



## **Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

Dear Customer,

I hope you're ok and coping with being penned in again. It's Sunday and we have been deep in snow and ice for a week. Locked down and snowed up, a double-lock. Not even a trip to the recycling bins to break the day up. But today thankfully, a slow thaw seems underway. I woke up to the glorious sight of a strip of green grass under the hedge where the snow was dripping. I love snow but only once a year for one day. I hope that's it for the year now. I live in fear of a winter the likes of which Ernest remembers from when he was a boy, snow down this lane 6ft high which lasted months.

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

### Spaghetti with Tomato and Aubergine Sauce

1 aubergine, cut into 2cm chunks	¼ tsp chilli flakes
1 tbsp olive oil	2 garlic cloves, sliced
400g tin chopped tomatoes	1 tsp capers, roughly chopped
fresh basil, leaves torn	spaghetti

Preheat the oven to 220°C/ Gas 7. On a baking tray, toss the aubergines 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. As soon as the aubergine is ready, add to the tomato sauce and simmer until the sauce has thickened and the aubergine is soft (5-10 minutes). Stir in the basil and season. While the sauce is bubbling, cook the spaghetti according to pack instructions. Tip the spaghetti into the sauce and toss to combine.

### Gnocchi with Courgettes and Ricotta

2 tsp olive oil	500g gnocchi
2 courgettes, cut into long thin strips	2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 tbsp capers, drained	1 lemon, zested and halved, plus extra to serve
25g mint, leaves torn	100g ricotta

Heat the oil in a wide frying pan, then add the gnocchi and fry for 4 minutes, without moving them. Turn the gnocchi by scraping them up with a 'fish' slice (some tasty crispy bits will already be starting to form), then cook for 4 minutes more, until golden, puffed and crisp. Tip into a bowl. Add the courgettes to the pan and cook for 1 minute over a high heat until just starting to wilt. Stir in the garlic, capers, lemon zest and a squeeze of juice, if needed. Season and take off the heat. Fold in the gnocchi and most of the mint. Dot with the ricotta. Scatter over a few more mint leaves and serve with lemon wedges for squeezing over.

I went past the mirror the other day and saw something really disturbing – a near mullet. I did that wallpaper scissor cut back in the early summer but have not touched it since apart from a few nail scissor snips at my fringe and the sides. It seems the conclusion to these DIY attempts are mullets. Hence their re-emergence. Alarmed, I found some fabric-cutting scissors and hacked away at the back to a short bob of sorts. Off came the last inches of the blonde highlights, grown out and chopped off. I am left with my natural hair colour which I haven't seen in many years. In all its glory, the colour of pure ditch water.

Before the first lockdown I needed to see a dentist which I kept delaying. Then of course everything kicked off. I have one tooth on borrowed time, so wobbly I almost have to hold it in place to brush it. It certainly wouldn't survive a dental impression putty tray - which at the best of times feels like it will pull all my teeth out with it. Because that tooth has moved it has now taken a chunk out of the tooth below. You can take your chances can't you and try and see dentists, hairdressers and the like between waves. Or, you can let yourself drop to pieces with a view to putting yourself back together again one day when we come out the other side.

It's Lainey's birthday today, she's 3-yrs old. What a beautiful and amazing dog she is. Except perhaps at 2am. It can take me a long time to get to sleep. Eventually I drop off. As soon as I find my way to a deep sleep, I get woken up to the sound of Lainey manically scratching herself. Oh, not again. I then feel her standing next to the bed staring at me. I lay there for some seconds trying to ignore. It won't stop I can still feel her staring at me, She needs to go out. I can't bear it.

"FOR GOD'S SAKE LAINEY, NOT AGAIN.....IT'S EVERY BLOODY NIGHT" ..... I shout, in a hushed, muted, shout. She hears it as..... "QUICK, IT'S THE SQUIRREL" .....gets excited and runs up to the window to stand on her hind legs to see if she can see it.

I drag myself out of bed, it's freezing, and she tanks it downstairs, 'why didn't you go properly when I let you out earlier' and runs down the garden to see if she can find the squirrel. By the time she comes back in I'm wide awake and have to start trying to get to sleep again. Honestly, it's every bloody night.

Tuesday Morning:

I didn't get the letter finished off yesterday as planned. It had thawed enough to get the car out. I was going to take the recycling, which was exciting, and go up to the Izzy Lane unit to pick something up. The recycling area was cordoned off due to overspill so I went to the unit. My fob didn't work to open the shutter doors so I came home again to get the other fob. That didn't work either so I had to call the landlady. While waiting for her I thought I'd nip round the Georgian racecourse with Lainey which is adjacent. I got half-way round and found a small snowdrift, the rest having now thawed. I threw Lainey's ball into it. She pounced on the ball. I went to pick it up again, and as I did Lainey leapt up and smashed me in the face. It really hurt. I instantly felt my lips starting to swell. I picked up a handful of snow and held it on my face, it turned red with blood. I kept putting more snow on it and rushed back to the car and came home. My dodgy tooth had a near miss, the impact was just to the right of it.

It ruined the day. I felt sick with shock. The arguments with myself – 'no, you can't get concussed from a smack in the mouth.....', 'this is absolutely nothing, grow up'.....'no, don't look on the internet'.... 'stop being ridiculous, all you've got is a graze on your top lip and a bit of swelling'... 'you do this every time'.... 'look, if you die, you die...ok ?'..... 'yes ok'

Very best wishes and stay safe,

Isobel