



Monday 8th August 2022

Dear Customer,

It's already Tuesday. The heat is starting to get up again and Lainey is snoring behind my head on the back of the sofa, zonked out in the sun's rays. I am in a panic because I am late.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Courgette and Tomato Gratin

450g courgettes, thinly sliced

400g tomatoes, sliced

25g Cheddar, finely grated, or non-dairy alternative

pinch cayenne pepper

2 tbsp pesto

4 tbsp breadcrumbs

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

1 tbsp oil

Preheat the oven to 220°C / Gas 7. Toss the courgette slices in the pesto until lightly coated. Arrange the courgette and tomato slices in a single layer in a large, 2 litre, ovenproof gratin dish; season to taste. Mix together the breadcrumbs, cheese, garlic and cayenne pepper and sprinkle over the top. Drizzle with the olive oil. Bake in the oven for 30 minutes until the top is golden and the vegetables are tender. Serve with crusty bread if desired.

Roasted Courgette and Tomato Pasta

450g courgettes, thinly sliced

400g plum tomatoes

handful basil leaves, torn

4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

4 garlic cloves

Preheat the oven to 220°C / Gas 7. Spread the courgettes out in a single layer in a large roasting tin and toss with 2 tbsp oil; season. Pile the tomatoes into a second, smaller roasting tin, tossing with 1 tbsp oil. Season and tuck the (peeled) garlic cloves underneath the tomatoes so they aren't exposed. Put the courgettes at the top of the oven with the tomatoes underneath. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring both trays halfway through. Stir again, then reduce the oven temperature to 180°C / Gas 4, and cook for 10 more minutes. Remove both trays from the oven and crush the tomatoes and garlic with a fork to make a rough sauce (the garlic might still be quite firm). Add the sauce to the courgettes and return to the oven for 10 minutes to thicken. Stir in the remaining 1 tbsp oil with the torn basil, then season. Meanwhile cook the pasta to packet instructions. Mix and serve.

Fruit Crumble

800g plums / nectarines / apples / pears, chopped

1 tbsp lemon juice

150g firm, slightly salted butter or margarine, cut into pieces

75g demerara sugar

175g plain flour

50g porridge oats

Preheat the oven to 190°C / Gas 5. Scatter the fruit in a 1-litre shallow ovenproof dish and sprinkle with 2 tablespoons of the sugar, the lemon juice and 125ml cold water. Place the flour in a food processor and add the butter / margarine. Blend until it is incorporated into the flour and the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add the remaining sugar and the oats and pulse briefly until the mixture begins to cling together. Tip the crumble over the fruit, spreading it almost to the edges of the dish. Bake for about 45 minutes until the crumble is pale golden brown and the fruit juices bubbling.

There was so much I was going to tell you but all I can think about are Toby and Basil. A friend has just stayed overnight. She has driven up from the South of France with two of her dogs en route to the Black Isle near Inverness. The dogs are escaping an execution order after running round her village biting people. She managed to persuade the Mayor to let her flee the country with them instead. He even rang her when she was en route to make sure they'd gone. They are beautiful dogs and it wasn't their fault. The dogs are going to live alone in a Yurt in a 1-acre field on a farm near Cromarty. But they aren't farm animals, you can't just put them in a field with a shelter. She will return to France, to her other animals, and then reconsider her life. I am worried sick about these dogs so have just emailed her to make sure she is aware of all the hazards they are facing. ' Yurts are tents, dogs can freeze to death in sub-zero temperatures. Unless it has deer fencing around the field they will jump out - escape to look for you, try to return home. If the fence has barbed wired on it would cut their stomachs open. They could be run over, shot by a farmer, bite someone else in fear. Tethered, they will strangle themselves with the rope. If there are gales the yurt will collapse and suffocate them. They will be terrified and bereft. The stress could make their pre-existing illnesses re-erupt. They need stimulation, socialisation and a home who will dry them if they get cold and wet, who will know if they tremble all night. They need company and affection, someone to play with them and take them out to different places. You can't just stay with them for three days and then drive off. You have to do it gradually, stay somewhere else, make sure they get bonded to 'Alan'. Can't he take them to his home ! '

No reply.

Otherwise, the hell goes on doesn't it. A raging economic crisis, a raging war, a never-ending pandemic, strikes looming, the NHS in a state of collapse and the planet on fire, while our government are dotted about on foreign beaches. Zahawi said he is still managing the economy. We all know how that works - laptop on a beach in full sun ! All we have is the touring freak show of the leadership contest. My MP, host extraordinaire, snazzy Sunak.... and the haunting and terrifying Truss.....flipping their policies, our futures, by the day. Still another month of it !!! Not to mention 'the return of Trump' Enjoy the sunshine, we have one hell of a winter ahead.

Hope you have a good week.....Kind wishes, Isobel