



Monday 17th August 2015

Dear Customer,

I'm back in Richmond under a gloomy leaden sky. I think I should apply for a PR job for the Yorkshire Dales – they need me. There is a big rumour going round here and it has hit all the national press. Apparently HBO, the American makers of The Sopranos and Sex in the City, are buying the rights to All Creatures Great and Small for a big budget remake of the series. It is touted that it will star the likes of Sarah Jessica Parker and Dominic West. That would put the Dales on the global tourist map. I am hoping that our MP Rishi Sunak will find out if there's any truth in it while he is away for the summer in Santa Monica – Silicon Beach - where he has a home. It would be the biggest thing to happen here under his watch. If it is true I have lined Izzy Lane up to work with the costume department to do the outfits – Wensleydale wool from the Dales, hand-knitted and Shetland tweeds, what could be more authentic. I will provide tame sheep, big sheep, little sheep and even old bony sheep for the animal cruelty scenes. I will offer to rescue any other animals they use for filming as they will need that these days ...at a price. Good Food Nation café could provide all the organic, animal-friendly catering. I've got it all arranged ! In the meantime, here are some easy and tasty recipes you could try this week:

Provençal Tomatoes

4 - 6 tomatoes	60ml olive oil
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped	1 tbsp chopped thyme
2 tbsp chopped parsley	60g breadcrumbs

Preheat the oven to 190C/ 375F/ Gas 5. Cut the tomatoes in half and remove the seeds. Season with some salt and leave cut-side down on paper towels to drain for 20 minutes. Gently heat the olive oil until warm. Remove from the heat and add the garlic, thyme, parsley and breadcrumbs. Season with salt and pepper and mix well. Season the tomato halves with pepper and fill with the stuffing, making a slight dome on each tomato half. Place in an oiled ovenproof dish and drizzle with some extra olive oil. Bake for 10 minutes or so until the stuffing is golden.

Fusilli Pasta with Courgettes and Tomatoes

225g courgettes	225g tomatoes
175g fusilli or other pasta	2 tbsp olive oil
1 garlic clove, crushed	salt and pepper
6 large basil leaves	fresh Parmesan cheese (optional)

Cook the pasta according to packet instructions. Meanwhile chop the courgettes into fine rounds or matchsticks and chop the tomatoes into chunks. Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the courgettes and garlic. Cook over a moderate heat, stirring often, for about 4 minutes or until the courgettes are just tender, then add the tomatoes and salt and pepper to taste and cook a little longer. Drain the pasta and stir in the courgettes mixture. Tear in the basil, check seasoning and top with Parmesan or other cheese if using. (serves 2)

Spiced Mixed Vegetables in Creamy Sauce

175g carrots	175g potatoes
175g courgettes	125g frozen peas
knob of fresh root ginger	2 tbsp ground coriander
½ tsp garam masala	150ml soured cream
salt and pepper	chopped fresh coriander

Scrub the carrots and thinly slice them and scrub and cut the potatoes into chunks. Boil them in a pan of water until nearly tender. Meanwhile slice the courgettes and add them to the pan along with the frozen peas and cook for 2-3 minutes, until just tender, and drain the pan. Heat the oil in a large saucepan, grate the ginger and add it to the pan. Cook for a few seconds, then stir in the ground coriander and garam masala and cook for a few more seconds. Add the cooked vegetables and stir over the heat until they are coated with the spices, then stir in the soured cream and continue to cook for a few more minutes until the cream is heated through. Season with salt and pepper and serve sprinkled with chopped coriander. Serve with basmati rice or naan bread. (serves 2)

I was asked to submit my photos for the chapter – I chose one of the Izzy Lane clothes, one of the sheep and one of the back of my head with some sheep. I was asked to replace the one of the back of my head with one in high definition of me without sheep. This was tricky. On Friday I received a prompt for the said photo so I told them I would send it by 'close of play' Sunday and called my friend Ali, a photographer. It's not good timing as I had a go at cutting my own hair last week. I did it in 30 seconds and I've completely ruined it. Just before Ali arrived I had another go at my fringe with the nail scissors. I didn't have hairs sticking into my eye balls now and could see out, but it wasn't good. I thought I'd done a reasonable job at the time, got away with it. But of course I'd destroyed 'the shaping', 'the layering', the ratio of highlighted hair to what had grown out – it was now flat and square, and dark to two thirds of the way down then a third highlighted and sun-bleached at the bottom. And as we know, your hair will make or break you. I only realised the full scale of how bad it was once I started to see the photos.

I absolutely hate having my photo taken. My mum was very beautiful – dark and deep, with Sophia Loren cheekbones - but I don't have any good photos of her because as soon as a camera was pointed towards her, she freaked out with self-consciousness. I didn't inherit her cheekbones and looks, but I did inherit the freaking outand turning into a monster. It may be an interesting look when you're in your twenties. I felt sorry for Ali. She spent so much time trying to get the right shots and light and angles and coax me, and I ruined every photo. Moving images are ok, I'm comfortable with being animated – but not that moment, frozen in time when the camera shoots straight at your soul. Gone, sadly, are the days of little Kodak snapshots where one had a tiny blurry head. Now you're instantly blown up super-size on a laptop – it's an invasion of privacy to be looked at so big. I think there's some mileage in a piece of software which locks your photo at a certain size, or even shrinks it. But in the grand scheme of things, does it really matter ? No, of course it doesn't. We are what we are, we age, all of us, and that is that. I sent them the best of a bad lot.

Diane is in the café kitchen making scones this morning – a group of 12 ladies are coming for coffee. Grace, our cook, took her tins home with her on Friday and this morning, Monday, emailed to say she wasn't coming back.

Kind wishes,
Isobel