



Monday 4th April 2022

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. I can't believe it's already April. It's been a wild week of rain, snow and hail. Of the three I prefer hail as it just bounces off leaving you dry. Now the wind has come.

I got a skip and have been clearing out the unit where I store archives and Izzy Lane things. I was ruthless: I needed to be as I was hoarding. Taking up a quarter of the space was a voluminous half-ton of noils. After the raw wool has been washed it goes to a combler who draws out the fibres ready to spin. There is a wool residue left from this process – 'noils'. It is perfect for stuffing, hence why I hoarded it. However, I couldn't think of anything to stuff. I tried to give it away to crafters a few times to no avail so it is now skipped. I did keep one big sack though which I tipped opposite my house around the trees as it's nesting time and the birds are out gathering moss and twigs. I thought they would love little woolly nests. But they don't seem interested. It looks like someone has fly-tipped a pile of fibre glass there and is getting filthy looks. It's also dispersing in the wind making it look even worse. I haven't seen one single bird fly off with any. I will have to rake it all up and bin it.

And here are a couple of tasty recipes you could try with you psb this week:

Purple Sprouting Broccoli with Satay Sauce

<i>½ tsp oil</i>	<i>2 garlic cloves, finely chopped</i>
<i>1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped</i>	<i>20g fresh root ginger, finely chopped</i>
<i>½-1 tbsp light brown soft sugar</i>	<i>2 tbsp smooth or crunchy peanut butter</i>
<i>100ml coconut milk</i>	<i>1 tbsp soy sauce</i>
<i>purple sprouting broccoli</i>	

For the sauce, heat the oil in a small frying pan with the garlic, chilli and ginger over a low heat and cook for 1 minute. Stir in the sugar and cook for 2 minutes more, until melted and caramelised. Use a hand whisk to blend in the peanut butter, coconut milk and soy sauce with a pinch of salt. Warm through, remove from the heat and add the lime juice. Keep warm. Trim the broccoli and halve any thicker stems then steam the broccoli spears over simmering water for 6-8 minutes until just tender. Serve with dipping bowls of the sauce, or spoon it directly over the vegetables. Serve with rice or noodles, if liked.

Purple Sprouting Broccoli Croquettes

<i>purple sprouting broccoli</i>	<i>3 Hen Nation eggs</i>
<i>400g mashed potato, chilled</i>	<i>100g Gruyère, finely grated</i>
<i>50g plain flour</i>	<i>125g fresh white breadcrumbs</i>
<i>vegetable oil, for frying</i>	

Boil the psb until just tender. Drain then wrap in a tea towel and press to remove all the moisture. Finely chop and put it in a large bowl. Beat 1 egg and add to the broccoli with the mashed potato and cheese then season. Combine the mixture then divide into 20-24 balls of equal size and roll each into a cylindrical shape. Beat the remaining 2 eggs in a bowl and put the flour and breadcrumbs in separate bowls. Roll each croquette in the flour, then the egg and then the breadcrumbs. Pour 4cm oil into a large saucepan and heat. Test with a small piece of bread – it should turn lightly golden in about 40 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, add a few croquettes at a time and fry for 2-3 minutes until golden. Remove to kitchen paper. Repeat with the remaining croquettes.

When I did the major works to the house, transforming it into my home, I knocked down all the internal walls downstairs and split the level. The part that used to be the old kitchen which jutted out to the side, now is two steps up, has a glazed sloping roof and French doors. It is a little sun trap and looks across to the other side of the valley. A Sunday afternoon sort of spot and here I am, having brought my laptop with me. Directly ahead of me the forsythia is in full yellow bloom, and behind it, a blue car is parked, Pantone 005BBB. The Ukrainian flag appears everywhere. Never have two colours been imbued with so much. Words fail us but the colours say it all.

I slipped back onto Twitter, trying to avoid any 'news', just to check for messages from the feeders of the dog refugees from the Turkish dog massacre, and also from Rawaa, who rescues wounded and starving dogs In Lebanon. There were messages. Worried messages. 'Had I left Twitter, had I left them'. One message from Ismail in Boyabat was a video of a dog who had just given birth, eating rubbish on the street, with the message: 'I can't bear it, I am leaving'. Ismail had no money to buy it some food. I sent some money over to them, of course. The fundraising campaigns I did for them have long gone but their need hasn't. I'm supporting them as much as I can. They sent me videos back of happy, thin dogs and little puppies: on mountainsides; on rubbish tips; in the wilderness; crunching on fleshy chicken bones and the small piles of dog food laid out for them on pieces of cardboard. They wag their tails as they eat: they are so grateful. It breaks my heart. It is something I can do in the pain of these days.

After a two-week news blackout, I couldn't stop myself from looking on Twitter at the posts of the people I'd been following in Ukraine. There's one particular war correspondent from the Kyiv Independent, Illia Ponomarenko. He only had about 30k followers when I started following him, and now has 1.1 million. In the first weeks he really buoyed everyone up. Every time they blew up a line of Russian tanks " they got the mother ***** ". He would talk about everyone meeting up in Freedom Square in Kyiv for a beer when it was over to celebrate victory and how he was going to get a Harley Davidson and ride all over the country. But now his tweets are dark. I barely slept last night, haunted by what I'd seen; what I'd read. Buchan; Mariupol; no words are there.

Kind wishes.....

.Isobel