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Coronavirus lockdown sees leek sales boom as stay-at-home Brits embrace scratch cooking

Sales of traditional British leeks have jumped by 15.6% since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, according to a report by industry trade journal FPJ that puts this often overlooked, British veg at the heart of the nation's lockdown larder.

The findings suggest that British consumers are reverting to staples such as leeks, onions, broccoli and cauliflower as lockdowns across the UK have seen a rise in scratch cooking; with more people staying at home and becoming increasingly budget conscious. The ongoing trend towards meat free meals and veganism is thought to be another contributing factor.

With the peak season for leeks starting in November the British Leek Growers Association has partnered with chef and nutritionist Julie Cleijne of Sustainable Kitchen Consultants to develop a suite of seasonal, immunity boosting and budget-friendly recipes, all cost less than £1 per serving.

Julie Cleijne says: "British leeks are one of the Country's most nutritious and yet under used and appreciated vegetables...until now. If there has been one silver lining to the pandemic, it has been to bring these nutritious, delicious and versatile vegetables centre stage. As one of the few indigenous British vegetables to be 'in season' throughout the winter months we really should be eating more of them, to reduce air miles, boost immunity and save the pennies."

Stewart Aspinall, Leek farmer and British Leek Growers Association chairman added, "The Coronavirus pandemic has made us all more aware of our health, while many consumers are starting to feel the pinch as the recession begins to bite. These recipes show how consumers can produce cost effective, easy to prepare and tasty meals with leeks at their heart."

From a simple stock, to a comforting Cannelloni and celebratory Xmas wreath, the Lockdown Larder recipes from the British Leek Growers Association offer diverse but delicious range of culinary options based on seasonal ingredients, to help you stay healthy and save money at the checkout.

-Ends-

Notes to the editor

- Research conducted by Kantar or behalf of Fresh Produce Journal and published as Big 50 Products 2020
- High resolution images of the recipes described above are available on request from carole@pendlepr.com
- For a copy of all the leek-based recipes created by Julie Cleijine for the campaign and accompanying high resolution photos contact carole@pendlepr.com

For further press information, contact:

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Appendix i

The new 2020 Lockdown Larder recipes from the British Leek Growers

Association include:

Leek, Potato & Cavolo Nero soup



Serves 2-4

Cost per serve = £0.72 for 2 people, or £0.48 for 3 people

Soup Ingredients

- 15g margarine (vegan, dairy-free), or butter
- 2.5 leeks – whites (approx. 250g), washed and sliced lengthways, and then into half-moons.
- 190g waxy potatoes – e.g. Charlotte, Maris Peer, or Jersey Royals, peeled and cut into cubes
- Sea salt
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
- 750ml vegetable stock
- 100g cavolo nero
- 2 tbsp coconut cream (vegan, dairy-free), or crème fraiche – optional
- White pepper
- Chilli flakes (optional)

Soup method

- First make the leek vegetable stock (see separate recipe).
- Melt the margarine or butter in a large saucepan over a low heat.
- Add the leeks, chopped potatoes and a pinch of salt, then cook over a gentle heat for 10 minutes, or until the leeks have softened.
- Add the garlic and cook for approximately 1 minute.
- Pour in the stock. Simmer on low heat for 10-12 minutes, and until the potatoes have softened.
- Add the cavolo nero and cook just until it has wilted, approx. 2-3 minutes.
- Using a handheld stick blender, blend until smooth. If adding cream, stir in the coconut cream or crème fraiche. Add more stock if you like your soup not too thick.
- Season to taste with white pepper, and salt

- Divide the soup between serving bowls, and top with the potato rose centre (see separate recipe).
- Top with a sprinkling of chilli flakes, if desired.

Mini Glamorgan Leek Wellingtons



Makes 6 mini Wellingtons

Cost per serve £1.38 for 3 people – non vegan, or vegan = £1.09

Mini Wellington Ingredients

- 6 tbsp margarine (dairy-free/vegan) or butter
- 175g leek, shredded – white part, (save the green leaves for the celeriac and potato mash (see separate recipe))
- ½ clove garlic, crushed
- 225g breadcrumbs
- 125g Caerphilly cheese, grated (for a dairy-free/vegan version you can use a hard grateable vegan cheese)
- salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon English mustard
- 1 heaped tbsp of fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 3 medium eggs (or 3 flax eggs if vegan version)
- 1-2 tbsp milk (plant-based if dairy-free/vegan version – we recommend oat milk)
- 6 sheets filo pastry

Method

- Pre-heat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius
- Add 1 tbsp of the margarine or butter to a fry pan and sauté the leeks and garlic over a low to medium heat until softened, approx. 2-3 minutes
- Add the cooked leek and garlic to a mixing bowl
- Add the breadcrumbs, cheese, salt and pepper, mustard, and fresh parsley to the bowl with the leeks. Stir through to mix well.

