

Monday 14th November 2016

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It's Sunday, dusk and very blustery under the super-moon. The leaves are being whipped off the trees. I spent all morning raking the leaves off the driveway and from all round the garden. It looked very tidy for a couple of hours until the wind got up and now it looks exactly as it did. Here are some recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Braised Red Cabbage

2 *tbsp* butter or margarine
1 head white cabbage, shredded
1 small onion, sliced
120ml cup vegetable stock

Melt the butter or margarine in a wide-rimmed pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook until soft. Add the cabbage and toss. Pour over the stock. Simmer gently over a low heat for about 30 minutes or until the cabbage is tender. Remove from the heat and mix in another small pat of butter or margarine. Season generously with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Charred Cabbage with Mint and Chilli Dressing

1 head red cabbage
olive oil for tossing

Dressing:

3 *tbsp* olive oil
1 red chilli, chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
salt and pepper
1 *tbsp* red wine vinegar
2 *tsp* honey
1 *tbsp* chopped mint

Cut the cabbage into wedges lengthways so that the leaves are still attached to the base. To make the dressing mix all the ingredients together in a shallow container. Toss the wedges in a little olive oil and grill in batches on a griddle so they are slightly charred. Transfer the leaves to the dressing container while they are hot. Toss and serve.

Red Lentil and Cavolo Nero Soup

500g split red lentils
2 medium onions
200g cavolo nero
2 *tsp* ground cumin
3 garlic cloves, crushed
grated zest of ½ lemon
lemons cut into wedges
2.5 litres cold water
2 *tbsp* olive oil
50g coriander leaves
1 *tsp* coriander seeds
50g butter or margarine
sourdough bread
salt and black pepper

Wash the lentils in cold water then place in a large saucepan with 2.5 litres water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 35 minutes or until soft. Skim off any scum that surfaces during cooking. Using a slotted spoon remove about half the lentils from the cooking liquid and set aside in a bowl. Add a pinch of salt to the lentils and water in the pan and liquidise using a stick blender or in a food processor. Return the reserved lentils to the soup. Peel the onions, halve and thinly slice them. Place a frying pan over a medium heat, add the olive oil and onions and cook, stirring occasionally, for 4-5 minutes until the onions soften and become translucent. Meanwhile strip the cavolo leaves from the stems. Wash and rinse the leaves then roughly chop them and roughly chop the coriander. Mix the cooked onions, cavolo leaves and coriander into the lentil soup and season with the cumin, cinnamon and salt and pepper to taste. Reheat the soup and simmer for 5 minutes. In a pestle and mortar crush the coriander seeds and garlic. Melt the butter gently in a small saucepan over a medium heat, add the garlic and coriander seeds and fry for 2 minutes until the garlic starts to colour slightly. Stir this into the soup, remove from the heat, cover and leave to infuse for 5 minutes before serving. Serve garnished with lemon zest and pass round the sourdough and lemon wedges to squeeze into the soup.

It's been a shocking, emotionally draining week - Trump, the John Lewis advert, Walnut. I didn't get any sleep the night of the US election and I've been running a deficit since, watching endless news coverage into the early hours. It's become a bad habit these last months - especially now I have discovered that they repeat the Daily Politics Show at some ridiculous time on the Parliament channel. I used to think I was pushing it staying awake for 'This Week' after 'Question Time'. I used to lament that nothing ever changed in the political landscape – that it was boring. I'm exhausted. And this is all just the beginning.

Kind wishes,

Isobel