

THE RAILWAY EXPRESS #6

A SPECIAL WEEKLY NEWSLETTER TO HELP US STAY CONNECTED

AROUND THE HOUSE

Hello everyone. Life is still a long way from being normal but it feels great to be making some small steps in that direction with some restrictions eased this week and the announcement that schools will reopen in a few weeks' time. The ease in restrictions doesn't mean a great deal for Railway House as most of our programs take place indoors. However, our **Bike Riding Group** can resume, which is very exciting! They will be meeting at their usual time of 10.30am on Wednesdays, starting next week. Take care bike riders, especially if you haven't been on your bike for a while! We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday.



We have also had the idea of creating a **Walking Group** since groups of up to 10 people are permitted to meet outside. If you would like to join a walking group and meet up with people in your Railway House group, as well as others from different groups, please get in touch.

In other news, we will be offering a **FREE Kids' Fun & Fitness** session at 11am on Mondays. This will be conducted outside, with physical distancing rules adhered to. Numbers are limited to 10 - please call the office to book a spot.

On Monday this week we held our first "**market**"! Alison collected six boxes of beautiful fruits and vegetables from Senserrick Greengrocers in Rathdowne Street, generously



donated by a local North Carlton resident. Staples such as potatoes, onions and tomatoes sat alongside pineapples, quinces and the tiniest, sweetest apples we had ever seen! Please come along next Monday from 11am -1pm if you would like to make use of this service.

Please BYO bag.



Staff continue to work some of the time at the office and it is wonderful seeing people dropping by for this and that when we are there. This week we saw and heard from a few different people, including: **Grace**, who called to say hello; **Sue**, who called to chat about Barry Dickins' classes; a few people to pick up bread; **Mary**, to drop off food donations; a few people to use the computers; **Stefan**, to inquire about volunteering; local residents **Sara** and **Jess** to inquire about the new garden; **Richard** and **Di**, to go on a bike ride; and it was lovely to see people at our fresh food market on Monday. Being **Neighbourhood House Week** this week, we asked some of them to share with us their thoughts about Railway House. More on this later in the newsletter.



A reminder that our first all-ages **Colouring Competition** is underway! The image is attached to last week's newsletter, and we have hard copies at the office available for anyone who needs one. We've received our first entry, (left) and it's a cracker! Deadline has been extended to close of business, **Thursday 21st**.

Lastly, the staff are excited to report that Railway House was re-carpeted a few weeks ago. The old carpet was quite tired and stained, so now we have a fresh new look! A bonus to seeing this take place was getting a glimpse of the beautiful old floorboards in the main room.

Please send us your stories about what you have been up to during lockdown, good recipes, recommendations for books and movies, and anything else that could be included in this newsletter. Your contributions are important!

Stay well and we look forward to seeing more of you over the coming weeks.

Alison, Lisa C, Lisa G and Jeff



YOUR LOCKDOWN NEWS: WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

This week we hear from the lovely **Teresa Miller**, from the Knitting group.

“During this lockdown period I’ve started (and undone and restarted - oops) a scarf to replace those eaten by moths last spring; I’ve sorted out some long-forgotten fabrics and begun a patchwork quilt - this is proceeding really well though because it’s hand stitched it’s going to be a bit slow.



Reading fills spaces as well as researching/Googling recipes for the sometimes-unusual ingredients in my veggie box. This veggie box is delivered by a little family group who ran a nearby cafe, now closed of course, but they’ve enterprisingly started up a grocery business.

My own little family keep in touch (at a distance) and bring any other things I might need - prescriptions, occasional bottle of wine, etc. and my grandson Ari has taught me to use FaceTime. Mustn’t forget lovely Dr. Norman Swan on the ABC for reasonable daily coronavirus updates.



If I get bored or distracted I spend time watching the action on my neighbours’ renovations. The Knitting Group’s emails keep us in touch and inspired - such a great idea! And my spinach seeds have sprouted - now I just need to keep the local possum away from them!

Particularly welcome is news of the start of work on the Community Garden - especially to those people who’ve laboured so long, in fact for years, to get this project off the ground.”

Don’t forget to send in photos and news about how you have been keeping busy during lockdown.



