



Monday 30th May 2016

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It's Sunday today and we were very excited as wall to wall sunshine was forecast. However, the sun did not come out once from above the thick grey cloud. My nephew who lives in London called me at 8.30am saying it was hot and sunny, he was wearing a t-shirt. He said it's like a different country. Here is a delicious tart you could try with your cavolo – perfect for your picnics:

Cavolo Nero and Caramelised Onion Tart with Walnut Crust

For the Pastry:

150g plain flour

85g butter, cut in small cubes

pinch salt

30g walnuts

1 free-range egg

For the Filling:

200g cavolo nero, washed and hard stems removed

350g organic double cream

90g Cheddar cheese

½ tsp salt

3 onions, finely sliced

4 free-range eggs

½ tsp dried oregano

3 tbsp olive oil

To make the pastry, grind the walnuts finely in a food processor. Put the flour, ground walnuts, salt and butter into the bowl of a food processor and mix at the lowest setting until it produces a mixture which looks like breadcrumbs. Add the egg and continue to process at the low setting until the mixture forms into a pliable ball. Flatten the ball into a disc, wrap in cling film and put in the fridge for 30 minutes. Pour two tablespoons olive oil in a frying pan and when hot add the onions and cook for 5 minutes, until translucent. Add the salt and reduce the heat to its lowest setting. Continue to cook onions for a further 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the onions are soft and caramelised. Remove from heat and set aside to cool. Put the remaining olive oil in a large pan over a medium heat. When hot, add the kale and stir-fry for 5-6 minutes, or until bright green and tender. Set aside to cool. Preheat the oven to 175F/ 350F/ Gas 4. Grease a flan dish, retrieve the pastry and roll it out thinly and place in the flan dish. Trim the pastry to there is an overhang of about 1cm. Prick the base and sides of the pastry with a fork, line with parchment and baking stones or beans, and blind bake for 10 minutes. Now trim the edges neatly to the height of the flan dish. Whisk the eggs with the cream until smooth. Pour a third of this mixture into the pastry case. Sprinkle over a third of the Cheddar, then evenly scatter over the caramelised onion. Next add half the egg mixture and scatter the kale evenly over this. Finish off with half of the remaining Cheddar, the onion mixture and finish with the remainder of the egg mixture. Scatter over the last of the Cheddar followed by the oregano. Place in preheated oven for 30-35 minutes or until set and golden. Leave to cool slightly before serving.

Cavolo Nero Pasta

450g penne pasta

bag cavolo nero, leaves stripped from stem

150ml olive oil

2 cloves garlic, peeled

3 tbsp pine nuts, lightly toasted

3 handfuls Parmesan, or alternative

Cook the pasta according to packet instructions. In another large pan, bring some salted water to the boil with the garlic cloves. When it is boiling, add the cavolo leaves and cook for 5-10 minutes until tender. Drain reserving the garlic. Transfer the cavolo, garlic and pine nuts to a blender and blitz to a fine puree. Add the olive oil and Parmesan or alternative and blitz again, then season. You should have a shiny dark green sauce. Toss the sauce through the pasta and finish with a drizzle of olive oil and serve.

The bronchitis thing has left me feeling very rough. Even though I am barely coughing now, I have a chest pain when I do. So on Friday I stupidly went onto the internet and googled pneumonia. Alarmed, I rang the doctor's surgery and begged that they squeeze me in for 5 minutes. They said "if you come now". I shot out the door, leapt in the car, and two minutes later the doctor was looking inside my ears – apparently there was nothing of concern in there. I rolled up my jeans, my calves were fine, my fingers were fine, so was my throat. I was sufficiently oxygenated and she listened to my breathing which she said was fine, and my temperature was fine. Then she took my blood pressure and told me to stop talking, which was difficult as it was the only way I could stop myself from exploding. She said I should book myself in for a chest x ray as I'd been coughing for more than three weeks. "What's my blood pressure?" I asked. She wouldn't look at me. Eventually... "It's high" she said. "How high?" "High" she said. I asked her again 'how high'. She really didn't want to tell me. "170" she said. "170 over what?" She paused "100". Why did she tell me that! Oh my God!!!!!!! 170/100. It took my panic attack to another level. I'd always had low blood pressure, what's happened. I know it's been five years since it was last taken but I'm vegetarian, I'm organic apart from biscuits – too many probably, slim but have been slimmer and I walk, albeit a bit less now Myfa's got cronky.

This is just a nightmare. I only went in to find out if I had pneumonia. I got home, somehow, and went straight back on the internet. I put in my 170/100 and looked through the charts. It was definitely up there in the danger zone. I checked out the forums and what others had to say "Hey guy, you need to get to A&E" was the advice to another victim of 170/100.

Trying to reassure myself I asked Google if bronchitis could increase blood pressure and it does as the heart has to work harder

Maybe it was the combination of that, the 'white coat' effect, the panic attack and decongestant sweets (which can also affect it so I read) - but maybe not. My neighbour is borrowing her mother's blood pressure gear for me. I'll let you know how I get on.

I just had to rush out as I had a call from the sheep's landowner. One of my Shetlands was in a local garden where a children's party was taking place - and could I get it straight away as the Bouncy Castle was about to arrive. I rang Ernest to ask him to help. We found the house and the sheep was just standing in the garden. I gave it some sheep nuts and Ernest jumped on him and bungled him into the car boot. I asked Ernest if he could sit in the boot with him with the boot door open if I drove slowly back but he was worried about falling out so he curled up with the sheep so I could shut the boot on them. Half a mile later the sheep was popped back into his field, it had been a smooth operation. He was an old Shetland with big curly horns and I have no idea how he'd managed to escape. While up there, at Hornby, we went into the grounds of Hornby castle to try and find a lone sheep which Lady Clutterbuck had spotted in her shrubbery yesterday. Probably a breakaway from the gang I retrieved from the walled vegetable garden a couple of weeks ago. We couldn't find that one.

Kind wishes,

Isobel