



Monday 16th August 2021

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well. The weather here isn't great but it's bearable. The forecast for the next 10 days is for a lot of cloud, some rain, but no sun. And that.....will see us into the meteorological autumn.

As if life on earth hasn't gotten hard enough, a new catastrophe has struck. The Bilsdale transmitter on the North Yorkshire Moors burned down on Tuesday leaving nearly the whole of North Yorkshire with no TV and no radio. It could be weeks or even months before service resumes. For many, especially those with no internet, it is the final straw.

Here are some tasty recipes you could try this week:

Sicilian Cauliflower

cauliflower	190ml vegetable stock, made with a stock cube
75ml extra virgin olive oil	25g sultanas
3 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced	3 tbsp capers, drained
25g pine nuts, lightly toasted	fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
lemon, halved	

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Cut the cauliflower into thick slices (about 2cm). Layer together in a small roasting tin, including any smaller florets and chopped tender leaves. Pour the stock over and drizzle with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Cover the tin with foil and roast in the oven for 35-40 minutes until tender. Remove the foil after the first 20 minutes. Meanwhile, soak the sultanas in a little boiling water for 5 minutes until soft, then drain and set aside. Warm the remaining olive oil in a small pan with the garlic slices, remove from the heat and leave to infuse for 5 minutes. Remove the garlic from the olive oil and discard, then stir in the capers, pine nuts, sultanas and parsley. Remove the cauliflower from the oven and, using a slotted spoon, transfer to a serving dish. Discard the stock. Drizzle the dressing over, season, then squeeze over lemon juice to taste.

Roasted Cauliflower, Bean and Garlic Soup

cauliflower	1 onion, chopped
1½ tbsp olive oil	1½ tsp cumin seeds
8 garlic cloves, 6 unpeeled, 2 finely sliced	20g sunflower seeds
400g tin cannellini beans	500ml hot vegetable stock
1 tbsp cider vinegar	

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Trim the base of the cauliflower, removing any tough leaves. Cut off the tender leaves and set aside, halving any thick stems. Roughly chop the remaining cauliflower and put in a roasting tin with the onion. Toss with 1 tbsp olive oil and 1 tsp cumin seeds. Add the unpeeled garlic cloves and roast for 10 minutes. Add the reserved cauliflower leaves and roast for 20-25 minutes more, until golden. Toast the sunflower seeds in a small frying pan on a medium heat then tip onto a plate. Heat the remaining ½ tbsp oil in the same pan and fry the sliced garlic and ½ tsp cumin seeds for 1 minute, until golden then set aside. Remove the garlic and cauliflower leaves from the roasting tin. Tip everything else into a blender. Squeeze in the garlic from its skins. Drain, rinse, then add the beans. Add the stock, cider vinegar and 200ml water. Whizz until smooth and season to taste. Top with the cauliflower leaves, sunflower seeds and garlic oil to serve.

Mustardy French Beans

50g butter, softened or buttery margarine	finely grated zest of 1 lemon
a heaped tsp wholegrain mustard	1 small onion, finely chopped
green beans, trimmed	

Beat ¾ of the butter / margarine in a small bowl with the lemon zest and mustard. Melt the remaining butter / margarine in a large frying pan or wok and gently fry the onion for about 5 minutes until soft. Blanch the beans in boiling water for about 5 minutes, checking them frequently until softened. Drain well and add to the frying pan. Stir in the mustard butter, add the onion and toss the ingredients together until evenly combined.

I don't know anyone who doesn't think, in retrospect, that they had Covid-19 before it existed. Most claim they got it in the early winter of 2019 before it kicked off in Wuhan. A friend who works in the Royal Free and was testing people for antibodies that fateful spring 2020 said everyone who thought they had had it, hadn't had it. Everyone who thought they hadn't had it, had had it.

I wonder if I had it in January / February. I wasn't particularly well. I could smell and taste and had no fever but was breathless and had palpitations. I put it down to winter: to being cooped up; spending too long on the computer; the general stress of lockdown. But now I wonder if it was Covid, and indeed if I now have Extra Long Covid. It could of course be psychosomatic Extra Long Covid. Whatever it is or isn't, I am dreading this winter. The last one was horrible.

It was nice to get away to the Lakes last week. It was only for three nights but felt like a fortnight. It is so beautiful there. The rooms had stunning views over Lake Windermere from which to watch the cruises and sailing boats pass. To Lainey's delight the hotel gardens sloped down to the lake so she could go wild paddling before breakfast and just before bed.

She's been frightened of swimming since falling in the toad pond when she was a puppy. No bad thing as far as I'm concerned, living as we do, near the fastest river in England. But she loves to splosh about.

The builder is still repairing my bedroom roof terrace. The leak has been fixed. It has been sealed and decked and now he is onto the re-rendering of the wall. He's juggling me with about 20 other jobs. He does half a day, quarter-fills a skip, smears wet concrete on the paving and all over the windows. The lilies in the pond get covered in a fine concrete dust. Then he disappears again for two weeks or more. I spend hours hosing, sweeping, and scrubbing the concrete off the garden furniture. Then he's back and it starts over again with a new empty skip and more concrete blobs and splatters everywhere. It will have taken the whole summer. Apart from that he's doing a good job though, and he's always cheerful. Puts Smooth radio on full-blast and sings along to it.

I hope you have a good week whatever you are up to,

Kind wishes,

Isobel