

CHOICE



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cheese**
Nicest slices

**SAFETY
WHEELS**
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252
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- Espresso machines
- Kitchen knives
- Soda makers
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- Air fryers
- Fridges
- Ovens

Growing apart?

How to break up with your supermarket



Plus A discrimination explainer, home-made moisturiser & more

You are what you eat

Turns out, food is pretty important!

Aright fine. I'll admit it. I don't have the healthiest relationship with food. At literally any point in my life cycle you can get a solid read on my mental state, purely by observing what I'm shoving in my gob.

If I'm glugging down four litres of water a day and politely eating overnight oats for breakfast, things in my world are likely good. If I'm sinking three or four cans of Coke Zero a day and smashing halal snack packs for lunch, things are almost certainly suboptimal.

You can get a solid read on my mental state, purely by observing what I'm shoving in my gob

What came first? The stress or the snack pack? It's difficult to say but, either way, when I become more soft drink than man, it's usually a telltale sign that something's up.

It's wild how much food impacts our everyday lives. Some studies have shown that diets laden with refined sugars correlate with mood disorders and, in some cases, exacerbate them. Conversely some diets, including the much-vaunted "Mediterranean diet", can be associated with lower risk of depression.

When I was a kid there was a sign above our school cafeteria that said, "you are what you eat". I recall reflecting on that message, while consuming many a meat pie. I assumed that was a physical thing, but turns out it's an *everything* thing.

Food is important. And the fact there's so much contradictory information on what is and isn't healthy just complicates matters.

CHOICE rarely deep dives into diet culture, as we prefer to deal in cold hard facts. We played a large part in the introduction

of the Health Star System being implemented in supermarkets. It's far from perfect, but at the very least it's something that allows consumers to quickly evaluate the food they buy in supermarkets.

We're also quick to call out when food gets a little bit shonky. Like the Kiddylicious Strawberry Fruit Wriggles, which were essentially a sugar bomb dressed up as a healthy snack for children. Or Freedom Foods XO Crunch, which did its level best to game the



aforementioned health star rating system despite being 22% sugar. Shonky Awards for them!

This month we're not calling anyone out on that level (but stay tuned for the 2024 Shonkys issue next month). Instead, we're focused a little more on the devices that help you cook the food in your pantry, along with ways to make your household grocery budget stretch just a little further.

We're also focusing on cheese. Cheese slices to be precise. Can't forget about the cheese. We left no stone unturned in our quest to find the best cheese slice in the land. Head to page 25 to find out more.

With all that said, time to sink my first Coke Zero of the day! (I'm fine I promise!)

Mark Serrels
CHOICE Editorial Director
Email: mserrels@choice.com.au

CHOICE

CHOICE gives you the power to choose the best goods and services, and avoid the worst. Wherever possible, we pay full price for the products we test, so we remain 100% independent. We don't take advertising or freebies from industry. We're not a government body and our consumer publishing and advocacy is almost entirely funded by membership. Membership includes access to services such as CHOICE Help and the Voice Your Choice research program. Our product ratings are

based on lab tests, expert assessments and consumer surveys. We also research a wide range of consumer services, reveal the truth behind the facts and figures, and investigate their quality and claims.

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25







18



CONTENTS

45







- 4 Checkout**
News, views and sneak peeks
- 14 Ask the Experts**
- 16 Your Say**
- 18 Supermarket swap**
 How to break up with your supermarket
- 22 Fresh vs frozen vs tinned**
 The cheapest way to buy fruit and veg
- 25 The slice is right**
 Which cheddar cheese slice is the best?
- 29 Multitasking machines**
 Are appliances that do more than one job any good?
- 32 Fair play**
The ways that businesses aren't allowed to discriminate

- 34 Retirement bonus**
We explain the bonus that some super funds pay out
- 37 Crash course**
Everything you need to know about car insurance
- 72 Index**
- 76 Hard Word**

TESTS

- 42 Lazy lattes**
 Pros and cons of automatic espresso machines
- 45 Change is in the air (fryer)**
 The newest features, plus tips for buying the best
- 50 Microwaves**
 What to look for in this staple appliance

- 54 Kitchen centrepiece**
 Choosing a freestanding oven for your home
- 58 Fridge follies**
 The mistakes to avoid when shopping for a fridge
- 64 Catch the fizz**
 Should you buy a soda maker?
- 68 Best blades**
 Our guide to buying the right kitchen knife

FRESH, FROZEN OR TINNED? P22



CHOICE magazine provides a selection of our top product reviews. We can't always include all the models we've tested, but you'll always find the products that scored the best. To view complete results for all our tests, go to choice.com.au, or call Customer Service on 1800 069 552 to add full online access to your membership package.

