

Festive: Anne McEnroe

Forty-four years of perfect Christmas puddings – then disaster with a capital ‘D’!

On the appointed day finally the ball of flour sultanas, raisins, currants, eggs and brandy was wrapped in its housing of calico to bubble away on the stove for the next six hours. Except it didn't! The stove had turned itself off when the water splashed over, and the waterlogged pudding was sitting in the pot looking very sad. A not very relaxing afternoon then ensued, with me leaping up every ten minutes to make sure it was still simmering.

The six hours were finally coming to an end but at the last check the stove had stopped again. As it was only a short time to go, I put a tea towel around the pot to stop the splashes. I didn't realise that our stove was not the sort you could do that with until I was finally relaxing in front of the telly and a pungent smell assaulted my nostrils. I looked in its direction and to my horror acrid black smoke was pouring out of the kitchen. Upon investigation, flames were leaping up to the ceiling. And the fire alarm was beeping furiously!

I managed to rouse hubby and we put out the fire. But the Nespresso machine had melted down completely, all over the stove-top, and the white cupboards were now an interesting charcoal shade. We prised the smelly melted mess off the stovetop and wiped down the tiles. Frank went back to bed in disgust but there was no way I could think about sleeping. I was so stressed. All I could think of was dollar bills flying out the window for a new kitchen.

Good old Sister Cataldus had always said ‘you can clean anything with some *Gumption* and a bit of elbow grease.’ And it was true! The cupboards were soon gleaming and looked better than new. The bottom of the kitchen cupboard was charred but not quite beyond recognition and was soon sanded and painted. The black part of the ceiling was suddenly white again under Frank's ministrations and the kitchen soon looked better than before. A strange bonus was a pretty lacy look at the junction of the ceiling and walls in the lounge room where the black smoke had settled on previously unseen cobwebs!

And you wouldn't credit it – miraculously the pudding was just fine! Roll on Christmas...