



Monday 29th October 2018

Dear Customer,

That's it the clocks have gone back and temperatures have plunged to zero. We even had our first snow. I have never understood why our time has to revolve round a few Scottish farmers. Surely they are the only people whose lives aren't dictated by the clock – they work in the daylight whatever the clock says. It's us, the other 65 million who feel it. I wondered if anyone has ever costed out what the time change translates to in the drop in productivity and the cost to the NHS as activity, vitamin D levels and moods slump and people head to the doctors for anti-gloom pills. The extra hour of sleep is no big deal, it's taken away from us again in March, we only borrow it, a sleep overdraft. Darkness, the first freeze, a cabbage and a swede, and here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week.

Roasted Cabbage Wedges

1 small cabbage, core trimmed
2 tbsp caraway or cumin seeds
5 tbsp olive oil
1 large lemon, cut in 4 wedges

Set the oven to 220C/ 425F/ Gas 7. Cut the cabbage into 8 wedges/ Brush the wedges all over with the oil. Put them on a baking tray, sprinkle with the seeds and season well. Add the lemon wedges. Roast for about 25-30 minutes turning them over halfway through cooking. Squeeze lemon juice over before serving.

Green Cabbage with Cumin and Chillies

2 tbsp vegetable oil
green cabbage, shredded
1 tsp cumin seeds
3cm fresh ginger, chopped
½ tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp black mustard seeds
1 medium onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, chopped
1 green chilli, sliced
1 tsp salt

Heat the oil in a pan with a lid. Add the mustard seeds and stir for about 30 seconds until they pop. Add the onion and fry over a medium heat for 10 minutes. Add the cumin seeds, garlic, ginger and chilli then fry for 4 minutes more. Add the turmeric and salt then stir in the cabbage. Add 100ml water, stir, then cook, covered, for 10 minutes. Serve in a warmed dish.

Cabbage and Potato Gratin

4 large potatoes, peeled and sliced thinly
2 tbsp butter or margarine
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbsp chopped fresh herbs eg chives/parsley
½ head cabbage, shredded
1 onion, thinly sliced
220ml double cream
110g grated cheese

Preheat the oven to 200 C / Gas 6. Grease a baking dish. Arrange a layer of the potatoes in the base. Sprinkle over half the shredded cabbage then add the rest of the potatoes and a second layer of cabbage. In a saucepan over a medium heat, melt the butter or margarine then add the onion and garlic. Cook and stir for 2 to 3 minutes until fragrant then pour in the cream and add the herbs. Cook and stir for 3 to 4 minutes until warmed through, then pour over the potatoes and season well. Sprinkle the cheese on top. Bake in the oven for 60 to 90 minutes or until the potatoes are tender and soft. If the cheese begins to get too brown on top, cover with foil until cooking is complete then remove at the end of cooking.

Spiced Lentil and Carrot Soup

2 tbsp olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp cumin
2 tsp ground coriander
¼ tsp cinnamon
1 tin chopped tomatoes
½ onion, chopped
500g carrots, chopped
1 tsp turmeric
½ tsp paprika
500g red lentils, rinsed
1 litre vegetable stock

Heat the olive oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until soft, about 2 minutes, then add the spices and sauté for another 5 minutes. Add the carrots and sauté until they are tender. Add the vegetable broth, chopped tomatoes and lentils and stir to combine. Simmer on a low heat for 20 minutes or until the lentils are tender. Whizz with a blender to your desired consistency and season to taste. Serve with a squeeze of lemon and some wholesome bread.

My friend Richard the writer came up for a long weekend to get a breather from London and try to do a bit on his new book, already 2 years past deadline. He wanted to see the North East coast, and so did I, I hadn't seen the sea for a long time. I checked the forecast, there was a massive storm hitting where we were headed, Saltburn, with its high cliffs and quirky funicular railway, the oldest in the country. A storm over the sea can be fantastic and dramatic. I am not keen on particularly keen on drama anymore but we went.

The gale had got up. Driving down the hairpin bends and steep drop to sea level, we got a good aerial view, the sea was crashing against the cliffs, the beach had disappeared, only a low wall separated the ocean from the small car park. I wasn't going to get out the car or park there, the sea was terrifying and sloshing over the wall. I've seen too much footage of upturned floating cars recently. But Richard wanted a walk down the pier, spindly, and now almost submerged.

He asked me to wait in the car park for him. I dropped him off and immediately drove out of the car park and back up the cliff to get away from the sea. But as I was driving up, the car started stuttering and a yellow triangle light appeared on the dashboard. I was nearly out of fuel, that steep incline drained the engine. I managed to stutter to the top where I parked and rang Richard to tell him to walk up the thousand steps to the top or take the funicular, but his phone was ringing in the car. I was stuck at the top with him at the bottom and if I went back down in the car, apart from possibly being swept away, Lainey is only 9 months old – not fair to cut her life so short - I wouldn't get back up with no fuel, and would my brakes even work on the way down if the car cut out. But, there was nothing I could do but risk it and then drive out the other way, up the coast, which wasn't as steep. I got back down to the car park, now in a state of horrible panic and anxiety. Richard all chilled out, drenched and windswept asked if I could just wait for him so he could go and get some fish and chips from an award-winning restaurant he'd spotted. "Richard, can you just get back in the car please" and we drove off. We stuttered off to find a petrol station. That was our afternoon out.

Hope you have a good week,

Isobel