



Monday 4th February 2019

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well. We finally got a smothering of snow. It came on Friday morning and by this morning, Monday, it had almost gone. Three days of winter, that is ok. It did look pretty. It always does initially, for the first day.

Here are some tasty and wholesome recipes you could try this week:

Braised Celery

1 head celery, cut in 10cm pieces
225ml vegetable stock
2 tbsp margarine
1 tbsp chopped parsley

Arrange the celery in a single layer on the bottom of a large frying pan. Season generously with salt and pepper then dot with the margarine. Pour the stock over the celery. Cover the pan and bring to the boil over a medium heat. Reduce to low and simmer for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Celery, Pomegranate and Bulgur Salad

100g coarse bulgur
seeds of ½ large pomegranate
small bunch flat parsley
small head celery, cut in thin slices on bias
75g walnuts, roughly chopped and toasted
1 level tbs chopped mint

Dressing:

juice of ½ large pomegranate
6 tbsp olive oil
clove garlic, crushed

Whisk the dressing ingredients together, season with salt and pepper and set aside. Put the bulgur in a bowl and add hot water to just below the surface of the wheat and leave to stand for 10-15 minutes until just tender but still quite al dente. Add more water if required or drain in a colander if too wet. Put the salad ingredients in a bowl, pour over the dressing, mix and serve.

Sweet Potato and Broccoli Gratin

½ tsp butter/margarine for greasing
200g broccoli
70g mature Cheddar cheese
150ml semi-skimmed milk
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
300g sweet potatoes
black pepper
1 Hen Nation egg
1 tbsp half-fat creme fraiche
½ medium onion

Preheat the oven to 220C/200C Fan/Gas 7. Grease the baking dish with butter or margarine. Wash the sweet potatoes and broccoli. Pat dry with kitchen paper. Cut the potatoes into thin slices. Layer half in bottom of baking dish. Cut the onion into thin slices, then roughly chop. Spread the onion over the sweet potato. Cut the broccoli into slices and spread over the onions in the dish. Grate the cheese. Sprinkle half over the broccoli. Top with the rest of the sweet potato slices. Crack the egg into a jug. Pour in milk to make 200ml liquid. Add the creme fraiche, nutmeg and 2 grinds of black pepper. Mix with a fork. Pour over the vegetables. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Bake in the oven for 35-40 minutes until it's golden brown and cooked through.

Sweet Potato, Apple, Carrot and Lentil Stew

4 tbsp margarine
3 large carrots, peeled and chopped
1 large potato, peeled and chopped
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
½ tsp ground cumin
½ tsp paprika
100g lentils
1 large sweet potato, peeled and chopped
1 apple, peeled, cored and chopped
1 onion, chopped
1 tsp salt
½ tsp chilli powder
1 litre vegetable stock
½ tsp minced ginger

Melt the margarine in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add chopped sweet potato, potato, carrots, apple and onion. Stir and cook the apples and vegetables until the onions are soft and golden, about 10 minutes. Stir in lentils, ginger, black pepper, salt, cumin, chilli powder, paprika and vegetable stock. Bring to the boil; reduce heat, cover and simmer until the lentils are soft, about 30 minutes. With an immersion blender, blend until smooth. Add some water to thin if desired. Warm the soup before serving.

I had a miserable time with the sheep last week. We found one of my big old Wensleydales laid out in the field on a pile of hay. We couldn't get him back on his feet. He was so heavy and so weak. We sat him up and fed him, gave him a glucose solution to try and rouse him. We did this for several days, trying to get him up, to balance him on his feet, to make him stronger, but to no avail. I had to make the call I delay and dread as I know what the outcome will be. I called the vet. My sheep are old. Talk of hydrotherapy, rehabilitation doesn't wash. I love all my sheep but when one is sick and in need that is the time when you really bond, sitting with their head in your lap, stroking them, comforting them. It makes it a million times harder. The vet arrived and said what I expected. At this point I have to walk away.

I knew this time would come when my flock would be old and with lifespans between 12-16 yrs, they would all go in a relatively short time. Sheep are generally quite good at death, grazing one minute and gone the next with nothing much in between. They lie down and go to sleep. I wish it were so for us humans.

Several days after losing the big Wensleydale, while the others were eating their sheep nuts I walked round the perimeter of the long field and onto the river banks to check for any stragglers. I found two semi-eaten carcasses. One was that of a very old Shetland with one front tooth who I'd seen mooching about there the previous day in a world of his own. The other was a black, horned Shetland. Away from the rest of the flock, had they died and then been preyed upon, or had they been killed. That, I will never know.

On that cheery note, I hope you have a good week

Kind wishes,

Isobel