



Monday 11th May 2020

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well, and above all, alert. It's a cold, windy and wet old Sunday here in the Dales. At least it's just a one-dayer supposedly. When the weather takes a plunge, so does my mood. A quick look at the forecast shows I might start to brighten up a bit at around 6pm.

We have butternut squash in lots of the bags this week, full of vitamins A and C. If you don't feel up to the chopping, simply pierce it through in a few places with a sharp knife and put on foil in a roasting tin at 220C/ 425F/ Gas 7. Let it roast for an hour or so, until the skin is starting to shrivel and go brown and the squash is tender when you put a knife through it. Then you can break it open, remove the seeds and scoop out the flesh.

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

Roasted Butternut Squash Macaroni Cheese

500g butternut squash, 1 clove garlic, crushed

1 tbsp chopped fresh sage

225g macaroni

40g plain flour

175g extra mature cheddar, grated

1 tbsp olive oil

40g butter

600ml semi skimmed milk

Peel and deseed the squash then cut into 4cm chunks. Preheat the oven to 190°C/ Gas 5. Put the squash in a roasting tin and scatter over the garlic and sage, then drizzle over the oil. Roast for 30 minutes until tender and golden. Meanwhile, cook the macaroni until tender. Drain and set aside. Melt the butter in a pan and stir in the flour. Remove from the heat and gradually stir in the milk to form a smooth sauce. Return to the heat and cook, stirring continuously, until it comes to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 2 minutes. Remove the sauce from the heat and stir in two thirds of the grated cheese. Preheat the grill to high. Stir the macaroni into the cheese sauce, then carefully fold in the squash, taking care not to break it up. Spoon the mixture into an ovenproof dish and scatter over the rest of the cheese. Place under the grill for 3–5 minutes until bubbling.

Yellow Pepper, Aubergine and Chickpea Curry

500g potatoes, peeled and diced

1 onion, chopped

1 yellow pepper, diced

400g tin chopped tomatoes

1 tbsp oil

1 aubergine, diced

1 tbsp medium curry powder

400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed

Cook the potatoes in boiling water for 5–8 minutes until just tender, then drain. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a frying pan and stir-fry the onion, aubergine and pepper for 8–10 minutes. Add the curry powder and cook for 1 minute more. Stir in the chopped tomatoes, 300ml water, chickpeas and reserved potatoes, and cook for 10 minutes. Season to taste and garnish with chopped coriander (optional). Serve with cooked rice or warm naan breads.

Celeriac Remoulade

1 lemon

400g celeriac

1 tbsp crème fraiche

1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped

3 tbsp mayonnaise

1 tbsp Dijon mustard

Add the juice of half the lemon to a bowl of cold water. Peel and finely julienne the celeriac. Drop the celeriac pieces into the lemon water to stop them discolouring. Drain and pat dry on kitchen paper then mix the celeriac with the juice of the other half lemon and a pinch of salt and leave for 10 minutes. Drain off, discard the juice and add in the mayonnaise, crème fraiche, mustard and parsley, season and mix well.

I am getting the usual string of emails from companies trying to sell services, all struggling on, trying to get business where there is none to be had. Our economy is wound down to almost nothing. One of them was from someone starting an online clothing platform, wholesaling round the world. Hopeless. I explained that Izzy Lane was slowing up, that it had built-in obsolescence. Don't we all. My sheep are slowly departing this life. One day there will be one sheep left, and one jumper for sale. In the meantime, they are nonchalantly chomping on the new sweet spring grass.

We on the other hand are a bit lacking in greens at the moment, waiting for the first spinaches, chards and salads, for the English season to get going. I'm told from Devon they are quite imminent.

I've been in a state of shock all week as Diane has been unwell, has all the symptoms, and is isolated at home. I've been very worried about her. And of course, concerned about my own minimal exposure to her. I understand why my brother went silent on me for several weeks when he thought he had it. Then when I rang my nephew in London for a chat to see if he was ok, he was not ok. I have never heard him sound so depressed. When I broached the virus subject, he said he thought he might have had it, he couldn't watch any news and that he just couldn't talk about it. Seemingly the virus is one thing, but the fear of it is another, sending one privately, rigid with fear. These are the days when a rogue sneeze can trigger full-blown panic.

I am writing this pre Boris Johnson's address tonight. The talk has been of us entering a magical wonderland of living in bubbles. But God, you're going to need to love those you'll be bubbling up with. I wouldn't trust anyone unless I had an app with a camera that showed their every move. And as for the app we're all supposed to be getting, why can't it tell us before we have an encounter and instruct us to do a 'U-turn', not after the event. What a mess.

Very best wishes,

Isobel

PS..... It's now Monday morning post the 'address to the nation'. No bubbles then, not one, just back to work we go. The onus on us to try and re-find normal life while dodging the virus. It is over to us, it's the People's Virus.

PPS.....Diane is feeling a lot better today.....phew