



Monday 22nd June 2020

Dear Customer,

It's Saturday and is the summer solstice in precisely 34 minutes, the longest day of the year. Seemingly we are in for a hot week.

And here are a few recipes you could try in the sizzle:

Chickpea, Walnut and Beetroot Falafel

400g tin chick peas, drained
100g walnut pieces
25g mint, roughly chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 tsp ground cumin

220g beetroot, peeled and coarsely grated
25g flat leaf parsley, roughly chopped
½ small onion, finely chopped
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tbsp olive oil

Preheat the oven to 190°C / Gas 5. Line a baking sheet with parchment. Put all the ingredients a food processor except the oil. Season and pulse until finely chopped and beginning to clump together. Take tablespoons of the mixture to shape into about 20-24 small patties. Space them out on the lined baking sheet, brush lightly with oil and bake for 20-25 minutes, until lightly browned. Leave to cool for 5 minutes on the baking sheet. Serve on their own, or with yogurt or houmous, salad or pitta.

Sauteed Cabbage with Orange Dressing

50g pine nuts
2-3 garlic cloves
2 tbsp finely chopped sage

1 tbsp olive oil
½ tsp fennel seeds (optional)
1 cabbage, finely shredded

Dressing:

2 tbsp olive oil
1 heaped tsp Dijon mustard

1 tbsp cider vinegar
1 orange, zested

Heat a dry frying pan over a high heat. Add the pine nuts and toast for 3 minutes, moving constantly until golden. Tip onto a plate and set aside. Combine all the dressing ingredients in a lidded jar and shake well, then set aside. Heat the oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Add the garlic, fennel seeds and sage, then fry for a minute until fragrant. Add the cabbage and cook for 6-8 minutes until wilted. Transfer to a serving dish and scatter over the pine nuts and extra orange zest. Spoon over the dressing.

Cabbage, Walnut and Sage Lasagne

750ml organic milk
½ small onion
6 fresh lasagne sheets
45g organic butter, plus extra for greasing
15g sage, leaves chopped
50g walnuts, roughly crushed
20g hard cheese, grated

1 bay leaf
2 garlic cloves, bruised
1 cabbage, cored and cut into 2 cm strips
3 tbsp plain flour
1 pinch freshly grated nutmeg
125g mozzarella, torn

Bring the milk to the boil with the bay leaf, onion and garlic, set aside for 15 minutes, then strain. Cook the lasagne sheets in boiling water for 3 minutes to al dente. Drain and pat dry. Blanch the cabbage in boiling water for 3 minutes then drain. Pat dry. For the sauce, melt the butter over a low heat and add the flour and sage. Stir for 2 minutes, then pour in the milk, whisking all the time until smooth. Simmer for 3-4 minutes. Add the nutmeg and walnut and season. Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Grease a 22cm x 16cm baking dish. Set aside one third of the sauce and stir the cabbage into the rest. Cover the base of the dish with a little of the plain sauce, then top with 2 lasagne sheets. Cover with half the cabbage, then add another 2 lasagne sheets and the remaining cabbage. Top with the final 2 lasagne sheets, spoon over the remaining plain sauce and scatter with the cheeses. Bake for 45 minutes until golden.

I find it hard to concentrate on anything these days. I am under a lot of pressure this weekend after receiving an email yesterday from the people developing the website for my new venture. Or, new, then shelved years ago and now being resurrected new venture. They said I have to "...revisit the functionality and create a firm list of what the site will do.....we need this **in one document** and not in lots of emails please".

They're putting their foot down now. Think they're fed up with nothing being forthcoming for days on end, then an hour-long bombardment of emails, things that have just occurred to me, all outside the original spec and quote. And I have to write more content, useless stuff, to appear in Google rankings apparently. I have to do the FAQ's and look at the Terms and Conditions. The Terms and Conditions. And they want it "...all by Monday to stay on track...." My brain has become like one of those old petrol lawnmowers, keep pulling at the starter cord and it just won't fire up. But then I get so easily distracted. I'll just start working on it then suddenly the squirrel appears on the garden wall. Then I notice how my neighbour's huge eucalyptus tree is quivering in the breeze, thousands of luminous silver discs shimmering as the sun hits the leaves.

I suspect there is a subconscious process going on in the brain, too much other stuff to assimilate. It's hard to just carry on as normal when our world is rumbling and crumbling and we have to reassess every aspect of our lives to prepare for an unknown future. And we haven't had a break, the dark winter months, the January blues, all flowed seamlessly into the pandemic crisis.

Reassuring to know that the virus is now 'just in general circulation'. I think I am beyond anger now, watching our government is like watching a Shakespearean tragedy unfold. Why does Britain always have to stick out, why can't we just be in the middle somewhere. Why do always have to be at the top or at the bottom, do everything right or everything wrong. Has to be wrong this time doesn't it of all times. Eccentricity, that's the problem. A nation of people who have collections of 1000 snuff boxes, a nation of people who grow pumpkins the size of sheds. Good old Britain eh. I will go and weep for us.

My treasured stick Dyson packed up a couple of months ago followed by my Sebo vacuum cleaner, a double whammy. I had to order a rubbish Miele online, you can't not Hoover. Finally, I was able to get them both repaired this week. I rang and paid for them and asked him if he could leave them outside the repair shop in Northallerton so I wouldn't have to go in. I arrived and he came out in rubber gloves, opened the boot and laid them gently on their sides, like roadkill, like two dead badgers. I now have a trio of hoovers.

I hope you have a good week, Kind wishes, Isobel