

May 1st 2020

Week 6 of Lockdown is almost over and things have changed little, the news is much the same and the daily total makes its steady way upward. I have done three funerals in the last 7 days which for me is a lot and a sign of where we are. Yesterday, at the crematorium, as the rain gently fell and a biting wind cut through, the grounds around looked magnificent. Two majestic trees, and verdant grass with shrubs painted a glorious picture of creation which was in such stark contrast why we were there but it did lift the heart and deep within there was that sense that all will be well.

The weather this week is very different, but it is good rain, as they say, and the gardens do need watering, so we are thankful. I have not ventured close, but I suspect there are shorter queues at the supermarkets this week with a reluctance to stand in the rain. For some people on very tight budgets, who could not afford to stockpile, there will be little choice but to queue for their weekly allowance of food, but for many it will a week to turn to overstocked cupboards and eat what they already have in there. I read an article on a new cookbook which is about creative cooking on a ration allowance and the author commented that there was much we could learn about valuing food, using it all and not throwing food away, something we really do need to practise.

At the same time, I received an email about a recipe exchange, in the form of a chain letter which I do not encourage so will not be joining, but the idea is an interesting one. I remember reading in a magazine that only a few people memorise recipes these days, and it is unusual to find someone who knows more than five recipes by heart. As an avid cook, often experimental, this startled me as if I did not have a wealth of basic recipes to draw on I could not experiment, and although often there are subtle variations each time I make something I reckoned I probably had at least twenty meals I could cook without referring to a book.

So, a thought emerged from these unconnected thoughts. Could we exchange favourite family recipes, the ones that are in our heads because we make them so often, and that rely on store cupboard ingredients rather than special purchases. Below is my recipe for Minestrone Soup, if you want to join in, send me your recipe and I will create a page on the website and who knows maybe we will end up with a pastorate recipe book.



Early signs of this year's tomato crop



A taste of summer from the store cupboard

Heather's Minestrone Soup

- 2 carrots peeled and finely diced)
- 2 sticks celery trimmed and finely diced)
- 1 large onion peeled and finely diced)
- 1 tbs vegetable oil
- 2 vegetable stock cubes
- tin of chopped tomatoes
- 500ml tomato passata, I use the cheap tetra packs
- 250ml water
- 1.5 tsps. Schwartz garlic Italian seasoning (or 1tsp Herbs de Provence plus 2 cloves of garlic pressed)
- 1tbs maple syrup (or 1 tbs brown sugar)
- handful of small pasta shapes (or spaghetti broken into 1 inch pieces)

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and sauté the diced veg (lid on) over a very low heat for 5-10 mins until onion soft and translucent.

Add the stock cubes and herbs and mix well, then add the chopped tomatoes, passata, maple syrup and water and stir, bring to the boil and simmer for 10 mins with the lid on.

Remove the lid and add the pasta, stir well and simmer for as long as the pasta needs to cook.

Season to taste and enjoy with crusty bread if you like. Enjoy!