

TV CHEF IS WAGING WAR ON PLASTIC WASTE AND PLEADS...

DON'T BOTTLE IT!



HUGH Fearnley-Whittingstall has lost the neck tattoo. I tell him I'm relieved. He looked daft.

Hugh chuckles. He's not going to argue.

"Happily, it was just a transient moment, Mike," he remarks.

To be fair, though, this temporary tat did its job, helping him go incognito, disguised as just your average hipster, for a stunt you can see in his new show on BBC1 tonight.

In *War On Plastic With Hugh And Anita*, he and Anita Ranil set out to show the harm being done to the planet by single-use plastic, such as bottles, bags, crisp packets and all that gubbins the supermarkets pack their fruit and veg in.

Used once then chucked away, it's ending up in places it really shouldn't, much of it polluting our oceans. Sir David Attenborough doesn't lie.

Trendy

Hugh's hipster stunt is to highlight his contempt for one particular product contributing to this nightmare. "Why are we so obsessed with bottled water?" he asks.

Sporting this disguise, he sets himself up in London's Covent Garden and starts dishing out free samples of a trendy new brand called Tapineau.

The punters, raving about how nice it tastes, feel like plonkers when Hugh comes clean - revealing it's come from his own kitchen tap.

It's all a bit Del Boy - a reminder of the *Only Fools And Horses* episode where he tries to flog 'Peckham Spring Water' from his tap.

But Hugh's not done it to make people look like fools, just to show that tap water, which we could carry around in our own refillable bottles, rather than buying and binning endless plastic ones, tastes equally good. Lab tests also show it's no less healthy.

Later in the series he even reveals we're inhaling the stuff. Yep, breathing in actual plastic.

"Microfibres from our clothes," says Hugh, "are being blown into the sky, swirling all around and raining down on us."

Blimey, isn't all this enough to make him despair?

"Well, it might sound hopeless but there are smart solutions to many of these problems."

Tackling this, Hugh suggests,

THE MIKE WARD INTERVIEW



can start with us. By changing our habits, we can make supermarkets etc change theirs.

"We need a culture shift in how we shop, to embrace a refill-and-reuse culture. Supermarkets must make it easier, and no more expensive, for us to opt out of plastic.

"And we need to embrace that, to be ready to do things differently. It might feel less convenient at first but it has to become second nature."

By campaigning, of course, Hugh and Anita make themselves easy targets. Surely sceptics will be out to expose double standards in the presenters' own lifestyles?

"They will," Hugh acknowledges, "and they'll probably succeed. Nobody's perfect. Neither I nor Anita would claim we are, but this show has been an incredible learning curve for us both."

In Hugh's defence, he's argued for years about giving us consumers more

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responsibility, starting with the honest truth behind what we eat.

"My River Cottage programmes

were, in some respects, a rose-tinted idea of country life," he admits, "but we were never shy about telling the story of where our food came from.

"I'd take my own livestock to slaughter and bring it back and cook with it. That creates transparency."

For Hugh, this war on plastic means galvanising action. "We want viewers to ask themselves: 'How much do I want this? What am I prepared to do?' The question is: who's prepared to become an activist, to tell them we want this now?"

So ultimately does Hugh rather enjoy being a thorn in the supermarkets' side, nagging them to recognise their responsibilities?

"It does have its moments," he says.

War On Plastic With Hugh And Anita is tonight at 9pm, BBC One.

FILL EM UP: Hugh shows off his refillable bottles, bags and food tubs



STREET BATTLE: Hugh and Anita in a scene from the programme



SCAM: Del Boy

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