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This week we meet **Flip Case**, our Choir leader. Flip quickly became a firm favourite at Railway House when she joined us a few years ago; we love the energy and warmth she brings to our singing group!

“I have been leading the choir at Railway House on Wednesday mornings since 2017 though the group has been going for much longer. We are a small but enthusiastic bunch, while we sing together, developing skills of singing in harmony, we also share many laughs and I have many times been told how uplifting the session is! It’s the magic of the energy in the group and the alchemy of voices joining, as well as the welcome and community that the house fosters.

I have been addicted to singing since childhood and was lucky to learn instruments (violin and viola), study at University High which had a great music program and later MUIE (previously MCAE or MSC). Most of my working life has been around education, be it school performances with environmental theatre group Vox Bandicoot, and for the last 20 + years running community choirs. I truly believe in music being accessible to everyone, and encourage all to find their voice or other creative outlet (especially at times like these).



While it’s not possible to meet as we normally would, I have been so heartened by the group’s enthusiasm and willingness to try the Zoom method, even though it presents many challenges, not least that we need to mute while we sing as the timing’s all out! Alison has been fabulous setting up the meetings AND playing her ukulele! We’ve all been helping each other with the tech and ways to make it fun and fulfilling. It’ll never be the same as meeting in person and I can’t wait for that time, but each week I feel we’re getting better! Hoping others are finding new, creative ways to connect and do things that bring joy and expression.”



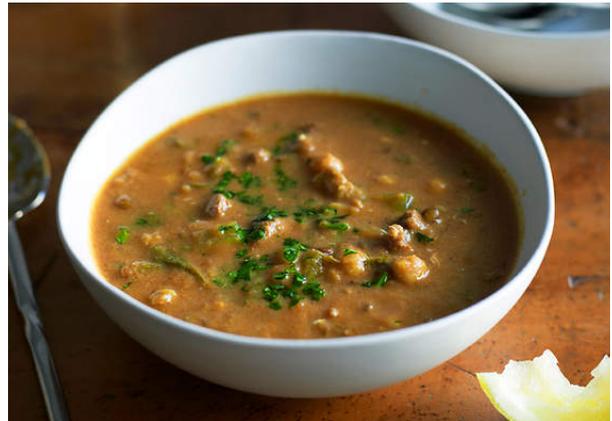
LET'S TALK FOOD

This week **Julia** from our Around the Table cooking class has shared a great recipe from Greg Malouf's cookbook *Arabesque*. This soup can be vegetarian / vegan if you use vegetable stock. Known as "Harira", this soup is a Moroccan favourite, particularly popular during Ramadan, when it is served after a day of fasting.

MOROCCAN CHICKPEA SOUP

INGREDIENTS

- 60ml olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 100g green/brown lentils, washed
- 100g chick peas, soaked overnight (you could use canned)
- 2.5 litres chicken or vegetable stock
- 400 g tinned crushed tomatoes
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ground ginger
- 1 pinch saffron, lightly roasted and crushed
- 60ml sherry (don't worry if you don't have any, soup still delicious)
- juice and zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tbsp parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp coriander, chopped
- salt and pepper to season



METHOD

- Heat oil in a large saucepan and gently sweat onions and garlic until they soften.
- Add lentils, drained chickpeas and 2 L of the stock.
- Simmer for around 1 hour until lentils and chickpeas are soft and starting to disintegrate.
- Blend with a stick blender to crush lentils and chickpeas but keep some texture. It should not be a completely smooth puree. (You could use a potato masher or the side of a wooden spoon.)
- Add tomatoes, cinnamon, ginger and saffron.
- Adjust the consistency with additional stock or water.
- Taste and season with salt and pepper and finish off with the sherry (if using), lemon juice and zest, parsley and coriander.

VARIATIONS

- You could serve this topped with some prawns sautéed in garlic, crumbled feta, or some additional whole chickpeas.



NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE WEEK



Neighbourhood House Week, happening across Australia on 8 -15 May 2020, is a nationwide initiative to celebrate the role of neighbourhood houses and centres in the community.

There are over 1,000 Neighbourhood Houses spread across Australia – that’s more than the number of McDonalds restaurants – and they provide safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces for people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with community, form friendships, and become involved in community projects, programs and groups.

