



Monday 19TH June 2023

Dear Customer, (PS AGAIN, PLEASE GET EVERYTHING INTO THE FRIDGE ASAP IN THE HEAT !)

It's been baking hot again, and dry. I love it, love the sun and cracked earth and sounds of crickets, imagining I am somewhere faraway and not in Yorkshire. Alas, if only it weren't so serious. I remember decades ago reading about how the Sahara was spreading into Spain and Portugal. It was measured by scientists - slight and barely perceptible. Things have changed and the desert is visibly creeping northwards - forest fires after forest fires until all vegetation just gives up.

I was in the graveyard of the church down the hill. They mow the grass, between and over the graves, down to the last millimetre, now burnt and orange, dead on dead. I was taking photos to post on the local Facebook group alongside some photos of the graveyard in the village on the other side of the valley which was full of long grasses and wildflowers with paths mown through. I am my own rewilding pressure group. But I wasn't convinced by my own argument as all the burnt graves made it look so exotic under the azure blue sky, like a graveyard in Sicily. It just needed a few lizards and an olive tree.

On one of the gravestones was inscribed 'Whatever you want to do, do it now ! There are only so many tomorrows'.

I spoke to a French friend last night. She said she'd had a pain in her chest (she is young and fit, and it was probably indigestion), but echoed these sentiments, a prevailing sentiment everywhere since the pandemic, that one must live now. She was using her savings and flying off to San Francisco with her daughters today before heading to Polynesia - to Tahiti and the Marquesas Islands in the footsteps of Gauguin.....determined to live it now.

Here are some tasty recipes you could try this week:

Spinach and Beetroot Curry

500g beetroot, peeled and cut into thin wedges

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
chopped

1 chilli, finely chopped

1/2 tbsp sesame seeds

1 tsp ground cumin

1/2 tsp turmeric

400g tin coconut milk

200g spinach

1 onion, finely chopped

1 small piece ginger, peeled and finely

25g cashews

fresh coriander, stalks and leaves chopped separately

1 tsp caraway seeds

, 1 tbsp dark brown sugar

400g tin chickpeas

1 lime

In a roasting tin, toss the beetroot with 1/2 tsp salt. Roast for 20 mins. Finely chop the cashews and sesame seeds. Heat 2 tbsp oil in a large saucepan. Gently fry the onion for 8 mins, stirring often. Add the spice mix, ginger, garlic, coriander stalks, cashew mix and 1/2 the chilli. Cook for 2 mins. Stir in the coconut milk, bring to a simmer and cook for 10 mins. Add the beetroot and chickpeas to the curry. Simmer. Add the spinach and cook until wilted. Stir in the coriander, check the seasoning and add lime juice, to taste.'

Galettes with Chard / Spinach (makes 4)

100g buckwheat flour

5 Hen Nation eggs

spinach, or chard with leaves stripped from stalks

sunflower oil

good pinch salt

300ml milk

50g butter or margarine, melted

125g organic Gruyère or non-dairy cheese

For the batter, mix the flour and salt in a bowl. Make a well in the centre and add 1 egg, then whisk, adding the milk a little at a time, until you have a smooth batter. Leave to rest for at least 1 hour. Blanche the chard leaves, squeeze, then roughly chop. Add the melted butter into the batter. Heat an oiled frying pan over a medium-high heat. Put a quarter of the batter into the pan, rolling it around to cover the surface. Cook for about a minute until golden underneath, then flip over. Crack an egg into the centre. Scatter a quarter of the chopped greens and cheese over the whole galette and season. When the underside is cooked to golden brown, use a spatula to fold the edges of the galette into the centre to form a square. Serve immediately, repeat with the rest of the batter and filling. (you could chop and saute the chard stems with a little lemon, or keep for another recipe)

Also 'doing it now' is Steve. I am keeping an eye this morning on the live tracker of 'The Spine Race'. Dubbed 'Britain's Most Brutal' endurance race, it is 268-miles, running day and night non-stop, up the Pennine Way from Edale in Derbyshire to Kirk Yeltholm in the Scottish Borders. Steve is the person delivering us a new website. Based in Oxfordshire, I have only met him on Zoom, so it seems like a perfect opportunity to say 'hello' as he speeds through the Dales. I asked him if I could bring him a drink or some food. Apparently only if I was also offering it to the 100-odd other runners - none are allowed any advantage. I'm planning to catch him in Thwaite, in Swaledale, as he passes through the village. Obviously he won't be able to stop, so I will try and run alongside him as far as the lamppost, and wave him off as he heads off up to Black Moor. He's currently in 10th position, so doing pretty well.

Yet another person 'doing it now', and also passing through is my friend Caroline. She's asked me if I can find a B & B for her 3 horses to stay the night in Richmond, as she's bringing them back from France. I've mentioned her before I think. She bought a village house in the South of France about 25 years ago (when we all should have bought one !) in Languedoc Roussillon.

Since the pandemic, and being able to work remotely, she's been living there full-time. She's the one whose dogs sneaked out the house when she went off to the hairdressers in Beziers, went on the rampage in the village, and bit someone. It wasn't the first time. The Mayor ordered her to take them out the country or else. She took them to Cromarty on the Black Isle in Scotland where they spent the winter living in a yurt. She'd already moved her pigs, cows and sheep to a farm there from Wales, and had moved her horses, donkeys and cats to France. Now, having just bought a piece of her own land on the Black Isle and having rented a cottage there, she's moving the horses back to the UK.

Splitting her life between France and Scotland, she drives back and fore, back and fore, from practically the northern tip of Scotland to the Spanish border. Sometimes with gate on top of her car as they are cheaper in UK, or an 'armoir' bought in a 'brocante' on the return journey. Anyway, she's now been told she has to spend two days a week at work in the office.....in Ipswich.

As for me, well, as you can see, living vicariously through other peoples' exciting lives.

Kind wishes and hope you have a good week,

Isobel