



Monday 7th August 2023

Dear Customer,

It's Tuesday already and I'm late again. After another horrible week of endless rain, we finally have some sun. Not sure how long it will stick around but for today at least, it feels a bit more like summer. And in the bags, that quintessential English summer garden vegetable - runner beans – coming to you from the New Forest.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try:

Provençal Stuffed Courgettes

round courgette(s) or long ones
1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
150ml vegetable stock
50g finely grated cheese, optional
basil, to garnish

2 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra
2 medium tomatoes
80g long-grain rice
1 bunch fresh mint
2 tbsp dry breadcrumbs

Heat the oven to 180C / Gas 4. Cut the tops off the round courgettes, if using, and scoop out the flesh leaving sturdy walls around the outside. Cut long courgettes in half lengthways and scoop out the flesh. Roughly chop the flesh, along with the lids of the round kind. Bring a large pan of salted water to a simmer, add the courgettes and blanch for five minutes. Prepare a sink full of iced water and, once the courgettes are done, put in the sink to cool. Heat the oil in a wide pan over a medium-low heat, add the onion, and cook until soft and golden. Finely chop the tomatoes and add to the pan with the courgette flesh and garlic, cook until soft, then stir in the rice, add the stock, bring to a simmer and cook for about 12 minutes, until most of the liquid has evaporated. Meanwhile, pick and roughly chop the mint leaves and stir into the stuffing mix with cheese if using. Season to taste. Put the hollowed-out courgettes on a greased baking sheet and divide the filling between them, packing it in well, then cover with foil and bake for 20 minutes. Toss the breadcrumbs in a splash of olive oil, season, sprinkle on top of the courgettes, and bake for a further 15 minutes. Garnish with basil.

Cauliflower and Chickpea Balti

6 cardamom pods, bashed
3 cloves garlic, crushed
2 level tsp ground cumin
1 level tsp garam masala
¼ level tsp chilli flakes
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1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
175g basmati rice
2 x 400g tins chickpeas, drained

2 medium onions, diced
2 tbsp root ginger, peeled and grated
1 tsp curry powder
1 tsp turmeric
500ml vegetable stock (made with 1 or 2 stock cubes

1 cauliflower, cut into small florets
3 tbs fresh lemon juice
4 tbsp fresh coriander, chopped

Oil a flameproof casserole or deep frying-pan, set over a medium heat and fry the cardamom pods for 1 minute. Add the onions and fry for 6-8 minutes until soft, then stir in the garlic, ginger, spices and chilli flakes and fry for another 2 minutes. Stir in the stock, tomatoes and cauliflower, season, then simmer for 10-15 minutes until the sauce has reduced and the cauliflower is tender. Meanwhile, cook the rice according to pack instructions, adding the lemon juice as it simmers. Add the chickpeas and cook for 2-3 minutes then stir through the coriander. Serve the curry with the rice on the side.

Plum Flapjacks

250g plums, stoned and chopped

250g caster sugar

3 tbs golden syrup

140g plain flour

½ tsp cinnamon

250g margarine or butter

350g rolled oats

Heat the oven to 180C / Gas 4. Grease a 20cm square tin and line with baking paper. Toss the plums with the cinnamon and 50g of the sugar then set aside. Melt the margarine / butter, remaining sugar and syrup in a pan over a low heat. In a large bowl combine the flour and oats. Pour the margarine / butter mix into the dry ingredients and combine. Press half the flapjack mixture into the tin, spread the plums on top, then add the remaining flapjack mix. Press down and bake in the oven for 35-40 minutes. Leave the tin to cool before cutting into squares.

On Sunday I went to Hauxwell to meet with Sir Richard Dalton's daughter to discuss the sheep moving there to Hauxwell Hall. She lives with her partner in a house on the Estate. It was down a rough, gravelly track and my wheels were already spinning just trying to get round the first bend. Everyone has 4 x 4's round here except me. I had to pull up and walk down it first before attempting it in the car.

They came out to greet me and we clicked immediately, like meeting up with long lost friends. It was suggested I jump in this strange vehicle they'd just bought, like a quad bike, but enclosed. It didn't have a seat belt, we set off at a hell of a speed downhill on gravel then onto the road, down the middle of the road, swerving when a car came round the corner. We turned off down a track to some farm buildings which is where we could keep our sheep nuts, meds and tools of the trade. They showed me their stunning and unusual sheep - blue ones and spotted ones. Then we sped off again and through the gate next to St Oswald's, the 11th century church, to the fields in front of the Hall where my sheep would be living. We tore across them at 70mph, my life flashing before my eyes. Then it was back for a cup of tea, and arrangements made for the sheep to come at the beginning of September.

Of note, they had the same toaster as me but in a much better colour. Mine is purple and theirs is an incredible sky blue. I left, with disappointment about the colour of my toaster.

They will be so happy there in the beautiful parkland, studded with huge ancient trees, with endless grass and plants to forage.

'I'm just going to finish off this patch then I'll meet you at the obelisk.' An obelisk ! They've even got an obelisk. All in all we are all very happy about the arrangement. I even got a lovely note from Sir Richard saying that he is pleased that the sheep will be going there to continue their retirement, and that he looks forward to making my acquaintance (terrifying !). I'm going to have to brush up on my Middle East politics and the Iran Nuclear deal (as if there's something in there to brush up – I don't think so)

Other than that, nothing, no news here. Kind wishes and hope you have a good week.....Isobel