



Monday 24th January 2022

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well, and welcome to Squirrel Week. Straight to a couple of tasty recipes you could try:

Roast Cauliflower with Lemon Salsa Verde

1 cauliflower	2 small lemons
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil	2 cloves garlic
1 tbsp capers	20g walnut pieces
flat leaf parsley, finely chopped	

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Cut the cauliflower vertically into slices about 1.5cm thick. Arrange in a roasting tin. Halve one of the lemons and cut 1 half into thin slices. Tuck the slices among the cauliflower, then drizzle with half the olive oil, the juice from the other lemon half and some seasoning. Cook in the oven for 30-40 minutes, turning once, until tender and golden brown. While cooking, finely chop the garlic, capers and walnuts. Place in a bowl and stir in the parsley, finely grated zest of the other lemon with its juice, remaining oil and seasoning. Put the cauliflower on serving plate and drizzle over the salsa verde to serve.

Sweet Potato and Coconut Curry

1 tsp cumin seeds	1 large onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, grated	20g fresh root ginger, grated
2 plum tomatoes, chopped	2 tbsp sunflower oil
1 tsp chilli powder	1 tbsp mild curry powder
4-500g sweet potatoes, cut into 2cm pieces	400ml tin coconut milk
handful of greens, chopped	½ lime, juice
2 tbs sunflower oil	

Heat the oil in a large saucepan, then add the cumin seeds and sizzle for a few seconds. Add the onion and cook for 9 minutes until golden, adding the garlic and ginger for the last minute. Stir in the tomatoes, cover and cook for 8 minutes, until softened. Add some salt, chilli and curry powders, followed by the sweet potatoes and greens and mix well. Pour in the coconut milk, cover and cook for 20 minutes until the potatoes have softened. Squeeze in the lime juice, mix well and serve with rice or chapatis.

I am going to have to stop going on Twitter. It is addictive. You go on for a quick peep, get drawn into ridiculous arguments and become arrogant and opinionated.

'There's a difference between a grey squirrel and a rhododendron', my last comment in one such exchange, left hanging in the air, in retort to them both being branded invasive, destructive species.

What is it with these conservationists who want to see the grey squirrel population exterminated. They are all for rewilding as long as they can play God and control which species can exist in their wild creation. That is not rewilding. Rather than congratulate the grey squirrel for its success in a hostile environment, against the odds, the conservationists have singled them out for persecution. They are deemed a 'pest,' they perpetuate this concept and endorse 'pest control.' Words which make my blood run cold.

This is happening now. The conservationists are out killing greys in their thousands in favour of tufty-eared red squirrel Nutkins, their personal preference to adorn their fairy tale woodlands. And what about others in this food chain. While I don't like it of course, grey squirrels are an important food source for raptors and others. How will they feel seeing Nutkins flying off in the talons of a red kite.

One particular woman had 'animal lover' on her twitter header. I told her she was no animal lover. She said she had rescued donkeys and horses. She said she was a scientist and that I was ignorant. 'Grey squirrels are an invasive species' she said, 'introduced from North America and the red squirrels can't compete with them'... the greys pass 'pox' onto them which can kill them.... oh and they do something to pine trees.

Given how a red and grey squirrel are almost identical, and even the greys' fur is tinged red, I told her that as a scientist she would know that all squirrels are on the same family tree, have the same origin. It would be some fluke of evolution if they weren't. This ridiculous notion that some species are native and others aren't. We were once an ice-covered rock. Species didn't exist. Native should say, native since 600AD, or N600AD, or N1798. Otherwise 'native' has no meaning.

She spoke about restoring the 'ecosystem'. Yes, of course, but I told her an ecosystem was not a finished state to revert to. It is something constantly evolving as climate changes and under pressure from human activity.

Bravo grey squirrels for adapting.

So here I am arguing away with all these 'experts' for the rights of the little greys to exist in this place they call home.

I went on to do some reading. These so-called 'native' reds were introduced from Scandinavia in the 18th Century after the 'native' red population here wiped itself out from auto-generated pox, well before the greys hopped on the QE2. These conservationists are off on a tangent, subjective, and aren't very scientific at all. They are in fact slightly dangerous.

I asked her what her preferred method of exterminating the greys was. I was ready with 'if you're driving along and a squirrel runs across the road, would you accelerate and think 'good job done'. But she didn't reply. It left me with the question 'what is a scientist?'. She had been indoctrinated. I had to Google wildlife guru Chris Packham, did he want to kill grey squirrels too? He branded these conservationists 'a small band of lunatics...blinded by sentimental racism'. Well thank heavens for that because I like Chris Packham.

I'm sorry. I've squirreled you out. I hope you have a good week,
Kind wishes, Isobel