

absolutely credulous

It's a new year and time to ring in the changes. Or perhaps not... No matter how hard she tries, Sally Feldman will always look on the inexorable side of life

I don't know about you (or maybe I do, but I'm not letting on), but I'm unequivocally over that hoary old chestnut of 'living in uncertain times' that everyone's been banging on about since the dawn of spring 2008.

The only uncertain time I've had recently was around midnight on New Year's Eve – whom to kiss first, my husband or my dog?

When it comes to most of the threads that make up life's rich macramé, you can be pretty sure of everything, except when and how you'll be plucked off this mortal coil, and whether the guy in the white van will let you change lanes in front of him before the traffic lights.

I've developed this theory over years of research, very little development and a brief encounter with hospitalisation, and so, as we venture forth into a brave new year, in which nothing will change except the exchange rates and maybe Victoria Beckham's facial expression (on second thoughts, maybe not), I thought I'd share my guide to life's absolute certainties.

ON FOOD

+ A dish with the word 'panache' as its descriptor means you are either in the aforementioned hospital or someone misused the spellcheck when they wrote the chocolate degustation menu. A 'vegetable panache' I had the misfortune to experience recently, while wearing nought but a white backless gown (and we're not talking Cannes Film Festival red carpet material here) was so utterly *sans élan* that it looked as though it had been pre-eaten, then returned at speed to my plate by its previous owner.

+ There will always be another next big ingredient that appears on every chic menu in town, until it goes the way of the last big ingredient – to a cafe somewhere just off the Pacific Highway.

+ Always stick to the first choice you make after reading the menu. He who vacillates will end up with the poached offal in porcini jus – probably just outside Coffs Harbour.

+ Coffee is a privilege, not a right, especially in New York.

ON HEALTH

+ If you take immune-boosting supplements when you travel, you're doing no one but your chemist any favours. You'll blow out your toiletry bag allowance and be stopped at customs for drug smuggling. Worse, you'll become so blasé about your indestructibility that you'll end up in hospital, reading a menu that includes regurgitated vegetables and something laughingly described as 'apricot danish'.

ON FINANCE

+ Budget deficits and economic downturns would be a thing of the past if all freak show mirrors and 'daylight' fluorescent lighting were removed from department store changing rooms and replaced with rose-tinted glass and mood lighting – especially in the lingerie and swimwear sections.

ON LIFE

+ There is no such thing as karma. What goes around doesn't come around, unless it's been re-gifted.

+ Neither is there any such thing as an axis of evil, except at London's Hyde Park Corner. Make one false move there, and a battalion of black cabs will rise up to destroy you.

+ The meek won't inherit the earth, just a badly chipped Clarice Cliff jug from the bottom of aunty's sideboard.

ON TRAVEL

+ Holidays will never be long enough, unless you're camping with vegetarians at a holistic watercolour retreat.

+ The cheese selection offered at the end of your in-flight meal will always be served colder than your Champagne.

+ Hotel hairdryers attached to the bathroom wall by those curly flexes will never reach the back of your head if you are more than 152cm tall.

+ Packing your clothes between layers of tissue will always be marginally more noisy and troublesome than ringing guest services for an iron, then being woken up from a deep, jet-lagged stupor by a loud knocking on your door.

+ Hotel slippers are the devil's work, designed to fill the coffers of orthopaedic surgeons, unless you are Big Foot.

ON CERTAINTY

+ He who hesitates is lost, or trying to cross the Champs-Élysées. **VE+T**

