

Monday 21st January 2013

Dear Customer,

Well, brrrrrrrrrrrrrr ! I've been feasting like Henry VIII to keep warm. This is how my evening has gone Montezuma chocolate snowman, savoury biscuits with houmous, date and pecan bread, banana, Montezuma chocolate snowman, cashew nuts with raisins, mashed potato with carrots parsnips and spinach sautéed in lemon juice, cashew nuts and raisins, orange and mango juice, Montezumas chocolate snowman. That little lot should keep me going. Here are a few recipes you could try to keep warm:

Leek and Oat Savoury Pancakes

1 tbs olive oil	1 leek, thinly sliced
4 sun-dried tomatoes, drained and chopped	100g rolled oats
250ml milk	3 eggs, well-beaten
50g plain flour	2 tsp baking powder
pinch salt	1 tbsp sunflower oil

Put the oats in a large bowl, add the milk and leave to soak for at least 30 minutes or even overnight. Then, mix in the eggs, flour, baking powder, salt and sunflower oil, using a hand whisk to get a fluffy mixture. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and add the leeks and cook until soft, approximately 5 minutes. Stir in the sun-dried tomatoes and cook for a further minute then add to the pancake mixture. Heat a frying pan to medium-high heat. Oil the pan and add a ladle of the batter. When air bubbles start to bubble up to the surface at the centre of the pancakes (2-3 minutes), use a spatula and flip them over. When golden brown on both sides they are done and ready to serve.

Cauliflower and Sweet Potato Balti

1 tbsp sunflower oil	2 onions, very thinly sliced
4cm piece fresh ginger, finely grated	1 tsp muscovado sugar
1 tsp cumin seeds	400g tin chopped tomatoes
400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed	½ tsp ground turmeric
½ tsp ground coriander	1 tsp chilli powder
400g sweet potatoes, cubed	1 cauliflower, in florets
juice of 1 lemon	chopped fresh coriander, to garnish

Heat the oil in your largest pan and cook the onions, ginger and sugar for 5 minutes, until softened and gently browned. Add the cumin seeds, tomatoes, turmeric, coriander, chilli powder, some salt and pepper and 250ml water. Bring to a simmer then stir in the sweet potatoes. Cover and simmer for 5 minutes then add the cauliflower. Cover and cook for a further 15 minutes. Add the chickpeas and cook for 5 minutes, until the vegetables are tender. Stir in the lemon juice and coriander just before serving. Serve with chapattis.

Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Cauliflower

5 small sweet potatoes	1 head cauliflower, in florets
2 tbsp olive oil	¼ tsp coriander
½ tsp paprika	2 tsp garlic powder
2 tsp onion powder	2 tsp parsley
ground black pepper	

Spread the sweet potato and cauliflower on an oiled baking sheet. Drizzle with vegetables with the olive oil and toss to coat. Sprinkle the spices over the vegetables and roast in the oven for 30 minutes or until golden and tender.

I've been kicking about the house wondering what to do since I am snowed in. Done the laundry, done the hoovering, done the guinea pig cage – even did a bit of dusting. Freezing outside. I decided to measure the house using my feet. Someone asked me how many square feet my house was a few weeks ago and it got me wondering. I did the length and breadth of every room. I texted my brother the result and he said that was enormous and not possible so I started again. My next result was more modest. Then I decided I would try and value some Japanese wood-block prints that belonged to my parents. Then I turned to my 20th century Japanese chest which I bought on the Kings Road 15 years ago. It hadn't appreciated in value. In fact, I now think I paid too much for it. Then I turned to an unusual carved red lacquer bowl with cloissone inside. Quite a strange object which I bought at the Portabello market. I looked at a thousand cloissone bowls on different websites, but none with any carved lacquer. Then all of a sudden I saw a 14th century Ming carved box on the Sotheby's site which sold for a million with the same red lacquer carvings. I couldn't believe it, I had a Ming bowl. I would go out and buy a farm for the sheep with it. Then, a few sites and a few hours later I came falling back to earth when I saw similar carvings on a 20th century vase. I felt very deflated and went to bed with the curtains open to fall asleep to the soporific sight of snowflakes floating past the street light.

Before the weather closed in I'd decided to go up the Dales to cold call on farmers, to try and find grazing. The first place I arrived, I knocked on the door and a farmer's wife came to the door. She had a strange brown stain above her lip, I wondered if it was iodine and why. I explained what I was looking for. I don't think she heard a word I said, she was too busy looking me up and down, returning again and again to my new boots. I expected her to say " what are you ?" and I would have replied " and what are you ?". It was a frosty little encounter.

I saw Ernest briefly today as I asked him if he would take me to see the sheep in his 4 x 4. When he dropped me off it was with the words " I'm an eternal pessimist" he said " that's why I walk this world alone". I expected him to vanish in a puff of smoke – he drove off. Ernest was born in the wrong place, into the wrong context, in the wrong century. He should be in Montmartre drinking absinthe with Manet and Baudelaire not driving to Farmways to get sheep nuts.

We wait with baited breath for Cameron's big speech on Europe. I think we should have a referendum on whether we should have a referendum. The politicians don't trust us a bloody inch do they !

It's Sunday night, next snowfall... eta ...midnight.....heaven knows what we'll wake up to and if we will get the deliveries out this week.

Kind wishes and hope you are keeping warm,

Isobel