).

Gift wrapping is a big focus in the plastic-free world, because any glitter, shine or remnants of tape renders wrapping paper unrecyclable, and there are plenty of stalls selling fabric Christmas wrapping. Some are enchanting, such as squares of pretty organic cotton (pictured below left, from £7.50, fabrap.co), which could also be used as napkins. But I struggle to understand who would pay £12 for a sheet of gift wrap (albeit made from recycled plastic bottles), which crackles like paper (Wrag Wrap, uk.buymeonce.com).

SHOPPERS can break off to attend workshops, and I learn how to make reusable Christmas crackers from fabric off-cuts and toilet roll tubes. It's a fun process, which, mercifully, doesn't require much artistic skill, but I'm exhausted after creating just one. You'd need considerable commitment and dedication to create a full set, but, handily, you can buy six for £30 from everyorigin.com.

There's no doubt that an event like this is a clever window shop for plastic alternatives that haven't yet made it to the mainstream stores.

But, be honest: how many people in your life would accept a zero-waste gift without wondering whether you might be making some kind of judgment on their planet-destroying habits?

Yes, small gifts are a brilliant way to introduce loved ones to clever new products, but you'll find a huge selection at online stores such as andkeep.com and plasticfreedom.co.uk without having to go out to a market.

I decide to ethically offset some of my cynicism by buying a Guppyfriend washing bag (£25, buymeonce.com), which gathers the microfibre particles shed by man-made clothes during a wash.

It's not the sort of present I'd give to someone else (and I'd think it distinctly odd if it were given to me), but maybe the microplastics it rescues from the ocean will, in part, help to make up for the gaudy excess of tinsel on my Christmas tree.

■ zerowastegoods.com

Picture: KI PRICE