- Lightly beat the eggs, and add to the bowl. (If using flax egg instead mix 3 tablespoons ground flaxseed with 6 tablespoons of water. Mix together, and let sit in the fridge for 15 minutes to set up and thicken.)
- Stir the eggs (or flax egg) through with the other ingredients until a firm dough is formed. Add a little of the milk if the mixture is a little dry. Add a little at a time, and mix through. Be sure to not add too much, as you don't want the mixture to be too wet.
- Divide the mixture into 6, and with your hands form each into a ball (just smaller than the size of a tennis ball). Put into the fridge to firm up, whilst you prepare the filo sheets
- Separate one individual filo sheet from the sheets very carefully, making sure not to tear them. Lay the individual sheet out on a flat surface.
- You now want to make the individual sheet into a square. To do this, gently take the bottom left corner of the sheet, and fold it up until the edge is level with the top edge. You will now see that there is a square, and you can now trim off the section of filo sheet that is left over by gently running your knife along the edge of the square section. Remove the trimmed off section (you can save it for another recipe).
- Now open out the square sheet.
- Melt the remaining margarine or butter, and with a brush, or the back of a teaspoon, gently brush a thin coat of the margarine or butter over the entire top of the filo sheet
- Now place one of the formed balls of the filling mix to the centre of the filo sheet, and placing a little pressure with your hand, lightly push down just about half a centre metre.
- To form the parcel (mini wellington) gently take one of the corners of the sheet and fold it in to the centre of the ball, keeping the corners of the sheet protruding at the top. Repeat with the other corners of the sheet and then gently twist and then pinch the pastry around the top of the ball to form.
- Repeat with all remaining balls and filo sheets.
- Place on a baking tray lined with baking paper, being sure to keep up to 2 centre metres apart
- Using a brush, brush the entire outside of the sheets with the remaining margarine or butter
- Bake in the oven until they are golden and slightly crispy, about 15-20 minutes
- Serve with potato mash and crispy Kale

Leek & Paprika Chicken Wantons



Makes approx. 10 wantons – serves 2, with a salad

Cost per serving £0.42

For the chicken:

- 1tbsp rapeseed oil
- 1 large clove garlic, crushed
- 2 tsp smoked paprika
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- 300g chicken (breast, leg or thigh), minced
- ½ tsp oregano
- ¼ tsp sea salt

Method

- Gently heat the oil in a fry pan and fry the crushed garlic over medium to low heat, until translucent
- Add the paprika and cayenne pepper to the saucepan and fry for 1 minute, to release the spices
- Add the minced chicken and stir to combine with the spices, and fry over a medium heat, until cooked through. You want to make sure that the chicken is not too dry.
- Add the oregano, and sea salt and stir through. Set aside to cool whilst you make the wanton wrappers.

For the leek wanton wrappers:

Ingredients

- 10 leek leaves – dark green part

- 1 – 2 leek lengths of the white part, cut in half and laid flat
- Water for blanching

Method

- You want to make sure that you separate the leek leaves so that they can be laid flat, and cut into a square, so you need to ensure each leaf still has a 'spine'. To do this, cut lengthways down the centre of the leek leaves, on one side only, along the entire length.
- Gently separate the leek leaves, and lay them as flat as possible. They will still be slightly rigid, which is okay at this point.
- Trim off any rough edges of the leaves, and discard.
- Cut the leaves into squares, approximately 8cm square.
- Prepare 2 saucepans with cold water, approximately 4 cm height of water in each.
- Boil the water in only one of the saucepans, leaving the other water cold.
- Once the water has boiled in the one saucepan, reduce the heat to a very low simmer.
- You will now very quickly blanch each square of leek leaf in the simmering water, to make them pliable enough to form into a wanton. This will take only 3-4 seconds. To do this, take 2 leek leaf squares at a time and plunge them in the boiling water for 3 seconds. Then **immediately plunge them in the saucepan of cold water. Then place each on a dry board to dry out.**
- Take a cloth and gently blot the excess water from the leek leaf squares.
- Repeat until all squares have been blanched. They are now pliable enough to form wantons.
- Once you have removed the excess water from the wanton wrappers you are ready to cut the ties from the white part of the leek.
- Cutting horizontally down the white part of leek, cut a thin ribbon approx. ½ cm wide. Cut the ribbon the full length of the leek. Repeat until you have enough ribbons for each of the leek leaf squares, with 1-2 extra spare, to account for any possible breakages. You want to make sure each ribbon is about 15 – 20 cm in length, and as long as possible.
- Pre-heat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius.
- With each leek leaf square lying flat on a board, ensure each is laid out like a diamond shape. Work with each individually, and take a toothpick and gently poke a small hole in the leek leaf in diagonally opposite corners of the square.
- Take a leek 'ribbon' and thread it through the right hand hole in the leek square first, towards the left hand hole. Thread it through the left hand hole, and make sure the ends of the ribbon are protruding evenly on each side.
- Now you can fill the leek leaf wanton wrapper. Using a teaspoon, take a tsp of your filling and place it in the centre of the leek leaf.

