

Monday 5th October 2020

Dear Customer,

It's Saturday night and there has been ceaseless heavy rain for the last 15 hours. I keep checking the river levels to make sure the sheep are safe. The river-bed has been re-sculpted this summer by the Environment Agency supposedly to prevent flooding. They moved the river over a bit.

We have swede in the bags this week, full of vitamins A and C, iron, potassium, calcium and fibre. You could roast them. Cut the two ends off with a knife then peel it and cut into 1cm cubes. Spread them in a roasting tin, season, then scatter with minced garlic, dried rosemary and chilli flakes. Drizzle with olive oil then mix around to make sure they are all well coated. Roast in the oven at 200C / 390F/ Gas 5 for around 20 minutes until tender and starting to caramelize, turning them halfway through.

Swede and Potato Gratin

1 tbsp olive oil	15g butter
1 red onion, thinly sliced	1 clove of garlic, crushed
500g potatoes, peeled and cut into matchsticks	1 medium swede, peeled and cut into matchsticks
6 bay leaves, torn in half	150ml cream
150ml organic milk	

Preheat the oven to 190C/ Gas 5. Melt the oil and butter together in a frying pan and add the leek and garlic. Cook gently for 5 minutes until softened but not coloured. Combine the onion, potato and swede in a buttered 1.5 litre shallow ovenproof dish and season, tucking in the bay leaves layer as you go. Mix the cream and milk together and pour over the vegetables. Bake for 1 hour until the vegetables are tender and the top golden. Cover with foil if the gratin browns too much.

Swede and Pea Samosas

200g swede, peeled and cut in 1cm cubes	1½ tbsp oil
1½ tsp cumin seeds	½ tsp black mustard seeds
½ red onion, finely chopped	1 tsp finely chopped fresh root ginger
75g frozen peas	2 tsp medium curry powder
½ tsp mild chilli powder	1 lemon, juice
handful coriander, chopped	7 sheets filo pastry
75g butter or creamy margarine, melted	

Steam or boil the swede until soft but still holding its shape and set aside. Put the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Fry ½ tsp cumin and the mustard seeds for about 20 seconds until they sizzle. Add the onion and ginger and cook for 5 minutes, stirring. Add the peas, curry powder, chilli powder and lemon juice and cook for 2 minutes. Add the swede then cook for 1 minute to coat in the spices. Remove from the heat, stir in the coriander, season and set aside. Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Unwrap the filo pastry, cover with cling film and a damp tea towel. Working with one sheet at a time, lay out on a clean surface and brush lightly with melted butter / margarine. Fold in 1/3 of the pastry from one of the long sides, brush again with butter / margarine and fold in the other long side to make a long, triple-layered strip. Place 1 /7 of the filling at one end of the strip. Fold one corner over to enclose the filling, so that the short edge now lies flush with the long edge, forming a triangle. Keep folding it up and across, keeping all the edges flush, to form a samosa. Brush the outside with butter to stick down any overhanging pastry at the end. Sprinkle over a few cumin seeds and put on a large baking sheet. Repeat to make 7 samosas. Bake in the centre of the oven for 20-25 minutes, or until golden and crisp.

Spinach and Pine Nut Couscous

vegetable stock cube	1 tsp harissa paste
150g couscous	1 tbsp olive oil
25g pine nuts	½ red onion, finely sliced
150g spinach	

Mix the stock cube and harissa with 200ml boiling water and pour over the couscous, cover and leave for 5 minutes before fluffing up with a fork. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the pine nuts and red onion for 1-2 minutes, add the spinach, cover and cook for 1-2 minutes until wilted and tender. Stir the couscous into the spinach mixture and season.

On Friday I walked on footpaths which criss-cross the landscaped grounds of Hauxwell Hall, somebody's garden. I'd parked up a track near the churchyard. Just as I was trying to get into the church to find out when it was built, Lainey emitted a horrible scream and came pelting towards me. We'd been playing 'splish' in the stream, she was soaking wet and very happy. Then zap, straight into an electric fence. It was cordoning the sheep off who were munching between the graves. She was so distraught and frightened, I had to take her straight to the drive through Macdonalds to get her a quarter-pounder. I couldn't decide if it was Norman or Anglo Saxon, so Googled it when I got home. Norman. But with two unusual 9th century Anglo Saxon crosses near the church. Will inspect those next time. Interestingly I came upon whose residence it is. Sir Robert Dalton, whose photos I recognised, an eminent diplomat and ex British Ambassador to Iran and Libya. Interesting because some time ago a man, who I assumed owned the Hall as he seemed a bit peculiar, came upon me shampooing Myfa in his stream. I'd created a good bubbly lather in the clear running water. I expected him to say 'what the hell do you think you're doing' but he just ignored it and was very pleasant. She'd rolled in a dead crow.

It's now Sunday. The rain stopped overnight and there's two feet of water in my wheelbarrow. I woke up with a bunged-up nose which I thought was Covid. I can't watch any more news about Trump or the US election. It is really getting to me. There are better things to do. Just trying to enjoy life for example.

My neighbour has been on crutches for the last 2 months after a riverbank collapsed when she was in Devon looking for her golf ball. Normally a keen gardener and walker, it's tough for her being temporarily incapacitated. I suggested I should go round and we could play Scrabble in the garden. As I walked away, I remembered how I play it and that I shouldn't go anywhere near her with a Scrabble board, she's the most lovely person you could meet. I take it too seriously. I play to win. I spend so long on my 'go' studying my letters, studying the board. Then 'here it comes' I'd lay it all out creating words in all directions from my word, always aiming for the mega-score. I gave up playing with my sister, there was no fight in her, she'd take one look at her letters and put C A T. I couldn't stand it.

Hope you have a good week, Kind wishes, Isobel