

1 The Guardian

2 **The Queen's common touch: from Tupperware** 3 **to her electric heater**

4 **Stories of the monarch doing the washing up and slipping her corgis toast under the table always**
5 **proved popular**

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8 Though she lived a very different life, the Queen embraced a few common touches that endeared her
9 to many of her subjects.

10 Famously, she stored her morning cornflakes in Tupperware containers, an incongruous sight among
11 the gilt and silverware at Buckingham Palace, a fact revealed by a tabloid journalist who managed to
12 work undercover as a footman for two months.

13 While headlines rejoiced in our "Tupperware Queen", the journalist also revealed staff were issued with
14 a detailed plan of the monarch's breakfast table, setting out the exact positions of every utensil,
15 condiment and cereal. Snuggled under the breakfast table, her corgis and dorgis would sit patiently,
16 waiting for their mistress to slip them toast spread with "light" marmalade.

17 According to his account, it took several staff to deliver her a cup of coffee: a maid to pick up the pot of
18 coffee from a hotplate and pour it into a silver jug; a footman to take the tray 20 metres to a page; and
19 the page to carry it another eight metres to the Queen in her dining room.

20 Her grand fireplaces, set in rooms groaning with original art masterpieces, housed cheap two-bar electric
21 fires – or convection heaters – retailing at about £20, and were spotted in official photographs on
22 occasions such as David Cameron's Balmoral sojourn. The ITV documentary film-maker Michael
23 Waldman described her private sitting room at Balmoral as appearing to be littered with personal
24 paraphernalia, including several teddy bears, a basket of pebbles, miniature statues and floral dog
25 baskets.

26 Balmoral was also where she liked to roll up her sleeves and get stuck in to the washing up after Prince
27 Philip's famous barbecues. Margaret Thatcher, appalled that the monarch had no washing up gloves,
28 bought her a pair. Cherie Blair recalled of a visit to Balmoral: "The Queen asks if you've finished, she
29 stacks the plates up and goes off to the sink."

30 Some of the more amusing personal items in her possession would appear to be gifts from her family,
31 who exchange jokey presents at Christmas. The Duke of York once bought her a Big Mouth Billy Bass
32 singing animatronic fish, which had pride of place for a while on the piano at Balmoral.

33 A plumber, summoned to Buckingham Palace to attend to the Queen's private bathroom, regaled the
34 Sun with his discovery that she possessed a rubber duck wearing an inflatable crown.

35 A cushion, embroidered with the words "It's good to be Queen" spied at Balmoral, was probably from
36 one of her grandchildren. William is said to have once given her as a present a pair of slippers
37 emblazoned with her face, and Harry once reportedly gave her a shower cap.

38 Palace aides liked to highlight some of her more frugal touches, a legacy of the war years she lived
39 through, and were happy to see reports of her recycling her clothes, going around her residences
40 switching off lights, and smoothing out and storing Christmas wrapping paper for reuse the following
41 year.

42 Her position meant she was denied some of life's rites of passage. She never went to school, for
43 example, and was palace-tutored. She never had to take a driving test, learning during the second world
44 war. But driving herself was one of her pleasures, and she was regularly behind the wheel on her estates
45 until her very late years.

46 Proof, if it were needed, of her willingness to appear less remote from her subjects as critics might say,
47 came from a surprising source in 2005. Scientific analysis of her accent, using four decades of her
48 Christmas broadcasts, and published in Nature magazine, detected her vowels moving steadily
49 downmarket. "There has been a drift in the Queen's accent towards one that is characteristic of speakers
50 who are younger and/or lower in the social hierarchy," researchers from Macquarie University in Sydney
51 found.

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