



Monday 28th December 2020

Dear Customer,

I hope you're well and had a nice Christmas of sorts.

No beating about the bush, this week I am taking you back in time to the Anglo Saxon period and a Medieval bag. It's Boxing Day and as I write this there are 10,000 Gaul and Roman carts attempting to de-invade 'Angle Land'. Trade routes are blocked.

The typical Anglo-Saxon peasant diet was a healthy one, and mainly vegetarian as the hunting of boar and deer were the preserve of rich landowners. They would generally eat 'briw', a potage of barley or wheat and vegetables.

Fill your tummies, we'll end 2020 in style.

Here you go:

Anglo Saxon 'Briw'

200g carrots diced
200g onions diced
200g leeks diced
1 litre vegetable broth
½ tsp sage
½ tsp dried rosemary
¼ tsp salt
1 tbs balsamic vinegar
40g barley flakes

200g parsnips diced
200g swede diced
100g cabbage or other greens chopped
1 bay leaf
½ tsp dried thyme
¼ tsp black pepper
very good slug of red wine, plus one down the throat
40g rolled oats

Peel and chop all the vegetables. Add the carrots, parsnips, onions and swede to a large casserole dish with a good dash of the veg broth. Saute for 10 minutes or until softened. Add the leeks, cabbage and any other veg you might want to add and simmer for an additional 5 minutes. Add the broth, seasoning, and wine and stir well. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Stir in the barley and oats and continue simmering, uncovered, for an additional 20 minutes or until grains are cooked. Stir in the vinegar, remove the bay leaf and adjust the seasonings.

It's blowing a storm up here in the Dales, Storm Bella to be precise. Here in this pyjama-wearing no-mans land between Christmas and New Year. A good time to catch up on some sleep and for doing nothing at all.

At least we have a DEAL, thank heavens for that. The 'mutant' induced chaos at the ports should gradually ease, to be replaced by some 'customs' chaos after 31st December. But that too will ease in time and the peppers and tomatoes and all the varied, sunny fare we've come to expect will come rolling back across the seas. I'm so sorry for the disruption.

And letting rip with the format this week, given there is no naughty list, here's another mouth-watering dish you could try:

Baked Swede and Onion

1 swede, peeled and cut into 2-3cm cubes
1 rosemary sprig, leaves finely chopped
50g butter or margarine
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
250ml vegetable stock

2 tbsp olive oil
6 thyme sprigs
3 onions, thinly sliced
2 bay leaves
grating of nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Put the swede in a roasting tin with the oil. Add the chopped rosemary and leaves from 2 thyme sprigs, plus salt and plenty of black pepper, then toss together well. Cook in the oven for 45 minutes, stirring a couple of times, until soft and tinged with gold in places. Meanwhile, melt the butter or margarine in a large saucepan. Add the onions, garlic, bay, leaves from 2 more thyme sprigs and a generous pinch of salt. Cook over a medium heat, stirring often for 20 minutes, until the onions are soft and golden. Stir the onions into the swede. Add the stock, a good grating of nutmeg, a pinch of salt and a generous grind of black pepper. Scatter the remaining thyme leaves over the top and return to the oven for 30-40 minutes, until the stock has become thick and syrupy. Remove from the oven, taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary. Leave to stand for 5 minutes before serving.

So this is it, the last letter of 2020 – signed, sealed and delivered. I checked the BBC news website earlier. There was a photograph of a shop window with an illuminated sign saying ‘BRING ON 2021’. Effervescent with Christmas cheer, my immediate thought was..... ‘be careful what you wish for’.

No, no, no ! We will see off this virus, we will get our lives back. The days are lengthening, the snowdrops will be pop up soon, spring will come.

Kindest wishes,

Isobel