



Monday 22nd March 2021

Dear Customer,

It's been a glorious weekend. It's a different world when the sun's shining. On Saturday morning I sat with a cup of tea next to the pond and counted toads, over and over again as they kept moving, plunging into the weed then popping up somewhere else. It requires a level of ocular and mental agility. I think I got to 38 and can only assume there were at least the same again down in the murkiness. It's not even that big a pond, maybe 10ft circumference. For the goldfish, it's like the funfair has come to town, the cacophony of the croaking, so loud it's almost embarrassing. The toad ruffians with their gold hoop earrings spinning the waltzers. Where at first the fish were nowhere to be seen, they now promenade, gliding round the circumference taking it all in. They'll find the pond very dull when the toads leave town.

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

Garlic Crumbed Lemony Cabbage Pasta

2 large handfuls fresh chunky breadcrumbs	3 tbs olive oil
three cloves of garlic	200g pasta eg farfalle or penne
1 medium onion, chopped	125ml white wine
zest of half a lemon	140g crème fraiche
½ small green cabbage, finely shredded	

Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. In a bowl, mix the breadcrumbs with half the oil and 1 garlic clove, and season well. Spread out on a large baking tray and bake for 8 mins, until crisp and golden. Remove and set aside. Cook the pasta in a large pan of boiling water until al dente. Meanwhile, pour the remaining oil into a frying pan, add the onion and remaining garlic, season and cook for about 4 mins until golden, then add the wine and lemon zest. Reduce for a few mins, then add the crème fraiche. Remove from heat but keep warm. Add the cabbage to the pasta water for the last 3 mins of cooking time. Drain and return to the pan, add the creamy sauce to the pasta and toss together. Top with the crumbs to serve.

Crispy Cabbage Fritters

2 tbs flax seeds	7 tbs water
500g cabbage	200g carrots
2 tbs of flour	1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp of turmeric	salt and pepper
oil for frying	

In a small bowl mix the flax seeds with water and leave to thicken while preparing the vegetables. Wash the cabbage and peel the carrots. Then shred both into small pieces. Mix the shredded cabbage and carrots in a bowl along with flour, baking powder, turmeric, and a generous pinch of salt and pepper. Add the flax seed mix and combine all the ingredients. The mixture will be wet and sticky. Form the mixture into fritter shapes. Heat a pan with 3-4 tablespoons of oil. Carefully add the fritters. Leave to cook for 5 minutes or so until crispy and golden. Flip them halfway through. Once cooked place on paper towels. Repeat using all the mixture.

Creamy Ginger Cabbage

2 tbsp butter or margarine	1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced	1 heaped tbsp grated fresh ginger
1 medium green cabbage, cored and thinly sliced	200ml cream or non-dairy alternative
Salt and black pepper to taste	

In a very large pan, heat the butter or margarine over a medium heat until it is melted and starting to bubble. Stir in the onion and garlic and cook for about 5 minutes, until softened. Stir in the ginger and cook for about a minute. Then add the cabbage, stirring well to coat it. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 15-20 minutes, until the cabbage is soft and caramelised. Turn the heat down to low and stir in the cream, making sure to scrape any browned bits up from the pan bottom. Cover and continue to cook over a low heat for about 10 minutes. Uncover, add salt and pepper to taste. Then cook for a few more minutes, stirring once or twice, to let some of the liquid evaporate. Adjust the seasonings as desired and serve.

'Too much time to think', that's what the angel said last week. I'm sure he's right. Thinking isn't good for you. I remember my mum always used to tell me I was much happier when I was busy. This time, a year now since the first lockdown, it has been the mother of all thinking periods - the forensic evaluation of one's life and drilling down into all the things one might rather not think about. I'm sure I'm not alone in feeling absolutely frazzled-out by it, and frazzled by the misery going on around us and in the wider world, not least the uncertainty of the future.

I thought I might give alcohol a go, I haven't drunk a drop since my early twenties. I even ordered a bottle with my Tesco order just to try. Yesterday I was meeting a friend for exercise. I brought the socially distanced picnic and she brought the socially distanced Dom Perignon. I asked her to pour me a tiny amount, about ½ a centimetre max. "STOP". I literally had two tiny little sips, just enough to taste it. Five minutes later I started feeling slurred and woozy – drunk. She said it would take time to get used to it, that I had to build up. I poured the other droplets away. I then woke up in the middle of the night with a horrible nightmare. Woke up possibly hungover after my ½ tsp of champagne. Not sure I'll try that again.

'Re-entry anxiety', that's one of them isn't it, as described by Roslyn Byfield in her weekly blog. OMG. Stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea. I'm going to make an appointment with that earth angel, I think he's our way out.

Two of my best friends have moved to the South of France in the last 9 months – one to Vallauris on the French Riviera and one to le Pujol sur Orb in Languedoc Roussillon. No regrets, they both seem really happy and won't be coming back. Sometimes in life you need change, new chapters.

Off now. Just going to go and count the toads again, see if I can improve on 38.

Hope you have a good week.

Kind wishes, Isobel