



**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

Dear Customer,

The weather has taken a turn for the even worse. I didn't think it could get any darker, wetter, windier or colder on an august day. I've had to get out my winter coat and boots, it's like mid-December. I noticed that the Coop Funeral Care have just relocated from a back street to take up prime position on Richmond market place. They've put a table outside on the pavement with a bowl of flowers and a little fan of brochures on it. Mmmm .....very inviting. 'Could I welcome you in to discuss your coffin Madam'. Richmond isn't for the faint-hearted. Arrive as a perky optimist and within a few short years you're just another morbid, grumpy old bag.

My MP Rishi Sunak is in Boris' new cabinet as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I think there's room for a Monopoly-type board game here. Sod 'I want to be the iron'... and .....I'll be the hat '. More like 'I'll be Secretary of State for Defence'..... 'ok, I'll be Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy'.

Rishi was always destined for the top, catapulted into this safe Tory seat replacing William Hague. Young, shiny and I think vegetarian, his wife certainly is, he went to Oxford then Stanford then made his fortune in Silicon Valley. He's always looked very out of context pictured at livestock markets alongside ruddy Dales farmers. So yesterday I wrote him a long letter about banning grouse shooting and about returning the National Parks to the wild, the wildlife and the people. William Hague was always very responsive to correspondence, Rishi less so, I think he's working on the new Social Care Plan. I bet he's been fun to be with on holiday " ....18 million, 19, 20 million – ssshhh, don't disturb me, I'm trying to work out how many of them there'll be.....".

Another couple of weeks isn't it before it all kicks off again.....and with bells on. Things are stirring, they've returning from their holidays, amassing on the borders, taking up position. It's the calm before the battle of all battles. Culloden here we go. It is going to be one bloody mess, and us, the hapless spectators can but watch on.

So in conclusion, don't look out the window, don't switch on your TV – don't look, don't listen, and above all, don't think, and everything will be ok. And here are a few quick and tasty recipes you could try this week:

#### **Courgette, Potato and Tomato Gratin**

225g tomatoes	225g courgettes
225g potatoes	1 onion
½ tbsp dried oregano	3 tbsp olive oil

Slice the tomatoes and courgettes into dices about 5mm thick, sprinkle with a little salt and set aside. Slice the potatoes and thinly slice the courgettes. Thinly slice the onions. Preheat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4. Arrange each vegetable in a single overlapping layer alternating potato, tomatoes, courgettes and onion in a heatproof dish. Season with salt and plenty of pepper. Sprinkle over the oregano and drizzle with olive oil. Bake for 50-60 minutes until the potatoes are tender. During the cooking time baste 2 or 3 times with its juices. Serve hot.

#### **Tomato and Courgette Pasta Bowl**

<i>vegetable oil</i>	<i>1 onion, finely chopped</i>
<i>2 garlic cloves, finely chopped</i>	<i>1 tbsp tomato puree</i>
<i>400g tomatoes, diced</i>	<i>2 courgettes, cut into 2cm dice</i>
<i>2 carrots, cut into 2cm dice</i>	<i>1 litre good vegetable stock</i>
<i>200g small pasta shapes eg orzo or macaroni</i>	<i>handful basil leaves</i>
<i>50g hard cheese, grated (optional)</i>	

*Heat 3 tbsp of oil in a large saucepan. Add the onion and fry gently for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the garlic and stir for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, tomato puree, courgettes and carrots and stir for 2 minutes. Add the stock and season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, add the pasta then reduce the heat to a simmer for about 10 minutes until the pasta is just tender. Shred and stir in the basil leaves and half the cheese. Serve drizzled with olive oil and scattered with the remaining cheese.*

#### **Sage Roasted Cabbage with Lentils**

<i>1 cabbage</i>	<i>3 tbsp olive oil</i>
<i>2 garlic cloves</i>	<i>400g tin lentils</i>
<i>12 sage leaves</i>	<i>1 lemon</i>
<i>1 tsp maple syrup or honey</i>	<i>salt and freshly ground black pepper</i>

*Preheat the oven to 200C/ Fan 180C/ Gas 6. Heat up a large baking tray in the oven. Quarter the cabbage, remove the core and separate the leaves. Arrange the leaves on the baking tray and drizzle with 1 tbsp of the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast in the oven for 10 minutes or until tender and starting to crisp around the edges. Meanwhile drain and rinse the lentils. Peel and finely chop the garlic and mix with the lentils. Scatter the lentils over the cabbage once it has crisped up a little. Top with the sage leaves and return to the oven for 5-10 minutes or until the lentils have warmed through and the sage has crisped up a little. Zest the lemon into a bowl then squeeze in 2 tbsp of lemon juice. Whisk with the remaining 2 tbsp olive oil and the maple syrup or honey. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle over the lentils and cabbage once cooked.*

I was contacted by a student last week doing a research project on sustainable diets and the role of gender. I didn't have much data to offer up – no ages, A-level results, no salaries or lack of, no data on who got on the property ladder in time. I can't profile you. I wouldn't want to. I just told her that you are all absolutely fantastic. The other thing I do know is that we have about 95% women to 5% men at most. That had us wondering, surmising. What were the men up to ! I know from watching Place in the Sun that men seem to like cooking more than women these days. Maybe they just don't like ordering. It was interesting for me to think about it and perhaps what had changed in these 25 years. The female to male ratio hasn't. But what has changed are the long lists of what we can and can't eat. I can see people taking responsibility for their health, not through pill popping but through sophisticated diets and nutrition. And now I'm on the subject, what does stand out when some of our men are ordering, are some 'extreme' diets – 20 heads of celery, a red cabbage and a banana.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel