

Monday 3rd February 2020

Dear Customer,

So our brave new dawn has arrived ! February already and it's a stormy, gale-force weekend here in the Dales. Not the weather to walk through ancient woodlands of thick, creaking, swaying branches as I found out yesterday when I ended up running, convinced I was going to be taken out, twigs flying at my face. Of course, you might run to meet the one which is was about to crash down. I thought I was better off on the open racecourse, the one close to the sky. I was the sole person up there braving it. There were moments when I nearly had to lie down to not be flung over. I collected pieces of turf scratched up by rabbits and hurled them into the wind for Lainey to chase, they flew off then rolled like tennis balls and she flew off after them with me screaming. There was no one to hear me in the roar of the wind. It was exhilarating. It was good therapy ! Especially after a long brutal migraine last weekend which is why last week's letter didn't materialise....apologies for that !

Lots of lovely, healthy veggies to cook this week to boost our immunity and help fend off any zoonotic, species-jumping viruses.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try:

Roast Kale Crisps

½ tsp sea salt

pinch cayenne pepper

1½ tbsp olive oil

½ tsp sweet smoked paprika

150g kale, thick stalks removed

Heat the oven to 180°C / 350F/ Gas 4. Finely grind the salt, paprika and cayenne in a pestle and mortar. Season with black pepper. Rinse and dry the kale and cut into 4-5cm pieces. Put in a mixing bowl with the oil the spice mixture and mix well. Spread the kale out on a large baking tray. Bake for 10-12 minutes, or until the leaves are crisp, turning halfway through.

Kale and Ricotta Tagliatelle

300g tagliatelle, dried

3 tbsp olive oil

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

25g fresh basil, leaves roughly torn

1 tbsp toasted pine nuts

200g kale, leaves shredded

1 large red chilli, seeded and finely chopped

½ small onion, thinly sliced

125g ricotta

Cook the tagliatelle in a large pan of boiling, salted water for 6 minutes, then add the kale for a further 3 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a small pan and add the chilli, onion and garlic. Cook for 3-4 minutes. Drain the tagliatelle and kale and return to the pan. Stir in the garlic mixture, the basil and the ricotta. Serve scattered with pine nuts and a grinding of coarse black pepper.

Kale and Barley Soup

1.2 litres vegetable stock

2 leeks, sliced

100g kale, shredded

25g pearl barley

2 potatoes, diced

Bring the stock to the boil with the barley then simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. Add the leeks and potatoes and cook, covered, for 10 minutes. Stir in the kale and cook for 5 minutes more until tender Season to taste, then serve with crusty bread.

Rice Pilaf with Caramelised Onions and Mushrooms

200g brown basmati rice

2 onions, finely sliced

15g margarine or butter

½ tsp ground turmeric

2 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed

large handful flat leaf parsley, roughly chopped

2 tbsp olive oil

bag of chestnut mushrooms, sliced

1 tsp cumin seeds

½ small cinnamon stick

350ml fresh vegetable stock

lemon juice, to taste

Soak the rice in cool water for 20 minutes. Put the oil and onion in a frying pan over a low heat and cook until softened. Add the mushrooms and cook for 5 more minutes. Transfer about ¼ of the mushroom mixture to a medium saucepan. Go back to the frying pan, continue to cook the onion and mushrooms for a further 10 minutes, until very soft and browned and set aside. Add the butter to the saucepan with the reserved mushroom mixture. Set over a medium heat and stir in the spices. Cook for 2 minutes, stirring. Drain the rice and add to the pan, stirring it in. Add the stock, bring to the boil, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Cover and cook for 20 minutes, until the rice is tender and no liquid remains. Remove from the heat and stir in the parsley. Add the lemon juice and season to taste. Serve with yogurt if desired and a scattering more parsley.

What on earth are we doing to our world. We've been saying it for decades, yet nothing changes, and the decades continue to roll by, with things just getting worse and worse and worse. To hear that in Antarctica, the most pristine place on earth, scientists are finding 100 pieces of plastic in each litre of water.

It can feel so hopeless, and we, so helpless. The hideous 'wet' and 'wild' markets in China, a vision from hell selling every species of live, dead, and 'still warm' creature. Animal cruelty from beyond our darkest imagination and from where the coronavirus emanated. A ban on such markets has been announced. A temporary ban ! If we can't learn from our mistakes what sort of stupid idiots are we. But what happens in one corner of the world affects the entire world.

If only the whole lot of them could just sit down with the scientists and ecologists, work out the rules, take them home and implement them. It is the duty of every world leader to do this, to put aside diplomatic irks, trade wars and lengths of term in office, and deal with it. Trump may have done plenty of things wrong and perhaps plenty of things right, I don't know, but what I do know is that in pulling the US out of the Paris Climate Accord, that was one of the greatest crimes against humanity that it was possible to commit. That forum, that place, where the world came together and could have tackled so many of these planet and life-threatening issues. For the leading Western nation to have done this, was, and is simply breath-taking. But we aren't all dummies, we can be heard, we can all play our part, and heavens.....we just have to.

And on we go.

Kind wishes, Isobel