



**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you ok. I hope it finds you well. I don't know where it came from but it's May. In fact today is Bank Holiday Monday. We should be dancing round the maypole. The weather has been fabulous, but grey and rainy today, miserable but we do need the rain.

Here are a couple of quick and tasty recipes you could try this week:

**Courgette and Aubergine Agrodolce**

<i>Aubergine</i>	<i>2 courgettes</i>
<i>4 tbsp olive oil</i>	<i>2 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced</i>
<i>1 tbsp caster sugar</i>	<i>4 tbsp red wine vinegar</i>
<i>fresh mint, chopped</i>	<i>fresh parsley, chopped</i>

*Cut the aubergine and courgettes into 1cm thick slices lengthways. Brush the slices lightly on both sides with ½ tbsp olive oil and season. Cook the aubergine and courgette slices, for 6-8 minutes, in a preheated pan, turning once until they are tender and golden brown. Transfer the vegetables to a serving platter, overlapping the slices. Heat the remaining olive oil in a small pan, add the garlic and fry gently until tinged a light brown. Add the sugar, vinegar, salt and pepper and bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Pour the dressing over the vegetables. Scatter the mint and parsley and serve with some nice bread.*

**Aubergine, Courgette and Tomato Pasta**

<i>aubergine, cut into 2cm chunks</i>	<i>2 tbsp olive oil</i>
<i>2 garlic cloves, sliced</i>	<i>¼ tsp chilli flakes</i>
<i>400g tin chopped tomatoes</i>	<i>1 courgette, cut into 2cm chunks</i>
<i>1 tsp capers, roughly chopped</i>	<i>basil, leaves torn</i>
<i>spaghetti</i>	<i>cheese, grated</i>

*Preheat the oven to 220°C / Gas 7. On a baking tray, toss the aubergine and courgette cubes with 1 tbsp oil then season. Roast for 15-20 minutes until turning golden. Meanwhile, heat the remaining 1 tbsp oil in a large frying pan, add the garlic and chilli flakes and cook gently for 5 minutes to soften. Tip in the tomatoes and capers, bring to the boil, then turn down and simmer gently for 20 minutes. When the aubergine and courgette is ready, add to the tomato sauce and simmer until the sauce has thickened and vegetables are soft. Stir in most of the basil and season. While the sauce is bubbling, cook the spaghetti according to pack instructions. Mix the sauce and spaghetti together, scatter with basil and cheese and serve.*

I just want to get in the car and go – anywhere – but ideally drive right round the edge of Britain, hugging the coast, the whole circumference. Anyway, instead, I'm just going to clean the kitchen floor. It hasn't seen the mop for a very long time. And I did so well cleaning the front windows yesterday. What a difference to be able to see out properly, not through a haze. They gleam.

Our saga goes doesn't it. I usually catch the tail end of the 5pm - 'Hancock, Witty and Valence' show - the Hectors House slot. I can imagine them in the wings.

'Just remember Matt, whatever you do, do not apologise, it would reek of guilt. Just say it back to me one more time ' we did the right thing at the right time' ..... 'we did the right thing at the right time' ... 'ok, in you go, hold your nerve, you'll be fine'.

I do feel sorry for Matt Hancock, he didn't call any of these shots but has to front it and ostensibly take responsibility. I doubt he sleeps very well at night.

I have a terrible admission. Upstairs in my spare bedroom is the stockpile. I shudder at the amount of toilet rolls, the tins of baked beans, dog food, the tins of fruit, soup, pasta. I was one of the catastrophising people who accumulated it way, way back when there were no shortages and the WHO thought there was no person to person transmission. I also booked Waitrose delivery slots as far as I could onto the horizon, up to 8<sup>th</sup> June. Once a fortnight on a Monday evening new supplies of biscuits, chocolate, fruit juices, margarine, almond milk, bread, washing powder, dog food and more, are deposited at the bottom of my drive. I pile it all into the wheelbarrow and bring it to the back of a house.

I know the couple who run the Post Office. Any cheques I need to deposit and parcels I need to send are left with cash just inside the door to the disgust of the people queuing 2 metres apart down the street. I know Pete Warne from the grocery store pretty well too, my brother used to go to school with him and he never left the area. I will ring him if I need anything, he holds my card details, I can do a grab and go without entering the store. I fill my pockets with dock leaves to open gates with on my walks. So all in all I'm pretty well -organised. However, risk is not eliminated of course. I was walking up the road and a consultant from Darlington Memorial Hospital, came huffing and puffing past me on his bike. Except, going up-hill he was barely faster than I was walking. I had nowhere to escape to downwind of him, I squinted my eyes and tried not to breathe.

We had our weekly Sunday sneak-out in the car, into the Dales for a walk. For the first time in years I thought we might go to the same place where I got stung by a hornet on Boxing Day when I pulled my trousers down in one of the army portable loos. A beautiful place but with a very bad memory which is why I hadn't returned. We got out the car and approached the first gate, no dock leaves in sight I grabbed at a clump of grass to open the gate with. Then a shooting pain went through my finger. It was agony. Was it the same hornet, a snake, or just a vicious stinging nettle pushing up under the grass. It sent me into a panic and throbbed for the rest of the afternoon. It was the not knowing. So not a great outing.

We have to take things a day at a time don't we and eventually it will end and the normal life we remember will return to us.

I hope you have a good week,

Very best wishes,

Isobel