



Monday 9th November 2020

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. The fog has descended here, enveloping us in our lockdown state. It doesn't feel as dramatic as Lockdown I, with so much still open this time, and not being in the same state of shock. Having said that, the weather was glorious back then and if you were that way inclined, the novelty could have been vaguely.... exciting. Not this time. I think I can safely say, we are all sick of it now. But it's flying, we are almost mid-November. We will fly out of 2020 and into what will hopefully be a much better year.

In the meantime, here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Cavolo Nero Gratin with Roast Garlic

30g butter or margarine	1 small garlic bulb
1 tsp olive oil	60g soft white breadcrumbs
2 tbsp picked thyme leaves	bunch cavolo nero, thick stems removed
300ml crème fraîche	75ml organic milk

Preheat the oven to 190°C/ Gas 5. Grease a baking dish. Slice the top off the garlic bulb horizontally to expose the garlic cloves. Drizzle with the oil then wrap in foil to make a parcel. Roast for 25 minutes, until tender. Melt the butter or margarine in a frying pan and add the breadcrumbs and thyme. Remove from the heat, stir well and season. Tear the cavolo nero into bite-sized pieces and put in baking dish, bruising the leaves as you do to tenderise. Squeeze the soft pulp from the roast garlic cloves into a small saucepan with the crème fraîche and milk. Heat through gently, whisking to break the roast garlic down. Season, then pour over the torn cavolo nero, tossing to mix. Press down, scatter with the buttered breadcrumbs, cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and cook for a further 25-30 minutes, until golden and bubbling.

Leek and Cauliflower Soup with Croutons

1 tbsp light olive oil	2 medium leeks, trimmed and roughly chopped
1 cauliflower, roughly chopped	1 onion, chopped
1 litre vegetable stock	2 tsp chopped rosemary, plus several extra sprigs
75g ciabatta, torn into small pieces	100ml crème fraîche

Heat the oil in a saucepan and gently fry the leeks and cauliflower for 6-8 minutes, stirring frequently, until softened. Add the onion, stock and chopped rosemary, and heat until simmering. Cover and cook gently for 15 minutes until all the vegetables are tender. Heat a dry frying pan, add the ciabatta and the rosemary sprig and heat until the bread is lightly browned. Tip out onto a plate. Use a food processor to purée the soup, then add half the crème fraîche, plenty of black pepper and heat through. Transfer to soup bowls, swirl in the remaining crème fraîche and scatter with the croutons, discarding the rosemary sprigs.

Roasted Crushed Swede with Feta, Chilli and Parsley

1 swede, peeled and cut into 2cm cubes	2 tbsp olive oil
1½ lemons, zest of 1, 3 tbsp juice	1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
3 tbsp chopped flat leaf parsley	100g feta, crumbled

Preheat the oven to 190°C/ Gas 5. Toss the swede with the oil in a large roasting tin, season and roast for 50-55 minutes, stirring halfway through, until coloured and soft. Roughly crush the roast swede using a fork or the back of a spoon, adding the lemon juice as you go. Transfer to a serving dish and scatter with the lemon zest, parsley, chilli and feta.

I've been trying hygge but I'm not very good at it. I don't have the patience to get that cosy. I've been feeling extremely anxious all week but couldn't put my finger on why. Did I have Covid, Long Covid, anxiety-induced Covid-mimicking symptoms. I kept doing the Coronavirus test, a sniff of the bathroom candle. Could still smell it. If I get Covid there is no hope for anyone as I am the most careful person in the world. Maybe it's just being alive that makes me anxious, that was my conclusion.

I have just spoken to a friend about it, he agreed, it's much easier when you're stressed about something specific, not as easy when it's about the human condition, about just being. How do you tackle that one, and it's come into sharp relief of late. There's nowhere to escape to from it, can't run anywhere in lockdown. He said he has a number of friends exploding at the moment "like badly made Chinese fireworks".

I think I get affected by a lack of sun, and perhaps a lack of vitamin D, living as we do in this greyest of weathers. It led me to browse sunbeds online. While I don't exactly like them, I thought to boost immunity and mood, one might help. I came across a 'mobile sun'. On a big stand with castors, you can put a t shirt and shorts on and drag it round the house, tilting it to shine on you wherever you are, whatever you are doing. Laid on the sofa watching TV for example, you can sun it. It was quite impressive...but pricey.

The good news of course is that Trump lost. And what a week it was. I watched the results until about 2.30am, nothing conclusive. I put the news on again at 7am, nothing had changed. Checked in a few hours later, nothing had changed. Then for 4 days, every hour, every few hours, nothing changed..... still 253 / 215.....still 253 / 215.....253/215on and on it went. But when it finally came, last night, what a relief, America liberated. The question mark though remains. Trump's revenge !

While I thought I was going to leave her hanging there in 1765 I feel we have to share one more week with our Richmond Georgian diarist. She's so comforting. So this week in 1765:

Nov 9th Busy preparing for mourning. Miss Carr drank tea

Nov 10th Wet Morn, at Church Morn and Eve. Mr and Mrs Wilson drank tea with us

Nov 11th Fine day, Mr and Mrs Hutchinson drank tea with us. Old Frances Allen buried.

Nov 12th Mama badly in the Giddyness in her head, in the Eve Mrs Wilson came in. Rainey night.

Nov 13th Fine day, another Child of John Cowling Buried in the Small pox

Nov 14th Fine day, Mrs Wilson came for half an hour. A Nichols sat the Evening with us. Cast on Mama a pair of White Worsted Stockings

Nov 15th Fine warm day

Kind wishes, Isobel