



Monday 12th June 2023

Dear Customer, (PS PLEASE NOTE TO GET EVERYTHING INTO THE FRIDGE AS QUICK AS POSSIBLE IN THIS HEAT !)

It's Monday morning 9am, full sun and 23C. A perfect summer morning. I've just fed the pheasants on my #nomowsummer lawn. It looks beautiful with tiny moths fluttering through the different grasses and buttercups. The pheasants are getting a bit too tame for their own good. It's not hard, they are placid and trusting. There are 2 females, and one male who walks round the outside of the house having altercations with his reflection in the bi-fold doors.....And straight in with a few tasty recipes:

Caramelised Broccoli

3 tbsp olive oil

120ml water

pinch of crushed red pepper

broccoli head, quartered lengthwise

3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

2 tbsp fresh lemon juice

In a large, deep casserole pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the broccoli, cut side down, cover, and cook over moderate heat until browned on the bottom, about 8 minutes. Add the water, cover, and cook until the broccoli is just tender and the water has evaporated, about 7 minutes. Add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil along with the garlic and the crushed red pepper. Cook uncovered until the garlic is golden brown, about 3 minutes. Drizzle with the lemon juice and season the broccoli to taste.

Broccoli and French Bean Stir-Fry

1 tbsp olive oil

1 head broccoli

2 cloves garlic

2 tbsp tamari

1 tbsp sesame seeds

¼ onion, sliced

220g French beans

1 tsp fresh ginger

juice from ½ lime

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté 3 to 4 minutes to soften. Add the green beans and broccoli. Stir. Cover the pan with a lid and cook 7 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger, and tamari. Sauté another 2 minutes, uncovered. Add the lime juice and sesame seeds just before serving.

Tomato Salad

400g tomatoes

fresh basil plus extra for serving

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

½ small onion peeled

2 garlic cloves, peeled

2 tbsp red wine vinegar

Chop the tomatoes into a bowl in chunks. Combine the onion, basil, garlic and salt and pepper in a food processor. Blitz into a rough paste, retaining some texture. Add it to the tomatoes with the olive oil and vinegar. Season and stir well, then let the salad marinate for at least 20 minutes. Serve topped with a grinding of black pepper and a few sprigs of fresh basil.

But of course, no rain. Not here anyway, and we look set for another drought. It might be sensible for the government and the water companies to pre-empt it, start telling us to reduce our water consumption. Maybe some of the saved water could be diverted to the farmers who need it to grow our food. But they won't do that: the former for fear of accusations of 'nanny stateism'; the latter because they want to disappear from public view over the sewage scandal ...and the 1.06 trillion litres of water which seep out of leaky pipes every year. They will just wait until the situation is critical.

To rely on 'education' + 'freedom of choice' + 'hope' - that doesn't work. It was never going to work. Only legislation works. Ok, we condemn the human race to oblivion, that's one thing, but to condemn the homes, the habitats, of all the other beautiful creatures of our planet - that is unforgivable. It doesn't matter if it has evolved over millions of years, give us an ecosystem and we will destroy it. I keep coming back to Theresa May's daring and ground-breaking achievement of banning plastic cotton wool buds. That just says it all about the tough decisions we have to make - we won't make them.

My sheep's vet was John Watkinson who practiced in Wensleydale, taking over from his father who advised on the TV series All Creatures Great and Small back in the day. John retired and his practice was bought out. Now I have to go to Barnard Castle if I need any meds, which I did the other day. As usual I took the country route to avoid the A66. I passed through the village of Barningham and saw a footpath sign pointing into the garden of Barningham Hall, home to the Millbanks who own a lot of the grouse moors. I parked up to go and have a look, it was a mass of colour with the rhododendrons in full bloom, not to mention a lot of #nomow areas. It's a shame he doesn't extend the same sensibility to his moorland.

I followed the path through the garden, past the hall, and into some woodland. It was one of those footpaths that entices and entrances - draws you round the next corner, over the next brow - too tantalising to turn back from. Out of the woodland path a gate was held open with a big stone, which led onto undulating parkland with red kites flying overhead. The pasture was pristine, no animal droppings or tracks. I carried on walking towards a kissing gate I could see in the far distance, behind which, the golden glow and coconut aroma of yellow gorse. The sun was shining, it was like being in wonderland.

I turned for a moment to look at the view behind me. To my horror, staring back at me were about a hundred cows with their calves, all standing at the side of the little hill I'd just walked past 'Jesus Christ'. You don't mess with cows with their calves in these parts. Every year people with dogs are trampled to death, including the deputy headmaster of Richmond School the year before last in another vast and undulating field next to the Georgian racecourse.

I was miles from the gate, miles from anywhere, just this huge expanse with my dog and a big, hefty herd of protective mothers. The terror! I spied a gate up a steep hill back onto the woodland. 'Don't look at them', I told myself. Lainey was running about trying to draw maximum attention to us. 'COME HERE !!' My brisk walk turned into a 'run for it'. But I couldn't get through the gate, it was dense and overgrown on the other side. If we went in we'd never get out. I clung to the 6ft stone wall and followed it back towards the gate I'd come in. By now I couldn't breathe - all the running uphill and panic - I was shaking. Anyway, I got safely back to the gate in the end and back into the woodland. I nearly moved the stone to shut the gate behind me. However, the cows were nowhere to be seen. I reckoned we were now safe. Oh for heavens sake 😞

Kind wishes and hope you have a good week.....Isobel