



Monday 8th February 2021

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It's Sunday morning. The snow thawed last week but it's back again. It snows and melts, snows and melts, snows again. It's just like a 'ye olde' winter of long ago. And it's bitterly cold. Must admit, I do prefer the modern winter.

Here are some tasty recipes you could try if you're coming back in from sledging:

Whole Roast Cauliflower

1 cauliflower	75g buttery margarine, softened
1 tbsp olive oil	2 cloves garlic, crushed
100g fresh breadcrumbs	25g flat leaf parsley, leaves roughly chopped
finely grated zest ½ lemon	lemon wedges, to serve

Preheat the oven to 190°C/ Gas 5. Trim the cauliflower of its outer leaves and cut the base so that it sits upright. Bring a large pan of water to the boil and lower in the cauliflower. Bring back to the boil and cook for 5 minutes until the outside is just tender. Drain well and pat dry with kitchen paper. Meanwhile, combine 50g margarine with the oil and garlic then season. Place the cauliflower into a small roasting tin and rub all over with the flavoured margarine. Roast for 25-30 minutes, basting twice, until golden and tender. Meanwhile, heat the remaining margarine in a frying pan. Add the breadcrumbs and fry until lightly toasted and golden, then season. Remove and leave to cool, then mix with the parsley and lemon zest. Serve the cauliflower cut into thick slices or wedges scattered with the crumb mixture, with lemon to squeeze over.

Broccoli and Hazelnut Pan-Fried Gnocchi

4 tbsp olive oil	2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 red chilli, thinly sliced	200g cherry tomatoes, halved
220g broccoli, cut in bite-size piece	500g potato gnocchi
2 tbsp hazelnuts, toasted and roughly chopped	1 lemon, zest
4 tbsp vegetarian cheese, grated (optional)	

Heat 2 tbsp oil in a large frying pan and gently sauté the garlic and chilli until golden – about 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes, then remove from the heat and set aside. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the broccoli and simmer for 1 minute, then scoop out, rinse in cold water and drain. Add the broccoli to the tomatoes. Place the gnocchi in the boiling water; when they float to the top, after 2-3 minutes, scoop them out, then dry on kitchen paper. Reserve a cupful of the cooking water. Heat a second frying pan with 1 tbsp oil. Add the gnocchi and fry for 5 minutes, until golden on both sides. Reheat the sauce, add the gnocchi and gently mix together with the remaining 1 tbsp oil and a splash of the reserved cooking water. Sprinkle with the hazelnuts, lemon zest and cheese, if using, to serve.

Lemon Broccoli Pasta

300g fusilli or other shaped pasta	head of broccoli, chopped in bite-sized pieces
2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced	grated zest of 1 lemon
1 red chilli, seeded and finely chopped	grated vegetarian cheese, optional
3 tbsp olive oil	25g fresh basil

Preheat the oven to 220°C, gas mark 7. Cook the pasta in a pan of boiling water according to packet instructions. Meanwhile, toss together the broccoli, garlic, lemon zest, chilli and half of the pecorino. Drizzle over 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and stir until everything is coated. Spread out evenly on a large, non-stick baking tray and roast for 6–8 minutes, or until the broccoli is tender and just beginning to brown. Reserve 100ml of the pasta cooking water then drain the pasta and return to the pan.

Stir in the roasted broccoli, reserved cooking liquid, remaining tablespoon of olive oil and most of the basil leaves. Serve with cheese grated over if using, a good grinding of black pepper, and scattered with the remaining basil leaves.

Not a lot to say this week. Huge disappointment that the Astra Zeneca vaccine isn't very effective against the South African variant. A bit worrying since the autumn booster is a long way away. And it had all been going so well.

I took Lainey down to walk on a meadow path alongside the river for our daily exercise. It was sheltered, out of the wind. The river was high but I found a quiet, shallow bit where she could play 'splish'. We are back home now, I dried her but her ears felt cold so she's now asleep with my powder pink cashmere dressing gown wrapped round her. All tucked in, just her nose poking out. It's effectively hers now anyway, it's got so many holes in. She loves chewing cashmere.

It's that time in her cycle when her squeaky toys are her puppies. We take the spherical ones onto Westfields and I throw them as far as I can and she has to try and find them. One ended up lost in a snowdrift, spent ages digging through but had to call off the search and abandon it. I've promised her we'll find it when it thaws. If I sit on one by mistake, a solitary squeak sets off her maternal fretting. Every evening she pulls all the heavy cushions off the sofa and makes a little nest which she curls up in. She'll be back to normal soon.

My washing machine broke down with a load in it at the height of this current wave. I wasn't going to call a plumber out until cases had dropped. Numbers still aren't great but I have no clothes left and a 4ft high pile of dirty dog towels and stuff. He managed to drain it and get it open. The clothes inside stink, I think they're rotting. I doubt I will ever be able to get rid of the smell. I need a new heating element which should be coming this week. When I get a new heating element I might be a bit more inclined to do a bit of housework. Bored stiff.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel