

Monday 14th May 2018

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well. It is Sunday and coolish with showers, but it is bright and there is blue sky. It's such a relief to see the back of that horrible winter, I will take anything.

We have orange kuri squash in the bags full of vitamin C, vitamins E, B6, folate, iron and calcium. It's a good source of carotenoids and other anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds. You could halve it, scoop out the seeds, drizzle with olive oil and seasoning and bake until tender. Or here are some recipes you could try:

Squash Taponata

1 squash	olive oil
3 tbsp golden raisins	3 tbsp red wine vinegar
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar	1 onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, crushed	1tbsp maple syrup
1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes	3 tbsp green olives, chopped
3 tbsp capers, rinsed	salt and black pepper

Peel, de-seed and cube the squash. Toss it in olive oil and sprinkle generously with salt. Spread in a single layer on a baking sheet and roast at 210C/ 425F/ Gas 7 until tender, about 25 minutes. Put the raisins and vinegars in a small bowl and set aside. Heat 2 tbsp oil in a large pan over a medium heat until shimmering. Stir in the onion and garlic and cook until soft. Add the maple syrup, vinegar and raisins, squash cubes and about ½ tbsp salt. Reduce the heat to medium and cook for a couple of minutes, stirring until the squash is coated with the rest of the flavours. Stir in the tomatoes, olives and capers. Reduce the heat to medium-low and cook uncovered for 20 minutes, stirring often, until the mix is thick and almost sticky, the vegetables tender and nearly falling apart. Taste for seasoning. Serve through pasta, on bruschetta or in a toasted sandwich with mozzarella.,

Squash Fritter with Ricotta and Lemon Honey

1 squash	salt
50g plain flour	2 Hen Nation eggs, beaten
70g breadcrumbs	vegetable oil for deep-frying
60g runny honey	finely grated zest of a lemon
3 tsp lemon juice	150g ricotta
40ml milk	zest of 1 lemon, finely shredded

Preheat the oven to 190C/ 375F/ Gas 5. Cut the squash into large wedges, discarding the seeds. Place on foil on a baking tray and season with salt. Wrap tightly and bake for about 45 minutes until very tender. Cool slightly then cut away the skin and roughly chop the squash into 3cm pieces. Place the squash in a frying pan over a very low heat and cook gently for about 15 minutes to dry out, stirring often. It should break down and become pasty. Do not allow it to brown. Season with salt to taste, tip into a wide dish and allow to cool. Cover and chill for about 20 minutes. For the lemon honey, in a small bowl, whisk together the honey, lemon zest and juice and 40ml water until combined. Set aside. In a bowl mix the ricotta with enough milk to give a spreadable consistency, using a fork. Shape the squash into 12 quenelles (oval-shaped balls). Place each on a tray lined with clingfilm and chill for 20 minutes to firm up. Have the seasoned flour, beaten eggs and breadcrumbs ready in separate bowls. One at a time, coat each quenelle in flour then dip in beaten eggs and roll in the breadcrumbs to coat evenly. Heat 6-7cm of oil in a deep heavy pan to 200C/ 400F on a frying thermometer. Deep-fry the quenelles in batches until golden brown and crisp – about 2 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on kitchen paper. Keep them warm while you deep-fry the rest.

Beetroot Tagliatelle

400g beetroot	1 small onion, finely chopped
vegetable oil	salt and black pepper
1 tbsp white wine	100ml single cream
200g tagliatelle	handful sage, finely chopped

Boil the beetroot until tender. Let it cool then peel, chop and set aside. Gently fry the onion in the oil until softened but not coloured. Add the beetroot, wine and seasoning then cook for a few minutes until softened. Cook the tagliatelle according to packet instructions then add the cream to the beetroot sauce. Drain the pasta then add it to the beetroot pan and combine. Serve garnished with plenty of chopped sage.

Despite it having rained endlessly for 6 months, it's amazing how quickly it dries up and you need a hammer and chisel to get a dandelion out. I've been busy in the garden again. Most years it's just weed extraction however, this year I've taken it up a notch. Always lamenting that my flowers have gone by june – the peonies, the irises, the clematis - I've been thinking 'succession'. There's a 'post the money through the door' plant stall in Kirkby Fleetham where the sheep are, raising money for the village hall roof. I have been stopping off there regularly and buying things which 'flower vigorously through summer into autumn'. So I'm looking forward to that. I've filled my pots with geraniums and have put some herbs in pots too. So all set for outdoor living in the fabulous summer weather I am expecting.

The book is still gurgling round in my head, maybe it would end this ennui, this sense that everything I do I have done a million times before. But then so is Swaphopper making some gurgling sounds, the website I launched then de-launched and shelved pending review and time to focus on it properly. It's probably easier than writing. I will have to make a move on something soon. Even though I'm getting on a bit now I'm still too young still to be pottering round the garden...surely.

I can't do anything else this weekend anyway. Lainey had chewed on my bank card and it disappeared into the cash machine yesterday. She has just proudly dragged the soggy garden broom into the house. People keep saying what big paws she's got. She's also got very big ears and a very long tail. All a bit strange. She's supposed to be a black lab. Failing being able to clone Myfa, it was the closest I could get. She won't be Myfa, or anything like her, but I will still love her. Well I do love her, but an emptiness lingers where Myfa was. I guess it will for some time yet. I worshipped that dog.

Kind wishes and hope you have a good weekend,

Isobel