

Monday 8th April 2017

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. Here are some tasty recipes you could try instead of eating Easter eggs:

Roasted Cauliflower Salad with Tahini Yoghurt

1 cauliflower, broken in small florets	1 x 400g tin chickpeas, drained and rinsed
5 tbsp olive oil	1 tsp ground cumin
100g tahini paste	2 tbsp lemon juice
grated rind of a lemon	1 garlic clove, crushed
30g fresh coriander, chopped	1 green chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
150g yoghurt	2 plum tomatoes, tinned or fresh

Heat the oven to 220C/ 425F/ Gas 7. Put the cauliflower and chickpeas in a bowl with the olive oil, cumin, some salt and plenty of pepper. Line a 30cm x 40cm baking tray with baking paper and spread the cauliflower mix evenly over it. Roast for 15 minutes until the cauliflower is soft and caramelised and the chickpeas are starting to turn crisp then remove from the oven. Put the tahini, lemon juice and rind, garlic, half a teaspoon of salt and 100ml water in a small saucepan. Whisk to a smooth paste then put on a low heat and whisk in the yoghurt a bit at a time until the sauce starts to steam. Pour onto a large platter and spoon the cauliflower and chickpeas on top. Sprinkle with chopped tomatoes, chopped chillies, fresh coriander and a drizzle of oil.

Fusilli with Courgette

400g fusilli, macaroni or penne	2 tbsp olive oil
1 clove garlic, crushed	400g courgettes, trimmed and cut into rounds
½ tsp dried chilli flakes	250g ricotta
2 tbsp chopped fresh mint	2 tbsp chopped flat leaf parsley
grated rind of 1 lemon	

Cook the pasta to al dente according to packet instructions. While the pasta is cooking, heat the oil over a moderate heat in a large saucepan and add the garlic and courgettes. Cook until the courgettes are beginning to brown, 5-6 minutes. Stir in the chilli and ricotta and cook, stirring, until warmed through. Drain the pasta reserving half a cup of water and return to the pan. Add the courgette mixture and mix through. If it's a little dry add some of the reserved water. Sprinkle with the herbs and lemon rind. Sprinkle with the herbs and lemon rind. Drizzle with olive oil and serve.

Courgette and Poppy Seed Cake

175g self-raising flour	50g wholemeal flour
½ tsp baking powder	½ tsp ground cinnamon
pinch salt	3 Hen Nation eggs
115ml vegetable oil	150g soft brown flour
1 tsp vanilla extract	3 tbsp poppy seeds
300g courgettes, grated	sifted icing sugar, to serve

Heat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4 and grease and base-line a 20cm cake tin. Put the self-raising and wholemeal flours in a bowl and stir in the baking powder, cinnamon and salt. In a separate bowl beat together the eggs, oil, sugar, vanilla extract and poppy seeds. Mix into the flour then stir in the grated courgettes. Pour into the prepared tin and bake in the oven for 45-50 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the middle comes out clean. Leave for a couple of minutes then turn out onto a wire rack to cool.

Something hideous happened in the garden yesterday. Diane was here teaching me how to use our computer system and while I was busy practicing she sat patiently then said that some birds were fighting in the garden. It's spring, there's lots of scuffles and mating going on at the moment - 'mmm' I said and carried on trying to concentrate on how to cancel the Green Module, replace it with a Standard Veg, change the eggs to weekly and add a Med Mod every three weeks – all that without crashing the system. Diane has to be somewhere on Monday and so I have to attempt to step in as we are very scaled back on the staff front these days. All these years and I've never processed an order before. Then Diane said they were in the pond drowning. I leapt out of my chair and rushed out to the garden disturbing what was a sparrowhawk drowning a blackbird. He flew out of the pond and away into the sky with the little blackbird gripped firmly in its talons. I've never seen anything like it. Diane said she thought the bigger bird was basking in the pond, wings outstretched, then realised the blackbird was being held under by it. I can't tell you how upset we were. I love all my blackbirds, they are nesting in the privet hedge. Blackbirds mate for life, he was someone's partner, a father and provider. I had to google to find out if what happened really did happen, was it known and deliberate. I found the evidence as captured by others on photo and video (which I couldn't watch) that sparrowhawks do indeed drown their prey if there's a pond handy. They are so intelligent. Very few birds in the garden – they must know what happened - and I'm on hawk patrol.

In the local paper I saw an ad for 62 acres of sheep / cow grazing with buildings to lease on the edge of nearby small Georgian racing town, Middleham – where Richard III was born – the one found under the Leicester car park. On Ernest's land they can only be there until the end of October so it is only delays things and I still need a permanent home for them

I went to visit it. It looked perfect with all the fields opening onto each other so they could roam, fresh streams running through and trees for shelter, to scratch their backs on and to chew. I called the agent and it is a 3-year lease and the tender closing date is 12th April. But, the new tenant would also have to buy the 'single farm payment' from the existing tenant. It all sounds like a lot of money upfront. What I do with my sheep is contentious – I don't breed, they aren't eaten. This puts me firmly either at the top of or at the very bottom of the list depending on the sensibilities of the landowner. I will put in a decent tender offer and leave it to fate. I went on the internet to see how much 'single farm payments' were traded for. What I discovered is that they are indeed 'traded' – you can buy them without owning or farming land. It's absolutely ridiculous, it's a racket and like trading in gold or futures, and thank heavens this is set to change after 2020 when it will probably end and subsidies will be geared towards ethical farms.

So it's Monday morning, Diane is not here, and I am charge of doing any order amendments and producing all the driver routes and documents. So if you're not reading this because your order hasn't turned up you will know why.

Kind wishes and have a lovely week,

Isobel