



Monday 19th October 2015

Dear Human, Canine and Feline customers,

This is me, Myfa writing the newsletter this week. She's asked me to step in. I don't know what's wrong with her, she was muttering something about being unable to feign anything, only being able write what's in her mind and that "the level of existential angst would be inappropriate for the vegetable letter....." So here I am, my writing debut. The nights are certainly closing in. By mid-afternoons I get a bit edgy wondering for how much longer she's going to be on the computer, worrying how many more daylight hours there are left. I start emitting a high pitch whine, barely audible at first but increasing in intensity, it really stresses her out. I like winding her up. I keep doing it until she shouts at me "for God's sake, shut up Myfa". This gets my adrenalin going and my ears prick up.... finally she's noticed I'm here. I know the exact frequency of the pitch which puts her nerves on edge. I keep doing it, over and over again. I destroy her concentration and finally she breaks and says "where's your collar", as if I know where she's put it. She told me I had to have a go at knocking up some recipes in the kitchen but they had to be vegetarian.....'urgh'. The only vegetarian things I like are rich tea biscuits, Bombay mix, pesto and mashed potato. I hate every other vegetable, I hate pasta, I even hate eggs. Anyway this is what I have knocked up for you. I make a very good Winalot risotto and this is a version I've adapted for you using green lentils.

Green Lentil Risotto with Beetroot and Horseradish

400g beetroot, gold or red
350g green lentils
100ml white wine
150g crème fraiche

1 large onion, finely chopped
2 bay leaves
10g fresh horseradish, finely grated
salt and black pepper

Individually tightly wrap the beetroot in foil and bake until tender at 180C/350F/Gas 4 – approximately 1½ hours. Sweat the onion in a saucepan and add the lentils, bay leaves and wine, then add enough water to cover. Bring to the boil then simmer. Meanwhile, fold the horseradish into half the crème fraiche. When the lentils are tender, turn up the heat and allow most of the water to evaporate, until there is just enough to keep it moist. Peel and dice the cooked beetroot and add to the lentils. Fold in the remaining crème fraiche then turn off the heat. Season, remove the bay leaves and serve in a bowl with a spoon of the crème fraiche.

Leek and Sweet Potato Soup

2 medium carrots, roughly chopped
2 leeks, roughly chopped
1 large clove garlic, sliced
1.6 litres vegetable stock

300g sweet potatoes, roughly chopped
1 large onion, roughly chopped
2 celery stalks, finely chopped
1 bay leaf

Preheat the oven to 170C / Gas 3. Put the carrots, sweet potatoes, leeks, onion, garlic, celery, stock and bay leaf into a large flameproof casserole and bring slowly to the boil. Cover, then transfer to the oven for 1½ - 2 hours, by which time the vegetable will be very tender. Remove the bay leaf and liquidise the soup. Stir in some hot stock if the soup is too thick. Season with salt and pepper and a drizzle of olive oil, garnish with fresh chopped herbs and serve with chunky bread.

Hazelnut, Maple and Sweet Potato Brownies

1 large sweet potato, peeled and cubed
50g coconut oil, melted
2 free range eggs
2 tbspcocoa powder
½ tsp salt

150g dark chocolate, chopped
100ml maple syrup
100g baking powder
½ tsp cinnamon

Put the sweet potato cubes in a saucepan of boiling water then cook for around 10 minutes, until tender. Drain well, mash until smooth then set aside to cool. Preheat the oven to 160C/325F/Gas 3. Put the chopped chocolate in a glass bowl over, but not in, a pan of simmering water then gently melt. Take off the heat then stir the melted coconut oil and maple syrup into the chocolate. Stir the chocolate mixture into the sweet potato add the eggs then fold in the ground hazelnuts, baking powder, cocoa powder, salt and cinnamon. Spoon into the tin, then bake for 30-35 minutes until the brownie is crusted on the outside but still squidgy in the middle. Allow to cool, then cut into squares.

We saw Ernest at the weekend, first time for over a month. He wasn't speaking to her because she'd insisted on bringing a load of the wretched Shetlands to graze off overgrown fields in Richmond, and to "conserve and refresh the grazing" at Hornby for winter. Yes, winter soon. He came up with a hundred reasons, which she said were absurd, why they shouldn't be moved and when she insisted they were moving, he stormed out. He doesn't really look after the sheep any more, I don't blame him. I hate the sheep. Another couple of other guys tend them now. However, when there is a big job to do, like move the sheep, they call Ernest to see if he'll help and Ernest even though he doesn't want to, can't bring himself to say 'no' to them. Hence his fury – he knew he'd get that call ! Well that's what she said anyway.

She thinks Ernest, when he's being deadly serious, is the funniest person on the planet. He was talking about China and how disgusting it is that they eat dogs, I start feeling a bit sick, then he said "It's surprising there are any left". She paused a while, I could see her biting her tongue, then she burst out laughing. I think she suffers from an over-vivid imagination. I didn't think it was very funny.

I think the problem with her today is that she spent hours on the internet late last night reading about Charles Darwin. I think

she's obsessed with him, it's been going on a while, used to go to Downe House all the time when she lived in London. The problem is that she is more caught up in his symptoms, the side-effects of his existence, than the origin of species. Darwin in a letter turning down a social invitation wrote to the hostess saying "the novelty and excitement would annihilate me". Social engagements made him ill with vertigo, tremors, palpitations, stomach ache – he suffered this all his life, couldn't eat in the same room as anyone else - the weirdo. You guessed it she gets the exact same things. She's supposed to be in London tomorrow night for the awards ceremony but thinks the novelty and excitement would annihilate her. She says we need a flat back in London because she's getting too dysfunctional, spending too much time tramping the moors just me and her. Humans are completely mad.

Woof, woof,

Myfa