



**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

Dear Customer,

It's Sunday morning, the mist is clearing and the sun is starting to permeate through. It might be a decent day after a miserably wet week which reached highs of 9C. And straight in with a tasty recipe you could try this week:

**Indian Cauliflower Soup**

1 tbsp oil	1 onion, diced
2 large cloves garlic, minced	1 tbsp ginger, minced
190g uncooked red lentil, rinsed	1-2 tbsp curry powder, to taste
1½ tsp ground cumin	1½ litres vegetable broth
1 cauliflower, in small florets	1 medium potato, diced
200g spinach, shredded	fresh coriander, optional

*Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat and saute the garlic and onion for 5 minutes, until translucent. Stir in the ginger and 1 tbsp curry powder, the ground coriander and cumin, then saute 2 minutes more. Add the broth and red lentil and bring to a low boil. Simmer for 5 minutes then add the cauliflower and potato. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes then add the spinach, more curry powder if desired and season with salt and pepper. Cook a few minutes more. Top with fresh coriander to serve.*

I feel so angry about everything. Woe betide anyone I start chatting to while out and about, they can count on me to ruin their day. We are working on a new website....finally....which should be ready to go in the coming month. But in the back of my mind I'm wondering if there's any point, if there indeed will be a future to be had. Xi Jinping yesterday told his troops to get ready for war. The US has vowed to defend Taiwan, Britain has vowed to defend Taiwan. Britain has vowed to defend everyone from everyone else. When it kicks off, when anything kicks off, we will be there.

I could easily envisage a scenario where Britain, like Batman or some other super-hero, is singlehandedly at war with both Russia and China and their allies. And that our allies have chosen a different path. Biden could be voted out at the next election to be replaced by a Trumpite who decides to leave NATO, as Trump vowed to. And AUKUS too. Macron has no appetite for war with China, or Russia, the EU could decide to create their own 'not NATO' defence block that we aren't part of, perceived as too much of a liability. Changes in government are usually a time to reset relations but Jinping is going nowhere ever, and nor is Putin ( except hopefully the grave ). There will be no re-set. This is it. It will all go one way or the other and no one is making any diplomatic effort to stop it from being 'the other'.

I was having afternoon tea in the garden of Ellerton Abbey yesterday, a big Georgian house between here and Reeth with a ground floor devoted to quirky antiques and a tea room. Outside is a vast lawn ending in a hoo ha below which is meadow land and the ruined abbey. An elderly Australian couple came out of the tea-room and came over to me to talk about Labradors, which quickly escalated into nuclear war. We discussed AUKUS and Britain having to defend Australia if China attacked them— something they are clearly worried about. While most of us here want someone to put a bullet in Putin's head, they want to see one in Jinping's head. I found that interesting. 'It's been lovely meeting you. I hope you enjoy the rest of your trip'.

Just before that a lady arrived cheerfully at my table with my tea and scones. She said she normally lives in South Korea teaching English and had lived in Asia for the last 11 years. Her husband was still out there but that she'd come over to stay with her mother for a while. She told me how they've only just started taking their masks off in S Korea. She had been unaware that there are still 1000 people a day being hospitalised with Covid and 5-600 deaths each week – or at least that was the case a couple of weeks ago. She was clearly oblivious. It's taboo here now to talk about it, I told her. I told her about some of the new Covid research. 'Lovely scones, thank you'.

Last weekend I'd been walking near Bolton Castle and sat on a sunny bench on the green with breath-taking views over Wensleydale. A young couple were on the next bench and I asked where they'd got their ice lollies from. I wanted one. I told them Mary Queen of Scots had been imprisoned in the castle - they didn't know. They asked me where I'd come from. 'Just Richmond'. They said they'd come up from Skipton for a day out. I wondered if they realised the degree to which their river was the most polluted in our region. I showed them on my phone.

It goes something like this. Or exactly this actually, as compiled by CPRE, derived from the Rivers' Trust data. These were the number of hours of raw sewage discharges into our region's rivers in 2020, and surely worse now:

Thirsk and Malton 22,129  
Middlesborough & SE Cleveland 36  
Redcar 775  
York Outer 514  
Selby and Ainsty 18,847  
Harrogate and Knaresborough 7,486

Middlesborough 447  
**Richmond 49,124**  
Scarborough and Whitby 8,585  
**Skipton and Ripon 63,889**  
York Central 14,838

I left the Skipton couple reeling in disbelief. 'Nice to meet you'. Later that day I drove down to take some Izzy Lane yarn to our knitter in Ripon. I keenly got my phone out to show her too. I have unburden myself somehow ☹️.

Yesterday, I finally wrote to Rishi giving him these figures, suggesting 'this probably comes as much of a shock to you as it has to us', and that the secret was now out. I also sent him lots of pictures of dead fish. There'd been an ecological disaster a few miles from here a few days ago when pig slurry entered a popular local beck, killing everything in it - a beck which runs into the Swale.

I'd posted raw sewage figures on the local FB group nearly a year ago now, to not much effect. But this time round, it being so topical, people took it seriously - 'Jesus Christ' and 'that's unbelievable'. So now, with that and also the dead fish pics, people are waking up. I can see it coming, The Richmond Environmentalists, with 'Richmond's Plan for Nature' – I just don't know if I have the time or energy for it. However, enough is enough ! I'm onto it now. Enough moaning it's time for action.

Bleary-eyed from screen-time, which isn't good for viewing the beautiful, long landscapes of Wensleydale, I'm off to meet a friend for lunch there. I feel sure I'll cheer her up..... Kind wishes and hope you have a good week, Isobel