



Monday 14th March 2022

Dear Customer,

Spring is pushing up here in the Dales. There have been some fine days: a warm sun but with a cold, sharp wind cutting across. This morning though, it is quiet. Quiet, save for the sweet cacophony of mating calls coming from the garden: birds taking the high trills; toads croaking in the lower ranges. The toads seemed late this year but are all safely back to the pond now, about thirty of them.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Roasted Fennel

2 medium fennel bulbs or 1 large
2 tsp balsamic vinegar

2 tbs olive oil

Halve the fennel lengthwise and cut lengthwise in 1-inch wedges. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 200C/ 400°F. Place the fennel wedges in a bowl and toss them with 1 to 2 tablespoons of olive oil, just enough to coat them. Sprinkle with balsamic vinegar, again just enough to coat them. Line a roasting tin with aluminium foil brushed with olive oil. Arrange the fennel wedges on the pan and roast them for 40 minutes or until the fennel wedges are cooked through and beginning to caramelize at the edges.

Orange-Braised Fennel

½ orange zested and juiced
2 medium fennel bulbs or 1 large
olive oil

175ml vegetable stock
salt and pepper to taste

1 tbs

Trim the fennel reserving some of the fronds. Slice the fennel in half, lengthwise. Remove tough core by making two angled cuts. Then cut each half into ½ inch wedges. Season both sides with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil in a frying or casserole pan with a lid over a medium-high heat. Add fennel wedges and brown on both sides, about 2 minutes on each side. Reduce the heat to low, add the orange zest, juice and the stock. Cook, covered, until fennel is tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Serve with a few reserved fennel fronds sprinkled on top.

Sweet Potato and Red Pepper Bake

4-500g sweet potatoes, peeled
1 red pepper deseeded and cut into chunks
salt and freshly ground black pepper
50g cheese, grated

1 onion, cut into wedges
2 tbsp olive oil
6 Hen Nation eggs

Preheat the oven to 200C/ 400F/ Gas 6. Cut the sweet potatoes into evenly sized wedges. Place in a large ovenproof dish, drizzle over the oil, season with salt and pepper, then toss to mix. Bake in the oven for 10mins. Stir in the peppers and onions and bake for a further 15 mins until all the vegetables are tender and lightly charred. Beat the eggs with a little seasoning then pour over the vegetables. Sprinkle over the cheese and return to the oven. Bake for a further 15mins or until the egg has set. Serve in wedges with salad or vegetables.

Sweet Potato and Lentil Curry

2 tsp vegetable oil
4 cloves garlic, crushed
2 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground turmeric
75g red split lentils
400ml vegetable stock
a lime, wedged

1 large onion, finely chopped
thumb-sized piece ginger, finely grated
2 tsp ground coriander
4-500g sweet potatoes, cut into chunks
400ml tin coconut milk
fresh coriander

Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat and cook three-quarters of the onion with a pinch of salt for 10 minutes, stirring regularly, until softened. Add the garlic, ginger and curry leaves, if using, and cook for 2 minutes. Add in the spices and cook for 1 minute. Stir in the sweet potato and lentils, then add the coconut milk and stock. Stir well, bring to the boil, then simmer for 15-20 minutes, adding a splash of water if it's getting dry, until the potatoes and lentils are cooked through. Season. Serve in bowls with coriander and the remaining onion on top, with lime wedges for squeezing over.

For the last week I have not read or watched any news whatsoever. I have no idea what is happening, except that it is still happening. It feels cowardly to have turned away. I took a number of coats, hats and scarves to an aid collection depot: a 5-vehicle strong convoy was heading out to the Polish border from Catterick Camp. I also sent the remaining stock of Izzy Lane dog coats, 78 of them, to Dogbus, taking animal aid.

My cousin has arrived from Dublin to stay. She has designed some beautiful new tartans which we have just had made in the Scottish Borders as well as having designed the next Izzy Lane collection for this autumn / winter. It was hard to get anything done through the pandemic with so many mill closures, so this will be the first new collection in three years. It may well be the last; our last hoorah. The sheep are so old now.

Hoping this finds you well,
Kind wishes,
Isobel