

THOUGHTFUL LIVING NEWSLETTER  
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2024



## CARROT AND PARSNIP SOUP

### Ingredients

1 onion peeled and chopped  
2 tbsp olive oil  
400g parsnips peeled and roughly chopped  
400g carrots peeled and roughly chopped  
1.0 litres / 2 pts chicken or vegetable stock  
¼ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon pepper  
1 teaspoon of chopped fresh chives

### Instructions

Heat the olive oil in a large pan and sauté the onion in the olive oil for 10 minutes or until translucent, stirring occasionally

Add the parsnips and carrots and cook for 5 minutes

Stir in stock and season well

Bring to the boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 35-45 minutes, until the vegetables are tender

Remove from the heat and leave for 5 minutes, then blitz the soup in a blender or food processor or with a hand blender.

Return the soup to a pan and check the seasoning and reheat gently. Ladle into bowls and scatter with chopped chives. Serve immediately.

### Alternatives

Why not try **Carrot and coriander** soup – use the recipe as above but substitute a large potato for the parsnips and add 1 tsp of ground coriander when frying the onion. Finish the dish with chopped fresh coriander instead of the chives.

Or **Carrot and ginger** use the recipe as above, but substitute a large potato for the parsnips and add 1 inch of

First of all, a big thank you again from the Thoughtful Living Group for your support for our fund raising efforts September - December. Well done to the group of parishioners, who took part in the Thames clean up in September and if you tried any of our “recycle Christmas” ideas, we’d love to hear about it.

The funds raised over the past 3 months have been directed towards CIRDIC - food items for their Christmas lunch as well as gifts of clothing and sweet treats. You may have heard or read in the local press that CIRDIC is in danger of becoming a casualty of the increases in rent, electricity and gas bills. Please pray for this worthwhile charity that they may be successful in their quest for further funding. In the meantime, we hope to continue to support CIRDIC as we have been previously.

The TLG has been thinking about how else we might support the marginalised in our community in addition to the food bank and CIRDIC. We have heard that there is a great need of books for the Reading Refugee Group to support the teaching of English to refugees in our area. We all know how vital literacy is in the successful search for work.

Our “Santa doesn’t always get it right raffle” will be drawn on 11th February and tickets will be on sale this weekend the 11th. With the draw taking place after the 10.30am Mass. The proceeds will be divided between CIRDIC and the Reading Refugee Group.

As Lent approaches, we often turn our thoughts as to what we might give up as a sacrifice. I am reminded of a study by the University of Cambridge's Department of Land Economy, which revealed the reduction on carbon emissions by the reintroduction of meat free Fridays since September 2011.

One in four Catholics changed their eating habits in response to the reintroduction of meat free Fridays, saving more than 55,000 tonnes of carbon a year. Imagine if we all tried to cut meat from our diets one more day per week than we do currently! Given the cost of living crisis, reducing meat consumption can also be a cost saving measure. We have included two recipes in this newsletter and are hoping to share some more vegetarian recipes with you during Lent. So look out for some ideas to help you ring the changes in your weekly menus!

Now a note on our terra cycling project: you have responded to this marvellously - thank you. In fact, we sometimes find it difficult to keep up with you! If you have grown used to separating the soft plastics from your non recycling bin, you might find it convenient to recycle these items in the appropriate receptacles at some of our supermarkets : the Coop in the village (the bin is right next to the till), the Tesco Superstore in Reading, as well as Waitrose and Aldi, all have recycling bins for soft plastics in their shops. We are still offering the facility at St Michael's of course.

Please remember these projects are all in response to Pope Francis call in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, to care for all of creation: our planet, the marginalised and vulnerable in our society and in the world, and for nature. Please look out for information on a new environmental group in our village, EcoSoCo, with ideas on how to improve the biodiversity in our area. And, most importantly, please feel free to make use one of our copies of the *Laudato Si'* prayer, available at the back of the church, during your quiet time of reflection and prayer.

Thank you for your continuing support, Mary



### Black Bean and Butternut Squash Stew

#### Ingredients:

- 2 x 400g tins black beans, drained and rinsed in a sieve.
- About 850g butternut squash, peeled, deseeded and cut into bite sized chunks.
- 2 medium onions
- 1 medium-hot green or red chili (deseed for less heat if preferred) sliced
- 2 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp molasses
- 2 tbsp English mustard
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 tbsp cocoa or cacao powder
- 1 garlic bulb, halved crossways
- 2 bay leaves
- A couple of sprigs of thyme
- 1 litre hot vegetable stock
- 2 tbsp olive or rapeseed oil
- Sea salt and black pepper

#### Method:

Heat oil in a large flameproof casserole, add onions and chili with some salt and pepper and fry gently till soft. Take pan off the heat and add sugar, molasses, and mustard, stirring well for form a thick paste.

Add the chunks of squash to the onion mixture and pour on the hot stock. Add the tinned tomatoes with their juice. Add the cocoa, garlic, bay leaves and thyme. Return pan to the heat, bring to the boil, then reduce heat to simmer for 30 – 40 minutes, uncovered till squash is tender.

When squash is cooked, add the beans to the stew. Simmer the stew for a few more minutes to ensure everything is piping hot. Season to taste and serve.

**Serves 4-6**

*Adapted from Much More Veg by Hugh Fearnley- Whittingstall*