



**Monday 29th July 2019**

Dear Customer,

It is Thursday and today, here in Richmond, it's hotter than Madrid. We're not up there in the 40's like Paris, and late 30's like London but it's extreme for here. It's been 33C. Having said that the TNT delivery man just delivered some dye swatches, he was red in the face and said it was 42C in his garden. But it's come so suddenly, from nowhere, we've had no time to acclimatise, and it's the wrong sort of heat. I may have been over-reacting with curtains closed, not leaving the house and wet flannels. I don't do that when I go on holiday....or maybe I do a bit....but I don't like things being abnormal. You expect it when you go abroad on holiday but you don't expect it in Yorkshire, the last refuge from the heat, it's creepy. Anyway, I'm looking forward to tonight's thunderstorms and then the temperatures dropping back to 20C with a bit of drizzle and some puffs of wind.

It's Friday morning now. Yesterday evening it was just about bearable 28C at 9pm. I took Lainey onto the racecourse with its far-reaching views. I went to see if the storm was coming. But I was beginning to acclimatise. I spoke to a woman up there with her dog. She said she spent the day indoors with her curtains shut. Ernest said that if it carried on another day he wouldn't survive it, it would kill him. It turned into a clear, hot, still and starry night. I went to bed, it was still 23C but so humid. I couldn't sleep and spent the night going back and forth into the spare bedroom to see if it made a difference. I got 2 hours sleep and gave up and got up at an unheard of 5.30am. The storm never came.

It's now Sunday evening and the weather has been horrible all weekend – 15C, dark, wet, unbelievably miserable and with thick air. The forecast is showing rain every day for the next two weeks.

Every summer holiday as a child, on the day school broke up, the caravan would be hooked onto the tow bar and we would set off to Dover to catch the night ferry. The caravan would be full of essentials including Vesta chow mein, Marvel, as fresh milk was hard to come by, biscuits, and butter. The butter would be wrapped in wet tea towels, placed in biscuit tins, and then go into the storage under the caravan seats where they would stay rock hard for the entire summer. My homemade birthday cake also went in. We would spend a week wending our way down through France and over the Pyrenees, coming to settle at a beachside campsite somewhere on the Costa Blanca, occasionally over the Alps to Italy. For the next month I would swim up and down the shore-line amongst the sea horses, trying to dodge my brother who was also at sea with his goggles on, flippers and harpoon gun. I would run about on the beach and round the sandy campsite all day every day with absolutely nothing on – no pants, no sun cream – under the burning sun. I always remember my dad saying daily, proudly, 'it's 100 degrees in the shade'. I stayed completely white, I didn't burn and I didn't tan. It also didn't seem to be a problem managing to sleep – five of us in our Alpine Sprite, which wasn't very big – a tin box on wheels – I can't imagine how hot it was in there. And if you opened the windows the mosquitoes came in. Happy memories which I would happily return to.

Anyway, down to business. We have fabulous spaghetti squash in the bags this week. Preheat the oven to 200C/ 400F/ Gas 6. Halve the squash lengthwise. Use a large spoon and scoop out the squash seeds and discard them. Drizzle the insides of each half with olive oil, rub all over and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place them cut-side down on a baking sheet. Bake for 40-60 minutes until the cut sides are turning golden and the flesh tender and easily pierced with a fork. Fluff up the spaghetti with a fork and serve as desired.

#### **Cauliflower, Courgette and Chickpea Tagine**

1 onion	2 garlic cloves
1 courgette	2 tsp ras al hanut
½ tsp caraway seeds	1 cauliflower
400g tin chickpeas	400g tin chopped tomatoes
75g wholewheat couscous	½ tbsp olive oil
salt and freshly ground black pepper	

*Peel and finely chop the onion. Place a pan on a medium heat for a minute then add the olive oil and onion. Season with salt and pepper and fry gently for 5 minutes stirring occasionally until softened but not coloured. Meanwhile peel and crush the garlic. Halve the courgette lengthways and slice into half-moons ½ cm thick. Stir the courgette, garlic, 2 tsp ras al hanut and the caraway seeds into the onion. Fry for a further 3 minutes. While the vegetables fry, break the cauliflower into small florets. Chop the stalk into bite-sized chunks. Rinse and drain the chickpeas and stir them and the cauliflower into the pan. Tip in the chopped tomatoes. Half fill the tin with water and add that to the pan. Put a lid on the pan, turn up the heat and bring the tagine to the boil. Turn the heat down a little and simmer for 15 minutes stirring occasionally. While the tagine simmers tip the couscous into a heatproof bowl and pour in 150ml boiling water. Put a plate on top of the bowl and set aside to soak for 10 minutes. Season the tagine to taste. Fluff the couscous up and serve topped with the tagine.*

#### **Dhal with Cauliflower**

2 tbsp sunflower oil	1 onion, chopped
1 large garlic clove	30g fresh root ginger, finely chopped
200g yellow lentils	550ml vegetable stock
100g carrots, in small batons	170g cauliflower, cut in florets
3 tbsp chopped fresh coriander	1 tbsp lemon juice
salt and pepper	

*Heat the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 5 minutes or until just starting to soften.*

*Stir in the ginger and cook for 3 minutes. Add the lentils and stir to coat with the onion mixture. Pour in the stock then cover the pan and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for about 15 minutes. Add the carrots and cauliflower, cover again and simmer for 12-15 minutes or until the lentils are tender and the vegetables are cooked. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the coriander and lemon juice and serve.*

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel