



Monday 8th May 2023

Dear Customer,

It's Bank Holiday Monday 2. The weather is done by the time it's been round the globe and gets to the Yorkshire Dales. It leaves us in cloud and rain for months on end with an Arctic wind blowing, can't be bothered to change our season. Then suddenly, without first removing the cloud and rain, it gives us a Saharan blast of intense heat leaving us with boiling fog.

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

Leek and Pea Pasta

400g leeks	3 cloves garlic
250 ml cream	large pinch salt
½ tsp cracked black pepper	100 g frozen peas
spaghetti or linguini	squeeze fresh lemon

Wash the leeks then finely slice, including the green ends. Put in a large pan with a drizzle of olive oil and the minced garlic. In another pan, cook the pasta to packet instructions. Sauté the leeks and garlic for around 5 minutes before adding the cream, a good squeeze of lemon juice, salt and pepper and bring to a low simmer for around 10 minutes. Save the a ladle full of pasta water and add to the pan with the cream and leeks, then pour in the frozen peas for the final few minutes. Add in the cooked pasta, mix and season to serve.

Roasted Leek and Red Pepper Salad with Balsamic

450g leeks, cut into 2.5cm rounds	2 red peppers, cut into large chunks
2 tbsp olive oil	1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
sprigs fresh oregano and thyme	2 cloves garlic, crushed
25g pine nuts, toasted	

Place the prepared vegetables in a roasting pan along with the garlic, olive oil and balsamic and season well with salt and pepper. Cover with wetted baking paper and scrunch over vegetables to seal. Oven roast for 30 minutes until tender and just starting to brown. Serve topped with the pan juices and scattered with toasted pine nuts.

The mowers from the Council came into town last week to ruin the blooming of spring. They cut every single blade of grass and wildflower they could find. I was walking up my road, where they were doing more of a 'scrape' than a mow, right down to the bare earth. I accelerated to overtake and stop him. I asked the guy what he was doing and why was he doing it. I had a rant about the flowers and insects and the ecosystem. He said he agreed with me but that it was his job. I asked him to at least not do at the top of the hill where I live and to tell them there was some woman glued to the verge. He agreed and left it alone.

I took photos of a piece of the verge full of wildflowers – the 'before' - and then of the scrape - the 'after'. I sent them to the Council and posted them on our local social media saying that it was time for an ecological review of Richmond in the light of the biodiversity crisis. I then started on the Richmond Landscape Trust who mow the nine-acre wildflower meadow in May when it is in full bloom and abuzz with butterflies and pollinators. Apparently they harvest the seed to send around the country, but what about our insects – they leave nothing for them. In May they grind them all up along with the butterfly eggs which have been laid in the long grasses, and probably the nests and habitats of amphibians and small mammals. 'RLT' Facebook page is a serene place with daily posts of photos of wild flowers, views from Westfields of the castle rising from the mist - that sort of thing – all appreciatively received with hundreds of likes and hearts.

So when I started interrogating them and suggesting they needed to re-examine what they were doing, they were quite shocked. Their responses were unsatisfactory, kept insisting biodiversity was at heart if what they were doing. I kept coming back at them, and so they then deleted all the dialogue to return to their world of make-believe - pictures of owls and bluebells. But I'm not done here.

In that group and the other local Facebook groups I accompanied my posts with a photo of little blue butterfly. Then, during the Coronation concert last night, above the stage, in lasers, appeared that very same little blue butterfly - 'Don't you forget about me'.

Beautiful serendipity. Vindicated 😊.

But count the pennies and the pounds look after themselves as they say – the little things we can each do in our own back yards and neighbourhoods can all add up to a hell of a lot.

There are many things that have divided us over recent years. I was really pleased to see Stella McCartney take to the stage last night at the Coronation concert to raise this point – that the future of the planet is greater than all of us, greater than what divides us. He is undoubtedly a green King. He is one of the most influential environmentalists in the world. David Attenborough. Who else have we got ? I remember in the early 90's when I started Farmaround – organic farming was of course niche back then, deemed a hippy thing - but there were 3 powerful leading voices in the movement. They attended every event, they were passionate and determined – Jonathan Dimbleby, John Humphreys, and Prince Charles. I remember the Soil Association dinner where, in his address, he spoke passionately against the cruelty of the factory farming of animals. He used to mingle with everyone talking ideas, leading / bolstering the sustainability movement. Trappings of monarchy aside, he was one of us, on our side. It's seemingly, clearly, 'not cool' to like our monarchy. Someone interviewed on TV apologised for liking the King. I'm sure there is plenty to criticise, but McCartney and Dimbleby are out there pleading with people not to see the monarch but the man. As our planet burns up and nature is being destroyed there are certainly greater issues at stake.

Kind wishes and hope you have a good week,

Isobel