



Monday 27th September 2021

Dear Customer,

It's warm and sunny here in the Yorkshire Dales this Sunday morning. I have returned home from Wales having dropped my friend back in Newcastle with her smashed, blue hand after her fall. Me, poisoned. That was the worst sting I have ever had in my life. It was only on the last day of the trip that the heat came out and it became a big bruise. I was finally able to walk without antagonising it and having to sit for hours with an ice pack. I think it was an Asian hornet. Anyway it looks like I've survived.

We go back a long time, this friend and I. She was studying in Paris and had gotten depressed reading Arthur Rimbaud. I went over to live with her for a while in her place on la rue des Archives. Above a patisserie, I remember it well. It was with her that we made off with one of the Notre Dame gargoyles. On an afternoon promenade we came across workmen doing restoration work to Notre Dame. There were hundreds of gargoyles lying about on the grass. We decided to take one home and stuffed it in a Monoprix carrier bag. By the time we got to the rue de Rivoli we were so full of guilt and fear of being cursed, that we turned round and took it back.

Despite our injuries we still managed to get out and about a bit in Wales. My friend magnanimously let us visit the places of ancestral relevance to me. Anyway, most importantly for both of us, our dogs had a fantastic time. They played constantly and loved having the sandy beach outside the back door.

But back to the grind now and straight into the fuel panic-buying crisis, and worrying about getting the deliveries out as well as getting produce in.

Hoping all will be well, here are a couple of recipe ideas you could try this week:

Beetroot Dhal

<i>2 tbsp vegetable oil or ghee</i>	<i>1 medium onion, peeled and finely diced</i>
<i>30g root ginger, peeled and grated, or finely chopped</i>	<i>3 cloves garlic, peeled and grated, or finely chopped</i>
<i>sea salt flakes</i>	<i>2 tbsp garam masala</i>
<i>1-2 tsp chilli flakes, to taste</i>	<i>1 tsp turmeric</i>
<i>2 tbsp black mustard seeds</i>	<i>500g red lentils, well rinsed</i>
<i>handful coriander</i>	<i>2 tbsp vegetable bouillon powder</i>
<i>450g beetroot, scrubbed, trimmed, then finely diced</i>	<i>400g can coconut milk</i>
<i>handful greens, shredded</i>	<i>1 tbsp nigella seeds</i>
<i>natural or coconut yogurt, to serve</i>	

Warm the oil or ghee in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the onion, ginger, garlic and a big pinch of flaked sea salt, and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened but not coloured. Add the garam masala, chilli flakes, turmeric and mustard seeds to the onions, stir thoroughly, then add the lentils. Mix well. Make the stock by dissolving the bouillon powder in 1.5 litres of boiling water. Add the beetroot, greens and stock to the pan and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to low, cook, covered, for 30-40 minutes, stirring frequently, until the lentils and the vegetables are tender. Add the coconut milk and roughly chopped coriander and stir well. After 2 minutes, remove from the heat and season to taste. Serve with rice or naan bread.

Green Beans with Garlic and Lemon

<i>green beans, trimmed</i>	<i>1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil</i>
<i>1 clove garlic, finely sliced</i>	<i>½ unwaxed lemon, finely grated zest</i>
<i>1 tbsp chopped flat leaf parsley</i>	

Bring a pan of water to the boil and cook the beans for 3-4 minutes until just tender. Cool under cold running water, then drain.

Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan, add the garlic and cook over a medium heat for about 30 seconds, taking care that it doesn't burn. Add the drained beans with a pinch of sea salt and stir fry, increasing the heat to high, for 1 minute. Remove from the heat, scatter with the lemon zest and parsley and serve.

It is nearly 2 months now that there has been no TV signal here. And not much progress since the Bilsdale mast burnt down. There are now legal wranglings with the landowner and the fact that the new mast is going on an SSSI site. It's been very hard on those with no internet, already having been so isolated through the pandemic.

While I was away a TV man came to put me a new aerial up and point it towards another mast far, far away. So I came back to some channels. But while in the attic sorting the aerial he found a massive wasps nest the size of a football above my bedroom. It was dealt with, and I am feeling pretty sick about that. It could have been humanely removed but probably wasn't.

As a late birthday present to myself I'd had someone come in and do an early spring-clean while I was away. A deep-clean. Everything is spotless. However, all the spiders have all gone. I'd meant to text her and ask her not to hurt them. I don't know where they are. I also found a dead blackbird caught in the netting on the pond which protects the fish from the heron. I came back to a lovely clean home but the site of a wildlife massacre. Another one.

I paused this and have just been to check on the sheep. They are there. Alive. They haven't been hoovered up or ploughed in or anything. Lying together in the shadow of a tree they looked podgy and content. They're so funny, they just stare at me – 184 eyes glistening, chewing their cud like chewing on gum, people and rabbit watching on a balmy afternoon. They are quite an age now most of them.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel