



Monday 1st March 2021

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well. What a beautiful weekend it's been. How uplifting to feel the spring, the warm sunshine, nature stirring. Such a relief after the longest winter. I've been in the garden tearing away all the dead vegetation uncovering the new growth. I took the netting off the pond and within an hour it started filling with toads. I'm a bit worried about the fish, Pinky and Perky, being exposed to the heron, but the amphibians need to come to the pond to mate. Like the wildebeest crossing the Serengeti, it's their great migration, emerging from beneath stones and shrubs to cross the garden.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Honey-Glazed Turnips

3-400g turnips, chopped	25g margarine
2 tbsp clear honey	1 bay leaf
3 thyme sprigs	½ tsp salt

Put all the ingredients in a large frying pan with 100ml water and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover and cook for about 15 minutes or until the turnips are soft to the core and slightly translucent. Remove the lid, turn up the heat and cook for 5 minutes more, gently turning the turnips from time to time, until the liquid has evaporated and the turnips are coated in a syrupy glaze. Season to serve.

Cheesy Leeks with Crispy Crumb

leeks, cut into 2cm-long pieces	25g butter
25g plain flour	220ml organic milk
1 tsp Dijon mustard	pinch grated nutmeg
150g organic mature Cheddar, grated	1 tbsp thyme leaves
3 tbsp breadcrumbs	

Preheat the oven to 180°C / Gas 4. Blanch the leeks in boiling salted water for 5 minutes, then drain and cool under cold water; set aside. Melt the butter in a heavy-based pan over a medium heat, add the flour and stir until the flour is cooked (about 1-2 minutes; the paste should become paler). Whisk in ½ the milk until it thickens, then whisk in the rest and keep whisking until the mixture is smooth. Add the mustard and nutmeg, then take off the heat, stir in the cheese and season. Transfer the leeks to an ovenproof dish, sprinkle with the thyme leaves and pour over the sauce. Sprinkle over the breadcrumbs, then bake for 25-30 minutes, until golden brown and bubbling.

Roasted Cherry Tomato and Aubergine Gnocchi

aubergines, cut into 3cm cubes	3 tbsp olive oil
250g cherry tomatoes, halved	3 cloves garlic, sliced
400g fresh gnocchi	hard cheese, grated (optional)
basil, leaves only, torn	

Preheat the oven to 200°C / Gas 6. Toss the aubergine with 2 tbsp oil and spread out on a large roasting tray. Roast for 20 minutes, turning halfway, then stir in the tomatoes and garlic and roast for a further 10 minutes. Five minutes after you put the tomatoes in, bring a large pan of water to the boil. Add the gnocchi and simmer for 2-3 minutes. Drain and stir into the roasting tray coating in the cooking juices, then sprinkle with the cheese if using. Return to the oven for a final 3 minutes, then serve scattered with basil leaves.

This morning has brought good news and bad news. Twenty million have now been vaccinated which is quite remarkable. The bad news of course is that the Brazilian mutant has arrived. It was inevitable, it had been given generous opportunity while they prepped the Best Westerns for quarantine. It just takes one person, and that person is here - lost, missing and wanted. I guess we could only keep it out for so long.

If it wants to know where to come to get a successful foothold, then Richmondshire is the place. Everywhere else in the country is going down, but we go down a bit then come back up again. On the local forums when it is brought to their attention, usually by me, they blame 'outsiders' bringing it in when that is clearly not the case.

Our local vaccination centre is at Tenants Auction Rooms over in Wensleydale. That's where everyone is getting done.

I said the other week that I've aged 30 years since last January. To prove my point, since December when Margaret Keenan became the first to be vaccinated, and the over 90's were being called in, people I met dog-walking were asking me if I'd had my jab yet. And 'have you still not had your jab?'. A bemused look when I say 'no'. They are flying through us, I daresay it won't be long before the letter.

It's now Monday morning. The BBC website forecast for North Yorkshire last week showed a long sunny period ahead. But the sun has gone now already, removed from the forecast for the foreseeable future. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. The Lord giveth far more in the South – sunny there. So much for the levelling up.

How much is the sun worth I wonder. Would one prefer a holiday in a super-luxury hotel in the rain, or on a cheap campsite in the sun. It's a no-brainer, it's priceless. Can't we drag this newly vaccinated island off through the Bay of Biscay, round Portugal and snuggle it in with the Balearics.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel