

Monday 17th December 2018

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. I can't believe it's nearly Christmas, where did that zoom in from. It comes quicker every year. And less than a week to the shortest day, the Winter Solstice. In ancient times the Norsemen of northern Europe thought the sun was like a wheel / a dial, which as it turned, changed the seasons. I think I would have thought that too.

It must have been strange living at a time before science and knowledge. They would have had no idea what they were living on – that they were spinning round in space on the edge of a big, round rock. Something very reassuring which we take for granted.

Here are a few tasty side dishes you could try for the great meal, the eighth Wonder of the World, the British Christmas Dinner. Christmas morning, multitasking, food blender out, oven steaming up the windows, spinning blissfully and nonchalantly at 1000mph through the solar system:

Parsnips Roasted with a Mustard and Maple Syrup Glaze

500g parsnips	$\frac{3}{4}$ tbsp wholegrain mustard
1 tbs maple syrup	2 tbsp oil
salt and pepper	

Trim and peel the parsnips. Cut them in half then cut the top part into 4 and the bottom halves into 6 so you have even pieces. Steam for 6 minutes or lightly boil and drain. Meanwhile in a preheated oven heat the baking tray with the oil in. Then add the parsnips round sides up. Tilt the tray and use a large spoon to baste the parsnips so they are evenly coated. Give them a good grinding of pepper and put in the oven. Bake for 25 minutes until nicely browned. Mix the mustard and maple syrup together. Using a brush, give the parsnips a liberal coating of the syrup. Return to the oven for 8-10 minutes.

Parsnip Puree with Crème Fraîche and Nutmeg

500g parsnips	100ml crème fraîche
$\frac{1}{4}$ nutmeg freshly grated	salt and pepper

Peel the parsnips and cut into 1" chunks. Steam or boil with a little salt until tender reserving a little of the liquid. Put them in a food processor along with the crème fraîche until completely smooth then add the nutmeg and seasoning. If the puree is too dry, add a little of the parsnip cooking water. Return the puree to the saucepan and stir over a medium heat until piping hot.

Brussel Sprouts with Ginger and Orange

500g brussel sprouts	ginger, grated to make 1 tbsp
1 orange, zested and juiced	50g butter or creamy margarine
1 tbsp soy sauce	

Blanch the brussel sprouts in salted boiling water for 4-5 minutes until tender but with a little bite. Drain well. Mash the ginger, orange zest and butter/margarine with plenty of seasoning. Tip it into a frying pan and let it melt for a minute. Add the sprouts and toss to coat. Cook for 5-10 minutes on a low heat until the edges are starting to turn golden. Add the soy sauce and orange juice. Make sure the sprouts are well-coated.

Sprout and Potato Gratin with Chestnut Crumb

20g butter / margarine	2 onions, thinly sliced
5 garlic cloves, thinly sliced	4 thyme sprigs, leaves picked
3 large potatoes, scrubbed, thinly sliced	500ml low-fat milk
100ml cream	200g crème fraîche
500g brussel sprouts	finely grated zest of 1 lemon
80g cheese, grated	50g stale wholegrain bread
3 tbsp oil	50g vacuum-packed chestnuts, finely chopped

Preheat the oven to 190C. Melt the butter / margarine in a baking dish over a medium heat. Add the onion, garlic and half the thyme, and cook, stirring for 8 minutes or until the onion is softened. Add the sliced potato and stir well then pour over the milk. Bring to the boil then reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring, for 3 minutes or until the potato is heated through. Remove from the heat and stir through the cream and crème fraîche, then fold through the sprouts. Add the lemon zest and half the cheese.

Season and stir gently to combine before grating over the remaining cheese. Place the bread in a food processor and pulse to coarse breadcrumbs. Transfer to a small bowl and add the chestnuts, oil and remaining thyme and stir well to combine. Sprinkle the chestnut crumb over the vegetable mixture. Transfer to the oven and bake for 50-55 minutes until the vegetables are softened and the top is golden and bubbling.

It remains for me to say how humbled and grateful I am to you for supporting us, for sticking with us, for being our fantastic customers, reassuringly 'in it together' through these turbulent and maddening times. I hope you enjoy a lovely Christmas holiday whatever you are doing.

Kind wishes from us all, Isobel