IMAGES: GETTY

The latest consumer news in brief
IN THIS ISSUE:



p6 TPG latest telco to scrap exclusive Google deals



p7 First Look: Ninja's new non-stick ceramic frypan



p8 ACCC takes on Meta over scam ads



p10 Court finds AGL overcharged customers on Centrepay

CHOICE welcomes improved flight rights

Australia's consumer protections for travellers have always been lacking and hard to enforce. But we truly experienced what this meant during the pandemic, with mass flight cancellations and delays, appalling customer service and a routine runaround to get a refund – or more likely the dreaded flight credit that was harder than Monopoly money to actually use.

Over the years, we've heard from thousands of consumers with travel horror stories – including having to drive across the state to make it to funerals and weddings on time due to cancelled and delayed flights. CHOICE has been campaigning for new protections for travellers for a long time, even giving Shonky Awards to the industry-run 'Airline Customer Advocate', which does little more than forward complaints to airlines, and Qantas – twice, for disappointing consumers again and again.

Now, the government has announced a new independent ombuds scheme to help consumers resolve complaints, along with clearer airline customer rights, including when you're entitled to a refund and compensation. The proposals are part of the government's long-awaited Aviation White Paper that will chart the course of travel protections for the years ahead.

This win wouldn't have been possible without the thousands of people who shared their stories, and the more than 31,000 people who signed our petition for stronger travel protections. These reforms are long overdue and CHOICE will continue to campaign for the strongest protections possible, as consultations on how it will all work begin. Thank you for making your voice heard (over the noise of another delayed flight passing overhead).

ANDY KELLY






3G stay of execution welcomed

Telco consumer advocates and the federal government have welcomed the decision from Telstra and Optus to delay the shutdown of their 3G networks. The companies were originally planning to turn off their services in late August, but have postponed the shutdown until 28 October.

In addition to devices that only use 3G, the shutdown will also affect 4G-enabled mobile phones that revert to the older technology when the user dials triple zero. Carol Bennett, CEO of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, says this makes the shutdown “a matter

of life and death”, and says the extension “gives us a final opportunity to reduce these risks and ensure Australians are ready for a post-3G communications landscape”.

Telstra and Optus are the only remaining providers of 3G coverage in Australia. The federal government estimates there are approximately 73,000 4G phones circulating in the country that switch to 3G when the user dials triple zero. Everyone is being urged to check if their phone will be affected, by texting ‘3’ to ‘3498’ or visiting 3gclosure.com.

LIAM KENNEDY

Even less competition among airlines

With the recent collapse of Bonza and the withdrawal by Rex of services between Australia’s capital cities, competition in the airline sector has dwindled even further.

With only two carriers – Qantas and Virgin – flying Australia’s busiest routes, airfares could go up and quality of service could go in the opposite direction. Though their market shares were small, the presence of Rex and Bonza drove down fares.

It’s an issue that’s on the ACCC’s radar.

“The concentrated nature of Australia’s domestic aviation industry reinforces the importance of the ongoing transparency and scrutiny we bring through our monitoring role,” says ACCC Commissioner Anna Brakey, adding that consumers “generally enjoy lower airfares where there is more competition on a route”.

The regulator’s August domestic airline competition report also

contains a bit of good news: the airline cancellation rate dipped below the long-term industry average for the first time since October 2020.

“The latest results demonstrate the aviation industry is capable of outperforming the long-term industry averages and this is something we

will continue to watch closely,” Brakey says.

