



Monday 8th January 2024

Dear Customer,

It's a grey and vaguely bright Monday morning here in Richmond. By some miracle we have managed to escape this latest round of floods. I had a walk in the village of Marske at the weekend and in the corner of the graveyard which surrounds the 11th century church, I saw the first snowdrops. Not quite yet in flower, but in bud and readying to open. Winter's days are numbered, we are on the march to spring, earning an extra 2 minutes of daylight every day.

It's always a slow start in the organic vegetable world in the new year. The farm workers who pick the crops, invariably from overseas, disperse home for Christmas. We await their return, back to our sodden fields. Not sure what we would do without them. We have white cabbages in the bags which are store cabbages and will keep fresh in the fridge for weeks. Great for carving off hunks to make crunchy coleslaw. Or you can braise it.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Broccoli and Parsnip Soup

head broccoli, roughly chopped
1 onion, roughly chopped
1½ litres vegetable stock
grated nutmeg, to taste
handful of walnuts
salt & pepper

300g parsnips, chopped
3 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp thyme leaves
handful of parsley
olive oil

Heat some olive oil in a large saucepan. Fry the onion and garlic together until soft and golden. Add the broccoli and parsnips.

Add the vegetable stock plus thyme. Bring to boil then reduce the heat and cook for 20 mins until vegetables are soft. Liquidise the soup. Season to taste with salt, pepper and nutmeg. Serve sprinkled with chopped parsley leaves and walnuts.

Parsnip Cottage Pie

450g large parsnips, roughly chopped
1 tbsp olive oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tbsp dried oregano
2 tbsp gravy granules
400g tin chopped tomatoes
3 carrots, chopped
handful frozen peas

2 tbsp margarine
1 onion, roughly diced
1 tbsp ground coriander
3 bay leaves
2 tbsp tamari
2 x 400g tins of cooked lentils, drained & rinsed
head of broccoli, chopped
large handful kale, shredded

Pre-heat your oven to 200C / Gas 6. Put the parsnips in a saucepan of boiling water and cook until tender. Meanwhile heat a large pan with the olive oil and add the onion, garlic, ground coriander, oregano and bay leaves. Then add the tamari, gravy granules, the lentils and chopped tomatoes, peas, carrots, kale and broccoli. Cook until tender, adding in some water if necessary. Drain and roughly mash the parsnips with the margarine, and season well. Put the veg in a casserole dish and top with the parsnip mash. Bake for 30 minutes in the oven.

Braised White Cabbage

1 white cabbage
2 cloves garlic, crushed
175 ml vegetable stock

1 onion, finely sliced
2 tbsp margarine or butter
salt and black pepper

Cut the cabbage into quarters, cut out the core and thicky slice the leaves. Melt the margarine / butter in a pan and saute for about 5 minutes then stir in the garlic. Add the cabbage and saute, stirring, for about 8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the hot stock, bring to the boil then reduce the heat to a low simmer. Cover with a lid and cook for 30-40 minutes, stirring occasionally. When meltingly tender, season and serve.

I watched 'Mr Bates vs The Post Office' on TV last week. I wasn't expecting to be in floods of tears - they surprised me, I was embarrassed about myself and wondered if it had more to do with my own emotional state. I was a bit relieved when I saw the reaction on Twitter to see that most people were in tears or smashing cups against the wall in anger. Then I wondered if it had anything to do with their emotional state – the emotional state of the nation. We just can't take any more. The lies, the cover-ups, the feathering of nests, the utter contempt with which ordinary people are treated.

Not only was this perhaps the hair that broke the camel's back, but it must be the worst miscarriage of justice in modern British history. And by the bloody Post Office. Those poor hardworking people who'd invested everything into their businesses: bankrupted; criminalised; imprisoned; driven to suicide. And the scale of it ! Every single conviction needs to be overturned immediately and serious compensation given immediately to end their purgatory so they can salvage what they can of their lives.

Nothing to report here. Glad to see the back of the festive season and to get back into the normal routine – you can't beat it. The third finger on my right hand is still swollen after several weeks, made all the worse by using the secateurs to prune some roses yesterday. It needs rest, so my left hand needs to step up and do more than it usually does – which is not a lot – a mere assistant to the right hand.

Hope you are well and have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel