

The best of this Summer's cryptic clue tie breakers.

They're not in any particular order. Prize-winners marked by an asterisk. It was very hard to choose – there are lots of clever ones. Sorry if you don't agree with my choice – it's all very subjective.

1. Bottom line: getting into pastries is painful (5)
2. *Martin and Tinker met their friends. Can you confirm? (5,5)
3. *Is this the result of a night on the tiles? (8)
4. *There's nothing in my belly and it hurts (4)
5. We in this country don't want the French in (8)
6. I join in the game in the second half, but I'm not very mobile (5)
7. Leave the house, take nothing from it (4)
8. A brush with this might drive you up the wall (9)
9. *A variety of plant, e.g. Venus flytrap (11)
10. Carnivorous cocktail that keeps us apart (11)
11. Stiff joints could make concocting a hastier risotto very painful (14)
12. It's grottier in very delicate places (10)
13. After consuming the content of pizzas, then I am feeling fatigued (8)
14. Did the Order of Saint Clara behave rashly? (10)
15. Croaks with aid from illness (8)
16. Change to a dry sauna to warm up your hands and feet (8)
17. It's a cruel joke! (5)
18. The French get commonplace disease (7)
19. Low temperature for Wombles (6,4)
20. Is mother idle or ill? (7)
21. Article found in bouquet (8)
22. Charlie's head in the waves (5)
23. Wearing goggles with ski attire could help (9)
24. *Puts Irishwomen off chaps for a while? (9)
25. Sounds like Mr Harvey's singular fruit let him down (7,5)

Answers:

1. Piles
2. Bell's palsy
3. Shingles
4. Gout
5. Glanders
6. Polio
7. Gout
8. Distemper
9. Coronavirus
10. Coronavirus
11. Osteoarthritis
12. Intertrigo
13. Asthenia
14. Scarletina
15. Diabetes
16. Raynaud's
17. Ulcer

18. Leprosy
19. Common cold
20. Malaise
21. Atheroma
22. Scurf
23. Keratitis
24. Menopause
25. Brewer's droop

Clues that I thought were near misses – a bit too tortuous, or inelegant. (I haven't included a few that didn't 'parse' properly, i.e. the clue didn't fully cover the word.)

- a) So what's the score? Minus one, after a big fish swallowed six (5,2)
- b) Unusually roast section is the answer (6,8)
- c) Wedding band for the legless invertebrate (8)
- d) Guacamole dip, but without the piper from Hamelin (8)
- e) The cement is, stickier so set, yours Togo fast (13)
- f) Another language, sounds Asian? Maybe the poor suckers will be quiet (6,3)
- g) A Peruvian coast in Asia? That's difficult to swallow! (9)
- h) Can I have a small minty sweet? (5)
- i) Finding going outside painful - too much port during lockdown? (4)
- j) Be careful of the lungs when mixing curious belts (12)
- k) We dropped anchor early in the day and waited nervously for the storm to pass (6)
- l) A month cut short for mice with artificial intelligence to be mixed together for an infection (10)
- m) Seamless? Nearly, and very confused – Can you spot it? (7)
- n) Too much for Labour leader (8)
- o) Not old, grumbling, plus two vowels (9)
- p) Disney's animated comical fish gets mixed up so then needs a rest to give ladies a flush (9)
- q) Downward direction for US intelligence getting confused after a cuppa (8)
- r) A drugless attraction leads soldier to dreaded mythical disease (5)
- s) Crust that is with 19
- t) The speakers seem confused but may be suffering from this (4,6)
- u) Hesitation before relating to holy text, despite lack of book, about having that woman by his side, we hear (9,6)
- v) Not every taxi driver might exhibit this (7)
- w) This could have caused Jareth dizziness (13)
- x) Attach the boss and a simple statement of existence (12)
- y) Crying 'bravo' for the vegetables! (7)
- z) Vowel exchange reminder of your last meal (3,8)

- a. Covid 19
- b. Aortic section
- c. Ringworm
- d. Glaucoma

- e. Rickettsioses
- f. Tongue tie
- g. Achalasia
- h. Polio
- i. Gout
- j. Tuberculosis
- k. Chorea
- l. Septicemia
- m. Measles
- n. Gluttony (Is that an illness?)
- o. lurgi
- p. Pneumonia
- q. Menopause
- r. Sciatica
- s. Scabies. (19 for 's'??)
- t. Sore throat
- u. Umbilical hernia
- v. Rubella
- w. Labyrinthitis
- x. Appendicitis
- y. Bunions
- z. Sea sickness