

Monday 23rd January 2012

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well and enjoying the lack of hard winter as much as we are.

We have grapes in all the fruit bags this week. They are black, seedless Midnight Beauties. Make of that what you will. John at Wass' is delighted it's been such a mild winter. That is, apart from the slugs not shrivelling off as they normally do - they have carried on chomping their way through the brussel sprouts. He and his men are busy cutting vegetables today and grading Desiree seed potatoes to export to Denmark. We have his Desiree in the bags this week. His next job is to put in his seed order for this year's crops. That isn't an easy task. The two previous winters he had grown a lot of purple sprouting broccoli but they got frozen and smothered out by the snow. This year he decided not to bother so the weather would have produced a perfect bumper crop. Planning isn't easy when you have Sod's Law to contend with. And there's no outwitting it.

Here are some delicious recipes you could try with this week's bag:

Butternut Squash and Red Pepper Soup

*1 butternut squash, halved lengthways and deseeded
4 tbsp olive oil
1 red peppers, roasted and chopped*

*2 tsp cumin seeds
1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
400ml stock*

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Place the squash on a baking tray, drizzle over 2 of the tablespoons of olive oil and sprinkle over the cumin seeds. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Then put in the oven to roast for 20-30 minutes until tender. Meanwhile, heat the remaining olive oil in a frying pan over a medium heat and fry the chopped onion for 2-3 minutes until soft. Remove the squash from the oven, scoop out the flesh and add to the pan along with the roasted red pepper. Add the stock, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat until the mixture is simmering and simmer for 4-5 minutes. Transfer to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the soup to the pan and warm through. Serve immediately.

Savoy Cabbage, Potato and Mushroom Casserole

*4 potatoes
12 small mushrooms
2 tbsp olive oil
½ tbsp tomato paste
100ml water*

*1 onion, chopped
¼ Savoy Cabbage
salt and pepper
lemon zest of ¼ lemon*

Peel and cube the potatoes then simmer in salted water for 5 minutes, then drain. Heat up the oil in a casserole dish then fry the potatoes for 2-3 minutes. Add the onions, followed by the mushrooms, stirring to avoid sticking. Add the finely shredded cabbage. Once soft, add the tomato paste diluted in the water and add the lemon zest. Season and cover with a little greaseproof paper and simmer for a further 15 minutes until everything is cooked.

Creamy Savoy Cabbage with Carrots

*1 large Savoy cabbage
50g butter
pinch nutmeg*

*4 large carrots
4 tbsp double cream*

Cut the cabbage in half and remove the inner core. Rinse the leaves then shred as finely as you can. Cut the carrots into fine, thin strips or grate in the food processor. Bring a pan of water to the boil and add the cabbage and carrots. Boil for 6 minutes until just tender, then drain well. Return to the hot pan and add the butter and cream. Season with pepper and salt and add the nutmeg. Stir well. Serve immediately.

I was busy this weekend netting my fishpond. We have been under attack from herons, which aren't quite so mythical after all. I came down the other morning to find two of them in the pond and they have since been circling menacingly overhead. I fear some of the fish may have disappeared.

I love that time of day and the fabulous light when the sun starts to set and often take Myfa, and walk until there's no more light. The other day as the light was slipping fast, Myfa was sniffing round a tree and looked as if she was about to collapse into a roll, into something horrible. I rushed up screaming at her "don't you dare". I saw the subject of her sniffing – a short, fat stick. I felt very guilty – she just wanted to play with the stick. I went to pick it up to throw it and as I grasped it, realised it was a piece of dog poo. It was absolutely horrendous and thankfully there was no one else around to hear me swearing.

The day before, Myfa had done the same up on the moor, and as I ran at her to stop her rolling, I saw she had found, hidden in the bracken, a little white stoat eating a rabbit. I sat next to it for ages watching it and took a photo just inches from its face. It didn't even flinch, just stared back into my eyes. Both events made me muse on life, a very long sequence of unique experiences, whether banal or extraordinary. No two moments have ever been or will ever be exactly the same. On that note I bid you farewell until next week !!

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS We have an Izzy Lane sale on at the moment with 50% off everything, including our Winter 2011 collection. Might be worth a look ?? www.izzylane.co.uk