



Monday 18th December 2023

Dear Customer,

Well that's it, normal life has stopped, suspended as we are between 2023 and 2024 in the fantastical interlude of Christmas. Bucket-loads of elections coming up next year. I'm pretty upset that Navalny has disappeared – hope gone for many Russians I imagine. Putin will be sworn in again. Please God, let us not see the return of Trump too. I wonder what the Starmer – Trump relationship would look like, and David Lammy popping back and fore to the White House. Will the wars end: will Britain finally go bankrupt; what does the climate have in store. I wish it could all look a bit happier.

A newsletter came through the door from Rishi, at pains to point out it wasn't paid for by the tax-payer, and wishing us a Happy Christmas. Glossy, colour pictures of his smile beaming out with groups of schoolchildren and with local businesses. We are getting a new, state of the art, £55 million health campus just a few miles from here and he announced they're starting to build it straightaway, 4 months ahead of the schedule. Clearly there are some benefits to having the Prime Minister as MP fighting for his seat.

Anyway, back to Christmas....

And here are a few tasty recipes ideas you could try:

Parsnip and Chestnut Gratin

500g parsnips, peeled 200g potatoes, peeled
20g butter or margarine ½ small onion, finely diced
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped 300ml cream
300ml hot vegetable stock good pinch thyme
½ tsp sea salt flakes black pepper
100g cooked chestnuts, crumbled, 80g sourdough, pulsed into fine breadcrumbs
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Preheat the oven to 200°C / Gas 6. Slice the parsnips into thin 2-3mm pieces, using a mandolin if possible. Slice the potatoes to the same thickness. Melt the butter / margarine in a large saucepan over a medium-high heat. Add the onion and a pinch of salt. Stir and cook for a couple of minutes, then add the garlic, cream, stock, thyme leaves, salt and pepper. Bring to a gentle simmer, then add the parsnips, potatoes and chestnuts. Stir so that each piece is coated and evenly distributed. Decant everything to a large ovenproof baking dish (about 26x18cm) in which everything can sit at a depth of about 4cm. Scatter with the breadcrumbs, drizzle with the olive oil, then bake for around 40 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender, the cream is bubbling and the breadcrumbs are golden.

Marmalade Roasted Carrots and Parsnips

500g carrots, cut lengthways 500g parsnips, cut lengthways
2 tbsp olive oil 6 sprigs thyme sprigs, leaves picked
2 tbsp fine cut marmalade 2 tbsp clear honey

Preheat the oven to 200°C / Gas 6. Put the veg in a roasting tin. Drizzle with the oil, scatter over most of the thyme and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 30-40 minutes or until softened. Toss the veg in the marmalade, honey and remaining thyme until coated. Roast for a further 10-15 minutes or until golden.

Braised Red Cabbage

**1 large onion, finely sliced 1 tbsp butter
1 tbsp cooking oil 600g red cabbage
¼ tsp cinnamon ¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
3 cloves 2 tsp balsamic vinegar
200 ml red wine 2 tbsp soft dark brown sugar
1 eating apple, cut into 2cm dice**

Halve the cabbage, cut out and discard the tough core, then lice into roughly 2cm wide strips. Pour the oil into the pan and fry the onion on a low heat until translucent. Turn the heat to medium, add the butter and allow it to melt then add the red cabbage and cook for five minutes, stirring occasionally to break up the chunks. If it begins to catch on the bottom of the pan, lower the heat and add a small splash of water if necessary. Add the spices, stir, then add the vinegar, wine, sugar and apple and stir well.

Place the lid on the pan, bring to the boil then turn the heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 1 hour 20 minutes. If the cabbage seems to be drying out, lower the heat and add a little more wine or a small splash of water. It is ready when the liquid has evaporated and the cabbage is tender.

It is Farmaround's 30th birthday next year. 1994. John Major was Prime Minister, Nelson Mandela became the first black President of South Africa, the Channel Tunnel opened, the internet had 20 million users worldwide.

Thirty years we've been on the block and that I've been writing these notes. I know I say it every year, but it humbles me beyond words that you stick by us.

You are the most fantastic customers and you have kept us going all this time – kept us employed, kept the organic growers growing, kept parts of this island free from pesticides and sewage sludge – protected ecosystems and safe havens for wildlife. Thank you so much.

I hope you have a really good Christmas. And thinking too of those we have all lost who won't be with us.

Kindest wishes and see you next year,

Isobel