

**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014**

Dear Customer,

It is a beautiful and sunny spring morning. Hopefully we can breathe a sigh of relief and have seen the back of winter. We have Royal Oak's golden beetroot in the bags this week which you could cook until tender and dice, adding chopped chives and toasted sesame seeds, and mixing with vinaigrette for a tasty, nutritious salad. You could also grate them raw into a salad or coleslaw. A simple way to bake them would be to wash the beetroot, pat dry, place in a roomy roasting tin, then drizzle with oil, roll them in the oil and sprinkle with thyme and salt. Bake for 40-45 minutes at 200C /400F /Gas 6, then leave to cool and rub off the skin. If that all sounds too savoury, why not try this amazing cake !

**Chocolate and Golden Beetroot Cake**

180ml sunflower oil, plus more for the tin  
60g cocoa powder  
250g golden caster sugar  
3 eggs

190g self-raising flour  
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda  
250g golden beetroot, cooked  
1 tsp vanilla extract

*Preheat the oven to 180C /350F /Gas 4. Lightly oil a 23cm diameter, 7.5cm deep, round tin then line the base with baking parchment. In a large bowl, mix together the flour, cocoa and bicarbonate of soda, then stir in the sugar. In a food processor, puree the beetroot, then with the motor running, add the eggs and vanilla, then slowly pour in the oil and mix until blended. Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients, pour in the beetroot mixture and with a large spoon, gently fold together. Pour into the tin and bake for 45-50 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Remove the cake from the oven, leave for 5-10 minutes in the tin then turn onto a wire rack. Ice if required.*

**Roasted Aubergine, Cherry Tomato and Mozzarella Pasta**

1 medium aubergine, cut into chunks  
1 garlic bulb, cloves separated and unpeeled  
grated zest of 1 lemon, plus a squeeze of juice  
400g pasta  
200g mozzarella, torn

250g cherry tomatoes  
1 tbsp fresh oregano  
3 tbsp olive oil  
12 sun-dried tomatoes, roughly chopped  
grated Parmesan to serve

*Preheat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. Place the aubergine and cherry tomatoes in a roasting tin with the garlic cloves, oregano and lemon zest. Season well and toss with 2 good tablespoons of olive oil. Roast in the oven for 25-30 minutes until the aubergine is soft and the tomatoes are bursting. Meanwhile, cook the pasta according to packet instructions. Drain reserving a little of the cooking water, and toss with the remaining olive oil and reserved cooking water. Remove the veg from the oven, squeeze the roasted garlic from the skins, discarding the skins, and add it all to the pan of hot pasta. Add the sun-dried tomatoes, mozzarella and lemon juice, and toss well. Serve with grated Parmesan.*

**Courgette and Aubergine Coconut Curry**

200g red lentils  
2.5" of fresh root ginger, finely chopped  
1 aubergine, chopped in bite-sized pieces  
½ x 400g tin of chopped tomatoes  
1.8 litres vegetable stock or hot water  
2 large pinches sea salt or 2 tsp Tamari  
1 handful of peanuts or cashews

2 onions, roughly chopped or sliced  
6 large cloves garlic, roughly chopped  
2 large courgettes, diced  
200g bar creamed coconut, chopped in pieces  
juice and zest of 1 lime or lemon  
1½ tsp maple syrup  
1 handful of chopped herbs eg coriander, mint or basil

*In a large wide pot, dry fry the peanuts or cashews for a few minutes to toast them, then set aside. In the same pot, fry the onions, ginger and garlic in one tablespoon of coconut oil, melted from the bar, on a medium heat for 5 minutes, until soft but not coloured. Add the lentils, the rest of the coconut solids and most of the hot stock or water and stir well. Don't let the lentils stick and burn at the bottom. After 6 minutes of cooking add the aubergines and stir. After a further 10 minutes, add the tomatoes, courgettes, lime or lemon zest, and salt or Tamari. Add more stock or hot water if you think necessary. After 6 more minutes turn off the heat and add the lemon or lime juice, maple syrup and fresh herbs. Stir and taste adding more salt or Tamari if necessary or more lime or lemon juice to add sourness. Top with the toasted nuts and serve with fresh green leaves.*

Isn't it dreadful what is happening in Ukraine. Those brave young people who gave their lives during their revolution to be part of Europe. It makes me hang my head in shame. They gave their lives that they might have a little taste of what we in Britain and the Western world have been born into and take for granted. And just moments after their 'victory', the Russian troops start amassing in Crimea. It is Monday morning and by the time this reaches you, who knows what will have happened. I hope it can be settled without more bloodshed.

News coverage this morning has shifted away from Ukraine and to the live trial of Oscar Pistorius. A South African student from Pretoria visited me over the weekend. She said she believed he would get off as he had money and it was so corrupt there. He'll find it hard to find another girlfriend if he does.

I have had a real flurry of students visiting me over the last few weeks including two lovely girls from China. One told me that her mother eats puppies when she is ill. They told me that if I lived in China, I would disappear. There can be no protest. It's not surprising that people want to come here from all over the world and experience our freedoms. Imagine being born in North Korea.

Here's hoping that by next week's newsletter we won't be at war and that we still have a gas supply to bake our beetroot cakes.

Very best wishes and counting my blessings,

Isobel