Though Rex is in voluntary administration, the federal government says it will guarantee bookings to regional and remote areas during this process.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN



TPG latest telco to scrap exclusive Google deals

TPG has become the latest phone and internet service provider to promise it won't sign agreements with Google that make it the exclusive default search engine on TPG-supplied devices.

The court-enforceable undertaking to the ACCC comes after Telstra and Optus made similar promises to the competition regulator in July.

"We are pleased that all three mobile network operators in Australia have responded to the ACCC's competition concerns," says Commissioner Liza Carver. "This undertaking is another important step towards providing Australian consumers with more choice about the digital platforms and services they use, and to encourage more competition in these markets."

The ACCC found that TPG had made exclusive agreements with Google to pre-install Google's search service as the default on Android devices it provided to consumers. The competition watchdog previously uncovered similar agreements between the search giant and Telstra and Optus.

The ACCC is currently investigating Google's services in Australia and believes such deals could be bad for competition, noting that the company already has a 98% market share for search on mobile devices.

LIAM KENNEDY



New rules for telco outages

Major telco outages such as the November 2023 Optus meltdown have far-reaching consequences, affecting everything from banking to emergency services. And it's often at these times that the communication skills of the affected telecoms fall short.

Earlier this year the federal government directed the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) to come up with enforceable industry standards to improve how companies communicate with customers, particularly when their services stop working.

The Telecommunications (Customer Communications for Outages Industry Standards) Direction 2024 requires the ACMA

to make new rules to ensure telcos keep customers informed and updated through website updates, email alerts to customers, social media updates and radio and television news bulletins, rather than providing little more than unhelpful silence.

"The Optus outage shone a light on systems and processes in the telecommunications ecosystem that are in critical need of reform," says Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland.

"Telecommunications services are essential for participation in modern life, and ensuring that systems and processes are working to support people during stressful outages is fundamental," she says.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN

Ninja launches ceramic cookware

Fast becoming a household name in kitchen appliances, Ninja has now added a range of kitchenware to its offerings, and its latest release is ceramic cookware.

The Ninja Extended Life Premium Ceramic 6 Piece Cookware set comes with 20cm, 24cm and 28cm frypans, and 1.4L, 2.3L and 5.6L saucepans with lids. We've put the 24cm frypan to the test to see if it's a better option than other traditional non-stick pans we've tested.

The Ninja Extended Life Premium Ceramic Cookware claims to provide five years of non-stick performance thanks to its CeramicLock coating, and comes with a five-year warranty to back the claim. The cookware requires little to no oil or fat during cooking, is suitable for all cooktops and is oven-safe up to 285°C.

It has an aluminium core with a dual-bonded coating that helps to preserve the non-stick capabilities, and the handle is stainless steel. If you're looking to reduce your exposure to PTFE and related chemical coatings, this set is free from harmful chemicals, PFAS, PFOA, lead and cadmium. It's also dishwasher-safe, and Ninja claims you can use metal utensils with the set.

How does the cookware stack up in our lab tests?

Our kitchen experts assess the evenness of heating for frypans by cooking pancakes. The 24cm frypan performed very well in this test – the pancake was fairly evenly cooked and didn't stick to the pan.

For non-stick pans, we also fry an egg without adding any oil. An excellent result is if the egg slides right off the pan when it's tilted or shaken. The Ninja performed well for this test, with the egg needing just slight lifting to release it from the pan. Over time you may need to use a little oil to improve the non-stick capability. We also found the egg ran to the side of the pan, because the base of the pan concaves during heating.

If you're using an induction cooktop, you may find the outer edge of the base has reduced heating. This is because the magnetic area doesn't cover the entire base of the pan.

This frypan is easy to use and very lightweight, and although the stainless steel handle has no non-slip grip, it's still fairly comfortable to hold. Be mindful that the area of the handle close to the pan can get hot. It's easy to clean but the stainless steel base, rivets and handle may discolour over time.

It also gave impressive results in our durability test where we scrub the surface 10,000 times using a mechanical scrubbing arm, loaded with a Scotch-Brite scourer and with a 10kg weight applied. After 10,000 cycles there was no bare metal exposed and no visible scratch marks. The surface was dulled but this is still a very good result, and with proper care you can expect the cookware to last.

