



Monday 20th April 2020

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well and coping in the lockdown. It's another sunny morning here in Richmondshire. Everything looks increasingly divine as spring blooms, and then blooms again to another level. The birds are singing from dawn till dusk. Never has their song filled the air as it does now. We are so quiet in our enfeebled state. Were it not for such a harrowing reason it would be refreshing. But actually, it still is, I think we could get used to it. Less human activity on the planet'the big global rest'....the planet needs it, badly needs it. As soon as this ends and we can return to other things, we will remember the trajectory we are on before everything stopped. We can be sure, Greta will return.

And here are a few recipes you could try this week:

Cauliflower and Courgette Fattah

<i>1 tbsp chilli infused olive oil</i>	<i>1 cauliflower, broken into florets</i>
<i>350g courgettes, cut into 1cm thick slices</i>	<i>2 onions, sliced</i>
<i>2 wholemeal pitta breads</i>	<i>2 tsp cumin seeds</i>
<i>150g natural yoghurt</i>	<i>2 cloves garlic, crushed</i>
<i>15g curly parsley, finely chopped</i>	<i>30g toasted flaked almonds</i>

Preheat the oven to 220°C / Gas 7. Heat the oil in a large frying pan and fry the cauliflower, courgette and onion for 10 minutes turning frequently. Tip them into a large roasting tin. Tear the pittas into bitesize pieces and scatter them into the tin with the cumin. Mix well. Bake for 15 minutes until the pitta is toasted. Combine the yoghurt, garlic and parsley with a little seasoning. Spoon the vegetables onto serving plates, drizzle with the yogurt and serve with the almonds scattered over the top.

Persian Cauliflower Omelette

<i>1 small / medium cauliflower</i>	<i>1 onion</i>
<i>oil</i>	<i>1 tsp turmeric</i>
<i>handful parsley</i>	<i>1½ dessertspoons plain flour</i>
<i>¾ tsp baking powder</i>	<i>5 Hen Nation eggs</i>

Cook the cauliflower in boiling water. Mash and leave to cool. Chop the onion and fry in a little oil until soft and golden. Stir in the turmeric and set aside to cool. Chop the parsley. When all ingredients are cool, mix the cauliflower, flour, baking powder, onions and parsley. Heat enough oil to cover the base of a large frying pan. Beat the eggs until frothy then stir in the cauliflower mixture. Pour into the hot oil, reduce the heat, cover and cook over a gentle heat for 15 minutes then turn over and cook for a further 10 minutes. Serve with pickles or salad..

Swiss Chard and Potato Gratin

<i>bunch of swiss chard</i>	<i>400g potatoes</i>
<i>300ml double cream</i>	<i>1 heaped tbsp wholegrain mustard</i>
<i>150g Caerphilly or Cheddar cheese, coarsely grated</i>	<i>1 tbsp butter</i>

Preheat the oven to 200°C / Gas 6. Cut the chard leaves away from the stalks, then cut the stalks into 10cm long sticks. Cook the stalks for 2 minutes in boiling water then add the leaves and cook for until wilted. Drain well. Chop the chard leaves roughly. Slice the potatoes thin. Mix together the cream, mustard and half of the cheese. Grease a gratin dish and arrange half of the potato slices over the bottom. Top with the drained chard leaves and stalks then spoon over half of the cream mixture. Top with the rest of the potatoes, then spoon over the remaining cream mixture. Top with rest of the cheese then bake for 30 minutes.

That we are 'following the science' is I'm sure bringing us all some comfort. I don't suppose it matters what the science is as long as it's science. In fact there has recently been some new research from Princeton University on how far a sneeze can travel, quite timely. The WHO's guidance was 1 metre, our guidance stretched it to 2 metres just to be safe. They have discovered that sneeze particles can travel at least 6 metres. I think I could have told them that, I think we all could have. They can split the atom and send people to the moon, but nobody knew this, not in even the centres of excellence for Global Infectious Disease. It's bewildering. And now in April 2020 they have called up an expert panel to discuss whether face masks work. Am I missing something. It's like some weird psychological drama.

I think I might rather follow common sense than 'follow the science'. 'Following the science' is the new Field Marshall Haig. His famous bad judgement was responsible for sending hundreds of thousands of men to their deaths in the Somme and at Passchendaele. We are set to have the highest death toll in Europe, obviously, as unlike most other countries we did nothing to try and stop it, letting it spread like a wildfire through London and the rest of the country. So the government are now in retreat, they are freaking out. They are seeing the consequences of their decisions, all taken with the best intentions I'm sure, but they certainly aren't going to let us out anytime soon.

I watch the Daily Briefings and the Select Committees, what an inept, bumbling, hopeless, aimless mess, it makes you want to weep. We can't go back and change those decisions, bring back those lives lost, back to their loved ones. Now we need not 'the science', but 'brilliant science'.

Anyway, some good news. When I went to check on the rabbit with myxomatosis, it had gone, along with all the pieces of carrot and apple I'd left. There are almost no foxes in this area, they've been hunted out of existence, so I think it left on its own four feet. It's hopefully back in its burrow, self-isolating but on the mend.

I'm sorry, I was trying to avoid writing about it, I did a 'search' in my brain for something cheerful, nothing came up. Then I wrote a few paragraphs on how lovely it was that celebrities had disappeared from our lives to be replaced by ordinary people and their voices, the conversation had changed. But then the celebrities changed, they started mutating into weeping, empathising wrecks, they self-filmed their tears and started singing from their sofas to find their way back in. Their egos atrophying in the lack of limelight. It turned into a two-paragraph vitriolic attack so I deleted it.

I'm sure it will be ok in the end. As our darling, our Vera Lynn, Captain Tom Moore said, 'we will get through it'.

I hope you have a good week. Very best wishes, Isobel