



**Monday 04<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

It's Sunday morning and we are sitting in a blanket of freezing fog. Lovely.

I've been snowed in for several days with another 5" dump overnight. Heavily clad children are hauling their sledges up the road to the summit of Westfields - a fittingly Bruegelesque scene on this wintry pasture. There is a piece of skid-ice on my hill which never melts and can cut me off for days and weeks, so I've been leaving my car below it in the pull-in for the allotments and walking up and down. I don't think anyone's going anywhere today though that isn't on foot.

We have spring greens in the bags from Royal Oak Farm in Ormskirk in Lancashire, 5 miles inland from the coast. Cheryl has 300 acres of organic land, including 120 acres of vegetables. Sixty acres are devoted to wildflower meadows and growing wild bird food mixes, providing fantastic habitat for bees and butterflies and an excellent stopover for swallows, geese and other migrating birds. But they have had a hell of a year. It started with a 6-week drought in the middle of May when 50% of their crops eg carrots and parsnips failed to germinate: to then endless rain from July onwards when they started planting out their brassicas. Some days they were getting 2 months' worth of rain in 24 hours. They've spent practically the whole summer and autumn under water. Equipment sinking in the mud had to be dragged out of the field through the cauliflower crop. All their summer vegetables failed – their beans, peas and chard; sweetcorn and courgettes as well as all their cauliflowers and more.

Here are a couple of tasty recipes you could try this week:

#### **Broccoli and Spring Greens Saag**

600g potatoes, chopped into 2cm cubes 200g spring greens, shredded  
1 head broccoli, thinly sliced 70 ml vegetable stock  
2 tbsp sunflower oil 2 green chillies, thinly sliced  
2 medium onions, finely diced 4 cloves garlic, finely diced  
20g ginger, peeled and diced 2 tsp cumin seeds  
2 tsp coriander seeds 1 tsp ground turmeric  
400g tin chickpeas, drained fresh coriander, finely chopped

Boil the potatoes for 8-10 minutes until just cooked. Drain and reserve. In a separate pan combine the chopped spring greens, broccoli and stock. Bring to the boil and cook for 2-3 minutes until the broccoli has started to soften and the greens have wilted.

Pour the stock and greens into a food processor and whizz until smooth. Reserve until needed. Heat the sunflower oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Toss in the cumin and coriander seeds and toast for about a minute until they begin to release their fragrance. Tip in the chopped chillies, onion, garlic and ginger. Fry for 4-5 minutes until the onion is soft and is starting to colour.

Add in the cooked potatoes, chickpeas and turmeric. Stir to combine then pour in the blended greens. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and season to taste. Finish the saag with the chopped fresh coriander and serve with naan bread.

## **Mediterranean Bake**

**800g potatoes, cut in bite-size chunks 2 red / yellow peppers, sliced**

**250g baby plum tomatoes 4 tbsp pesto**

**1 tbsp olive oil salt and pepper**

**70g black pitted olives 70g green pitted olives**

**fresh basil leaves**

**Preheat the oven to 180 C / Gas 4. Parboil your potatoes in a pan of salted water for 10 minutes. Drain, then pour the potatoes into a large mixing bowl and add the pepper slices and cherry tomatoes. Add the pesto and olive oil, then season with salt and pepper and mix well. Spread the coated vegetables in an even layer on a baking tray or roasting tin and roast for 30 minutes until charred at the edges. Remove from the oven and add the olives and basil.**

**Scotland has just announced they are going to double their land farmed organically by 2026, aligning with the EU, where the Farm to Fork policy is hoping to have 25% of land farmed organically by 2030 - each nation having its own action plan. Germany is targeting having 30% organic by 2030 as well as having 30% of public procurement organic: schools; hospitals; prisons. France has just made a 60-million- euro injection into the sector, aiming to be 18% organic by 2027. Even the US has just made a 300-million-dollar investment into organic. But what of England. Since 2008 there has been a 31.6% decrease in land farmed organically in the UK, down to 2.9%. What's happening to this country is nothing short of tragic.**

**As for Sunak, the marbles and cancelling the meeting with the Greek PM. How excruciating. I'm sure we'd all want them to be returned, in friendship, and with goodwill. Does he think it shows 'strong leadership' - he just looks ridiculous. Great to see King Prince Charles' with the Greek flag tie though. Also pleased to see him at COP28. Starmer cut a very presidential figure striding across the tarmac there. Our future will soon be in his hands - the King knows it, the world knows it.**

**My tulip bulbs are finally in the ground. Mick who looks after the sheep brought round his super-dibber which extracts cylindrical pellets of soil – you pop the bulb in, return the pellet on top and stamp on it. He did the cutting and stamping, I worked at ground level popping in the bulbs and pellets. Sounds nifty but it took so long. 'How many more are there ? ' he kept saying. There was no room in the beds and pots for them all so most have gone into the lawn.**

**Just a note about Christmas deliveries. We will have our Jumbo Organic Christmas Veg Bags and Christmas Organic Fruit Boxes available for delivery on week commencing 18th December – available to order from now on the website or by calling or emailing Diane. We will then not be delivering during the week between Christmas and the New Year but starting again as normal on week commencing 1st January in the brand new year.**

**I hope you have a good week,  
Kind wishes..... Isobel**