



Monday 24th April 2023

Dear Customer,

It's Sunday morning again, and as usual, cold and wet. I watched Stacy Dooley's documentary about the Ukrainian soldiers being trained in England. "We've brought you to a place in England where the weather is bad..." the officer told them. A bit of a giveaway. I can even see the woods where they are training out of my window. Rubbing it in, Stacey later said it had the 'worst weather in the country'.

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

Beetroot Ragu

<i>olive oil, for frying</i>	<i>1 large onion, peeled & diced</i>
<i>1 carrot, diced</i>	<i>2 garlic cloves, grated</i>
<i>2 bay leaves</i>	<i>1 tsp dried oregano</i>
<i>1 tsp dried rosemary</i>	<i>3 medium beetroots, peeled & grated</i>
<i>125ml red wine</i>	<i>2 x 400g tins of chopped tomatoes</i>
<i>2 tbsp tomato puree</i>	<i>1 vegetarian stock cube</i>
<i>60g pine nuts</i>	<i>pasta</i>

*Heat a generous glug of olive oil in a large frying pan. Slowly soften the onion, carrot and garlic on a low heat until soft. Add the bay leaves, oregano and rosemary and stir. Add the grated beetroot and a pinch of salt. Turn the heat up and cook the beetroot for about 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the wine and allow the alcohol to cook off then add the tomatoes, tomato puree and stock cube. Half fill one of the tomato tins with water and add that too. Turn to a low heat and allow to simmer and reduce for at least 30 minutes. **To make the gremolata**, finely chop the parsley together with the lemon zest and garlic in a pile on a chopping board. Toast the pine nuts in a dry frying pan. Serve the ragu with pasta and garnish with the gremolata and pine nuts.*

Purple Sprouting Broccoli with Lemon and Butterbeans

<i>Purple sprouting broccoli</i>	<i>100g toasted pine nuts</i>
<i>2 tbsp olive oil</i>	<i>1 small red onion, finely chopped</i>
<i>2 cloves garlic, chopped</i>	<i>½ red chilli, finely chopped</i>
<i>400g tin butter beans, rinsed</i>	<i>1 lemon, zest and some of the juice</i>

Trim the broccoli and cut into 2cm pieces then blanch in a pan of boiling water for 3 minutes. Drain and set aside. Toast the pine nuts in a dry frying pan, shaking them constantly to prevent burning. In a saucepan, heat the oil. Add the onion, garlic, chilli and some salt and pepper and soften them gently adding a little water to create some steam. When soft add the butter beans, lemon zest, a little lemon juice and the toasted pine nuts and fry for 3 minutes. Add the blanched purple broccoli and mix well. Serve with extra lemons juice and a drizzle of olive oil.

After the failed attempts at being recognised as a human being by the passport photo booth in Tesco, I thought I'd try Johnsons the dry cleaners. Here there is a woman with a camera, specialised in photo booth rejects. After a few attempts and a lot of grimacing she finally came up with one that she thought would pass. She showed me it in her camera. Lovely! I uploaded it to my application and a mere 3 days later I got my new passport. The blue one. Freedom day! Though what I will do with my newfound freedom I don't know because I have this dog.

If I just pop outside to put the bins out, or to move the car, she stands up at the window, tears of anxiety rolling down her face. If someone tries to take her for a walk, she won't even go down the drive with them – even people she loves. How could I possibly fly off and leave her. As for taking her with me, I don't want to give her the rabies vaccine which can have so many side effects, including making them suspicious and aggressive; or cover her in chemicals to protect her from ticks, and the sandflies which could give her leishmaniasis; give her the heartworm pill. I long to get off this island, go somewhere. I just don't know how.

It was an equally trepidatious 'freedom day' for the hens too last week after months of being in lockdown with avian flu sweeping the country. The doors were opened up to the spring pastures outside. But no, a few poked their beaks out, then came back in. A few more adventurous ones went out for a quick look. It will take time for them to be reaccustomed to the great outdoors.

Once upon a time on a Sunday I might have gone to Spitalfields market, or Greenwich for a rummage. I might have had a long breakfast reading the papers in the courtyard at Kenwood House: gone to see an exhibition at the Tate. Move to the country and all culture drains out of you. My attempt at 'half and half' failed. I'd come to an arrangement with someone with a basement flat between Regents Park and Primrose Hill, that I would use in between it being let for holidays. It seemed the perfect solution. However, day 2, I came back to a smashed window and my laptop missing. I took it as a sign.

So, I will just drive off into Wensleydale again, discover some new footpaths, and worry about the mice that are now living too close for comfort, next to back door. The blue tits sit on the bird feeder and throw all the seeds out for them. Every single time I look out the door the mice are there.

I received a letter back from Rishi about the sewage. It was the usual copy and paste piece of text. I spat on his blue signature, smeared the ink, checking to see if that at least was real. 'Here's the pile of sewage letters for you to sign Sir'.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel