



Monday 6th March 2023

Dear Customer,

It's still and dry here with light cloud. Not bad really. Braced for snow though, supposed to be coming overnight.

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

Whole Roasted Butternut Squash

Preheat oven to 220C/ 425°F/Gas 7. Line a roasting tray with aluminium foil. Put the squash in the pan. Pierce the squash in 5-6 places with a sharp knife and place on the tray. Roast for 60-80 minutes, or until the outer skin is browning and starting to shrivel and a squash is tender. Break open or peel and remove the seeds.

Lemon Courgette and Potato

*400g potatoes, peeled
100ml olive oil
1 clove garlic
2 bay leaves*

*400g courgettes
40ml water
½ lemon, sliced
1 handful parsley*

Cut the potatoes and courgettes into 1cm chunks. Warm the oil in a casserole with the bay leaves, lemon and the garlic clove for 5 minutes. Add the vegetables, season with salt and mix well. Add a little water and bring to a gentle simmer, put the lid on and leave to stew for about 40 minutes. Check every 10-15 minutes, stir and add a little more water if necessary.. Once the water is evaporated and vegetables tender, check the seasoning. Serve garnished with parsley or mint.

Roasted Squash, Broccoli and Blue Cheese Pasta with Crunchy Topping

*butternut squash, about 400g prepared weight
2 tbsp chopped fresh sage
300g penne
30g organic butter or margarine
300ml organic milk
125g blue cheese, or non-dairy alternative crumbled
2 tbsp breadcrumbs
20g walnut pieces, chopped*

*1 tbsp olive oil
½ tsp chilli flakes
200g broccoli florets
1½ tbsp plain flour
200g yogurt
1 tsp Dijon mustard
3 tbsp mixed seeds*

Preheat the oven to 200°C / Gas 6. Peel, deseed and cube the squash. Toss the squash with the oil, sage, chilli and seasoning and arrange in a single layer in a roasting tin. Roast for 30 minutes, turning once, until tender. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in boiling water to just tender. Drain the pasta and arrange in an ovenproof baking dish. Cook the broccoli until just tender, then drain. Add the broccoli to the pasta together with the roasted squash. To make the sauce, melt the butter in a medium pan and stir in the flour. Cook for a minute, stirring, then, off the heat, gradually whisk in the milk, keeping the mixture smooth. Return the pan to the heat and stir constantly until thickened. Off the heat stir in the yogurt, 100g blue cheese, mustard and seasoning. Pour over the pasta and vegetables to coat. Mix the breadcrumbs, seeds, walnuts and remaining blue cheese together. Scatter over the top of the pasta. Cook in the oven for 25-30 minutes until the top is crisp and golden.

No news here. For our Saturday walk I thought dog and me would go and check out Foxglove Covert on the edge of the moors at Catterick - a 100-acre nature reserve set up by the Scots Dragoon Guards when they returned from the first Gulf War. I've driven past the sign many times, which sends you up a road with a security barrier and armed guards, so I'd always drive on by. I knew I had to take photo ID with me. I drove up the road to the barrier and flashed my driving licence at the Royal Lancer. Lainey was sitting on front passenger seat. He said that I should have parked the car 'back there', got security clearance, and walked up. He waved me through, I asked him where to go, he said 'left'. I went left, drove past the barracks, past the Military Medical Centre, no signposts and not a single person anywhere. I carried on and on winding my way round, eventually finding myself on some sort of massive industrial type area with hundreds of warehouse units, in front of which were rows and rows of military vehicles - battle tanks, military ambulances, land rovers, infantry vehicles and other unfathomable huge khaki things - acres and acres of them. I'll try a right, I'll try a left, I'll try this right. There had been one solitary sign, to give way to foot soldiers. I couldn't retrace my steps, I couldn't get out and was going into panic mode. I had to stop. I took a photo of a long line of the combat vehicles and WhatsApped it to my friend. 'I'm completely bleep'ing lost'. Then I realised I was WhatsApping photos from this highly sensitive military compound where I shouldn't be in the first place. Surrounded by 12ft high fences with barbed wire on top, they would surely have CCTV. If I ever get back to the armed entrance they would ask me to hand over my phone. I didn't want to go to the nature reserve anymore I just wanted to get out.

Eventually, I managed to escape - as if it was ever in doubt. They didn't take my phone, and I headed for the peace and tranquillity of Wensleydale instead. It was very interesting though. The military vehicles looked so old.

I stopped in various villages and explored the lanes of pretty cottages with spring beds of wallflowers, polyanthus and daffodils. I followed footpaths that criss-crossed the fields, bought a pot of homemade Victoria plum jam. In my mind thinking how fragile this perfect, timeless piece of England which could be exploded to oblivion in a split second by a nuclear bomb.

I met an elderly man on one of the footpaths with two collies. He kindly let me out of a field by unpicking a Yorkshire farmer's knot on a gate when Lainey couldn't fit through the stile. He looked really sad and told me that the pub had closed and while the villagers had tried to raise the money to buy it, they couldn't. He said there was no community spirit anymore, the village had been taken over by retirees and second-home owners. He left the lane to walk up the drive to his bungalow. His social life probably revolved around going to that pub.

So our grubby government was making policy on WhatsApp, half-cut on a Tuesday evening whilst watching Eastenders. I preferred blissful ignorance. However, finally there is a little hope, not one piece of encouraging news but two. The Northern Ireland protocol (what a humiliation for Boris who clearly was only capable of creating chaos), and of course the UN High Seas Treaty. I haven't had a good look at this yet but seems momentous.

I hope you have a good week.....Kind wishes, Isobel