



Monday 26th July 2021

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It's cooler now, but we have had some glorious weather. It's just like a real summer. The air is infused with the fragrance of my neighbour's orange blossom. It's sweet, soft scent, so refreshing in the nasal passages after 18 months of inhaling through a mask.

Here is one tasty recipe you could try this week:

Kohlrabi and Kale Gratin

1 tbsp sunflower oil	1 knob butter, plus a little more for greasing the dish
2 medium onions, halved and finely sliced	salt and freshly ground black pepper
kohlrabi, peeled and cut into 3mm thick rounds	250g potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 3mm rounds
2 tsp thyme leaves, chopped	200ml organic double cream
200ml water or vegetable stock	1 tbsp chopped parsley
1 big handful shredded kale leaves mixed with kohlrabi leaves	
Topping:	
60g fresh breadcrumbs	25g butter or margarine, melted
45g Cheddar, grated (or alternative)	

Preheat the oven to 190C /375F /Gas 5. Place a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the oil and butter / margarine then add the sliced onion and sauté for 12 minutes, until soft and taking on a little colour. Add the kohlrabi, potatoes and thyme, and season generously with salt and pepper. Cook, tossing occasionally, for another 5 minutes. Pour over the cream and stock, simmer until the liquid is reduced by half, stir in the kale and parsley, then place in a greased gratin dish, levelling it out with a spatula as you go. Blitz together the breadcrumbs, butter/ margarine and cheese in a blender, and sprinkle over the top of the filling. Bake on a baking tray in the oven for about 35-40 minutes, until golden and bubbling.

The tadpoles from my pond are absorbing their own tails, sprouting limbs and climbing out of the water. It's a complete nightmare. They have to cross the gravel surrounding the pond to get onto the paving, where they go hopping round the back of my house. They miscalculate a jump and disappear into a crevice between the slabs. The mortar is shot after bad workmanship and pressure- washing. The slabs were never laid correctly on a bed of concrete, but on concrete ridges. What lies beneath I have no idea. An underground labyrinth with colonies of worms and wood lice. The frogs are dropping down into this other world beneath. I started filling in the crevices with gravel but then worried I was trapping them down there in that dungeon. How long could they survive there ? Might they be able to find a way out ? So now I am trying to catch them and take them to the place they all seem to be headed, to behind a big aluminium storage bin near the tap. I have put a few rocks around it and some bunches of ferns to give them cover. I keep dripping the tap so they don't shrivel up and have put a pile of fish food next to it. It isn't a sustainable solution. It will be three or four years before they return to the pond to breed. The back of my house is all paving and walls with just pots. To get to the vegetation, they will need to climb half a dozen deep steps and they are no bigger than house flies.

A builder has been here fixing a leak and the damage done by a leak. The plan was that he would come next week to 'point', or whatever it's called, between the slabs. It will stop any more dropping down into the underworld but what will become of those already down there. I'm very perplexed.

This week the diggers have gone into the paddock which I have rented for the last 12 years and have to vacate in September - the 4 acres that I've returned to the wild. I walked through it this evening. The digger tracks alone looked like sacrilege in this natural haven. They are carrying out the land survey prior to putting in for planning. The last time they tried it was for 30 houses, and it was Wimpy who surveyed the site. My neighbourhood has roused, we are new nimbys. I initially tried to wriggle out of the protest given that the Earl of Ronaldshay would then not give me alternative land. However, I wasn't comfortable, felt like a sort of scab, and no way should they be building there in any case. I'll find grazing elsewhere. The big technical letter dealing with traffic issues, access and the like, is gathering signatures and I've written my own 'heartfelt' 😞 note to the planning officer.

Dear Mr Robson,

Reference Land between Hurgill Road and Westfields

Richmond rises up from the arable plains of the Vale of York, where industrialisation has taken its toll on the landscape, on biodiversity, on wildlife. Decades of grubbing up hedgerows and woodlands has led to soil erosion and the decimation of natural eco-systems. The streams and waterways have been rendered toxic from the overuse of pesticides and chemical fertilisers.

Richmond is a jewel in Yorkshire's crown. Westfields, a jewel in Richmond's crown, a quintessential English lane. Unchanged in almost a century, the avenue of ancient trees, verges of wild flowers, of elderberries and honeysuckle, it hosts our pollinators, field mice, bats and barn owls, in its own delicate ecosystem. It is where Richmond town ends and undulates seamlessly into the Yorkshire Dales.

Westfields is walked by people from across the town, coming to relax and find peace and enjoyment here. Our visitors on the Coast-to- Coast are intoxicated by the sweeping views across Richmond's landmarks and away to the Cleveland Hills, and by the charm of this descent into our town. It has been filmed and photographed many times over enhancing Richmond as a tourist destination on which so many of our businesses depend.

With the new development at Scotch Corner, the expansion of Catterick Camp, the proliferation of housing estates, all encroaching on Richmond, I believe that as the Norman Castle and the Georgian architecture are preserved, so should this special place be preserved, be a Designated Local Green Space, spared from development, that future generations might enjoy it as we enjoy it today. (Amen !)

Hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes, Isobel