



Monday 3rd December 2018

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. I'm getting ahead of myself, it is just Saturday but it's definitely letter writing weather, too vile to go outside. As the gales subsided, a massive, wet murk descended. The rain is continuous. But it is at least still relatively mild.

Here are some tasty recipes you could try this week:

Mushroom Pasta

200g mushrooms, thickly sliced
3 cloves garlic, crushed
250g pasta eg penne, spaghetti
zest of 1 lemon

2 tsp wholegrain mustard
150g vegetable stock
3 tbsp flat-leaf parsley

Put the mushrooms, mustard, garlic and vegetable stock into a frying pan, bring to the boil and simmer for 5 minutes or until the stock has nearly all evaporated and the mushrooms are soft. Meanwhile cook the pasta to packet instructions. Drain and toss the mushrooms with the parsley and lemon zest. Season to taste and serve.

Parsnip, Carrot and Lentil Casserole

1 tbsp olive oil
2 parsnips, peeled and sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tin kidney beans, drained and rinsed
1 tsp. ginger
1 bay leaf
600ml vegetable stock
2 tbsp milk

3 carrots, peeled and sliced
1 onion, finely chopped
170g red lentils, rinsed
2 tsp cumin
1 tsp finely chopped coriander
salt and pepper to taste
2 medium potatoes
1 tbsp margarine or butter

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 300F/ Gas 4. Saute the onion and garlic in the olive oil in a large pan until soft. Add the carrots, parsnips and stock and bring to the boil. Add the lentils, herbs and spices. Simmer, covered for 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender and the lentils cooked. Oil a casserole dish. Mix the kidney beans with the carrot mixture in the saucepan, then with slotted spoon transfer the vegetables into the casserole dish. Ladle in enough of the liquid to cover the vegetables. Bake for 40 minutes. Meanwhile, peel and chop the potatoes and cook in boiling water until tender. Mash with the milk and butter/margarine and season. Remove the casserole from the oven and put dollops of mashed potato onto the vegetables. Turn up the oven a bit and return the casserole to oven. Bake for an additional 25 minutes until potato blobs begin to crisp. Serve with crusty bread.

Spiced Cabbage with Coconut and Ginger

2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 garlic clove, sliced
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp mustard seeds
2 tbsp desiccated coconut

4cm piece ginger, cut into fine matchsticks
1 onion, sliced lengthways
½ tsp turmeric
1 head green cabbage, chopped into 5cm pieces

Heat the oil in a wok or a large frying pan. Add the ginger, garlic and onion and a little seasoning, and then stir-fry over a medium heat for 8 minutes, or until softened and golden. Add the cumin, turmeric and mustard seeds, cook for 1 minute or until the mustard seeds start to pop. Add the cabbage, coconut and 1tbsp water and continue cooking for 5 minutes or until softened.

I keep checking the river level online - so much easier than going down into town and back to check on it every hour. It is the river Swale, the same river which some 10 miles further down borders the sheep's fields at Kirkby Fleetham. Whatever the river is doing here, it will be doing it there. Several weeks ago I went halves with the farmer to fence a very long corridor through the middle of his arable crops so we could run them back up to the farm quickly should the water levels rise. I'm sure you can well imagine how neurotic I now am when it rains or when rain is forecast. I don't know where the sheep bed down for the night but I have nightmares about them being fast asleep in the nooks and crevices of the wooded river bank, and in the pitch black, the waters rising. This is of course their first winter there and they do love it, they are very happy and thriving. It is more sheltered than it was for them here in Richmond.

I went on to Google 'can sheep see in the dark'. Apparently, yes they can, in fact they are one of the creatures with the best night vision. They have a reflective cell membrane behind their retinas called a tapetum lucidum, meaning 'bright carpet'. It acts like a mirror allowing more light into the eye and is also why their eyes glow yellow/green when light is shined at them. On occasions when I've been to see them at night with a torch, it's like lighting up hundreds of little green, twinkly fairy lights. Anyway, that is reassuring to know. Someone doing research into sheep's eyes is a Durham physics professor who lives in my road. He has two blind spaniels so I often meet him out walking. We have in the past talked about sheep's eyes, about their rectangular shaped lens and almost 360-degree peripheral vision. They are long-sighted but struggle to see what is above or indeed beneath them. A rising river beneath them ? I need to ask him that one. They sleep lightly, on average 3.8 hours in every 24 hours.

With time ticking on, I just want to let you know about deliveries over the Christmas period:

Week Commencing 17th December - Deliveries will be on your normal day. For delivery on this week only, we have the Jumbo Christmas Vegetable Bags at £29.50, and the Christmas Fruit Box at £29.50, available with all the fruit and vegetables you need for the seasonal period. Contents for these bags will be on the website this Friday.

Week commencing 23rd December – Tuesday and Wednesday deliveries will be made on Thursday afternoon into Friday. Thursday and Friday deliveries will be made Friday afternoon into Saturday.

Week Commencing 30th December – Tuesday and Wednesday deliveries will be made on Wednesday afternoon into Thursday. Thursday and Friday deliveries will be made Thursday into Friday.

Week Commencing 7th January – Normality resumes

Kind wishes, Isobel