



Monday 21st September 2020

Dear Customer,

We have had some beautiful late summer days. Monty Don was right, I cut back my delphiniums and they have flowered again. I normally wing it in the garden, but I think I will listen more attentively to Gardeners World. My succession planting has been a great success. The intermittently barren beds are history. They have been bursting with blooms from spring onwards. The crimson bergamot in the front garden has even been turning heads. Lockdown has produced some beautiful gardens. Sadly it has been one of the worst years in living memory for the vegetable producers. The lack of rain in the spring saw farmers in Norfolk trying to plant their onions in cracks in the ground. The endless rain over the summer saw crops rot. The organic apple harvest is a mere 40% of the expected yield.

Yet here are a few tasty recipes you could try with this week's vegetables:

Caramelised Red Pepper Penne

2–3 tbsp olive oil	2 onions, sliced
2 cloves garlic, sliced	2 red or yellow peppers, seeded and sliced
25g fresh basil	penne or other pasta shapes
juice of ½ lemon	chilli flakes, to serve (optional)

Heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan and cook the onion, garlic and peppers with half of the basil leaves over a very gentle heat for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally until very tender and golden brown. Meanwhile, cook the pasta in a large pan of boiling water according to the packet instructions. Drain loosely and return to the pan. Stir in the pepper mixture and remaining basil leaves and toss well together. Grind in some black pepper and add a good squeeze of lemon juice and chilli flakes, to taste.

Red Pepper, Sweet Potato and Tomato Soup

1 large sweet potato, peeled and cubed	2 red peppers, roughly chopped
2 onions, roughly chopped	300g tinned chopped tomatoes
3 garlic cloves	1 red chilli, deseeded
4 tbsp olive oil	800ml fresh vegetable stock
1 tsp sweet smoked paprika	

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Put the sweet potato in a large roasting tin with the peppers, onions, whole garlic cloves and chilli; season and toss with the olive oil. Roast for 30 minutes. Transfer the contents of the tin to a large pan with the vegetable stock and chopped tomatoes and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes until the sweet potato is cooked through. Add the smoked paprika and season. Use a stick or jug blender to whizz until smooth. Serve with a swirl of yogurt and crusty bread.

Sweet Potato and Lentil Curry

2 tbsp vegetable oil	1 onion, roughly chopped
6 garlic cloves, crushed	1 tsp dried chilli flakes
2 tsp garam masala	1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp ground cumin	1 tsp ground turmeric
1 large sweet potato, cubed (unpeeled)	175g red lentils
1 litre vegetable stock	1 tsp fine sea salt
240g basmati rice	1 lemon, juice
natural yoghurt, to serve	

Put the oil in a large, high-sided pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and sauté for 5 minutes until starting to soften. Tip in the garlic, chilli flakes, garam masala, coriander, cumin and turmeric. Fry for 2-3 minutes, stirring now and again, until aromatic. Add the sweet potato, lentils, stock and sea salt. Bring to the boil and simmer for 30-35 minutes, stirring often, until the sweet potato and lentils are cooked through; season. Meanwhile, put the rice in a large pan and cover with twice its volume of salted water (about 500ml). Bring to the boil then reduce the heat to low, cover the pan and leave to simmer gently for 12 minutes. Once the liquid has been absorbed, remove from the heat, leaving the lid on to allow the rice to steam for a further 5 minutes, then fluff up with a fork. Stir the lemon juice into the curry and season. Serve with the rice, and the yoghurt stirred through.

I have switched from taking Lainey on the Georgian racecourse to the Medieval racecourse for her walks. It's quiet there except for the hare and stoats as most people don't even know it exists. It's higher up, wilder and with views even more spectacular. I drive and park at the top then walk down. Going back up is long and gruelling, would have been even for stocky medieval ponies. So instead I leave the car abandoned and carry on walking down through various meadows, finally ending up on my lane and the half mile to my house, a timeless lane bordered by wild verges and hedges of rosehips, honeysuckle and blackberries. For all that I moan about up here its natural beauty is undeniable. It's nice to just walk home, have no car in the drive and put the kettle on. Will have to call Ernest again and ask him for a socially distanced, masked, head-out-of-the-window, lift to collect the car later.

For the bad bit, I've been seeing multi-coloured zigzags. The new migraine maybe, at this anxious time. They are disconcerting and it's happened three times in the last couple of weeks, each session a horror, lasting about half an hour. I have to lie down, shut my eyes and wait for them to go, whilst having a panic attack about them. I really don't like it, and it's not good when they appear when you're driving. Give me a good, bog-standard 48 hours of excruciating pain to a zigzag any day. Better the devil you know.

Hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel