



Monday 6th June 2016

Dear Customer,

It is a glorious morning here in Yorkshire – hot and sunny with a blue sky and no cold wind - just like the Mediterranean and the same as yesterday. Yesterday, Sunday, I dragged a mattress onto my roof terrace and lay there knowing I had some urgent work to do and shouldn't be there. I got settled in and decided I'd stay until the sun left it at about 2pm – but the sun didn't leave it at all. Working outside on your laptop is hopeless with disappearing screen-mouse syndrome. Determined to catch up with work in the evening, a friend came round and stayed for a number of hours then a mild sunstroke kicked in, no work done, so here I am early Monday morning with double the pressure.

On Friday I received an email from the economic correspondent of The Economist. Blimey..... hard-core.... but I like it. She wants to discuss pensions for animals. I then got another email from her, could we make it 3.30pm as she'd just checked her diary and she was meeting the head of the World Trade Organisation at 2.30pm. That's it, it's off the hard-core scale now. I need my facts, need to revisit the economic models, I need to find my jotters..... the figures, my early work produced in the early hours armed with a calculator, a pencil, lifespans, eggs per day, fleece weights, spinning costs, litres per lactation, bottling costs, grams of grains of corn, blades of grass per animal per day. But where the hell are my jotters. At least I have an extra hour to trawl through all my boxes of paperwork. I asked her to ask the Head of the WTO from me if he would ban global live exports. He actually is THE man. She said she'd give it a go and was looking at recent global live export trends.

Here are some tasty summery recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Courgette and New Potato and Tarragon Tortilla

2 tbsp olive oil
700g new potatoes
400g courgettes

2 tbsp fresh chopped tarragon or equivalent dried (optional)

salt and pepper

1 onion, peeled and thinly sliced

6 free-range eggs

Wash the potatoes and cut them into 1cm slices. Boil the potatoes in salted water for about 5 minutes or until just tender then drain and set aside. Heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan and fry the onion gently for about 10 minutes or until soft, golden and sweet. Add the courgettes, then cover and cook for a further 5-10 minutes. Beat the eggs and tarragon together and season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables and return to the heat. If you have a lid for the pan, cover it and let it cook through for 5-10 minutes. If not, cook gently for 5-8 minutes until golden underneath and almost set through. Place the pan under a pre-heated grill for 5 minutes or until browned. Otherwise, slide the tortilla onto a large plate, hold the frying pan over the top, then flip it back into the pan onto the other side for 5 minutes or so until browned. Cut into wedges and serve with a crispy salad with mustard vinaigrette.

Crushed New Potatoes

1k new potatoes

2 tbsp olive oil

Bring to the boil in salted water and simmer for approximately 10 minutes until tender. Drain and gently squash each potato with a fork. Place in a roasting tin and drizzle with oil. Roast in the oven at 200C/220C/ Gas 7, for 30-40 minutes until golden and crispy.

Roasted Leeks and Potatoes Vinaigrette

450g leeks, cut in half lengthways and cut into 1½ " lengths

½ glass dry white wine

1 tbsp sherry vinegar

1 tbsp flat-leafed parsley

1-2 hard-boiled eggs (optional)

450g new potatoes, washed

salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 tbsp lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 200C/ 400F/ Gas 6. Combine the leeks and potatoes in a baking dish large enough for them to fit in in one single layer. Toss with the white wine, salt, pepper and 2 tablespoons olive oil. Cover the baking dish tightly and place in the oven. Roast for 30 minutes. Uncover, raise the heat to 230C/ 450F/ Gas 8 and return to the oven for another 10-15 minutes until the potatoes and leeks are just tender but not mushy, and just beginning to colour. Remove from the heat and add an extra tablespoon of olive oil, the vinegar, lemon juice and additional salt and pepper if desired. Toss together and to allow to cool. If using, put the hard-boiled eggs through a sieve and season with salt and pepper. Arrange over the leeks and potatoes the sprinkle with parsley and serve.

As for my blood pressure reading at the doctors the other week of 170/100, my neighbour has kindly come round a few times since with the gear to take my 'at home' readings. The first since was 139/87 in the right arm and 134/86 in the left. Already lower, and a difference

between arms the arms, but still a bit high. The next time she came my arms were 133/83 and 135/89. But when she took them again 1 minute later, they were 124/84 and 121/79 and looking reasonably normal for my age. I can see clearly how stress raises both levels instantaneously – how it rises and falls in mere seconds. I'm working on reducing my stress levels. Other than that I think I'm ok. However, I now feel so upset for my late mother. She worried a lot, could get very anxious and hated anything medical. In the days when she was told she had high blood pressure and was put on tablets, I guess in her 50's, the only readings she will have ever known were the super-elevated 'white coat' ones in the surgery. She was medicated on this basis. I remember how anxious I would be each time I knew she was going to the doctors, it was a big deal waiting to hear those critical numbers. I would watch the clock, waiting for her to get home and call her for the update of those 'false' readings - which no doubt hung over her, like over us, like the grim reaper. After she died of a sudden heart attack my father said the doctor had told her that taking the blood pressure pills would mean living into her 70's rather than her 60's. Maybe thinking she was a ticking time bomb contributed to why she did die so young, on her 74th birthday when I was 34. Or maybe they did extend her life. I shall never know.

On that cheery note,

I hope you have a lovely week,

Isobel