



Monday 15th March 2021

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. There's been a cold wind blowing here but spring is visibly at the ready. A few daffodils in sheltered spots have managed to shiver open. The toads have filled the pond and are nonchalantly tumbling about mating. The three new goldfish have never seen anything like it, these strange little monster creatures that have taken over their calm waters and eat their fish food.

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

Parsnip, Carrot and Potato Latke

450g potatoes, peeled and coarsely grated
125g parsnips, coarsely grated
1 tsp caraway seeds
2 tbsp butter or margarine, melted

125g carrots, coarsely grated
1 onion, coarsely grated
2 Hen Nation eggs, beaten
flat leaf parsley, roughly chopped

Preheat the oven to 180C / Gas 4. Put the grated potato, carrot, parsnip and onion into a clean, dry tea towel and squeeze out as much liquid out as possible, then tip into a large bowl. Mix in the caraway seeds and eggs, then season generously. Grease a 20cm loose-bottomed cake tin and tip the grated mixture in. Gently press to level it out, then bake for 40 minutes. Remove from the oven and pour over the melted butter or margarine. Put it back in the oven for 15 minutes or until golden. Carefully remove from the tin, sprinkle over the parsley and serve cut into wedges

Parsnip and Apple Soup with Hazelnuts

100g blanched hazelnuts, roughly chopped
450g parsnips, peeled and cut into 1cm chunks
4 tbsp vegetable oil

20g sage, leaves picked
2 apples, peeled and cut into 1cm chunks
1 litre hot fresh vegetable stock

Preheat the oven to 220°C / Gas 7. Reserve a small handful of the nuts and sage leaves. Toss the rest on a baking tray with the parsnips, apples and 1 tbsp oil then season. Spread out and roast for about 30 minutes until just tender. Discard the sage and transfer the tray contents to a blender (or use a stick blender). Blend, in batches if necessary, with most of the stock. Add the remaining stock to the tray to lift off any remaining caramelised morsels, adding these to the blender as well. Blend until smooth, loosening with a little water if needed and season. Heat the remaining 3 tbsp oil in a small pan. Add the reserved sage and hazelnuts; fry for 1 minute on a medium heat, until golden and crisp. Serve topped with the crispy sage and nuts.

Orange Cakes

175g butter or margarine, softened
grated zest and juice of 1½ oranges
3 Hen Nation eggs, beaten
1½ tbsp organic milk

175g soft light brown sugar
125g sultanas
175g self-raising flour
100g granulated sugar

Preheat the oven to 180°C / Gas 4. Line a deep 12-hole muffin tin with paper cases. In a large bowl, beat together the butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Stir in the grated zest of 1 orange and the sultanas before adding the eggs, a little at a time, beating well after each addition. Sift in the flour and gently fold in, adding enough milk to make the mixture drop off the end of a spoon when tapped. Spoon the mixture evenly into the tins, and level the tops with the back of a spoon. Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden and a skewer inserted in the centre comes out clean. Meanwhile, mix together the remaining orange zest, the juice and granulated sugar and pour over the tops of the cakes. Allow to cool in the tins.

I'm very late with the letter this week. I did write it on Sunday but then deleted it. I thought better of telling you all about 'le tueur de l'Oise' who murdered eight young women in the Paris region, and that when I was living there a couple of years later, a copycat serial killer was at large. I knew nothing about it and used to hitch-hike to work each morning as my moped would never start. I found out later that he had been preying on hitchhikers. One girl was found dead in the local woods. They eventually caught him and he was the neighbourhood policeman.

Like all women I have had my fair share of harassment and fear over the years and stand in solidarity. My first band was an all-girl band, we were spirited, outspoken feminists, railing against sexismtunefully. Plus ça change. But then the streets aren't safe for men either.

I'd been walking on the Georgian racecourse the other day and was nearing the car, a woman came up to me and asked if Lainey would like some raw-hide bones as her ageing spaniel couldn't eat them anymore. I gladly accepted as she keeps pinching and crunching up my bios. The lady was parked next to me and I admired her car. It was camper-van shaped with 9 very comfy looking seats, a Nissan Elgrand. "We're about to sell it if you're interested" she said. It was old, about 2003, but had only 60k on the clock. I have long longed for a campervan, to be able to drive to somewhere beautiful, open the doors up so Lainey can mooch about, cook lunch, put the kettle on, have a snooze. And given that any normal holiday would be unlikely, I was interested. We exchanged details and I arranged to go and see it properly. They live in Hudswell on the other side of the valley. I can almost see their house from mine. There was a big Buddha at the door which I commented on and they said they had loads more inside. The man told me that he is a healer and a house healer. He has written three books and goes round the world expelling ghosts and trauma from people's houses as well as removing curses. Had a good look at the van. I can be impetuous, a trait I'm trying to curb. I said I would think about it.

The man emailed me details of a company who could convert it, who I then contacted. It only cost £2k to do the conversion, giving it a stove, sink, table, benches and bed, which I thought very reasonable. But, they're booked up until November. No use for summer then. However, on his email were links which I checked out wondering if he could heal me of everything. I googled him and there was a piece about him in the Daily Mail, and it turns out he's actually an angel. The article was about earth angels and there was a picture of him in a white suit with big white wings.

Hope you have a good week.

Kind wishes,

Isobel