

THOUGHTS FROM THE KITCHEN

A thriving community

I, Kathleen, have always enjoyed cooking. Over the years I have acquired recipes from many recipe books, magazines, friends and, more recently, the Internet. Richard and I have a large allotment where we have chickens and grow

Kathleen and Richard Hooper share a delicious recipe for Mustard Chicken.

our own fruit and vegetables. Eating seasonally and buying fresh, rather than prepared food, brings its own challenge. You have to learn to work with the ingredients available and improvise where necessary.

When Richard asks me about the recipe of a meal we have just eaten I often find myself replying: 'Oh, with a bit of this, and a bit of that. Whatever was lying around in the fridge or cupboard.' Our experience of retirement has been like that. Stanhill village is a small community, near Blackburn, Lancashire, and was the home of James Hargreaves, the inventor of the Spinning Jenny. This machine provided the impetus that led to the industrial textile revolution that created the first 'Northern Powerhouse'. In 2015 we were awarded a major grant to celebrate this and as a result we have built a Spinning Jenny from the original patent, a website and heritage trail. A wide range of talks and learning activities have resulted, bringing many people in the community together.

We also hold a Fete which attracts over one thousand visitors annually, raising funds for local charities and good

causes; organise a pensioners' party and a traditional carol service in the Memorial Gardens. The Methodist Chapel provides a place of worship as well as a community venue for talks, heritage displays and keep fit classes.

It is a rare day when you don't stop to chat to someone on the street or over a garden wall. It's a wonderful place to live.

What I, Richard, find most fascinating is that all of this has been achieved without a great strategic plan. Back in my days of working for large organisations I was accustomed to formal planning and hierarchies; 'mission statements', 'operational targets' and 'task groups' with 'cross cutting' themes. Now, although our activities require organisation and practical planning, our success has not come about as a result of an overall 'corporate strategy'. It has come about first of all because people care for each other and their community and have a willingness to give up their time for a common cause. We improvise and use whatever skills and talents are available. We all want to leave the world a better place than we found it.

Like seasonal cooking, a thriving community requires frequent departures from the recipe book!

One of Richard's favourite recipes:

Mustard Chicken

Ingredients

- ▶ 1 large sweet potato
- ▶ 1 large onion
- ▶ 2 chicken breasts, batted out if thick
- ▶ 3 tbsp red wine vinegar
- ▶ 4 tbsp Dijon mustard
- ▶ 4 tbsp olive oil

Method

Mix the vinegar, mustard and oil, and spread over the chicken. Cook under a pre-heated grill about 15-20 cm from the heat for 8-10 mins. Turn and grill for a further 8 mins until nicely coloured. The juices should run clear when pierced with a skewer. Serve with bread and salad.



Photo: Pixabay