



Monday 11th December 2023

It hasn't stopped raining for days. Heavy rain. There are 2 streams running down my road heading for the Swale, water which will join the Ouse, pass through York, and pour out into the sea and the ocean to meet the melting glaciers. If it were coming down as snow we'd be having 6ft drifts. I'm glad it isn't.

I still have nightmares from when we used to spend Christmases at my brother's second home, high up on Alston Moor in the North Pennines. England's last great wilderness. He loved it there, the wild and bleak desolation. His fiancé couldn't bear it, preferred to be walking distance from the delis and coffee shops of Teddington. I struggled with it. The water that came out the taps was brown. Even just getting there was traumatic. It might have been raining driving through Barnard Castle, but by Middleton in Teesdale it was sleet, and from there on were the ominous sight of snow poles bordering the roads and ever-deepening snow all the way. Once you got there, you were immediately snowed in.

Inside, it was so hot with a central heating system that could heat a castle: the Aga, and roaring fires, we'd all fall asleep on the sofas. There were times when my brother had to make a tunnel through the snow to get out the house. Coming back the other way was lovely when eventually the snow turned back into rain and everywhere was green again. We had some lovely Christmases there and I do miss it as he sold the house a few years ago. My Mum would have loved being snowed in with us all but sadly she didn't live long enough, was always hauntingly missing. She didn't see a lot of what we ended up doing with our lives. Christmas, the prism through which we see the years tick by. They march on don't they - and wait for no man.

On that chirpy note, here are a few tasty recipes you could try, on this the last week before it all goes parsnips and sprouts:

Broccoli and Chickpea Stir-Fry

1 tbs oil 1 onion, diced
5 garlic cloves minced 1 tbsp fresh ginger, minced
1 tsp onion powder 1 tsp paprika
½ tsp smoked paprika pinch of cayenne pepper
1 head broccoli, cut into small florets 80ml vegetable broth
400g tin chickpeas, rinsed and drained rice, to serve

Sauce:

120 ml water 3 tbs soy sauce
2 tbsp rice or balsamic vinegar 2 tbsp maple syrup
1 tablespoon cornstarch

Heat oil in a pan over medium heat. Add onion, ginger, garlic, and all spices. Sauté for 3-4 minutes. Add broccoli florets and vegetable broth. Fry until the broccoli is tender but not soft, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare the sauce: In a medium bowl, combine the sauce ingredients and whisk. Pour the sauce in the pan and add chickpeas. Bring to a boil until the sauce simmers and cook for a few further minutes. Adjust seasonings and serve with rice.

Kale Pasta

300 g dried spaghetti 200g kale, de-stemmed and shredded
4 cloves garlic, crushed 2 lemons, juiced
60 ml cream ½ tsp Dijon mustard
75 g cheese 8 olives, sliced
handful of chopped walnuts

Cook the spaghetti to package instructions. While cooking, heat some olive oil in a frying pan and stir fry the kale until it starts to soften. Add the garlic and continue to cook until the garlic is fragrant and softening. Pour the lemon juice into the pan and cook until it's mostly evaporated. Turn the heat down to a very low setting. Push all of the kale to the edges of the pan so that there is a bit of space in the middle. Add the Dijon mustard and cream, and get them mixed together with the wooden spoon before mixing it through the kale. Add a handful of the cheese (reserving a little for the topping), the walnuts and olives to the pan. Remove from the heat until the pasta is ready then drain and add to the pan with the kale. Top with the extra cheese and serve.

Broccoli and Kale Saag

600g potatoes, chopped into 2cm cubes
200g kale, de-stemmed and shredded
1 head broccoli, thinly sliced
70 ml vegetable stock
2 tbsp sunflower oil
2 green chillies, thinly sliced
2 medium onions, finely diced
4 cloves garlic, finely diced
20g ginger, peeled and diced
2 tsp cumin seeds
2 tsp coriander seeds
1 tsp ground turmeric
400g tin chickpeas, drained
fresh coriander, finely chopped

Boil the potatoes for 8-10 minutes until just cooked. Drain and reserve. In a separate pan combine the chopped kale, broccoli and stock. Bring to the boil and cook for 2-3 minutes until the broccoli has started to soften and the greens have wilted.

Pour the stock and greens into a food processor and whizz until smooth. Reserve until needed. Heat the sunflower oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Toss in the cumin and coriander seeds and toast for about a minute until they begin to release their fragrance. Tip in the chopped chillies, onion, garlic and ginger. Fry for 4-5 minutes until the onion is soft and is starting to colour.

Add in the cooked potatoes, chickpeas and turmeric. Stir to combine then pour in the blended greens. Simmer for 5 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and season to taste. Finish the saag with the chopped fresh coriander and serve with naan bread.

Just another reminder that next week will be our last deliveries before Christmas. Please can you give us your orders as soon as you are able. You might want to stock up as we will not be delivering during the week between Christmas and New Year. ,

Many thanks and very best wishes.....Isobe