At Railway House, we’ve spent the week asking our visitors to tell us what Railway House means to them. This has been a bit challenging with our programs not running as usual, but between our drop-ins, emails and phone calls we’ve been able to gather some great testimonials.

"The way I am welcomed here makes this a very special place, like a real home." *Anonymous*

"It's really great here, thanks so much for being so hospitable." *Anthony*

"Keep being as kind as you are to everyone you see" *John*

"Railway House has been my outlet. At the time I'd just lost my husband when I started coming here. It was somewhere to come and put my time into, and I just got pleasure out of it. It just filled my life." *Kath*



ROSIE



"C'mon up to the House!" by Carolyn Ilsley

I've always loved that song as sung by Tom Waits in his gorgeous gravelly voice. Sung also with gusto and enjoyment at our house...Railway House, by the men's choir established by Brian Stratfield ("Strat") some years ago. Strat also established our (then) women's choir which became known in the Bronwen era as the Rambling Roses.

The men's choir took off in a big way as The Homebrew Veranda Singers, while the women became seasoned performers at the annual Town Hall.

"Music from the Heart" neighbourhood gatherings which were incredibly enjoyable and participated in 2 CDs that were recorded. Earlier leaders included Pippa (remember "Blue Moon" everybody?) Bronwen and our own Shirley standing in. Now we have the talented and irrepressible Flip who has encouraged us, made us laugh and boosted our endorphins.

An event that was really great was when the two groups united in a grand singalong at the Railway Hotel for Strat's "retirement" farewell.

And I haven't even mentioned other terrific groups I've been part of.... the incredible knitters with Sandra Hatzis, the chair yoga with Simone, Barry Dickins' writing group. And the bus trips to fabulous places driven by our wonderful Martyn.

This is what Railway House has meant to me.....enjoyment and pleasure and togetherness with marvellous people.

So, "C'mon up to the House!"

Click [here](#) to view videos of Richard, Di and Lydia sharing what Railway House means to them!





LOOK AFTER YOURSELF – MEDITATION



What is Meditation?

Meditation is both a skill and an experience — a formal exercise to cultivate awareness and compassion. By sitting with the mind, we're training it to be more open and at ease, and we consequently discover greater calm, clarity, contentment, and compassion. In doing so, we increasingly learn to have a direct experience of the present moment.

Why Meditate?

The more we can stay in the present — not bogged down in thoughts or reactivity — the more we are able to take life in stride. Whether we're feeling challenged by circumstances or frazzled by tech, meditation can provide a reset for the mind through a graduated path of learning in both awareness and compassion.

Choosing to spend time quietly with your thought processes and breath can be as beneficial as choosing to go for a 5-minute walk, jog or sprint. In fact, meditation has been called a push-up for the brain because of its ability to improve cognitive control and strengthen the brain's fibre connections.

How can I start?

Choosing to implement a 5-minute meditation into your daily routine is a great way to get started. You might even find that after incorporating 5 minutes per day, you'd want to slowly increase your practice time as the weeks, months and years go by. However, you will always know that when time constraints arise, 5 minutes is all you really need.

Why not follow these steps for a simple 5-minute meditation?

- **Find a relaxed, comfortable position.** Seated, lying down or even standing.
- **Notice and relax your body.** Relax any areas of tightness or tension. Just breathe.
- **Tune into your breath.** Feel the natural flow of breath—in, out.
- **Be kind to your wandering mind.** If your mind wanders, gently redirect your attention back to the breathing.
- **Stay here for five minutes or more.**
- **Check in before you check out.** After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here. Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.

Sources:

www.headspace.com

www.smilingmind.com.au (also a great app of free guided meditations)

www.mindful.org

LOCKDOWN LAUGHS



AND FINALLY...

The Railway House Facebook page was hacked at the beginning of the year, forcing us to create a new page from scratch. Sadly we've gone from nearly 500 followers, to about 60! If you are on social media, please follow our new page – and share with your friends and family. We want to get the word out there about the great things we do at Railway House.

Unfortunately, the old page is still up (Lisa is in a protracted exchange with Facebook about having it removed) but the new one is easily identified as the posts are very recent. Here is an image of what the new page looks like. Thanks for your support!

