



CHATTERBOX

By Alice Griffin

At the moment everywhere we turn all we seem to hear about is the dreaded credit crunch. People are wondering whether to buy presents or not this Christmas, everyone's worried about the future and it occurred to me, living as I do in a very traditional and old-fashioned village, that life may well start to revert back. It's a bit like fashion. When I was young I would say to my mum "you don't know anything about fashion!" to which she would reply: "I was wearing trousers like that thirty years ago!" Fashions go in cycles and it seems to me that our way of life might too.

There is more interest than ever in self-sufficiency and with celebs such as Liz Hurley and the uber-cool ex-Blur-guitarist, Alex James, buying farms in the country it seems it's becoming acceptable for us all to hanker after our own slice of old-fashioned country living. Liz's primary drive was the desire for her son to grow up away from car fumes (although I'm suspecting he instigated it knowing there would be less chance of the paparazzi sliding around in mud to get a shot of him in one of those god-awful outfits she puts him in) not to mention an opportunity to get an organic range of chicken breasts out in the public domain now her own are getting a bit tiresome. Mr James? Well he decided enough was enough with drugs and women so gave up rock 'n' roll to make the best cheese for his own roll in the Cotswold countryside. But what does this turn to the country mean for the likes of you, me and the credit crunch?

Well, like I said, I think people are beginning to look to the past because if all of us were to start even a small kitchen garden, we could shave at least a little money of the weekly food bill. The king of self-sufficiency himself, John Seymour, says we can all become pretty self sufficient with just an acre of land and here in my village there are plenty of locals harvesting from far less than that and they still have enough to chuck the odd pumpkin and aubergine our way. OK, so I don't personally want to start feeding up pigs for slaughter, but I am drawn to the idea of more fresh air and being able to cut back on shopping bills and I've already started my own herb garden. Don't laugh, I know it's a small step in the great scheme of things, but it's a start.

If you think it all sounds a bit boring and earthy, panic not! Although Liz says she can be found on her farm "in wellies, covered in mud" I think she's lying. I bet she's there cleaning out her chickens in welly stilettos, lip gloss and a few safety pins to cover her modesty and well, if she can make farming fashionable – I'm sure as hell willing to give it a bloody good go!

Do you spend hours scrutinising your fine lines, furrows and smile lines in the mirror every day wondering how to keep them at bay? Look out for my next column where I have a moan about my aging face.

Tana Ramsey – Family Cook book

This lady is becoming a household name in her own right and let's face it; with her husband recently outed again as a philanthropic fool, there's probably more chance of us girls buying her books than his at the moment! I am the proud owner of the Family Cookbook and I can tell you, there are some crackers in there so if you know anyone who likes quick and easy recipe ideas for the family (and doughnuts) then I recommend this.

It's split into sections covering breakfasts, lunch bites, tea-time

treats, puddings etc which makes it nice and easy to flick through for ideas to suit. It's very much aimed at a mum's lifestyle and makes you feel like getting all homely. So now we're getting snow here why not batten down the hatches and enjoy some good old family stew and dumplings – made with home-grown veggies of course!

Tana Ramsay's Family Kitchen
Published by Harper Collins
£12.99 available on
Amazon.co.uk