



Monday 31st May 2021

Dear Customer,

I hope you have had a nice Bank Holiday weekend and are enjoying the stunning weather. It's sunstroke central up here, a lot of very red people. Happy people. Happy red people.

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

Spinach, Potato and Chickpea Hotpot

2 tbsp olive oil	3 onions, sliced
2 tsp vegetable bouillon powder	1½ tsp ras el hanout spice blend
½ tsp fennel seeds	400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed
150g spinach, shredded	500g potatoes, thinly sliced
knob of margarine, melted	

Preheat the oven to 180°C/ Gas 4. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and fry the onions, stirring often, for 10 minutes or until golden. Stir in the bouillon powder, 1 tsp of the spice blend, the fennel seeds, chick peas and 300ml boiling water. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat to low, cover and cook very gently for 10 minutes. Stir in the spinach until wilted, season, then turn into a shallow ovenproof dish. Meanwhile, bring a saucepan of water to the boil, add the potatoes and return to the boil. Cook for 1 minute then drain thoroughly and scatter half over the filling. Mix the remaining spice blend with the butter and some seasoning. Brush half over the potatoes. Scatter the remaining potatoes on top and brush with the remaining butter. Bake for 1 hour until the potatoes are crisp and golden

Leek and Tomato Pasta

knob of margarine	450g leeks, sliced
300g pasta	300g tomatoes, sliced
2 cloves garlic, crushed	150g mascarpone
2 tbsp finely snipped chives	

Heat half the butter or margarine in a frying pan and cook the leeks for 5 minutes until softened. Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to packet instructions. Tip the leeks into a large bowl. Add the remaining butter or margarine to the pan and cook the tomatoes and garlic for 5 minutes. Drain the pasta and return to the pan. Stir in the softened leeks, garlic mushrooms, mascarpone, chives and cheese. Toss together well, then divide between bowls and serve with a good grinding of black pepper.

Monty Don said one of this week's tasks was to nip the heads off the tulips once they'd flowered, so with a pair of small scissors and a bucket, I went round snipping them off. This is the sort of gardening I like: deadheading; anything that uses secateurs. What I don't like is anything involving a fork or a spade. The garden, what a mess. Six hooligan species have taken over all the beds and smothered out my carefully-chosen, delicate, colourful flowers. All submerged beneath one green mass. The ferns have multiplied and taken on giant proportions after the rain. The naked ladies, an autumn crocus, puts up huge dense clumps of leaves in the spring completely disproportionate to the solitary september flowers. There are three other culprits which I won't name, because I can't. Not to mention the long grass growing up through the irises, the lavender, inside the roses. At the back of the beds are nettles and that clingy stuff. At the front, the cheerful little blue faces of forget-me-nots, millions of them, spreading into the lawn. It's gruesome out there.

I parked my pink wheelbarrow and lay down on the lawn with a small fork. I was only 15 minutes into the weed when a blister erupted on the palm of my hand; the result of my hard labour. It will take days to heal, and before I can resume. Tragic.

I like Sheila 'of the cemetery' and took her a piece of a delicious almond cake. I was on my walk early and she wasn't there so I laid it on the grave against next to a small statuette of the Virgin Mary.

Well as for Cummings ! We knew it all anyway didn't we ? It was what we strongly suspected. It was still hard to hear laid bare.

Cases in Richmondshire are the lowest I can recall, just 2 in the last 7 days for our rural population of 50k. As a glass completely empty sort of person I expect that to change imminently. I doubt very much we can escape the seeping Indian variant, especially if this is the beginning of the 3rd wave, as it being posited.

I'm sure many a million holidays have just been thwarted by France closing their borders to us today. Checkmate I guess. All still so unknown where we are, where this will end, and what life will look like when it eventually does.

And so, back to the Georgian lady diarist of Richmond who helped us through our first lockdown, as requested by a customer who misses her. Back to this week in 1765 and still drinking Tea:

1st June: very Cold. Writeing to Winston, my Sister got a letter from Miss Pye, one inclos'd for Miss Mawer with some patterns, Betty Beautiment and her Daughter drank Tea with us.

2nd June: at Church Morn and Eve, Mrs Colingham and Mrs Mayson drank Tea with us, Mr and Mrs Wilson spent the Evening

3rd June: at Church, Mr Peacock preach'd. Mr Moor drank Tea with us. Mrs Wilson & I had a walk, very Cold

4th June: walk'd down Street, drank Tea at Mrs Newsam's, in the Morn at Mrs Simpson's to see the Men fire. Got a letter from C. Jenny Emerson to inform us that my Aunt and she wou'd be here on Thursday to spend the day with us.

5th June: Tolerable fine day. Mama & I drank Tea at Mr Wilson's

6th June: greatly disappointed in not seeing our friends according to appointment. Mr and Mrs Wilson drank Tea.

7th June: Mama very badly, we sat in her room all day

8th June Fine day. Cousn Jenny Emerson came alone to spend the day with us. We were down Street at the Shops. I got a new hatt 4s 5d.

22p for a hatt in 1765. What a bloody rip-off.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel