



**Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

It's gotten cold. It's horrible. Still a few leaves hanging on though and a few roses still in bloom. The beech tree is covered with new buds hoping we might give winter a miss. Oh, if only, with Christmas and all. I'll just say this once to get it off my chest while it's still November, I know I'm not allowed to say it in December but it's coming for us. I loathe Christmas. I detest and dread it. I hate absolutely everything about it.

Here are a few tasty recipe ideas you could try with this week's ingredients:

### **Mushroom and Leek Tagliatelle**

3 tbsp olive oil 3 garlic cloves, crushed  
½ tsp dried oregano or mixed herbs 2 leeks, washed and finely sliced  
200g mushrooms, washed 400g tagliatelle or other pasta  
zest of 1 lemon 30g fresh flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped  
2 tbsp crème fraiche salt and pepper

Bring a large pan of water to the boil for the pasta. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat and then add the garlic, oregano, leeks and mushrooms. Sauté for a few minutes until the leeks and mushrooms have softened, then season.

Cook the pasta according to the packet instructions, drain and return it to the warm pan. Add the grated lemon zest, a squeeze of lemon and parsley, stirring them into the pasta. Finish with crème fraiche and season then serve.

### **Roasted Fennel**

Preheat the oven to 210C / Gas 7. Cut the fennel into wedges and place them in a bowl. Toss them with 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Sprinkle with balsamic vinegar, just enough to coat. Line a roasting tin or baking dish with foil brushed with olive oil. Arrange the fennel wedges in the tin and roast until the fennel wedges are cooked through and beginning to caramelize at the edges.

### **Roasted Swede**

1 swede 12 cloves  
1 tbsp olive oil 30g dark muscovado sugar  
20g wholegrain mustard

Preheat the oven to 180°C/ Gas 4. Score the swede all over with a knife, cutting about 1cm into the flesh in a criss-cross pattern. Stud the surface evenly with cloves. Drizzle with the oil and season, then wrap the swede in a large sheet of greaseproof paper and place in a small ovenproof dish. Roast for 1 hour, then remove the paper and return to the oven for a further 30–60 mins, or until the swede is well cooked. Remove from the oven and turn down the temperature to 120°C/ Gas ½ . Mix the sugar and mustard in a small bowl and brush the swede all over with the mixture. Return to the oven and cook for 20–30 mins. Carve into slices to serve.

Swede and Potato Gratin olive oil butter or margarine 1 onion, finely sliced 1 swede, peeled and cut into batons 500g potatoes, peeled and cut into batons 200ml cream 100ml milk grating nutmeg 1 bay leaf

Heat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4. Heat a little oil and a knob of margarine and gently fry the onion until it is very tender but not coloured. Add the swede and potato, turn them over in the onion mix and season really well. Tip into a greased baking dish about 1.5 litres in capacity. Bring the cream and milk to a simmer and pour it over the veg, grate over some nutmeg and add the bay leaf. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender and the top is browned.

With winter coming and longing for spring, about a month ago, I went tulip shopping on Bulbi.com. I completely lost the plot. I kept adding and adding, I couldn't resist them. I thought the list would end but it never ended – hundreds of shades of whites, of soft, blush pinks, of oranges and purples – there were two-toned, double petalled, round headed. And I'd already filtered out short ones, frilly ones, speckled ones and red. I wanted tall, simple and elegant to rise out of the tangle of forget-me-nots and celandines. I did hesitate, I'd ordered too many, then hit 'Place Order'. I love tulips.

They didn't arrive for two weeks, they needed to go in quick, I was already late. And I also needed another two weeks of psychological preparation to plant them. The box arrived and it was massive, I could barely lift it. Hundreds, thousands !

It has made its way from the hallway to the garden door, another two-week journey. It's been sitting there for some days now, where I have stared at it, defeated. It's Monday afternoon. I've just been to post some Izzy Lane parcels and gave Lainey a quick walk by Culloden Tower and along the river towards the nuns' graveyard. I came back determined to make a start and went off to the shed to find the dibber.

The dibber was gone. It wasn't in the shed, nor in a bucket. It wasn't in the porch or poking out of a flower bed.

Now I truly am defeated. You have to have the right tools for the job. I was all psyched up ready. They will not now be planted today. It has also just started raining and will be dark in half an hour.

I'm glad I don't have to rely on myself to grow my own food.

I hope you have a good week.....Kind wishes, Isobel