



Monday 28th February 2022

Dear Customer,

It's Monday morning and pale grey outside. There's a low mist hanging below in the valley. It's cold and still and quiet. The forecast today is for rain.

Here are a couple of tasty recipes you could try this week:

Spicy Aubergine Curry

400g aubergine
1 large onion, finely chopped
piece of root ginger, peeled and chopped
juice of 1 lime
a tbsp soy sauce

2 tbsp sunflower oil
2 cloves garlic, chopped
a tbsp Thai red curry Paste
2 tbsp dark muscovado sugar
½ x 400g can coconut milk

Cut the aubergine into small cubes. Heat the oil in a frying pan and add the onion, garlic and ginger. Cook for 3 minutes until starting to brown then add the aubergine and fry until browned on all sides. Stir in the curry paste and cook for a minute. Add the lime juice, sugar, soy sauce and season. Add 400ml cold water and bring to the boil. Lower the heat and simmer for 15–20 minutes until tender and sauce reduced. Stir in the coconut milk and heat gently. Serve with steamed Thai jasmine rice.

Spaghetti with Aubergine and Tomato Sauce

400g aubergine, cut into 2cm chunks
2 garlic cloves, sliced
3 x 400g tins chopped tomatoes
fresh basil, leaves torn

2 tbsp olive oil
½-1 tsp chilli flakes
2 tsp capers, roughly chopped
spaghetti

Preheat the oven to 220°C/ Gas 7. On a baking tray, toss the aubergines with 1 tbsp oil then season. Roast for 15-20 minutes until turning golden. Meanwhile heat the remaining 1 tbsp oil in a frying pan, add the garlic and chilli flakes and cook gently for 5 minutes to soften. Tip in the tomatoes and capers, bring to the boil, then turn down and simmer gently for 20 minutes. As soon as the aubergine is ready, add to the tomato sauce and simmer until the sauce has thickened and the aubergine is soft (5-10 minutes). Stir in most of the basil and season. While the sauce is bubbling, cook the spaghetti. Serve scattered with fresh basil.

I have no idea what is happening in the world and what has changed since 1pm yesterday when I had to walk away from it. Did the talks on the Belarussian border go ahead; has the Russian economy collapsed this morning; is Kyiv still standing. I want to look, of course, but when Putin said he was putting his nuclear team on stand-by, that was it. I couldn't take anymore. Later, I watched the Antiques Roadshow. I watched Chris Packham do his favourite river walk. I went to bed early avoiding any news, any social media. A newsflash came up on my phone saying that a 3-mile long convoy of Chechen tanks were approaching Kyiv. Then I went to sleep. Then I woke up to another day. I remain news-free but pre-occupied. Knowing or not to knowing; they are equally difficult.

Since the invasion on Thursday morning and the lead-up, I'd been following Ukrainian reporters and individuals in Kyiv on Twitter. Minute by minute coverage. I was awake late into the night as they tweeted into the night, as they came under attack. On other footage I would see the convoys of tanks heading towards them. I liked their tweets and retweeted them. One of the thousands showing them they weren't alone, we were there, helpless, but we were there. The more aware of it you are, the more you interact, the more involved you get. I'd wake up too early and instead of going back to sleep for an hour or two, I'd check my phone, learn of the horrors that had unfolded. By Saturday afternoon, my fury was rising. I went to the grounds of Kiplin Hall for a walk. I didn't walk. I stormed round. All the while, thinking 'I'll go', 'I'll go and fight' 'Give me a kalashnikov' 'I'll ***** get them'.

But here I am, safe in my house and I can't cope with it, with the state of my emotions and my nerves. So what about those in Ukraine who are actually living in it. It is unimaginable what they are going through. The braver they are, the harder they stand, the worse the

weapons he will bring. How is it for those their families and friends elsewhere as they watch in terror. For the women refugees who have fled with their children, with their cats over their shoulder, leaving behind elderly parents, sons and husbands. Imagine how it would have been in WW1 and WW11 if there had been Twitter and Tiktok and livestreaming of every movement, every moment. How would the families have coped.

On the local Facebook groups no one is mentioning it. Life goes on as normal. On Thursday morning I posted the Ukrainian flag calling out to the local Ukrainian community that we were there for them if they needed help. It got an immediate 5 likes, a man messaged that he needed help to get his girlfriend out, then the post disappeared. Admin removed it. When I protested they said it was because it was a world issue and not a local one. The next post was by a woman looking for someone to do her eyelashes.

Are we equipped to deal with these days: Liz Truss to this crisis, what Matt Hancock was to the pandemic; so out of her depth it's truly unbelievable. I just can't stand her.

Stay strong everyone, like the Ukrainians. Long Live Ukraine, Long Live the Free World, Long Live Zelensky..... and may the other rot in hell.

Warmest wishes,

Isobel