



Monday 14th November 2022

Dear Customer,

Another misty Monday morning, following a misty Sunday. Mild. Still no frost. As if nature somehow knows we can't afford to put on our central heating.

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

Sweet Potato Rostis

500g sweet potatoes, peeled

2 tbsp olive oil

1 clove garlic, crushed

250g potatoes, peeled

1 small onion, halved and thinly sliced

2 Hen Nation eggs, beaten

Preheat the oven to 220°C/ Gas 7. Grate the sweet potatoes and potatoes using the coarse side of the grater. Place in a tea towel and squeeze out any liquid, then place in a bowl. Heat half the oil in a frying pan and sauté the onion and garlic for 3-4 minutes, or until soft and golden. Add to the grated potato with the beaten eggs. Mix well to combine all the ingredients. Season generously with freshly ground black pepper. Divide the mixture into 4 and shape into rough cakes with your hands. Place on a large non-stick baking tray, and drizzle with the remaining oil. Roast in the oven for 25-30 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked through.

Cheesy Celery and Potato Gratin

50g organic butter, plus 1 tbsp

2 bay leaves

6 stalks celery, cut into 5cm chunks

¼ chilli flakes

600ml organic milk

curly leaf parsley, finely chopped

50g walnuts

1 tbsp sunflower oil

1 medium onion, roughly chopped

1 large potato, peeled and cut into 1cm pieces

50g plain flour

100g organic Cheddar, grated

100g sourdough bread

Heat 1 tbsp butter and the oil in a pan and, once it starts to bubble, add the bay leaves and onion. Cook over a medium heat for 2 minutes until the onion starts to soften. Add the celery and cook for 5 minutes. Add the potato, increase the heat to medium-high, and cook for 5 minutes until the vegetables start to colour. Stir through the chilli flakes, season well, then transfer to an ovenproof baking dish. Preheat the oven to 200C/ Gas 6. In a medium pan, heat the 50g butter. Once it starts to bubble, add the flour and cook for a couple of minutes, then reduce the heat to low and gradually add the milk, whisking the whole time. Cook over a low heat for 2 minutes until the mixture thickens. Add the grated cheese and parsley; mix well. Pour over the celery in the dish. Put the sourdough and walnuts in a food processor and pulse until crumbly but not too fine. Sprinkle over the cheese mixture, then bake for 35-40 minutes, until golden and bubbling.

Quick Braised Celery

1 head celery, cut into 3-inch pieces

1 medium onion, peeled and thinly sliced

225 ml stock made with strong vegetable bouillon powder

salt and freshly milled black pepper

25g margarine

75 g carrot, thinly sliced

1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Melt the margarine in the frying pan and cook the onions for 3-4 minutes over a medium heat until lightly golden, then add the carrots and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the celery and continue to fry for 5 minutes more, or until everything is slightly browned at the edges. Season with salt and black pepper, then pour in the hot stock and place a lid on the pan.

Turn the heat down and simmer gently for 20 minutes until the vegetables are almost tender. Remove the lid and increase the heat to medium and continue to simmer until the liquid has reduced and become slightly syrupy – about 5 minutes. Serve the celery with the juices poured over and sprinkled with the parsley.

The Smart Meter was installed last week. I put it in the room next door, out of sight, but was going in and out so much to look at it, I had to bring it 'in', put it under close observation on the piano. The reading looked modest, it seemed affordable, and the dual fuel estimate of £8,700 a year, grossly over-exaggerated. However, I later realised it was only showing the electricity, not the gas.

On the first full day, I had the electric fire on one bar for about an hour in the morning to warm the air around where I was sitting, and the central heating on from about 7pm until 9pm. I'd already turned all radiators off except the living area and my bedroom. I didn't use the dishwasher or washing machine, I don't think I even cooked. I am very much less than the average household (capped at £2,500 !), and yet it hit over £20....in one day... using practically nothing. That's £600 a month while being extremely restrained and before the weather turns. This can't be. Surely. I don't trust EDF and I don't trust the meter. I can fully understand now why communities are creating warm places for people to go – libraries, pubs to hang out in. I may join them. I understand why people are going off to live in Spanish hotels. It's going to be a cold and wretched winter when it comes.

A few positives this week at least. Trump is being blamed for losing the Republicans the Senate so looks like he must be finished now. Maybe the come-back-kids don't get to come back after all. Life moves on.

If there's anything we've all got used to over the last few years, it's dealing with massive shocks. No doubt we are all braced for Thursday's benign-sounding 'Autumn Statement', orange and golden leaves fluttering in the breeze, Hunt and Sunak mean business.

I hope you have a good week.....Kind wishes, Isobel