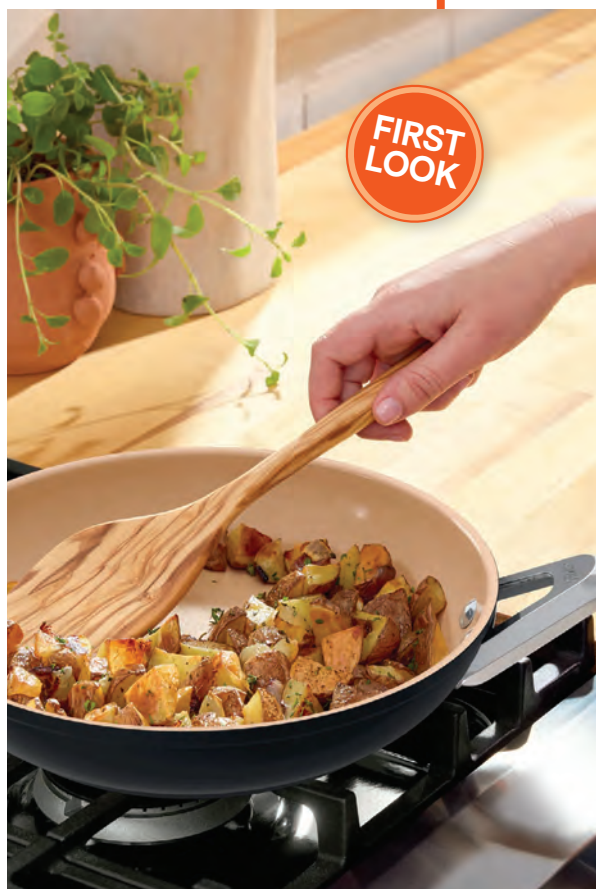
The Ninja Extended Life Premium Ceramic 24cm Frypan performs well, is easy to use and has a durable ceramic coating. While other ceramic-coated frypans we've tested have performed better

and have been recommended by CHOICE experts, this set might be worth considering if you're looking to make the move away from traditional non-stick for all your pots and pans. You can buy some of the individual pieces through Amazon if you want to give it a go before investing in the whole set.

REBECCA CIARAMIDARO

This frypan performs well, is easy to use and has a durable ceramic coating

FIRST LOOK



NINJA CERAMIC COOKWARE

PRICE \$400

(for the 6-piece cookware set)

CONTACT ninjakitchen.com.au



Banks continue to leave scam victims in the lurch

In April 2023, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) released a report on what the big four banks were doing to protect customers from scams, and what they did after customers were scammed. The answer in both cases was nothing much. The big banks (ANZ, CBA, NAB and Westpac) as a whole had put a stop to a mere 13% of scam payments over the review period, and had provided reimbursement to customers for the money stolen by scammers in a paltry 2–5% of cases.

A recently released ASIC report focusing on 15 smaller banks delivered much the same troubling news. In 96% of the cases where a scam occurred, customers suffered the losses. And, as with the big four, reimbursements were few and far between. Almost all the money lost to scams by customers of the 15 banks in 2022–23 (\$232 million in total) stayed with the scammers, which may explain why the scam industry has exploded in recent years. CHOICE senior campaigns and policy adviser Alex Söderlund says, “With banks stopping only a small percentage of scams and refusing to reimburse the vast majority of scam losses, it’s clear that they won’t step up unless they’re forced to by law.”

ANDY KOLLMORGEN



ACCC alleges more than half of Facebook crypto ads are scams

In a case against tech giant Meta, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has alleged that more than half of the cryptocurrency-related ads it reviewed on Facebook were scams or violated the company’s policies.

The ACCC has also alleged that since at least January 2018, “Meta has been aware that a significant proportion of cryptocurrency advertisements on the Facebook platform have used misleading or deceptive promotional practices”. Some of these ads also falsely used public figures, such as David Koch and Celeste Barber, to promote the scams. It’s clear that digital platforms, like Meta’s Facebook, need to do more to protect consumers and stop scam ads from reaching users. But if they were going to do it without the government forcing them to, they would have done it already.

