



Monday 24th September 2018

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. We took a real battering from the hurricanes this week – trees and branches strewn everywhere. I felt very sorry for the Coast to Coast walkers passing my house, grimacing. Richmond is the end of one of the stages so by the time they pass my house they are generally exhausted, but last week, leaning into 70mph winds, they were on their knees. The problem with doing such walks is that one has to book all the accommodation in advance so hurricane or no hurricane you've got to get out of your B & B and go. You can't have a duvet day.

If you are ever tempted, the C2C is 192 miles, done in 12 stages, from St Bees in Cumbria to Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire and passing through some of Britain's most stunning landscapes – the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales and then the Yorkshire Moors. Do knock and crawl in for a cup of tea with us if you are passing.

Here are some tasty recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Squash and Aubergine Tagine with Olives

2 tbsp olive oil	400g aubergine
500g squash	1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped	2 whole chillies
1 lemon	1 tbsp honey
400g tin chopped tomatoes	300ml vegetable stock
5 cardamom pods	1 cinnamon stick
3 tsp harissa	2 tsp ras el hanout
couscous and pitta bread, to serve	

Preheat the oven to 160C/ 325F/ Gas 3. Put 1 tbsp olive oil in a large ovenproof casserole or tagine. Cut the aubergine and squash into chunks and fry over a medium heat until slightly softened. Add the onion and garlic and fry until translucent. Add the harissa and whole chilli peppers and fry for a couple of minutes. Add the cinnamon, passata, juice of a lemon, honey, stock and cardamoms. Season with salt and pepper, cover and put in the oven for 1 hour. Then remove the chillies and cinnamon stick. Serve with couscous and pitta bread.

(you could make your own ras el hanout – 1½ tsp coriander seeds, ¾ tsp cumin seeds, ½ tsp crushed chilli flakes, 1¼ tsp ground cinnamon, 1 tsp paprika, ½ tsp ground cardamom, ½ tsp ground ginger, ½ tsp turmeric)

Sicilian Pasta Norma

olive oil	1 aubergine, diced
3 cloves garlic, finely sliced	chilli flakes, large pinch
400g tin chopped tomatoes	300g rigatoni or other pasta
small bunch basil, shredded	grated cheese, optional

Heated 1-2 tbsp olive oil in a large frying pan. Add the aubergine in batches and fry on a high heat until it is very tender and golden. Season and top onto a plate. Add another tbsp of oil and cook the garlic for a minute. Add the chilli flakes and tomatoes and season, then simmer for 10 minutes. Cook the pasta. Stir the basil and aubergine into the sauce and simmer for 5 minutes. Toss the sauce with the drained pasta and finish with grated cheese, if using.

Leek and Potato Soup

375g potatoes	2 tbsp margarine or butter
450g leeks, trimmed	1 litre vegetable stock or water
4 tbsp chopped chives, to serve	4 tbsp sour cream, to serve (optional)

Heat the oven to 200C/ 400F. Bake the potatoes until tender. Meanwhile, melt the margarine or butter in a large saucepan over a gentle heat. Rinse the leeks then roughly chop. Fry with a pinch of salt until soft and silky then scoop out a couple of spoonfuls and set aside. Cut the potato into cubes, with skin. Add to the pan and saute for another couple of minutes then add the stock or water. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes. Allow to cool a bit then puree. Season to taste then stir in the reserved leeks. Divide between bowls and top with chives and sour cream, if using.

What a week it's been. Salzburg ! Bewildering and surreal.....Kafkaesque..... Brexitopic. Teresa May was like a caged hamster running on the wheel to nowhere. Hopelessly chasing a little peanut with the 27 EU leaders peering in, unwilling to help. I must admit, I was a bit taken aback by Macron's comments. What's happened to the 'entente cordiale'. How this ends God only knows. It's not looking good is it. But then Chequers was everything they always said we couldn't have, so why was Chequers Chequers. I don't think Britain has a single friend left. Our left-wing antagonises one half of the world and our right-wing antagonises the other. Check mate ! Maybe it is time for the machines to take over after all – calculated, impartial. We keep cooking and carry on.

Anyway, one surprising thing learned this week is that France was still using the guillotine for executions until 1981. I thought that was the stuff of the French Revolution and Marie Antoinette.

It is a glorious Sunday morning here, still, with golden sunshine and the birds are singing. One of those rare and special days when the planets align and give us nicer weather than the south. How we savour it. I'm heading out walking in the Dales.

Kind wishes,

Isobel

I'm back now from walking in the Dales. Afternoon ruined as usual. The wildlife and animals love this weather as much as we do. There were rabbits bounding about. I turned a corner, and on a bank above the footpath two men had been using a ferret to send down rabbit holes. Beside them a pile of rabbits, freshly killed. Their fur was gleaming, they had been young and healthy. Like rats they have no protection in law. Then I passed a field of lambs which had obviously just been taken from their mothers for 'fattening' – they weren't grazing, just lying down, ears back, looking so sad and broken – and on such a glorious day. I think it's particularly hard for the single lambs with no siblings. It is all too heartbreaking! Living in the countryside, it is hell in a heavenly setting.