



Monday 25th November 2013

Dear Customer,

It's a foggy day here in Richmond, this time next week it will be December and in 4 weeks time the days will start lengthening again. We have Jonnie Watson's delicious crunchy Tadcaster January King cabbages in the bags this week and leeks, carrots and Marfona potatoes from the Yorkshire Moors. The apples are Red Pippins and the pears, Conference, both from Herefordshire. The pomegranates and Ohane grapes are from Andalucia. If you find pomegranates fiddly and either pick the seeds out with a cocktail stick or use a fork and get great mouthfuls of bitter pith, I have news for you. Someone just told me how to do it another way, I tried it and it was a revelation. Score round the circumference of the fruit with a knife and twist it in half to open it. Scrunch it a little to loosen the seeds then take a bowl and a wooden spoon. Beat the skin of the pomegranate all round with the spoon over the bowl. You will be utterly amazed as they all fall out with barely no pith at all. Here are a few delicious recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Leek, Red Pepper and Cashew Nut Lasagne

850g semi-skimmed milk	50g olive oil spread
50g plain flour	1 bay leaf
60g Parmesan	1 tbsp olive oil
3 leeks, sliced	350g red peppers, cubed
300g ricotta	12 lasagne sheets (ready to cook)
50g cashew nuts, roughly chopped	½ tsp nutmeg
100g grated Mozzarella	salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 180C/Gas 4. Place the milk, olive oil spread, flour and bay leaf in a saucepan, season and whisk together over a medium heat continually until it comes to a simmering point and has thickened. Turn the heat to it's lowest setting and allow the sauce to cook gently for 5 minutes. Then, stir in most (50g) of the Parmesan, remove the pan from the heat and discard the bay leaf. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan, add the leeks and red peppers and cook until softened (approximately 5 minutes). Transfer into a large bowl and stir in the ricotta and cashew nuts. Season with black pepper and a pinch of salt.

Assemble the lasagne by spreading one quarter of the sauce into the bottom of the dish, then one third of the leek mixture and place sheets of lasagne on top of this. Repeat the whole process, this time adding one-third of the grated Mozzarella, then the lasagne sheets. Repeat again, finishing with a layer of the pasta, the rest of the sauce and the remaining Parmesan and Mozzarella. Bake for 50-60 minutes until the top is golden and bubbling.

Winter Cabbage and Bean Soup

1 tbsp olive oil	1 small onion, chopped
200g January King cabbage, shredded	1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
1 glass dry white wine (about 150ml)	2 tbsp fresh thyme leaves
400g peeled plum tomatoes	600ml vegetable stock
400g tin cannellini or butter beans, drained	4 thick baguette slices
50g Cheddar cheese (optional)	

Heat the oil in a saucepan, add the onion and cook over a medium heat for 3-5 minutes until softened. Add the cabbage and garlic and stir-fry for two minutes. Add the wine and thyme and simmer for one minute. Add the tomatoes and stock and bring to the boil. Simmer for 15 minutes, then stir in the beans, Season and simmer for two minutes. Set aside. Arrange the baguette slices on a baking tray. Toast under a hot grill on one side, then turn over and top the untoasted side with cheese (if using). Return to the grill for 2-3 minutes until the cheese is golden and bubbling. Ladle the soup onto bowls and serve with the (cheesy) toasts.

Leek, Feta and Pomegranate Couscous

125g couscous	1 leek, finely sliced
1 tpb lemon juice	1 tbsp olive oil
seeds from a pomegranate	50g dried apricot pieces
¼ cucumber, diced	150g feta cheese, diced or an avocado diced
25g black olive, pitted and halved	half a red pepper, sliced in strips
1 tomato, small diced	1 tbsp raisins
handful parsley chopped	

You can vary these ingredients according to what you have and haven't got. Stem the leek for about 2 minutes until tender. Put the couscous into a bowl and cover with 150ml boiling water. Cover with cling film and leave to stand for 5 minutes. When ready, fluff with a fork and stir in the lemon juice oil and black pepper. When cool, add the remaining ingredients and stir through and sprinkle with parsley.

Now that I've left it too late, I thought it was time I considered having some children. I've been wondering about what the most suitable and pain-free method would be and have decided that cloning meets all my criteria. Just unwind a single hair follicle from your hairbrush and put it in an envelope with a cheque. The next decision, how many. I thought twelve. Twelve 3yr old me's galloping round the house on broom handles, no dodgy genes - perfect. Sit them all down cross-legged in a row to watch 101 Dalmatians. When I would ask my mother what I was like when little, she just used to say that I was very independent. Fine, just buy four triple-deck bunk beds and let them get on with it they wouldn't listen to me anyway.

I hope all is well with you,

Kind wishes,

Isobel