

Monday 7th April 2014

Dear Customer,

The fog still hasn't cleared up here, but it's a lovely wet, clean fog and not the grainy, orange, sub-Saharan type. Yesterday there was a brief burst of sun but fog again today.

We are keeping going with the Royal Oak psb for the moment as is particularly popular and abundant. We also have leeks and courgettes, Golden Globe beetroot and green pointed cabbages in most of the bags. Here are a few delicious quick and easy recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Italian Stuffed Courgettes

3 or 4 courgettes, halved lengthways

3 tsp olive oil

Stuffing:

60g breadcrumbs

60g pine nuts

1 garlic clove, crushed

8 sundried tomatoes in oil, drained

1 tbsp thyme leaves

25g Parmesan or other cheese (optional)

Heat the oven to 220C/200C/Gas 7. Place the courgettes in a single layer in a shallow ovenproof dish, cut-side up, tightly packed together. Brush lightly with 1 tsp oil and bake for 20 minutes. To make the stuffing, mix all the ingredients together in a bowl and season with lots of black pepper. Sprinkle the stuffing on top of the courgettes and drizzle with the remaining olive oil. Bake for a further 10-15 minutes or until the courgettes are softened and the topping is golden and crisp. Serve hot.

Spaghetti with Courgette and Chilli

400g spaghetti

450g courgettes

2 cloves garlic, crushed

½ red chilli, sliced

extra olive oil, to serve

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water according to packet instructions, or until al dente. Meanwhile, slice the courgettes lengthways, using a vegetable peeler, or cut them into thin strips. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the courgettes, garlic and chilli. Stir over the heat for about 3 minutes, until soft. Season well with salt and pepper. When pasta is cooked, drain it and return it to the pan. Add the courgette. Taste and adjust seasoning. Serve with drizzle of olive oil and some grated Parmesan possibly.

Gratin of Rice and Courgettes

500g courgettes

100g butter

2 tbsp flour

½ litre milk

3 tbsp Parmesan or Gruyere

4 tbsp fine-quality rice

salt, pepper and nutmeg to season

extra butter for finishing

Clean and grate the courgettes. Put them straight into a sauté pan or wide frying pan with half the butter. With the remaining butter, the flour and warmed milk, make a béchamel sauce. Season it well, not forgetting to add a little nutmeg. When it is well-cooked and smooth, stir in the courgettes. Cook the rice in boiling water, keeping it on the firm side. Have ready a lightly buttered gratin dish, approximately 20cm x 5cm, combine the courgette-Béchamel mixture with the rice, put it all into the dish and smooth it down. Sprinkle the Parmesan and tiny knobs of butter on top. Put the dish near top of a moderate over 170C/Gas 3, and let it cook for 15-20 minutes, or 30 if the whole mixture has been heated from cold. The top should be lightly golden and bubbly.

Richmond is in a right old state at the moment, in the throes of a crime wave. We are under attack from Romanian gangs robbing us of our jewellery and our peace of mind. They are so brazen – one woman came home from lunch with a friend and two masked men were coming down her stairs and just walked out the front door. They are robbing in the middle of the day, there have been dozens of burglaries this last week. They drive in on one set of number plates and set off back down the A1 with another set on. Alarms have come into vogue, everyone wants one and they want it now. Noone wants to be the only one in their street without one. I thought my primeval mechanism of the guinea pigs squeaking every time I opened the back door, expecting grass and dandelions, needed updating. Luckily I got fast-tracked through a contact. I only had to sit it out for the weekend with a fully illuminated house and a TV blaring right through the night. I had my consultation this morning for an all singing one which would also give me a panic button should I have a heart attack in the night. I will try not to abuse it. I remember once the brain haemorrhage I had on the M1 which saw me pull into the service station and hold my head in my hands in horror as I had felt the blood moving about in my brain. I then realised that my car window was very slightly open and that it was a little stream of air blowing into the side of my head.

The security man came and first thing he said was that he had OCD. 'Yeah, me too' I told him. 'It's the new religion'. We ended up talking about animals and he told me how much he hated all human beings. As he left, another security van drove past.

Kind wishes,

Isobel