



**Monday 21st March 2022**

Dear Customer,

It's Sunday afternoon and the weather is amazing. We have had frosty nights and clear, sunny days. Spring starts tomorrow but the coming week is set to feel like summer. Even up here in Yorkshire.

Here are a couple of tasty recipes you could try:

**Parsnip and Spinach Linguine**

15g margarine

1 onion, finely sliced

450g parsnips

30g pine nuts, toasted

1 tbsp olive oil

200g dried linguine

120g spinach, shredded

4 tbsp grated hard cheese or non-dairy alternative

*Melt the margarine with the oil in a large saucepan set over a low-medium heat. Add the onion with a pinch of salt and cook, stirring often for 10 minutes until soft and beginning to brown. Meanwhile, cook the pasta to al dente then drain, reserving some of the cooking water. Shave the parsnips into wide ribbons with a vegetable peeler, add to the onion and sauté for about 8 minutes until the parsnips are tender and golden in places. Add the spinach and pine nuts to the pan and cook for 1 minute, until the spinach is just cooked. Toss in the drained linguine with 3 tbsp cooking water and the grated cheese.*

**Butterbean, Aubergine and Olive Cassoulet**

2 tsp olive oil

1 tsp dried oregano

½ tsp ground cinnamon

400g tin chopped tomatoes

2 tbsp pitted olives

handful flat leaf parsley, chopped

1 aubergine, cut into bite-sized cubes

1 tsp dried mixed herbs

1 onion, finely diced

1tbsp tomato ketchup

400g tin butter beans

*Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over a high heat, then add the aubergine, oregano, mixed herbs and cinnamon. Stir frequently and then cook for 3 minutes. Add the onion and cook for 2 minutes until the onion begins to soften. Add the chopped tomatoes, 150ml water and the ketchup, followed by the olives and butter beans. Reduce the heat to medium, partially cover with a lid, and simmer for 10 minutes. Season and scatter with parsley to serve.*

My cousin, my cousin's daughter to be precise, stayed all week. She is at that age, her mid-twenties, when you really worry about which genes you've inherited. I did my best to try and be as normal as possible. I'm fairly sure she saw straight through me though. But as BUPA says 'there's no such thing as normal'. At breakfast, I said it must feel to her like she is at the confluence of all these rivers of genes ( ones which throw up worrying traits ). She said it was exactly what she'd been thinking that night. I tried to reassure her that it was creativity that was in the genes and that going off the rails, in whichever permutation, was personal choice. Some had been very creative in the manner in which they had gone off the rails. I told her the seniors of our Welsh family had been as resilient and stoical and wise and solid as the Black Mountains. Must admit though; she has a very dramatic load of genes coming at her from her other sides. Her great grandmother, depicted in the new series of Peaky Blinders, had Hitler and Goebbels at her wedding. Her grandfather's family died in the holocaust. I remember being in my twenties and would not want to re-live them.

I remain news-free. It has been two weeks now that I have no idea what is happening in the world. I suppose I am skipping critical chapters of the world's history. But in the same way I can't watch hospital series, crime dramas, psychological thrillers, horror movies, war films etc. I can't watch this. It's all of these things, and it is actually real.

Things have heated up on Westfields. There are posters and boxes of leaflets nailed on every tree campaigning against the 30-house development next to me. There is an extension to mid-April now to appeal. Richmond Civic Society are opposing it, as are Richmond Town Council and Richmond Landscape Trust, but the District planners are a law unto themselves. It's on the Coast-to-Coast path which is about to be made Britain's 7<sup>th</sup> National Trail. A table has been set up in the pull-in opposite my house and residents are taking it in turns to man it and get signatures from the passing walkers. I managed to find some very emotive pictures of the fields in summer in its semi-wild state with some of my sheep grazing. They showed the intense beauty of it and its surroundings. In the 15 years I rented the paddock, it became its own ecosystem. Organically managed, in my case 'unmanaged', it went wild and is home to eighty-four species of moths and butterflies: countless pollinators and other insects; small mammals and amphibians; wild flora. It's a wildlife haven. Their justification for the density of housing is that they have to spend so much on the ground works as there are underground streams and difficult levels they need to address. It will cost 12.5 million to build and they will sell for 14.5 million. Not a great return for the level of destruction and two years of hell. I'd like to go and build a Wimpy estate in their Capability Brown' garden to the front of Aske Hall where they live. And down the sides and behind it.

There are times when a massive estate deserves a generation to gamble away the power and break down the land ownership.

Hope you can get out and enjoy the beautiful sunshine

Kind wishes,

Isobel