



Monday 20th March 2023

Dear Customer,

The weather has been peculiar. On Sunday morning it was hot, like a summer's day. I sat outside and tried to count the toads in the pond. They've been arriving for the last few days to mate. And I spotted some newts. This is a relief as I thought I'd somehow killed them all. I was in shorts and a t-shirt, and Lainey, too hot for her, slumped under the wall in the shade. It made me already worry about what the temperatures will be like this summer. Then in the afternoon it was freezing.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try week:

Cauliflower and Coconut Curry

3 *tblsp* vegetable oil

6 *curry leaves* (or *lime / lemon zest*)

1 *tsp* *cumin seeds*

3 *cloves* *garlic*, finely chopped

227g *tin* *chopped* *tomatoes*

½ *tsp* *ground* *turmeric*

400g *tin* *coconut* *milk*

steamed *basmati* *rice*, to serve

1 *cauliflower*, cut into *florets*

1 *tsp* *black* *mustard* *seeds*

2 *onions*, finely chopped

10g *fresh* *root* *ginger*, finely chopped

½-1 *tsp* *mild* *red* *chilli* *powder*, to taste

1 *tsp* *garam* *masala*

120g *shredded* *greens*

Put the oil in a saucepan over a medium heat. Fry the cauliflower for around 7-9 minutes until lightly browned. Stir in the curry leaves, mustard and cumin seeds. Fry for a couple of minutes then add the onions and reduce the heat. Sauté for 10 minutes then stir in the garlic and ginger; cook for a further 3-4 minutes. Add the tomatoes, chilli powder, turmeric and garam masala then season. Add some water if it looks dry. Increase the heat to medium and bring to a simmer. Bubble for 5 minutes so the tomatoes reduce a little then add the coconut milk. Bring to the boil, then reduce to a simmer, add the greens and cook for a further 10-15 minutes until all is cooked through and tender. Season and serve with the steamed basmati rice.

Ribollita with Greens and Cannellini Beans

3 *cloves* *garlic*, crushed

3 *carrots*, finely sliced

drained

400ml *strong* *vegetable* *stock*

shredded

25g *fresh* *basil*, torn

1 *onion*, finely chopped

410g *tins* *cannellini* *Beans*, rinsed and

200g *spring* *greens*, *cabbage* or *kale*,

½ *tblsp* *olive* *oil*

Preheat the grill to high. In a large, lidded pan, gently 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, stirring occasionally. Add the cabbage and cook for a further 5 minutes until the cabbage is tender. Scatter with the basil and serve with a good grind of black pepper and warmed ciabatta bread.

Mustard and Honey Spring Greens

bunch *spring* *greens*, *shredded*

2 *tblsp* *olive* *oil*

1½ *tblsp* *honey* or *maple* *syrup*

¾ *tblsp* *wholegrain* *mustard*

Steam or boil the green for 4-6 minutes, until tender, wilted and dark green. Drain if necessary. In a large bowl, whisk the honey or syrup with the oil and mustard. Season well. Tip the greens into the bowl and toss with the dressing to serve.

The rivers and reservoirs should be overflowing at this time but there's nothing in them. Even after the recent snow and quick thaw, I could walk across the river Swale. It's not looking good on the Continent either. After the worst summer drought in 500 years, the winter rains didn't come, and Europe is running dry. France has had its driest winter in 60 years. Their reservoirs and those in Italy are a mere 40 - 50% of where they should be. The longest river in Italy, the Po, is 60% lower than its normal winter level and the Rhine has dropped by up to 2 metres. In Coucouran in the Ardeche, they have had to deliver drinking water ten times a day since July. The Alps have had only half the normal snowfall, which is a huge problem. Central Europe relies on that meltwater which feeds into the waterways. The Alps are known as 'the water towers of Europe'. With no water there is no food. In Catalonia farmers have just been instructed to reduce their water consumption by 40% and unless it rains, a lot, very soon, this will just be the beginning.

One of our customers is one of the leading geologists of the NASA mission collecting rocks on Mars. (How cool is that !) He sent me a link to a video of the landscape. It looked eerily familiar, with the same topography as the Yorkshire Dales, but stripped of vegetation, stripped back to rock and dust. It showed the ripples in the rock, formed by sediment where there was once water - waves, lakes and streams.

Meanwhile back down here, I am full of trepidation and anxiety with the dog arriving from Lebanon on Wednesday. (pic of her on Farmaround facebook page !) For the time being at least, she will be coming to live with me. I think she could probably jump over the garden gate or get through the privet hedge at the back, probably could jump over the neighbour's wall. She could also reverse out of her harness, I know that one, or slip her collar - get run over, end up in a sheep field, be shot. How do you take two dogs everywhere with you, how do you even walk safely on a pavement with two dogs. I've never had two dogs because I couldn't cope with two dogs.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes, Isobel