

Spring Flavours - March 2017

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Onion and chilli tabouleh Serves 6

6 spring onions • 1 red and 1 green chilli • 1 bunch watercress • 1/2 cucumber • 175g cracked wheat • 1 lemon • extra virgin olive oil

1 Finely slice the spring onions. Seed the chillies and chop them finely with the watercress (this can be done in a processor). Coarsely grate the cucumber, reserving the liquid.

2 Wash the cracked wheat in a sieve then turn it into a pan and add 450ml boiling water. Cover and cook for 10 minutes, stir and add the cucumber water, then leave to stand for 10 minutes, covered.

Turn the cracked wheat into a bowl and add the prepared vegetables. Grate the zest from the lemon into the salad, squeeze the juice and add that with some seasoning and leave for a few minutes. Check the moisture and add a little olive oil. Season again and serve.

Butternut noodles with salmon and coconut Serves 2

half a spring cabbage • pinch of chilli flakes • 250g pack butternut noodles or sweet potato tagliatelle • 400g can coconut milk • 2 skinless salmon fillets • freshly chopped parsley or coriander

1 Trim the cabbage then shred it. Preheat the oven to gas mark 6, 200C. Place the cabbage in a large roasting tin or on a large baking sheet with the tagliatelle, sprinkle with the chilli flakes, season lightly and mix well. Pour the coconut milk over and bake for 10 minutes.

2 Remove from the oven and stir. Lay the salmon fillets on top and bake for a further 5-6 minutes, according to size and how well you like your salmon cooked.

3 Flake the salmon, tossing it into the vegetables then serve in warmed bowls with the coconut milk poured over and garnished with chopped parsley or coriander.

Caribbean sweet potatoes. Serves 4

2 large sweet potatoes about 750g • 1 clove garlic • 1-2 chillies • 4 rashers bacon • 2-3 tbsp oil • 2 bay leaves • 1 tsp dried or 1 tbsp fresh thyme leaves • 1/2 tsp ground allspice • 1-2 tbsp vinegar

1 Peel the sweet potatoes and cut them into 4-5cm chunks. Peel the garlic, seed the chillies then chop them very finely together. Chop the bacon.

2 Heat a large frying or sauté pan which has a lid. Add the oil and cook the potatoes chunks over a medium high heat for 5-6 minutes until starting to colour, stirring frequently. Add the garlic and chillies with the bacon and continue cooking for a further 2-3 minutes. Add the herbs and spices with 250ml water and some salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, cover and cook for 10 minutes.

3 Check the sweet potatoes to see if they are soft? Continue cooking until they are, removing the lid if still wet. Add the vinegar, then season to taste and serve. This dish makes a great one-pot supper, can accompany cold meats or can be served with freshly cooked veg or a salad to accompany.

Rhubarb and raspberry compote

This is a recipe where you don't need quantities - you just go with what you have! Assuming you use a bought tub of frozen raspberries you will need:

300g tub frozen raspberries • 4-6 sticks rhubarb • Sugar to taste • 2 star anise • 1 cinnamon stick

1 Chop the rhubarb into 2-3cm pieces and place in a pan with 2 tbsp water, about 100g sugar and the spices. Cook over a low heat until just starting to soften then add the frozen raspberries. Cook until the raspberries are just defrosted then cover and leave for 10 minutes. Add extra sugar to taste. Remove the spices just before serving.

Citrus winter fruit salad Serves 6-8

4 Navel oranges • 1 x 540g can grapefruit segments in juice or syrup • 250g pack soft Agen prunes or figs • 125g soft apricots • 2 star anise • 1/2 tsp vanilla extract • 100-150g crystallised stem ginger

1 Grate the zest from the oranges into a saucepan and add the dried fruits, star anise, vanilla, the juice from the canned grapefruit and 150ml water. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer slowly 10 minutes.

2 Finely chop the ginger. Cut the pith and skin from the oranges with a sharp serrated knife, then cut the fruit in half lengthways. Cut out the pithy core, then cut each half into 5 or 6 slices.

3 Add the ginger and oranges to the pan with the canned grapefruit segments, stir carefully and then allow to cool before removing the star anise. Serve warm, with custard, cream or ice cream, or cold. This is really good with porridge too.