In our recent submission to the Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society, CHOICE recommended the government require businesses like Meta to improve verification processes, prevent scam ads on their platforms and act within an hour to warn users after detecting a higher risk interaction with a scammer. Make your voice heard by signing the global statement on online scams: choice.com.au/stoponlinescams.

ALEX SÖDERLUND

Legislation to fight SMS scams passes parliament

The federal government will establish a new facility to combat text message scams, after legislation to establish an SMS sender ID registry passed Parliament. The registry is designed to make it harder for scammers to impersonate trusted brands and institutions by protecting the names and numbers they use to send text messages. Federal Communications Minister Michelle Rowland says the registry will be an “important tool in the fight against highly organised criminals” and will help consumers trust communications from legitimate organisations.

SMS remains the most common way scammers have contacted Australians so far this year. Scammers can alter the sender IDs of their messages to make it seem like they’re coming from established organisations, such as banks and government services. These messages can then appear in the same thread as legitimate messages from these institutions.

The registry will require telcos to check whether messages being sent under a particular brand name are coming from the associated registered sender, and block the message or include a warning when this isn’t the case.

LIAM KENNEDY



Majority of consumers back fair use of personal data by businesses

Consumers overwhelmingly believe that privacy laws need to be changed to protect people from data misuse and unfair treatment, according to new national research commissioned by CHOICE. More than three-quarters of people surveyed agreed that businesses should only use their personal data fairly. Additionally, 83% of consumers believe that small businesses should be required to follow the same rules as big businesses when it comes to using personal data, and 88% of people agree the privacy regulator should be able to fine businesses that misuse personal data.

This research comes on the heels of another major data breach, as it was recently revealed the personal and health records of almost 13 million Australians were exposed in a breach of MediSecure, a former prescription delivery service provider. Without comprehensive reform of the Privacy Act, it’s likely that consumers will continue to be vulnerable to invasions of their privacy. CHOICE is continuing to advocate for new obligations on businesses to only collect and use personal data in line with consumer expectations, and to remove exemptions in the Privacy Act for small businesses.

RAFI ALAM



Car park operator fined for misleading claims

When a carpark business offers a service called 'Secure-a-Spot', customers can be forgiven for thinking it means they'll get a guaranteed parking spot. But Secure Parking apparently didn't mean that literally. In August, the Federal Court slapped the business with \$10.95 million in penalties for making false or misleading claims in a case brought by the ACCC.

The company came clean during the case and admitted that when car parks reached capacity, customers with a Secure-a-Spot booking could arrive to find the space they had booked already had a car in it, which is never fun. More than 10 million Secure-a-Spot bookings were made during the five-year period that the service was advertised, meaning lots of motorists had this experience.

"Secure Parking did not provide customers with the service it advertised, and it denied customers the opportunity to make an informed decision about which parking service best suited their needs," says ACCC Commissioner Liza Carver. "This penalty sends a strong message to all businesses that making misleading claims to consumers about the nature of the services provided can attract substantial penalties."

ANDY KOLLMORGEN

Court finds AGL overcharged Centrepay customers

Energy retailer AGL and three of its subsidiaries breached energy retail rules by failing to notify and refund customers it overcharged through the Centrepay deductions program, according to a Federal Court finding.

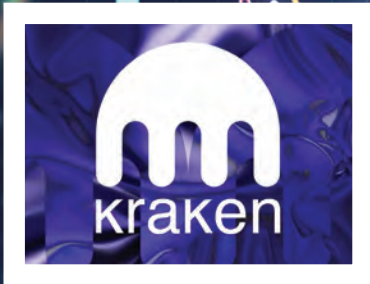
Centrepay is an automatic deduction program for welfare recipients, who can arrange for bills to come straight out of their welfare payments. The case, brought by the Australian Energy Regulator, found that almost 500 customers were overcharged from 2016 to 2021. The rules were breached over 16,000 individual times.

AER Chair Clare Savage says the regulator will continue to investigate and take enforcement action when consumer harms occur.

"We expect retailers to have the policies, systems, and procedures in place to give consumers their money back if they have been overcharged and to provide the protections they're entitled to under the National Energy Retail Rules," she says.

