



Monday 12th March 2018

Dear Customer,

Well it's grey, grey, grey. It's neither winter nor spring, a miserable stasis waiting for the sun. The sun which doesn't appear whatsoever in the two-week BBC forecast for Yorkshire. Why do we live in this country! We live in hope of a good summer which never comes, certainly not north of Peterborough. Anyway we've got some celery and parsnips to cheer you up with this week:

Celery Soup

25g butter or margarine	1 tbsp oil
1 onion, finely diced	1 head celery, sticks finely sliced
2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced	150ml white wine
1 litre vegetable stock	125ml double cream (optional)
salt and pepper	

Heat the butter or margarine and oil in a large saucepan and cook the onion on a low heat for 10 minutes, stirring now and then until soft and translucent. Add the celery and potato. Stir for a minute then turn up the heat a little. Add the wine and cook on a low boil for 2 minutes. Add the stock and season. Bring to the boil then reduce heat and simmer for 12-15 minutes until the vegetables are all tender. Blitz in a food processor then return to the pan. Add the cream if using and gently reheat. Check the seasoning before serving.

Carrot, Jerusalem Artichoke and Parsnip Gratin

500g potatoes, sliced wafer thin	1 parsnip, sliced wafer thin
150g Jerusalem artichokes	3 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1 tbsp chopped rosemary	284ml double cream
300g carrots, sliced wafer thin	50g cheese
150ml milk	

Preheat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4. Butter a shallow ovenproof dish. Layer the potatoes then the Jerusalem artichokes and parsnips in the bottom of the dish with two of the sliced garlic cloves and sprinkle over a little salt and half of the rosemary. Pour the cream and milk into a large saucepan and add the rest of the rosemary and garlic, the carrots and a little seasoning. Bring to the boil then turn the heat to the lowest it will go and simmer for 3 minutes. Pour the carrots and cream over the other vegetables and spread the carrots out. Sprinkle over the cheese, cover with foil and bake for 40 minutes. Remove the foil and bake a further 20 minutes until golden and bubbly.

Roasted Root Vegetables

200g Jerusalem artichokes	500g potatoes
300g parsnips	fresh rosemary
bulb of garlic	olive oil
parsley	

Preheat the oven to 180C. Wash all the veg well leaving them in their skins. Chop into irregular sizes of roughly one inch. Place in a large roasting tray in a single layer. Crush the whole of the bulb of garlic in your hand to remove excess of the papery wrapper and break it into cloves amongst the vegetables. Pull the leaves from the rosemary and add to the tray. Season generously with salt and pepper and add the oil. Toss with your hands to make sure all the vegetable surfaces are coated. Put in the oven for 45-60 minutes turning the veg every 20 minutes to caramelize the different edges. To finish toss in chopped parsley.

I'm really sick of the rats in the garden. Every time I look outside they are there. I have only seen two at any one time but I suspect there are more. I have reset the humane trap and came home the other day to a kerfuffle. Hoorah, I approached with trepidation and found a blackbird flapping about in it. I let it out and it flew away. They just aren't going to go in it – too clever. Then this morning I looked out and saw the rat sitting by the pond and for a moment thought it was eating some plastic then I saw it was a writhing toad. It ran off with it. It's horrible. The only advice online I can find is to take away all their hiding places which is just impossible. When the snow was here I could see their little handprints everywhere – up and down the drive, back and fore to where the sheep's feed bin is, back and fore to the pond. Ernest keeps saying I have to poison them but I can't do that. I can kill ticks but that's about all.

As you can imagine I am still reeling with the grief of losing my dog and losing her in the manner I lost her. I can't do anything useful. I can't really speak to anyone. I lurch from listening to classical music, then pick the guitar up, go for a drive in the car, come home, go on the computer for a while, fiddle about on the piano, feed the sheep, curl up with my face in Myfa's blanket, make a hot water bottle, give myself a foot massage to get rid of the palpitations, listen to sad love songs, make a cup of tea, try and watch some TV but it's too boring, back to classical music, and so it goes on. I guess it is very marginally better this week than last week but I take nothing for granted. I'm sure it must be easier to just pop a pill. How did my father get up each morning, dress and make his breakfast after losing the love of his life, the woman he woke up with every morning for over 50 years. He didn't pop anything.

The sad fact of life is that we will all be one day separated from everyone we love. It has and always will be thus, and as unbearable as it may be, we are equipped to mourn and grieve and then carry on.... I tell myself. I think my grief is also being compounded by a long, hard think about my life, my insecurities and my 'what now'. It's all rushing in like a big tidal wave. I guess we all have these moments.

So on that, yet another cheery note....kind wishes,

Isobel