

Christmas Fowl Play!

I hope everyone enjoyed Christmas. It was wonderful to meet some of you at our Christmas Emporium and throughout the holidays.

Millions of folk across the world sat down on Christmas Day to a roast turkey lunch.

Turkeys have become synonymous with Christmas – but it was not always so. When Europeans first encountered the native bird on discovering the Americas, the Turkey became a meal of celebration and was adopted as part of the traditional Thanksgiving dinner for settlers.

It did not become a common food for Christmas celebrations on this side of the Atlantic until – supposedly – England's King Henry VIII fancied the bird! Throughout the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, Turkey vied with Goose as the roast of Christmas preference. In the Victorian era, there were even 'Goose Clubs' where those less well off saved a little each week to put towards their festive feast.

The Turkey's victory over other perhaps paltry poultry is often attributed to it featuring in the Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' when Scrooge buys Bob Cratchitt a huge turkey for Christmas lunch. But whatever the myths, we are now fans of this foreign feathered feast – and it is to mealtimes of Christmas present that I turn with a couple of ideas for leftovers.

A really simple, quick and warming winter soup is one of my favourites.

In a large pan, heat a little oil (lime infused rapeseed oil is great for this) then add a thinly sliced onion and stir until the onion has softened. Next, add a sliced red pepper, a couple of teaspoons of ground coriander, a chopped fresh chilli and a good handful of basmati rice. Stir for a minute – add the leftover turkey and drained and rinsed chickpeas - double the weight of whatever turkey has been used. Bring to the boil then simply simmer – covered - for 10 minutes until the rice is cooked. And if you can't quite face another turkey meal, this can be cooled and frozen for up to a month.

Another simple but very tasty use of cold turkey is to make a heart-warming Turkey Pie. Sweat some leeks and bacon in a pan and, if you have any to hand, add some fresh parsley and thyme. Let them cook slowly for half an hour – the

fat from the bacon will work wonders on the leeks and they'll go beautifully soft and sweet. Stir every now and again to stop them sticking – then add the cold turkey in chunks. Add two heaped tablespoons of plain flour, stir – then 2 pints of stock, ideally made from the turkey's carcass. Stir – then add a little double cream or crème fraiche. Season as needed.

Strain your turkey and leek mixture through a sieve – keeping the gravy - then roll out your puff pastry. It is perfectly OK to buy this! Spoon the strained mix into a deep pie dish and then cover with the pastry, tucking in around the edges, scoring the pastry – gently – before brushing it with beaten egg and little salt. Bake for 40-45 minutes in a 180 oven. Serve with some of the re-heated gravy and some lovely fresh green veg.

Happy eating – and happy Hogmanay – and I hope to see you soon in 2015!