



**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Dear Customer,

I was hoping to write a jolly letter to bring in 2020. But we've had a short, sharp, shock. Just as we were stretching and yawning our way out of the festive season, getting ready for new year, Trump targets, bombs and kills the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important person in Iran. The spectre of War rears its head on a mere 'day 3' of the new decade.

It's a grim reminder that we can't take peace for granted, nor anything else. Australians can't take for granted that their country will remain habitable into the future. The fires are catastrophic, the hundreds of millions of animals burning to death, numbers impossible to imagine. And the human lives lost and lives ruined. Nature is traumatised, the floods and fires and sea level rises. I've been attempting to understand better how human activity is affecting climate change. It isn't hard to understand in its simplistic version. All the CO2 we pump up into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuels and deforestation doesn't disperse into the universe, it enshrouds the earth in a heavy blanket of gas which impedes the heat from escaping. As is the case with methane, associated with livestock farming and NO2, nitrus oxide, associated with the use of nitrates as fertilisers in non-organic farming and burning fossil fuels. Thirteen hundred independent scientific experts from across the world have concluded there's a more than 95% probability that human activities have, over the last 50 years, warmed our planet.

Here are some tasty recipes you could try with your broccoli. We keep cooking and carry on...

#### **Lemon Broccoli Pasta**

300g pasta	head of broccoli, in florets
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced	grated zest 1 lemon
1 red chilli, seeded and finely chopped	3 tbsp olive oil
25g basil	

*Preheat the oven to 220°C / Gas 7. Cook the pasta in a pan of boiling water according to packet instructions. Meanwhile, toss together the broccoli, garlic, lemon zest, chilli and half of the pecorino. Drizzle over 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and stir until everything is coated. Spread out evenly on a large, non-stick baking tray and roast for 6–8 minutes, or until the broccoli is tender and just beginning to brown. Reserve 100ml of the pasta cooking water then drain the pasta and return to the pan. Stir in the roasted broccoli, reserved cooking liquid, remaining tablespoon of olive oil and most of the basil leaves. Serve garnished with rest of the basil leaves and a good grinding of black pepper.*

#### **Broccoli Soup with Herby Croutons**

30g oil	1 leek or stalk celery, sliced
1 medium onion, diced	1 medium potato, diced
2 garlic cloves	3 sprigs of thyme, leaves removed from the stems
1¼ litres vegetable stock	300g roasted broccoli
juice of ¼ of a lemon	salt and black pepper

#### **For the Croutons**

300g stale bread	1 tbsp oil
2 sprigs of thyme, leaves removed from the stems	2 sprigs of rosemary, leaves removed from the stems
½ tsp smoked paprika	1 tsp sesame seeds

*First, make the croutons. Preheat the oven to 180C /350F / Gas 4. Rip up the stale bread into bite-sized pieces. Place all the crouton ingredients into a mixing bowl and mix thoroughly, until all the croutons have been well coated. Transfer them to a baking tray and roast for 15-20 minutes, or until golden and crisp. To make the soup, pour the oil in a saucepan and add the leek / celery and onion, stir and cook until it is starting to colour. Add the potatoes, garlic and thyme, then cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the stock, bring to a simmer and cook for 15-20 minutes, or until the potato is tender. Add the roast broccoli and, using a hand blender, blitz to a smooth and creamy consistency. Add the lemon juice, season to taste and serve with a good handful of croutons and a sprinkle of sesame seeds.*

In my last letter to Rishi I said that as well as an economic levelling up with the North, that they should think about a cultural levelling up. When I was 11-yrs old I remember going to see The Dice Players by George de la Tour in Preston Park Museum. It was, and still is, the only art 'masterpiece' in the North. In the north of the North that is, above Leeds / Manchester, in the red wall..... I think there's a bit of Hockney and Lowry in West Yorkshire. It's verging on criminal that the London galleries only show 5-10 per cent of their collections and the rest is stored away and will never see the light of day. Stored for who, for what, and for when ! The British Museum shows just 1 per cent of its 8 million artefacts. There should be a 'National Gallery of the North' and a 'Northern British Museum'. Honestly, in these parts many, many have never been to London, nor have their children, nor will they ever go. They think they couldn't cope with the number of people and that they'd get stabbed. And it's so expensive.

Give us some galleries, bring us some treasure, not just another care home and car factory. There is no comparison when it comes to firing a child's imagination between a text book and actually seeing an Egyptian mummy for example, or seeing pre-Raphaelite paintings or Matisse, Rembrandt, Pollock. Same for an adult for that matter. Note, not even Banksy has ventured north. And with galleries come cultural events, cultural jobs, cultural credibility, tourism, better status for the arts colleges. If it's good for the North, it's good for the country. Anyway, I'm not going to write to him again for a while.

This all sounds like a very serious letter and I didn't want it to be ! It's that January thing, and compounded by the spectre of WWII, again.

Three snowdrops have come into flower in my garden and Lainey is making nests in the sofas and armchairs, rearranging the cushions in a frenzy and running round the house with her toys in her mouth whining. I've realised it's two months since she was in season and the gestation period for a dog is two months, this is the time she would be having her babies. She's seems very happy though, just busy.

I wish you a good week.....and peace on earth,

Isobel