

# Drop in with Dirk

02

COMMUNITY  
NETWORK

*Dirk Lakeman*

## Welcome back to Drop in with Dirk!

This blog was created by a Choice tenant, for Choice tenants, a space for everyone, whether you're a green-thumbed gardener, a confident home cook or just learning to cook your first meals or grow your very first plants.

With the colder months rolling in, I'm sharing some simple, budget-friendly recipes to keep your home cozy, your garden thriving, and your spirits lifted. I've also answered some of your questions on staying nourished, hydrated and prepared as we settle in for the winter ahead.

Think of this blog as a cozy kitchen table somewhere to pull up a chair, swap stories, share ideas, and grow together, one post at a time.

***So grab a cuppa, and feel free to drop in anytime.***



HEALTHY  
EATING

## Q&A

### Q1. Do you have any tips on how to stay healthy during the winter months?

A. You want to make sure your immune system stays healthy during the cold winter months so I would recommend eating lots of root vegetables like carrots and parsnips, leafy greens such as spinach and kale and citrus fruits like oranges as these will all provide you with essential vitamins and minerals needed to keep your immune system happy. It is also important to get some fresh air, even if it is chilly outside, just make sure to wrap up warm. Lastly don't forget vitamin D, whether that's through some safe sun exposure, your diet or taking supplements, it is important to keep your body stocked up with vitamin D.

### Q2. How much water would you recommend drinking every day? What tips can make this goal easier to reach?

A. The recommended amount is between 6-8 glasses of water a day, though this can vary depending on your age and activity level. It can feel tricky to reach at first, so here are some simple ways to make it easier. Keep a reusable water bottle with you at all times as this makes it more likely that you will take sips throughout the day. Add natural flavour to your water with lemon, lime and cucumber to make it more enjoyable. Remember that herbal teas also count towards your daily hydration, so find some flavours that you enjoy. Finally, try having a glass of water with every meal as this can also help you reach your goal in a more attainable way.

### Q3. What types of exercise would you recommend for someone with limited mobility?

A. Even with limited mobility there are lots of ways to stay active. Chair-based exercises like seated leg lifts, arm raises or using light hand-held weights can help build strength and improve circulation. If you have access to a leisure center, water-based activities such as swimming and aqua aerobics can be easier on the joints. Finally, going for a small walk or stretching can make a positive difference and can both be done at your own pace. Just be sure to check with your doctor or physio before starting anything new.

## Potato Skins

Cut baking potatoes in quarters or in six wedges, then scoop out the inner part and leave about ½ inch and bake in the oven for healthy eating, rather than deep fry them.

For the skins softening use an oven temperature of 170° C and for browning increase to maximum or 210° C.

Boil or Steam the potato bits that remain and use them for gratin. Layer finely sliced boiled potatoes with cheese, cream, and other ingredients for a rich potato gratin.



HEALTHY  
EATING

## Ratatouille

This has now become a popular dish made up from:

1 onion & 2 cloves of garlic, sautéed in a little butter rather than oil

Once caramelised just a little add olive oil for the remainder of the sautéing of the vegetables

Add 1 bell pepper in ½" squares

Add 1 cubed courgette, followed by

1 cubed aubergine

Size of cubes will determine the frying/cooking time, the smaller the cubes the quicker they cook. I like to cook my veg all al dente, but I also like Ratatouille soft and cooked a little longer.

Once you're happy with the slight colouring of the added veg, add a dessert spoon of balsamic vinegar and a small 400 gsm tin of tomatoes.

Add salt and pepper to taste, a few cloves, some bay leaves and star anise, if you don't have those spices no worries, just use a dessert spoon of balsamic vinegar or ordinary vinegar, balance it with a little honey or brown or white sugar.

Simmer for 15 to 30 minutes depending how soft you want your vegetables to be, either way is ok. Taste after about 15 minutes and finish the seasoning.

PLEASE NOTE: WHEN YOU SEE TV CHEFS THEY TASTE THEIR SAUCES AND WET DISHES AS THEY GO ALONG, FINAL SEASONING SHOULD BE DONE JUST BEFORE SERVING OR PLATING THE FOOD.