JARNI BLAKKARLY





Kraken crypto exchange failed to meet regulations

The Federal Court has found Bit Trade, the operator of the Kraken crypto exchange, failed to comply with design and distribution obligations when offering its trading product in Australia. From October 2021, the “margin extension” product was available to Australian customers without a target market determination that’s required by law. A target market determination is a legal document which describes the type of customers a product is appropriate for and restricts the distribution of the product to meet those markets. Each time the product was made available by Bit Trade without this document, it breached the Corporation Act.

“This is a significant outcome for ASIC involving a major global crypto firm. We initiated proceedings to send a message to the crypto industry that we will continue to scrutinise products to ensure they comply with regulatory obligations in order to protect consumers,” ASIC Deputy Chair Sarah Court says. ASIC will seek financial penalties against Bit Trade on a date to be set.

JARNI BLAKKARLY

IMAGES: GETTY

Victorian button battery sales spark consumer warning

Victoria’s consumer affairs agency has issued a rare urgent public warning about light-up shoe charms and accessories containing button batteries. Consumer Affairs Victoria Acting Director David Joyner says the items, designed to clip onto laces or into holes in shoes, are being sold at various pop-up stores in shopping centres across the state.

“Our officers have recently visited Chirnside Park, Northland and Melbourne Central shopping centres, seizing 80 of these products. We’re undertaking further inspections across Victoria,” he says.

Button batteries pose a serious health risk to children who may ingest them. They can burn through the oesophagus in just two hours, causing internal injuries, severe bleeding and death. Joyner says the light-up shoe charms “don’t have their batteries adequately secured, making them easily accessible, or lack the required warning information about the danger button batteries pose”.

JARNI BLAKKARLY

Button batteries pose a serious health risk to children who may ingest them





Consumer groups call for a stronger remote food security strategy

A coalition of financial counselling, community legal centres and consumer advocacy organisations has lodged a submission to the National Indigenous Australians Agency's (NIAA) consultation on the National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities. The coalition included CHOICE, Community Credit Legal Service Western Australia, Financial Counselling Australia, Financial Rights Legal Centre, The Indigenous Consumer Action Network and Mob Strong Debt Help.

Every Australian should be able to access food and groceries at fair and reasonable prices regardless of where they live, but many people in remote communities face significant challenges in accessing these items due

to their geographical location and the availability and affordability of food.

The joint submission welcomes the proposed strategy, but calls on the NIAA to strengthen its recommendations. It recommends consulting the community about price caps on essential food and grocery items and regulating informal credit schemes. It also suggests introducing a price-monitoring tool that records historical data that's accessible in real time; considering subsidies for freight across the country; and significantly raising the remote allowance payment. These initiatives will work to reduce grocery prices, improve accessibility and help close the gap for First Nations people living in remote communities.

BEA SHERWOOD

Can we count on super fund retirement calculators?

A key question people ask when preparing for life after work is how much income they can expect in retirement. Many super funds provide a retirement calculator on their website to help people answer this question, but a deep dive by Super Consumers Australia found serious problems with these tools.

More than three quarters (77%) of the calculators we surveyed recommend default retirement incomes that are either too high, meaning your super may run out long before your lifespan, or too low, meaning you may still have a substantial balance remaining at age 100.

Another issue with these calculators is that they don't provide useful guidance for people who rent or who are still paying a mortgage in retirement and will have higher housing costs. Most of the calculators (73%) didn't factor in whether you will still have a mortgage once you're retired and none included the additional income the government provides for renters.

Super Consumers Australia is calling on the government to give an independent body the job of developing reliable retirement calculators and other digital planning tools. Ideally, these tools would be part of a free, independent 'one-stop shop' to help all Australians plan for retirement.

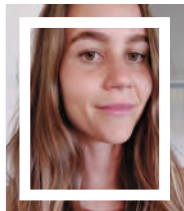
DANIEL HERBORN





RANTS AND RAVES

Home economy



I can't be the only one who's noticed that while things we really need (housing, food, energy) are getting more

expensive, the things we don't need at all are getting cheaper. Case in point: I could buy a completely new summer wardrobe from Kmart, Shein or Temu for less than my weekly grocery shop.

