



Monday 3rd September 2018

Dear Customer,

"If you were to stand on a hill during any Sunday afternoon in winter and listen carefully, you would hear a low, rustling, crunching sound" wrote Adrian Bailey in 1969. "It is the entire nation eating celery".

I'm not sure one might hear the same today. Crunching celery has become a little retro...vintage. Yet there's nothing better to accompany a sandwich.

Raw or cooked, it's a fab vegetable containing folate, manganese, magnesium, calcium, vitamins B2, B6, A, C and much more.

Here are a few simple recipes you could try with it:

Braised Celery

1 head celery, de-stringed and cut into 3" pieces	25g butter or margarine
1 medium onion, thinly sliced	75g carrot, thinly sliced
225ml stock, from vegetable cube	1 tbsp fresh parsley
salt and freshly ground black pepper	

Melt the butter or margarine in a frying pan and begin to cook the onions for 3-4 minutes over a high heat until lightly golden, then add the carrots and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the celery and continue to fry for 5 more minutes until everything is browned at the edges. Season with salt and pepper, pour in the hot stock and put a lid on the pan. Turn the heat down to a gentle simmer for 20 minutes until the vegetables are almost tender then take the lid off and increase heat to medium. Continue to simmer until the liquid has reduced and become slightly syrupy – about 5 minutes. Serve with juices poured over and sprinkled with parsley.

Celery Soup

60g butter or margarine	1 bay leaf
¼ tsp all spice	8 sticks celery including leaves, sliced
1 medium potato, diced	600ml vegetable stock
60ml milk (optional)	salt and pepper

Melt the butter in a large saucepan. When it stops bubbling add the bay leaf and allspice. Cook for about 30 seconds or so before adding the celery, onion and potato. Mix well to coat the vegetables. Turn the heat down to low and cover the pan. Let them cook gently for 20 minutes until the vegetables have softened. Add the vegetable stock, bring to a boil and simmer gently for a further 30 minutes. Liquidise to smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper and add the milk if you are using.

Boulangere Potatoes with Leeks, Celery and Garlic

40g margarine for greasing	1 tbsp olive oil
400g leeks, thinly sliced	½ head of celery, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed	600g potatoes, sliced 5mm thick
10g flat parsley	450ml hot vegetable stock

Preheat the oven to 200C/ Gas 6. In a large frying pan melt 25g of the margarine with the oil, add the leeks and celery and cook for 8-10 minutes, stirring until soft. Season well and stir in the garlic. Cook for 2 minutes then set aside. Grease a baking dish. Spread a third of the cooked leeks and celery in the bottom of the dish then cover with a third of the potatoes with some of the parsley. Repeat with two more layers. Pour over the vegetable stock and dot with the remaining margarine. Bake for about an hour or until golden and the potatoes are tender.

It's interesting how our diets have changed through the decades. The 1940's were deemed to have been the healthiest, and wartime rationing had a positive health impact. The white loaf was replaced by the standardised wartime national wholemeal loaf, loaded with fibre. Rationing was the great leveller and it is during this decade that the difference in death rates between rich and poor were at their narrowest. While potatoes and particularly root vegetables were freely available the ration of meat was 10oz per week, 2oz butter, 2oz cheese, 4oz sugar, 3oz sweets and 1 fresh egg. In the 1940's rural households relied on gardens and allotments to provide more than 95% of their fruit and vegetables, urban households about 30%.

Today we have the ability to eat the diet from hell - the most appalling junk and crap imaginable - or indeed, the best, most healthy, fresh diet. The best diet can also be the cheapest. The problem is freedom of choice. That is what is causing our obesity, diabetes and all the rest of it, crisis. Human beings are mad, out of control and self-destructive. We need more nanny state in the food department. It's just been a downward spiral since Smash and tinned peaches. Many of us would welcome a bit of rationing.

Not far from here is Stockton on Tees where there is the lowest life expectancy in the country – for men, just 64yrs, and on a par with Ethiopia. Yet several miles away in the more affluent Yarm, it is 84yrs. That is one hell of a disparity..... a retirement's worth.

So now the government is deciding whether to impose an extra 5p charge on plastic carrier bags in its mission to save the planet. France completely banned them years ago – they still get their shopping home. Each EU citizen uses an average of 198 bags per year. Each bag will take up to 1000 years to biodegrade. In Kenya if you manufacture, sell or even carry a plastic bag you can face 4 years in prison or a £30,000 fine. They are even banned in Rwanda – they, who have almost nothing. We make me sick. Why can't they just be banned here too, in the whole of Europe and the whole world. Radical policies are desperately needed, we need a global environmental dictator. I pity future generations who will have to dredge the oceans, devoid of all life, of our grotesque plastic sludge.

X Factor, Bake-Off and leaks about the Strictly line-up are all spelling end of summer in their all-too-familiar way. Articles are appearing about how to beat the post-summer blues. We had such a good summer.....

Hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel