



Monday 11th October 2021

Dear Customer,

We have had some beautiful, sun-soaked days this last week. A taste of loveliness but with the ghostly thought of another Covidy winter looming. It can't be as bad as the last surely. Why at this time, when we are all on our knees, does China have to start moving in on Taiwan, vowing 'reunification'. The thing with China is that they mean it. I doubt they will be terribly scared of the HMS Elizabeth prowling about in the South China sea. They probably find it amusing. They probably find recently formed AUKUS less amusing, our new allegiance with the US and Australia, all set to defend Taiwan. They're probably taking that quite seriously. I'd rather they were amused. Seriously sort of looks like World War III. Always something to worry about isn't there.

But cutting to the chase, parsnips. Here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Parsnip and Chestnut Tarte Tatin

<i>1 tbsp olive or sunflower oil</i>	<i>350g parsnips cut into spears (about 2cm at the thickest part)</i>
<i>150g small onions, cut in thin wedges</i>	<i>30g margarine or butter</i>
<i>3 tbsp light brown muscovado sugar</i>	<i>2 tbsp cider vinegar</i>
<i>1 tbsp fresh rosemary leaves</i>	<i>100g chestnuts (canned or vacuum-packed), sliced</i>
<i>2 tbsp wholegrain mustard</i>	<i>250g frozen puff pastry block, defrosted</i>
<i>3 tbsp fromage frais or non-dairy alternative</i>	

Preheat the oven to 190°C / Gas 5. Heat the oil in a 24-25cm ovenproof frying pan and cook the parsnips and shallots for 10 minutes, until golden. Add the butter or margarine, sugar, vinegar, rosemary, chestnuts, 1 tbsp mustard and 50ml water to the pan. Cover tightly with foil and bake for 20 minutes, then remove from the oven and turn the temperature up to 200°C/ Gas 6. Arrange the vegetables in a rough pinwheel shape in the pan. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the pastry to make a rough circle slightly bigger than the pan. Lay the pastry over the vegetables, tucking the excess into the sides. Bake for 30 minutes, until the pastry is risen and golden. Mix the remaining 1 tbsp mustard with the fromage frais; season. Carefully turn the tart out onto a serving plate and serve with the mustard sauce alongside.

Roasted Parsnip and Carrot Soup

<i>500g parsnips</i>	<i>300g carrots</i>
<i>1 tbsp maple syrup</i>	<i>2 tbsp olive oil</i>
<i>2 onions, roughly chopped</i>	<i>2 garlic cloves, crushed</i>
<i>2 tsp ground cumin</i>	<i>500ml fresh vegetable stock</i>
<i>1 tbsp lemon juice</i>	<i>4 tbsp non-dairy yogurt</i>

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Trim and peel the parsnips and carrots, then cut into 3cm chunks. Toss with the maple syrup and 1 tbsp oil, then spread out on a lined baking tray. Season and roast for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, heat another 1 tbsp oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat and add the onions, garlic and a pinch of salt. Cover with a lid and cook gently for 12 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove the lid, add the cumin and cook, uncovered, for another 3 minutes. Tip in the roasted parsnips and carrots, stock and 750ml water; bring to the boil, then simmer for 10 minutes. In a blender, whizz the soup with 1 tbsp lemon juice until smooth. Add a splash of water to loosen if needed, then reheat. To serve, swirl in a dollop of non-dairy yogurt and a grinding of black pepper

Parsnip and Hazelnut Gratin

<i>few knobs margarine or butter, plus extra for greasing</i>	<i>500g parsnips</i>
<i>175ml double cream</i>	<i>2 garlic cloves, crushed</i>
<i>2 thyme sprigs, leaves picked</i>	<i>1 heaped tsp Dijon mustard</i>
<i>grating fresh nutmeg</i>	<i>large handful (about 30g) fresh breadcrumbs</i>
<i>handful blanched hazelnuts, chopped</i>	

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6 and grease a medium gratin dish (about 1 litre in volume). Use a mandolin to slice the parsnips lengthways to about 0.2-0.3cm thick. Throw into a pan of boiling, salted water and cook for 4-5 minutes, until soft but not collapsing. Drain well and leave to steam dry. In a large bowl, mix together the cream, garlic, thyme, mustard and a good grating of nutmeg. Season and gently toss with the parsnips. Tip into a gratin dish and press down so the liquid oozes up. Mix together the remaining breadcrumbs and hazelnuts, then scatter over the top. Dot with the knobs of butter or margarine and bake for 30 minutes, or until bubbling and golden.

No news here. It's 10.55am and I've been sitting at my desk trying to write this for more than 3 hours. I have to give up now, defeated. Nothing whatsoever springs to mind to write about. Lainey is asleep next to me. The sun is shining. The leaves are fluttering in the breeze. I keep thinking a new cup of tea will bring a new thought, some inspiration, but it doesn't. Nor does a biscuit, or a walk about.

I wish you a very good week,

Warmest regards, Isobel