



Monday 27th February 2017

Dear Customer,

In case you don't recognise them, the little knobblies in the bags are Jerusalem artichokes. They are nutty tasting root vegetables related to sunflowers and rich in vitamin C, B vitamins, iron, and more potassium than bananas – which is saying something – vital for a healthy heart and other muscles. You can boil them in their skins until tender, slip the skins off, chop them into small cubes and mix with a mustard vinaigrette to make a fantastic salad. You can mash them into a delicious puree with some margarine or butter. You can roast them in the oven at 175C/ 350F for 35-40 minutes – scrub them and toss them in a mix olive oil, garlic and sea salt then put in the oven.

Sauteed Jerusalem Artichokes

500g Jerusalem artichokes
a few bay leaves
1 splash white wine vinegar

olive oil
2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
salt and pepper

Peel and cut the artichokes into chunks then place in an oiled frying pan and fry on a medium heat until golden on both sides. Add the bay leaves, the garlic, white wine vinegar and some salt and pepper. Put the lid on the pan and cook for 20-25 minutes. Remove the lid and the bay leaves and continue cooking for a couple of minutes to crisp the artichokes up and serve straight away.

Roasted Aubergine and Cauliflower Curry

1 aubergine
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2cm piece fresh root ginger, peeled and chopped
2 tsp cumin seeds
150g red lentils, washed and drained
fresh coriander, finely chopped

2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp mild curry powder
½ cauliflower, in large florets
100g natural yoghurt (optional)

Preheat the oven to 190C/ Gas 5. Place the whole aubergine directly onto the oven shelf and roast for 15 minutes then remove and allow to cool slightly. Meanwhile heat the oil in a medium saucepan and saute the onion for 3-4 minutes until starting to soften. Add the garlic and ginger and fry for a further minute without colouring. Sprinkle in the curry powder and cumin and cook for 1-2 minutes over a gentle heat stirring continuously. Add the cauliflower and lentils with 900ml water and a little seasoning. Bring to the boil then stir and cover. Leave to simmer for about 20 minutes until the curry has thickened and is a smooth consistency. Peel the aubergine and remove the stalk. Roughly dice the flesh and tip into the curry. Simmer for another 15 minutes until all the ingredients are tender. Stir in the yogurt if using and half the coriander and warm through. Divide into bowls and serve with nan bread and chutneys.

Roasted Cauliflower, Aubergine and Chickpea Salad

1 cauliflower, cut in small florets
½ a 400g tin of chickpeas
2 tsp cumin
1 tbsp tahini

½ aubergine, chopped in bite-sized pieces
2 tbsp olive oil
pinch chilli flakes
½ tbsp. fresh lemon juice

Preheat oven to 200C. Put the cauliflower, aubergine and chickpeas in a large roasting tin. Drizzle over one tablespoon of olive oil and sprinkle over the cumin and chilli flakes. Toss to make sure everything is evenly coated and roast for 20 minutes. Meanwhile make the dressing by whisking together the tahini, lemon juice and olive oil. Taste and season. When the vegetables are cooked remove from the oven. Pour over the dressing then taste to check for seasoning.

Sicilian Aubergine and Tomato Pasta

450g penne pasta
½ large onion, chopped
1 medium aubergine, cubed
ricotta cheese, crumbled (optional)

4 tbsp olive oil plus extra for frying
400g tin peeled plum tomatoes
basil leaves, torn

Cook the penne to al dente according to packet instructions. While it is cooking heat 4 tablespoons of olive oil in a saucepan and gently saute the onion until tender. Add the plum tomatoes and liquid from the tin. Break the tomatoes up with the back of a wooden spoon. Season with salt and pepper and cook for a few minutes until the sauce has thickened. In another pan fry the aubergine until golden and drain on paper towel to remove excess oil. Drain the pasta and add to the saucepan with the tomato sauce in a cook for a further few minutes. Add the fried aubergine and basil leaves and mix together well. Sprinkle with ricotta to serve if using.

Last week as I wrote that I had an offer of sheep grazing in Camarthenshire. I didn't seriously think I'd be seriously thinking about live exporting them to Wales, however, as nothing else has materialised I now think it is highly likely. It's an organic farm in a magical, lush green valley near the Brechfa Forest. Of course, being a 'Davies', while I have never lived there, my DNA came out of that Black Mountain granite. My dad left the Rhondda Valley aged 15 to come to London. He never stopped being Welsh though – Celtic, pale, blue eyes, cerebral, left-leaning.

He always spoke so evocatively about his childhood there – the images it conjured up were so vivid they have always felt like my own memories - so when I go there it does feel like I'm going home. In a 'Who Do You Think You Are?' moment, I dug out the paperwork a lady did on my ancestry – found the villages in Camarthenshire and the Brecon Beacons where my ancestors farmed, preached and barded before they went 'over the mountain' into the Rhondda valley - to work in the mines most of them. I looked at the print out of the census. My great grandfather aged 71 said 'coal-hewer' – he was still working down the mine. I stared at the map - Trealaw and Treorchy cemeteries - where I know so many of them are buried including all my grandmother's brothers aged 3 months, 3 yrs and 5 yrs. Even she ended up spending her later years in Putney. They all left.

I yn gobeithio byddwch yn cael wythnos dda. And I thought German was hard !

Isobel