But when you can buy a brand-new toy, home decoration or piece of clothing and have it shipped to your house from China for less than five bucks, it's hard to ignore the feeling that someone, somewhere is paying the real price.

I don't have the solution to unethical global supply chains, but I have started to make some changes in my own lifestyle to bring back a connection with, and appreciation for, the products I consume. How?

I've started making things from scratch.

Now let me preface this by saying I am not a Crafty Person.

I'll never be that mum hunched over the sewing machine come book week. I've never dabbled in making my own jewellery or decorating cakes.

But what I have always been is a Stingy Person. So, while my non-crafty inner core revolts at the idea of gathering the materials and know-how to create something, my inner Scrooge can usually be convinced if I can make a strong economic case for it.

It's a small thing, but in a world where we've become disconnected from the products we consume, it feels like a win



It started with bread. Like many others, I started making my own sourdough during COVID, and the quiet joy of eating homemade loaves meant that I never stopped. I continued with exploring making food from scratch, enjoying the satisfaction it brings.

But lately I've taken a step into previously uncharted waters – skincare. As a woman in my 30s, frugality often goes out the window when faced with a fancy skincare product.

The latest one to snag my interest was an organic beef tallow moisturiser. I bought a tiny pot for an eye-watering sum and fell in love. When the time came to replenish said tiny pot, my miserly brain started to whirl. If the product was made out of beef tallow... wouldn't it be possible to recreate it at home for a fraction of the price?

You see, I had already started rendering my own beef tallow for use as a cooking oil. Pre-made jars

of tallow are expensive, but a kilo of beef fat from the butcher is usually just a few dollars. All you have to do to turn it into tallow is melt it down and sieve it. In fact, I remembered I already had a jar of homemade tallow just sitting in my fridge.

Heart pumping, I started googling recipes. I discovered I could just take my cooking tallow, melt it down and sieve it a couple of times to get rid of any beefy aromas, and then just mix in any essential oils or other skincare additions (I added honey and aloe vera from my garden). Voila – fancy face cream for a fiver.

I told a couple of friends I was doing it and they laughed, thinking it was typical Grace madness. But when I produced an absolutely giant jar of fragrant, rich, silky face cream, nobody was laughing, only asking me for some to take home.

Buying and rendering beef fat might not be for everyone, but if there's some other DIY task calling your name, this is your sign to answer the call. It's a small thing, but in a world where we've become disconnected from the products we consume, it feels like a win.

GRACE SMITH

ASK THE EXPERTS

Got a niggling question our team can help with?



Q I purchased the Swissvoice C50s about a year ago after seeing it was recommended by CHOICE as a phone for seniors. The battery has recently failed, but when I returned to the retailer to buy a replacement I was informed that they had no knowledge of how to buy a replacement battery.

A CHOICE mobile phone expert Denis Gallagher: Firstly, if the battery has failed after only a year or so, you may want to ask the retailer for a replacement by invoking your rights under Australian Consumer Law. You would reasonably expect the battery in a new phone to last a couple of years at least, even if there is a reduction in the battery life. If you decide you do want to buy a replacement battery, it is possible to do so. Guardian has recently taken on the local distribution of this mobile, and can send you a new battery for \$39 plus shipping.



Q I've been buying cheese slices for my kids' sandwiches for years, and I always assumed they were just

normal cheese cut into slices. But I've recently started checking the ingredients on some of the products I buy and I noticed a long list of ingredients that include things like emulsifiers and preservatives. What are the potential health impacts of these additives, and should I avoid cheese slices that contain them?

A CHOICE food and nutrition expert Shadia Djakovic: The product you have been buying is called processed cheese (and this should be written somewhere on the packaging). These products contain a number of additives to improve the taste, texture and longevity of the cheese.

We are lucky in Australia to have strict food regulations set by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). All food additives added to our food supply including emulsifiers and preservatives are regulated by FSANZ to ensure they are safe for consumption and are used in levels that don't pose a health risk. However, it's still important to understand their role and potential impacts on health.

