

Monday 19th January 2015

Dear Customer,

It's snowy and icy here in Richmond today. Royal Oak in Ormskirk have not just the weather to contend with at the moment. They haven't had much luck recently. Before Christmas they were burgled and threatened, they then had to shut down for a few weeks as they were all bedridden with flu. Their Romanian staff had had a car accident in Germany on their way back from their holidays. When they eventually returned, it was with a severe bug which everyone then caught, sending them all back to bed again. They still managed to scrape together the rainbow carrots this week but couldn't fulfil the rest of the order. When I suggested to Cheryl that she needed to go and put her feet up in front of the TV, she said they hadn't watched it or even been in their living room for 2 years and that they haven't had a holiday for 14 years. I really want to go and run the farm for them so they can get a holiday.

We have spring greens in the bags this week and here are some tasty recipes you could try.

Panade

6 tbs olive oil
2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
4-450g spring greens, tough stems removed and cut into 1cm strips
200g slightly stale, robust bread, cut into 2cm cubes
350ml hot vegetable stock
2 large onions, peeled and finely sliced
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
140g grated Gruyere or other well-flavoured hard cheese

Heat half the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the sliced onions and stir well to break up the rings. Once they are sizzling, turn down the heat to very low and cover the pan. Cook them gently, stirring from time to time, about half an hour, or until soft and golden. Add the chopped garlic and some salt and pepper halfway through cooking. Heat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Meanwhile, put the spring greens into a steamer and cook for about 4 minutes until tender. You could boil them but be sure to drain very well. Put the cubed bread into a large bowl. Add the remaining oil and some salt and pepper and toss well so the bread cubes are well coated. In an oven dish about 20cm x 20cm, spread a third of the cooked onions over the base then scatter a third of the bread cubes, followed by a third of the cheese and then half of the spring greens. Repeat these layers then finish with the final onions, bread and cheese. Make sure the stock is piping hot then pour it all over the dish, allowing it to soak into the bread. Cover with foil and bake for 30 minutes, remove foil and bake for 30 minutes more, until golden brown and bubbling. Let it settle for 10 minutes before serving.

Spring Greens with Noodles

175g spring greens
2 tbsp groundnut oil
150g fresh noodles
3 tsp soy sauce
3 cloves garlic
6 spring onions
1 tbsp mild chilli sauce
5 or 5 sprigs coriander

Get all the ingredients ready before starting to cook. Chop the spring onion into thin rounds. Peel and finely chop the garlic. Snap off the leaves of the spring greens, pile them on top of each other, roll them up then shred into ribbons. Heat a wok to a high heat. Pour in the oil, swirl it round the pan, then as it shimmers and starts to smoke, add the spring onions and garlic. Move them quickly round the pan for a couple of minutes they soften and colour then add the fresh noodles. As the noodles cook, drop in the shredded greens and stir or toss them around the pan as they cook for 2 minutes. Stir in the chilli sauce and soy, add the coriander leaves and continue cooking for a minute or so till all is soft, glossy and sizzling.

Carrot and Lemon Soup

25g butter or margarine
1 leek, halved and sliced
juice and zest of half a lemon
100g split red lentils
sea salt
1 tbsp vegetable oil
300g carrots, peeled and sliced
1 litre vegetable stock
handful coriander

Melt the butter or margarine in a saucepan over a low heat and add the oil. Gently saute the leek, carrots and lemon zest in the butter or margarine and oil for 15-20 minutes or until soft. Add the stock and lentils and bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Add half the coriander. Puree, then season with sea salt and add the lemon juice to taste. Serve with a final sprinkling of coriander.

I picked Ernest up to go for a walk – he was looking overwrought, fresh from reading the Daily Mail, whipped into a state of extreme anxiety. He looked in agony as told me about the woman with 85 children, all by different fathers, none of whom had ever worked, claiming £8 million pounds of benefits a month, living in a Georgian pile, flat screen TV's in each room - all paid for by tax payers. It had ruined his morning. I told him to change papers as the Mail wasn't good for him - damaging his health even. Myfa startled a bird which swooped over us – "it's a townie oil" he said. The 'tawny' and 'owl' got mashed, his mind elsewhere, haunted by the spectre of the woman. He asked me if I'd been to get my copy of "Charlie He..He...Heb...Hebden" as in Hebden Bridge, I guess the 'o' is a bit too latin. How I'd love to introduce him to some Russians and Africans to see how he'd get on with their names - 'Mr Ekk.Ekk..EcclesCake'.

As you can see, no news from me. I'm perturbed this morning, by not having an internet connection and will have to go and find wifi somewhere to send this to Diane. That's if I can get the car out – the hill is sheet ice.\

Hope you're having a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS We are now selling organic garlic bulbs and also fresh organic lemons from Andalucia, as add-ons – available in the website shop or by calling the office.