

Monday 9th May 2022

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. May! Isn't it the best month, it's so beautiful. Here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Lemon and Garlic Roast Potatoes

approx. 1kg potatoes
3 garlic cloves, peeled

3 tbsp vegetable oil
1 lemon, zested and cut into wedges

Preheat the oven to 220°C / Gas 7. Peel the potatoes and cut into 4-5cm chunks. Boil them in a pan of salted water for 10-15 minutes. Drain and leave to steam-dry. Meanwhile, put the oil and garlic in a roasting tin and heat in the oven for 5 minutes. Add the lemon zest to the potatoes and season. Shake to roughen up the edges of the potatoes, then put them in the tin, turning in the oil until glossy. Add the lemon wedges and cook on the top shelf of the oven for 1 hour-1 hour 10 minutes, turning halfway, until crisp and golden. Sprinkle with sea salt, if liked.

Cheesy Leeks with Crispy Crumb

5-600g leeks, cut into 2cm-long pieces
25g plain flour
1 tsp Dijon mustard
120g organic Cheddar, grated
3 tbsp breadcrumbs

25g organic butter
220ml organic milk
pinch grated nutmeg
1 tbsp thyme leaves

Preheat the oven to 180°C / Gas 4. Blanch the leeks in boiling water for 5 minutes, then drain and cool under cold water. 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. 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 and pour over the sauce. Sprinkle over the breadcrumbs, then bake for 30 minutes, until golden and bubbling.

Leek Fritters

2 leeks, washed, halved lengthways and thinly sliced
200g self-raising flour
1 tbsp wholegrain mustard

3 Hen Nation eggs
100g organic Cheddar
75ml organic milk

Heat a knob of butter in a frying pan over a low heat and fry the leeks for 10 minutes until softened. Tip into a large bowl and cool. Whisk in the eggs, flour, Cheddar, mustard and plenty of seasoning, then gradually stir in the milk until you have a thick batter. Heat another knob of butter in the frying pan and drop in 2-3 heaped tbsp of batter. Cook for 2-3 minutes or until golden, then flip and repeat. Put the cooked fritters on a baking tray and keep warm in a low oven while you cook the rest (you should get about 12).

It's Sunday afternoon and I feel exhausted. I went away for a few nights last week and am recovering from the exertion....all the packing and unpacking. It's the worst part of going anywhere. Whether you're going for three nights or three weeks, you still need all the same stuff: shampoo, soap, flannel, towels, toothbrush, hairbrush, deodorant, Savlon, plasters, dog food, dog toys, dog leads, dog towels, dog bowls, dog throws, lap top, laptop charger, phone charger, note pads, pens, highlighters, glasses, spare glasses, sunglasses, all the work stuff, calculator, card reader, address book: night clothes, day clothes, clothes for hot and cold; coats for dry and wet..... wellingtons, hot water bottle, slippers. Self-catering, so tea, coffee, almond milk, salt, pepper, margarine, mayonnaise, vinaigrette, biscuits and cakes, bread, Heinz beans, orange juice, pasta, pasta sauce, veg, fruit, fruit, veg etc. etc. etc. Plus all the things for my friend and her daughters: gifts; not to mention children's food.

I was meeting my French friend just south of York where we were staying in 'holiday lodges'. I decided to arrive a day early to make the most of this rare trip away and my first in a lodge. We were on the new part of the site which had yet to be planted up, it was a grey day, it looked like Auschwitz, stark, with the rows of wooden huts.

On that first day alone I was so bored. I didn't want to leave the site as the woman at reception when I arrived had told me the exit code, and explained in minute detail how to get the barrier to open to get back in, but I wasn't listening to her because I was so angry. Instead of saying 'hello' or 'welcome', the first thing she said, in an accusatory manner, was 'you still owe £35'. I told her I didn't and that single occupancy the 'dog' fee had been waived. The hefty rental I'd paid was flashing in my head. She told me, gruffly, that she would check with 'Lisa' the next morning.

I didn't want to go into the tiny stuffy reception for instructions, I had checked in online, so told her I was 'shielding'. She said I 'had to' go in. I told her I wasn't going in, so she came to the door and threw some stuff on the ground about the lodge. I picked it off the floor, already writing the Trustpilot review*. I drove off to look for my lodge, the first sign I saw was 'Keep dogs on a short lead'. Not just a lead but a short one. I let her off the lead near my lodge and a man poked his head out of another lodge to tell me that dogs had to be kept on a lead in the entire grounds.

Not daring to leave the compound, with no exit code or knowledge of how to get back in, I walked endlessly round the woods in the grounds – extensive thankfully – full of bluebells thankfully – I did miles and miles – with Lainey off her lead. I thought I'd rather be at home and that I have better places to walk. Later in the early evening the sun came out and I instantly felt cheered, like a different person and the place didn't seem too bad.

Having gotten used to not going anywhere through the pandemic, I don't mind not going anywhere. Although I moan about it constantly, Richmond is a very beautiful place, and an easy place to live. Going away is a lot of hassle. Had it been the Mediterranean and not more of Yorkshire it might have felt different. I still managed to get covered in mosquito bites none-the-less - stagnant ponds in the compound. Nice to see my friend and her girls though of course. Bien sur.

Very best wishes, Isobel

*I didn't write a Trustpilot review. I know how devastating those reviews can be for businesses. The bloody bitch.