- Take the ribbon on either side of the filled leek leaf wonton wrapper and gently pull them together and tie in a single knot, then a double knot.
- Trim the excess ribbon with some scissors, so that only approx. 1-1.5 cm ends remain.
- Place the wontons on a lined baking tray and bake in the pre-heated oven, just until the leek leaf wonton is tender, approx. 6-8 minutes
- Remove and serve – serving suggestions: serve on a bed of salad, CousCous or pearl barley, with some fresh herbs and fresh vinaigrette.

Leek & Chestnut Christmas Wreath (Vegan)



Serves 4 – 6

Cost per serve = £1.04 for 4 people

Ingredients

- 400g celeriac, peeled and roughly chopped
- 10 shallots
- 1 whole leek, entire leek – whites & green leaves
- 3 apples
- 4 slices bread, crusts removed
- 1.5 tbsp fresh sage leaves
- 1/2 tbsp fresh rosemary
- 7-8 chestnuts
- 1 500g block of shortcrust pastry
- Plain flour for rolling
- A little plant-based milk – we recommend oat milk
- Rosemary sprigs and dried cranberries to garnish

Method

- Pre-heat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius

- Place the chopped celeriac in a bowl, and drizzle with oil. Toss through the oil until each piece is lightly coated.
- Place the celeriac on a baking tray and bake in the oven until tender, about 20 minutes
- On a separate baking tray place the shallots and drizzle with oil.
- Slice the leek lengthways and lay facing up on the same baking tray as the shallots. Drizzle with oil. Place tray in the oven and bake both the shallots and leek until lightly caramelised, about 15 minutes.
- Peel the apples, remove the core, and thinly slice. Boil sliced apple in water until tender, drain well, then mash into a puree. Set aside.
- Remove the celeriac, leeks and shallots from the oven and allow to cool slightly.
- Add to a food processor or blender and pulse until a roughly textured puree.
- Break up the sliced bread roughly and add to the puree mix. Pulse a few times until the bread is mixed through. Add the apple puree, and pulse 1- 2 times.
- Add the chopped chestnuts, sage, rosemary and salt and pulse 1-2 times until mixed through. Remove and add this mixture to a bowl, ready to use to fill the wreath.
- Dust a work surface well with flour, and roll out the pastry block into a rectangle, approx. 60cm x 20cm.
- Starting one cm in from the edge of the pastry, spoon the wreath filling mixture along the length of the pastry, making sure to leave a 2cm gap at the left and right ends of the pastry.
- Fold the left and right ends in to the mixture, to stop it from coming out, then roll the pastry away from yourself to start making a long sausage shape, enclosing the filling.
- To make the long sausage a wreath, gently bring the two ends together to create a circle shape, and stick them together with a little plant-based milk.
- Carefully transfer the wreath to a baking tray lined with baking paper.
- Place in the fridge for at least 20 minutes to firm up. Can be made up to this point a day in advance and kept covered in the fridge.
- Once the wreath is chilled, heat the oven to 180 degrees Celsius.
- Cut small slashes in the top of the pastry using a sharp knife, approximately 2.5 cm apart, all around the wreath.
- Mix a little plant-based milk with some oil and brush all over the wreath, to prevent it from getting too dry, and also to help give the pastry a nice golden colour.
- Bake for 40-45 mins until golden brown.
- Leave to cool for 5 minutes, then transfer to a serving platter and decorate with rosemary sprigs and some dried cranberries.

