

Monday 6th May 2013

Dear Customer,

Well spring has finally arrived in the Dales. The trees went suddenly from being stark and skeletal to oozing with life and bursting with fresh green leaves - this magnificence of nature. I was starting to worry that we'd fallen into a climatic black hole of eternal winter.

Here are a few recipes delicious spring recipes you could try this week:

Spanish Potato Salad

500g new potatoes, scrubbed and cut in bite-sized pieces
3 tbsp olive oil
1 garlic clove, crushed
1-2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley or chives (or mixture of both)

3 tbsp tomato puree
1 tbsp lemon juice
few drops tabasco or chilli sauce

Cook the potatoes until just tender and drain, Mix the tomato puree with the oil, lemon juice and garlic in a bowl. Add the salt, pepper and tabasco to taste, then stir in the herbs. Pour the dressing over the potatoes, mix lightly and leave to marinate for 3-4 hours before serving.

Carrot and Apple Souffle

50g butter
150ml single cream
2 tbsp fresh white breadcrumbs
250g carrots, finely grated
40g walnuts, chopped

50g plain flour
½ tsp ground cinnamon
4 eggs, separated
250g dessert apples, peeled, cored and grated

Melt the butter in a saucepan and stir in the flour to make a smooth paste. Add the cream and cinnamon and cook over a low heat until the sauce thickens. Cool slightly, then add the breadcrumbs, egg yolks, carrots and apples. Whisk the egg whites until stiff but but not dry, then carefully fold into the mixture. Pour into 4 greased individual soufflé dishes. Sprinkle over the chopped walnuts and bake in a preheated oven at 200C/ 400F/Gas 6, for 15-20 minutes until well-risen and golden brown. Serve immediately.

Carrot and Walnut Salad

450g carrots, coarsely grated
25g walnuts, roughly chopped
2 tbsp chopped parsley, to garnish

1 small onion, thinly sliced
50g sultanas

Dressing:

grated rind and juice of 1 orange
3 tbsp olive oil
50g walnuts, roughly chopped

2 tbsp lemon juice
1 garlic clove

To make the dressing, put the orange rind and juice, lemon juice, olive oil, garlic and walnuts in a liquidiser and blend until smooth adding salt and pepper. Place the carrots and onions in a large bowl and stir in the dressing, adding the sultanas and walnuts. Mix well and sprinkle with the chopped parsley.

I was first contacted about Bobby a year or so ago. I was told he was a little lamb which had been rescued from a halal killing. I am at saturation point with sheep and told the 'rescuer' that I would take him as a last resort but they should look for other options first. A couple of weeks ago I was told that the small sanctuary who had taken him was closing down as a lady had fallen over while visiting them, had hurt her leg, and was suing them. Just as well I didn't hear from last week's teacher again ! Anyway, Bobby, the little lamb was arriving on Thursday. I thought he'd arrive on their lap in the car but a trailer pulled up and out swaggered an enormous Swaledale ram with curled horns. They said he had been castrated now. They were tearful but obviously frightened of him. They said he was a head-butter. " Thanks very much" I said. I tried to get to the bottom of how they came to have Bobby the tiny lamb, and they said he had been alone in a field but were murky with the facts of the sheep rustle . I have experience of sheepy matters and it wasn't hard to deduce that this had been someone's prize ram - on his own because he was separated from the ewes. They probably saw him on his own in the field, felt sorry for him, didn't realise what he was or why he was there, crept in and took him. The farmer must have had a bit of a shock next morning !! Thankfully we haven't been attacked as yet and he seems happily integrated into the flock.

I am extremely pleased with myself because I cleaned my car yesterday, my green bin is full and in place ready for the bin men, both the garden and house are looking tidy and respectable. I feel very grown-up..... adapted. I am terrified of the car wash but I braved it. As the metal bar with the spinning mop settles on the bonnet and starts coming for the windscreen I think it's going to malfunction, not lift, come crashing through and decapitate me. I try to work out if I can fit down on the floor with the brake pedal. Surely if that was a possibility they wouldn't let us use it, would they ? I have so far refrained from googling to see how many people have been killed in this manner. Anyway, it can be challenging being on your own and having to manage and do everything yourself - car, meals, garden, house, businesses, animals etc. but when you do manage it, it is fantastic and far better than being moody, irritated and crying all the time. The only downsides are when you're ill, or you think you're ill, and not having someone obvious to go on holiday with and that's about it. Apart from that, blissful freedom and independence.

I hope you are having a lovely Bank holiday,

Kind wishes,

Isobel