



**Monday 10th January 2022**

Dear Customer,

It's still mild isn't it. We've had a bit of snow here and the pond froze over a couple of times, but nothing much. My four goldfish are still bobbing about. Generally, I don't see them from November to April as they seem to hibernate. I spend months thinking they're all dead. The roses have stopped flowering but the hebe is still going strong.

I got a response from the horticulturist at Suttons seeds after complaining that my tulip bulbs were mouldy. She said they should still be viable! Blue powder, I could practically blow them out the box. My Russian snowdrops did turn up though eventually. I'd make a terrible farmer, planting things at random times, the wrong time, and hoping they'll grow.

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

### **Ribollita with Kale and Cannellini Beans**

3 cloves garlic, crushed  
3 carrots, finely sliced  
400ml strong vegetable stock  
25g fresh basil, torn

1 onion, finely chopped  
410g tins cannellini Beans, rinsed and drained  
200g kale, shredded, tough stems removed  
½ tbsp olive oil

*Preheat the grill to high. In a lidded pan, heat the oil and add the garlic, onion, and carrots. Cover and cook for 5 minutes until starting to soften, stirring occasionally. Remove the lid and add the beans, stock and 100ml boiling water and bring to a simmer. Add the kale and cook for a further 5 minutes until tender. Scatter with the basil and serve with a good grind of black pepper.*

### **Lemon and Garlic Roast Potatoes**

900g potatoes  
3 garlic cloves, peeled

3 tbsp vegetable oil  
1 lemon, zested and cut into wedges

*Preheat the oven to 220°C/ Gas 7. Peel the potatoes and cut into 4-5cm chunks. Put in a large pan and cover with cold, salted water. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 10-15 minutes. Drain the potatoes and leave to steam-dry for a few minutes. Meanwhile, put the oil and garlic in a roasting tin and heat in the oven for 5 minutes. Add the lemon zest to the potatoes and season. Shake to roughen up the edges of the potatoes, then put them in the tin, turning in the oil until glossy. Add the lemon wedges and cook on the top shelf of the oven for 1 hour-1 hour 10 minutes, turning halfway, until crisp and golden. Sprinkle with sea salt.*

### **Leek and Garlic Mushroom Pasta**

knob of margarine  
300g pasta  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
2 tbsp finely snipped chives

500g leeks, sliced  
220g mushrooms, sliced  
150g mascarpone or non-dairy alternative

*Heat half the 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 margarine to the pan and cook the mushrooms and garlic for 5 minutes. Drain the pasta and return to the pan. Stir in the softened leeks, garlic mushrooms, mascarpone and chives. Toss together well, then divide between bowls and serve with a good grinding of black pepper.*

### **Smoky Sweet Potato Wedges**

sweet potatoes, scrubbed  
½ tsp hot smoked paprika  
1½ tbsp maple syrup

2 tbsp sunflower or olive oil  
1 red chilli, sliced  
50g almonds, roughly chopped

*Slice each sweet potato lengthways into 8-10 wedges Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Line a large baking sheet with parchment. Toss the sweet potato wedges with the oil and paprika then season and spread out on the baking sheet in a single layer. Cook for 35 minutes. Remove the wedges from the oven and add the sliced chilli, maple syrup and almonds, tossing through. Return to the oven and cook for a further 15 minutes until the potatoes are soft and caramelised and the almonds toasted.*

I came home yesterday to large muddy footprints in the hallway. One doesn't get unexpected visitors in these pandemic times. It was disconcerting. Then there on the coffee table were two Christmas presents. It could only mean one thing, the only person whoever comes so unannounced – my brother. I think he'd had an attack of remorse before Christmas after sending me that really horrible email abandoning me. He'd probably seen the Salvation Army ad on the TV. A few days after the email I received a Christmas card inviting me to stay for a few days over Christmas.

We are now into year three of Covid. Who'd have thought it back then as we stepped innocently into 2020 charged with our plans and resolutions.

'It will become endemic', 'it's endemic now', 'it's nearly endemic' they say.

The thing is, 'what' is, is nearly, or will become, endemic? The Omicron version, another more deadly version, a milder version, or all of them on repeat. For all that virologists and epidemiologists are the new superstars, our cult heroes, with literally millions of followers, the bottom line remains that no-one on earth has a clue as to what will happen next. I think that is what 'living with Covid' means. Living in a world of uncertainty where nothing can be taken for granted and we have to make the most of today.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes, Isobel