



Monday 14th August 2023

Dear Customer,

It's been absolutely tipping it down. There were a couple of summery days last week, but blink, be busy at work, you miss them. Rain every day until the end of the month, until the end of summer. Holiday in this country at your peril.

Yet here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week with your courgettes:

Provençal Stuffed Courgettes

courgettes	2 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra
1 onion, peeled and finely chopped	2 medium tomatoes
4 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed	80g long-grain rice
150ml vegetable stock	1 bunch fresh mint
50g finely grated cheese, optional	2 tbsp dry breadcrumbs
basil, to garnish	

Heat the oven to 180C / Gas 4. Cut long courgettes in half lengthways and scoop out the flesh. Roughly chop the flesh, along with the lids of the round kind. Bring a large pan of salted water to a simmer, add the courgettes and blanch for five minutes. Prepare a sink full of iced water and, once the courgettes are done, put in the sink to cool. Heat the oil in a wide pan over a medium-low heat, add the onion, and cook until soft and golden. Finely chop the tomatoes and add to the pan with the courgette flesh and garlic, cook until soft, then stir in the rice, add the stock, bring to a simmer and cook for about 12 minutes, until most of the liquid has evaporated. Meanwhile, pick and roughly chop the mint leaves and stir into the stuffing mix with cheese if using. Season to taste. Put the hollowed-out courgettes on a greased baking sheet and divide the filling between them, packing it in well, then cover with foil and bake for 20 minutes. Toss the breadcrumbs in a splash of olive oil, season, sprinkle on top of the courgettes, and bake for a further 15 minutes. Garnish with basil.

Courgette Brownies

110ml vegetable oil	250g granulated sugar
2 tsp vanilla extract	250g plain flour
65g cocoa powder	1½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt	325g courgette, finely shredded, retaining the juices
100g chopped dark chocolate or chocolate chips	55g pecans, roughly chopped (optional)

Preheat oven to 180C / Gas 4. Line a 9" x13" (23 x 33cm) tray with baking paper. Put the oil, sugar, and vanilla in a large mixing bowl and beat until combined and sandy. Stir in the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt. Stir in the shredded courgette by hand. Set the mixture aside for 5 minutes to rest and let the courgette's juices release into the batter. Gently fold in the chocolate chips and pecans. If the batter is very dry at this point, add a little water. Pour the batter into the pan and spread evenly to the edges. Cook for 25 minutes or until the edges are set and the centre is still a little bit wobbly and soft. Allow the brownies to cool completely in the tray before cutting into squares.

I continue to try and prepare the house for doing some Airbnb. Though as summer evaporates, I am running out of time. I'm trying to reconfigure the house, sort out downstairs so that I can let the upstairs as and when I can. I switched to paying interest only during the difficult days of the organic farm shop and café and am tied excruciatingly to the variable rate. My mortgage repayments have more than tripled. I got onto a mortgage broker to fix a rate, but equally importantly, to try and extend the term. A surveyor needed to come out. I thought this would be weeks away, then got a call saying they wanted to send one the next morning. The house is looking like a junk shop with rolled up rugs, furniture piled up, mattresses leaning up against windows, unplumbed freestanding bath on the landing. I told her that the next day would be

impossible, she said I would receive the appointment by message on my mobile phone and that it would give me a link to change the day. Ok, so when I got it, I would change it for in a few weeks' time.

I had taken Lainey down to Round Howe to play 'splish' in the river. I'd been feeling guilty about being so busy I'd just been taking her for a perfunctory walk around the racecourse each day – the default. As I left the car park and walked up the footpath alongside the river, a text came through with the 8.45am next day appointment. I needed weeks to make the house look presentable. It's ok, when I got home I would change the appointment.

After an hour of 'splish' I headed back towards the car, put my hand in my pocket, my phone was gone. It was nearly 5pm. I re-traced my steps back along the riverside, it was nowhere. I went home and hoped someone might have found it and get in touch. I walked into the house and it had never looked so bad. I haven't bothered with any cleaning or hoovering while it's been upside down.

Someone did find my phone, I got it back at about 8pm, but it was wet and within a minute the screen went black and it never recovered. No link to change the surveyor's appointment, they would be arriving first thing.

It was painful showing him round, the horrors that confronted us behind each door. I tried to divert his attention to the views out the windows. He was quite stern, and when Lainey ran off with one of his shoes I could tell he wasn't a dog person.

He wanted to go up into the attic. I haven't been up there for a few years, not since the TV man found a huge wasps nest up there which had to be removed. And I get vertigo. I pulled open the trap door for him and a tangle of cobwebs and spiders fell out. He said he wouldn't bother which is just as well as it's rammed with the entire contents of my late parents' house. That's the next job.

Apart from that, our packing manager has been off on holiday, so not running smoothly in that department. She's back next week.

Kind wishes and hope you have a good week,

Isobel