

Monday 18th November 2019

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. Rain and more rain up here but I think we've got off lightly here compared to further south so I'm not complaining. At least it's not falling as snow. And it's nicely filling up the reservoirs ready for the drought.

Without further ado, here are some tasty recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Majorcan Aubergine and Pepper Bake

400g tin chopped tomatoes	1 tbsp chopped fresh oregano
2 cloves garlic, chopped	2 tbsp olive oil
1 aubergine, sliced	1 red or green pepper, sliced
1 medium onion, sliced	650g potatoes, peeled and sliced

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. In a pan combine the chopped tomatoes, oregano, garlic and 1 tsp of the oil. Season and simmer over a medium heat for 10 minutes until thickened, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, toss the aubergine, pepper and onion in the remaining oil and season. Arrange over the base of a roasting tin and cook in the oven for 10 minutes. In a 2-litre ovenproof dish, layer up the roasted vegetables with the sliced potatoes and tomato sauce, seasoning each layer. Finish with a layer of potatoes and then tomato sauce. Cover with foil and bake for 45–50 minutes until the vegetables are tender and the top is golden, removing the foil halfway through cooking. Serve with crusty bread and a salad.

Braised Rainbow Chard

1 bunch rainbow chard	3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 lemon	2 tbsp olive oil

Strip the leaves of the chard from the stalks. Chop the stalk into small pieces and roughly chop the leaves. Heat the oil in a pan and sauté the stalks for 5–8 minutes until they soften. Add the garlic and sauté for another minute then add the leaves. Cook on a medium heat until wilted and tender, about 5 minutes. Season and serve finished with a good squeeze of lemon.

Rainbow Chard, Potato and Caerphilly Gratin

bunch rainbow chard	500g potatoes
300ml double cream	1 heaped tbsp wholegrain mustard
160g Caerphilly cheese, coarsely grated	1 tbsp butter

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Cut the chard leaves away from the stalks, then cut the stalks into 10cm long sticks. Bring a pan of water to the boil and cook the stalks for 2 minutes then add the leaves and cook for until wilted. Drain well. Chop the chard leaves roughly and slice the potatoes as thinly as possible. Mix together the cream, mustard and half of the Caerphilly cheese. Grease the bottom of a gratin dish with the butter and arrange half of the potato slices over the bottom. Top with the drained chard leaves and stalks then spoon over half of the cream mixture. Top with the rest of the potatoes, then spoon over the remaining cream mixture. Top with the other half of the cheese then bake for 30 minutes until bubbling and golden.

Baked Swede and Onion

1 swede, peeled and cut into 2-3cm cubes	2 tbsp olive oil
1 rosemary sprig, leaves finely chopped	6 thyme sprigs
50g butter	3 onions, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced	2 bay leaves
250ml vegetable stock	

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Put the swede in a roasting tin with the oil. Add the chopped rosemary and leaves from 2 thyme sprigs plus salt and plenty of black pepper then toss together. Cook in the oven for 45 minutes, stirring a couple of times, until soft and golden in places. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large saucepan. Add the onions, garlic, bay leaves, and leaves from 2 more thyme sprigs. Cook over a medium heat, stirring often for 20 minutes, until the onions are soft and golden. Stir the onions into the swede. Add the stock and more seasoning. Scatter the remaining thyme leaves over the top and return to the oven for 30–40 minutes until the stock has become thick and syrupy.

My tulip bulb and raspberry plant order arrived in the week. I bought so many tulips that I was awarded 60 free daffodil bulbs which I've planted today, or should that be sown, not sure what you do to bulbs, poke them in. Anyway, they're in. I'll start on the tulips this week if we get a few dry days. I need them in before the Beasts from the East get here. And then I'm ready for spring.

As you can see, no news here. It's Sunday evening. I had a nice drizzly walk in the mud this afternoon, up my lane and onto the Coast to Coast path. It passes through Whitcliffe Woods which was teeming with pheasants, all looking very busy and purposeful, an avian Piccadilly Circus. But they're on borrowed time. Now that the grouse shooting is ending, the pheasants are next. Ernest's old farmhouse is on that same lane. It's now owned by an oil tycoon. He spent a fortune on renovating and extending it and it's now rented out as luxury accommodation for the shooters. It accommodates 24 of them, right on the doorstep of their killing grounds. They could shoot them out their bedroom windows.

The house has the most incredible views up the Swale Valley and oil tycoon has put floor to ceiling glazing everywhere to make the most of them. As I walked past I thought they really didn't deserve those views. I saw two deer in the woods. Would they kill them too !

Anyway, there was some good news. I had an email from Bruce at Brierley Bros who do the carpet wool spinning. He said he thought they may have found my wool and was going to send me a sample. It was a surprise as my last email to him was unanswered and I had written it off, almost shed tears over it. The sample arrived. I put my hand in the bag, fearful in case it wasn't mine and had come from slaughtered sheep, but I recognised the softness. I pulled out a handful – unblended, as that is the next stage – there were little pieces of the Wensleydales' ringlets and earthy-coloured tufts of Shetland and alpaca. It could only be mine. Bruce later confirmed that the quantity tallied. So tufted rugs there will be.

Kind wishes, and hope you have a good week,

Isobel