



Monday 1ST May 2023

Dear Customer,

It's Bank Holiday Monday morning. We had a 45-minute burst of warm sunshine from 8.17am until 9.28am, then the thick cloud returned. The weather has been horrible - dark, foggy and wet all week. And cold. The two-week forecast to mid-May shows more of the same. Spring is progressing in slow motion - leaves tentatively opening, daffodils still in full bloom. The neighbour's camelia which usually flowers in January is only blooming now with its mass of saucer-sized pink flowers that fall over my fence.

We have globe artichokes in the bags this week. Remove the toughest leaves from close to the base of each artichoke and trim the stem to about 3cm long. Place in a saucepan of lightly salted boiling water with a squeeze of lemon juice, or in a steamer, and cook for 15–30 minutes. An artichoke is cooked when a leaf from the middle pulls away easily and the heart is tender when pierced with a knife. To eat, pull off the outer leaves, dipping them in your chosen sauce (lemony butter / margarine or mayo work well) and scraping away the tender part with your teeth. Work your way down to the tiny, papery leaves near the base, discarding these. Remove the hairy part of the choke with a spoon, then tuck into the delicious heart.

Cauliflower Dahl

<i>1 tbsp oil</i>	<i>1 onion, chopped</i>
<i>1 clove garlic, crushed</i>	<i>1cm piece root ginger, finely chopped</i>
<i>1 ½ tsp ground cumin</i>	<i>1½ tsp ground coriander</i>
<i>2 tsp medium curry powder</i>	<i>½ tsp garam masala</i>
<i>225g small cauliflower florets</i>	<i>85g red split lentils</i>
<i>450ml vegetable stock</i>	<i>85g frozen peas</i>
<i>1 tbsp chopped fresh coriander (optional)</i>	

Heat oil in a saucepan; add onion, garlic and ginger and cook over a medium heat for about 5 minutes or until softened, stirring occasionally. Add cumin, coriander, curry powder and garam masala; cook gently for 1 minute, stirring. Add cauliflower florets; cook gently for 1 minute, stirring. Add lentils and stock; stir to mix. Bring to the boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer for about 15 minutes or until lentils are just cooked and tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in peas. Bring to the boil; simmer, uncovered, for about 4 minutes or until peas are cooked, stirring occasionally. Stir in chopped coriander (if using).

Apple Toffee Cake

<i>25g margarine, plus extra for greasing</i>	<i>3 dessert apples</i>
<i>195 g muscovado sugar</i>	<i>180 g plain flour</i>
<i>1 tsp bicarbonate of soda</i>	<i>1½ tsp mixed spice</i>
<i>80 ml sunflower oil</i>	<i>1 tsp vinegar</i>
<i>1 lemon</i>	<i>85g shelled walnuts</i>

Preheat the oven to 180°C / Gas 4 and grease and line the base of a 23cm square cake tin. Coarsely grate 2 of the apples and finely slice the remaining apple. Melt 85g of the sugar and the margarine in a pan, then pour into the prepared tin. Top with the sliced apple in a single layer. Combine the flour, 110g of sugar, the bicarbonate of soda and mixed spice in a bowl. In a separate bowl, combine the oil, 180ml water, the vinegar, grated apple and lemon zest. Mix the dry ingredients with the wet, quickly but thoroughly. Roughly chop and stir in the walnuts, then pour over the layer of apples in the cake tin. Bake for 30 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean. Leave the cake to cool for 5 minutes before turning out.

Just more of the same up here. With spring comes lambs, millions of them all over the Dales. They are everywhere. Including escapees with a perilous love of adventure - they get out their fields but are unable to get back in, like the one I came across the other day. It was clinging to the wire fence on the roadside. I couldn't leave it there. I stopped the car and flagged down the first vehicle, asked if he would help me get it back in. It was a Morrison's supermarket van on the rural route. He was at first glad to help.

'Can you stand there please and not let him come past, I will drive him up this way', I asked, where I then hoped to corner him in the hedge. But he managed to get behind the hedge and ran. I ran down the road. The lamb then appeared from behind the hedge and attempted to force himself hopelessly through a tiny gap in the fence. It gave me time to get ahead and get the next gate open, with Morrisons man hopefully stopping him from doubling back. There was however not much commitment on his part, he was miles away. He probably couldn't understand why we were bothering. The lamb set off again in my direction, saw me ahead and ducked a quick right to avoid me - through the gate. 'Job done' thought the Morrisons man. No. Job only part done. Off the road but in the wrong field and separated from his mother. There was a connecting gate into the right field which we now had to try and get him through. After a couple of attempts, Morrisons man said he needed to go and check on his van, he was in fact making a quick getaway. I thanked him. I would have to go and try to find the farmer.

I was forced into the murky backwaters of livestock farming. I pulled into a yard with huge barns and rows and rows of heads of young cows, eyes glazed, rhythmically chomping their stinking silage through the bars. Would they be turned out to graze soon or was this it, incarcerated for life. Would they end up in Ireland and from there be live-exported to the Middle East as many are. On another farm was a barn full of ewes who were lambing. They were comfortably bedded down with straw. Outside the barn, a sack of tiny dead lambs with two in the dirt next to the sack as the sack was full. They don't all make it out alive. I couldn't find anyone anywhere. I drove off and at the junction a young man with a child on his back was coming along on a quad bike. I flagged him down. They were his sheep, I asked him if he could follow me so I could show him where the lamb was and where I'd found him. He said all the sheep and both fields were his so he would just open them up so the lamb and his mum could reunite.

As I drove off I looked at the wire fencing of the field I'd thought the lamb had escaped from but couldn't see how that was possible. And all the lambs in there looked younger. The next field along however, the fencing was full of gaps and the lambs looked more similar to him in age. I just hope the farmer would have sussed it too. But with literally thousands of sheep and lambs who all look, if not identical, pretty similar, I worry the lamb and mum will never be reunited.

I hope you have a good week and are getting some good weather wherever you are.....Kind wishes, Isobel