Emulsifiers are added to processed cheese slices to help blend and keep the ingredients together. While most emulsifiers used in food products are considered safe and are approved by FSANZ,

ASK US

Email your question to asktheexperts@choice.com.au or write to Ask the Experts, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Rd, Marrickville, NSW 2204. You can also tap into the 'brains trust' at www.choice.community.

there are concerns that excessive consumption of some emulsifiers may negatively affect gut health. However, occasional consumption as part of a balanced diet is generally not a cause for concern.

Preservatives are used to extend the shelf life of cheese slices by preventing the growth of mould and bacteria. Common preservatives in cheese include sorbates (e.g. potassium sorbate) and citrates. Some consumers may prefer to avoid preservatives due to concerns about potential sensitivities, though these are relatively rare.

If you're concerned about these additives, you can always switch to buying cheese slices that aren't processed. These are usually simply cheddar cheese that has been sliced and packaged. Head to page 25 to read our review of unprocessed cheese slices and see which products were rated the highest by our expert taste testers.





QI'm looking to buy a stick vacuum was considering the Dyson V12 Detect Slim, but I'm a little confused. After checking

the Dyson website and online reviews I was of the understanding that the battery can last up to 60 minutes. However, according to the CHOICE review, the run time is only six minutes. How can this be so?

A CHOICE vacuum expert

Adrian Lini: We test all our vacuums on their maximum power settings with the brush head attachment on our testing carpet. We test the products at their maximum to see how they compare to one another and to give them the best chance to pick up dirt in our cleaning tests. Under these conditions, the Dyson V12 Detect Slim ran for six minutes. However, it's true that the battery could last much longer under different conditions, for example on automatic or lower power settings and on hard flooring, which requires less power from the battery.



IMAGES GETTY / DYSON

CHOICE Help

Whose fault is it anyway?

Member Phillip wrote to us after he was misled by a Google ad for "Apple noise-cancelling airpods (3rd Generation)".

He'd clicked on the link and purchased the product, but soon after realised that the airpods were not noise-cancelling, as the ad had suggested. Phillip sent us a screenshot of the Google ad, which described the product as "noise-cancelling".

As soon as he realised the airpods didn't match the description on the ad, Phillip called Qantas Marketplace to request a refund. Qantas Marketplace said it couldn't give a refund as it would not be reimbursed by Apple. Phillip then contacted Apple, who said it was a Qantas Marketplace issue.

As Phillip had already tried resolving the issue with both the retailer and the manufacturer with no success, we suggested he escalate the issue to NSW Fair Trading. We also suggested that he might like to contact the ACCC to let them know about this issue.

Phillip got in touch with Qantas Marketplace again to inform of his intention to escalate the matter. Qantas Marketplace responded by referencing clause 4.12. in its terms and conditions, which states:

"Product descriptions featured alongside Retail Rewards are based on information provided by the Seller. Qantas will take reasonable steps to ensure the descriptions are accurate, however, to the extent permitted by law, Qantas does not accept any liability for the lack of

completeness or correctness of such information."

Qantas also said it had no control over the information displayed on external search engines like Google, and that members are encouraged to use the search bar on its website. Qantas offered Phillip a 10% discount on his next purchase as a "goodwill gesture".

Phillip let us know he thought this response was unsatisfactory, as he had clicked on an ad that presumably had been placed and paid for by either Qantas Marketplace or Apple, and therefore they should be responsible for its content.

We encouraged Phillip to pursue the issue, noting his rights under Australian Consumer Law.

Phillip responded once more saying he had taken the complaint to NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) and had received a hearing date. He was advised the cost would be \$58.

The Qantas Marketplace representative he had been emailing then contacted him by phone and offered a full refund and an offer to pay return postage.

The rep said the error in the ad was Google's fault, but Qantas would take responsibility for it. They advised Phillip to seek compensation from Google, but he decided not to, having already expended a lot of effort on the matter.

Phillip got the outcome he was looking for, but he was rightfully upset he had to take it so far.



CHOICE Help is our in-house advice service for CHOICE members. We'll arm you with the information and tools you need to tackle your consumer issue and help you work towards a solution.

CONTACT US at [choice.com.au/choicehelp](https://www.choice.com.au/choicehelp).

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