

How to make the best chocolate cake in the world...

Question: what could be nicer than the taste of slightly *warm chocolate cake* made with eggs collected from your own back garden?

Answer: knowing you *saved the lives of the hens* that kindly laid them for you. The feel-good factor instantly increases ten-fold.



Of course I didn't start the British Hen Welfare Trust to enhance the taste sensations of the nation; the seed was first sown at the tender age of 17 when I watched Panorama 'Down on the Factory Farm'.

I started the charity to lift the lid on the old thorny issue of battery farming. Ever since the days of Chickens Lib, (who did a great job in the 60's), the subject has created controversy and inflamed emotions. The result was that farmers became as hidden from public view as the hens themselves.

I had been rescuing battery hens from slaughter for eight years when I had that 'light bulb moment' and decided to see if anyone else wanted to give some hens a retirement home.

Since October 2003, the phone hasn't stopped ringing.

Right from the off I decided two things: to treat farmers with the same respect as any other human being and to create a charity with a positive ethos. I didn't want to berate farmers, I wanted to understand them, work with them, learn more about the egg industry and what happened to hens in other parts of the world.

It soon became apparent there was a) a great demand for these delightful creatures and b) an awful lot of almost 'relieved' support for my moderate stance; no balaclavas or crowbars required! I built a local team in Devon and subsequently have set up 29 teams of volunteers around the country.

In 2005 the British Hen Welfare Trust became the first registered charity for chickens and we now regularly find homes for over 60,000 hens a year. Not only do we find homes for hens, we also educate consumers on how they can influence laying hen welfare through their shopping baskets.

Many people choose to purchase free range eggs, but not so many are discerning when it comes to processed food products, such as pasta, quiche, ready meals and other everyday items that contain eggs from caged hens. Choosing to buy products containing British free range eggs means a world of difference to the humble laying hen.

None of our work would happen without the time and commitment of our national team of volunteers. It's a fantastic team effort that sees tens of thousands of ex-bats enjoying a second chance in life every year. The farmers, too, play a vital role in trusting us.

And getting back to the chocolate cake I shall be tucking into this afternoon - yes, it's been made not just by me, but Bunty, Darcy, Scooter and Winky have all contributed to what I know will be the best chocolate cake in the world!

For more information on the British Hen Welfare Trust log onto their website www.bhwt.org.uk or email info@bhwt.org.uk

