



Monday 13th May 2019

Dear Customer,

It's Monday morning, a glorious morning, not a cloud in the sky. And I have to tell you, my raised bed of tulips is heavenly. I'd chosen a mixture of colours and forms and planted them randomly. There are some which are a very pale pink on the outside of the petals and a deep pink inside, they are the size of mugs – they are stunning. I am overlooking them as I write this. The room is full of sun, the birds are singing, Lainey is curled up asleep on a cushion. A perfect morning.

And here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Beetroot and Courgette Burgers

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2-3tbsp olive oil | 1 onion, finely chopped |
| 2 cloves of garlic, crushed | 1 raw beetroot, grated |
| 2 courgettes, grated | 1 large carrot, grated |
| 4 medium slices wholemeal bread | 400g tin chickpeas, drained |
| 3tbsp crunchy peanut butter | 1 Hen Nation egg yolk |
| 3 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, chopped | |

Sauce:

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 350ml plain yoghurt | olive oil |
| ½ cucumber, peeled and diced | 1 clove garlic, crushed |
| lemon wedges, to serve | |

Heat 1tbsp of the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat. Sauté the onion and garlic for 4-5 mins or until softened. Add the grated vegetables and cook, stirring, for about 5 mins until wilted, then drain off any liquid. Place the bread, chickpeas, peanut butter and egg yolk in a food processor and whizz to combine. Transfer the mixture to a bowl, stir through the grated vegetables and parsley, and season generously. Form the mixture into 8 patties and chill for about 3 mins (or up to 24 hours). Heat the remaining oil in a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and cook the burgers, in batches if necessary, for about 2-3 mins each side until golden. Make a quick sauce by combining the yoghurt, a drizzle of olive oil, cucumber and crushed garlic. Serve the burgers with the sauce and lemon wedges.

Polenta and Chard Chips

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 200g chard | 40g margarine |
| 1 medium onion, finely chopped | 280g coarse polenta |
| salt and pepper | vegetable or coconut oil for brushing |

Cut the stalks from the chard leaves, chop the into small pieces and set aside. Chop the leaves into bite-size pieces and set aside separately. In a large saucepan melt the margarine and fry the onion over a medium heat with a pinch of salt. Add the chard stalks and cook for 5-10 minutes until tender, then add the leaves and sauté for 1 minute more. Add 1.4 litres of boiling water to the saucepan then stir in the polenta. Whisk until thickened then stir in the salt and some pepper. Cover and cook over a low heat for 10-20 minutes until the polenta thickens and begins to come away from the side of the pan as you stir. Transfer to an oven proof dish and flatten with the back of a metal spoon to an even thickness of about 1.5 - 3cms or less if the dish is big enough. Leave to set in the fridge for a few hours. Preheat the oven to 200C/ 400F/ Gas 6. When you are ready to cook and the polenta is firm, cut into 'chips' about 8cm long x 1.5cm x 1.5cms. Place the chips on a baking tray and brush on all sides with the oil. Roast for about an hour until golden and crunchy on the outside, turning with a spatula after 30 minutes.

Chard Tagliatelle

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 bunch chard | 50ml olive oil |
| 1 clove of garlic, crushed | zest of a lemon |
| 370g dried tagliatelle | 150g cheese, grated (optional) |

Separate the green leaves from the stalk of the chard and cut each stalk into strips, discarding any stringy bits on the bottom. Put the oil into a large pan on a medium heat, add the stalks and garlic, season and sauté until cooked. Leave to one side. Cook the tagliatelle as per packet instructions. Just before the pasta is done, add the chard leaves to the boiling water, and cook for half a minute. Drain immediately and add the pasta and leaves to the pan of cooked stalks. Toss everything together with the cheese and lemon zest, check the seasoning and serve immediately.

I was so ill last week. I was in agony with my stomach after some beans on toast and the local election results. It turned into a migraine. I took to bed on Sunday morning then spent 48 hours in and out of sleep, only getting up to be sick. By Tuesday the pain had eased, I got up at midday weak and exhausted. By late-afternoon my energy was starting to return. By evening I was supercharged and doing housework at 100mph. I went to bed at midnight with some tentative optimism. What a waste of time. After an hour of the news I put my head down to sleep and shut my eyes but I was wide awake, heart pounding. I lay like this for an hour or so, sat back up, put on the TV and stared at handbags on QVC until the channel shut down. I wondered how many other people in Britain were also trying to get to sleep at what was now 4am. I probably dropped off at about 6.30am. Then I woke up at 8am. I can't function without enough sleep so dropped off again. Next time I woke up it was 11am – a horrible time to start one's day.

As expected, that night I couldn't sleep, and so it went on. That's the thing with migraines, it's the aftermath ! I used to get them so often that this was my life. Thankfully I don't get them so much anymore.

Anyway, I'm very excited for the guinea pigs. I went up to Durham yesterday to visit a friend and collect an Ebay purchase, a present for the guinea pigs. I've got them some wheels to put their hutch and terrace on - a steel and wood platform with castors. They presently live statically in the utility room but they'll be whizzing round the house now.

I hope you have a good week. And please don't worry about scientists trying to refreeze the poles by injecting the clouds with salt particles. Don't worry either about them filling the sea with iron particles to stimulate algae, dumping chemicals in it to reduce acidity and introducing genetically modified heat-resistant coral. They know exactly what they are doing.

Kind wishes,

Isobel