



**Monday 2nd April 2012**

Dear Customer,

## **Happy Easter**

It's been another fraught start to the week - touch and go whether we could get the milk from Devon as all the petrol stations there were empty of fuel. In the end we did find some but God help us when there really is a fuel strike. At least there's some good news - people who eat a lot of Easter eggs are generally thinner than other people. If ever there was a case of 'win, win'. Another of science's little ironies. Like the thick waist which 12 months ago sent you to an early grave now protects us from heart disease. I think we have all grown wise enough by now to completely ignore such proclamations. Give them another hundred years, I think, to get it sorted out.

Who knows what this week will bring - whether we'll be out having an Easter barbecue or an Easter snowball fight. One thing is for sure ..... we need water to drop from the sky in whatever form it cares to take. At this time of year the river Swale is generally deep, fast and terrifying but it's a mere trickle of its normal self. It's great for Myfa as I generally have to stay away in case she jumps in and gets carried off to sea but these last weeks she's been happy paddling about.

The low rainfall is having a devastating impact on both farmers and wildlife - meanwhile domestic customers are probably using ten times what they actually need. The low water levels in ponds and lakes are causing algal blooms in the stagnant water. In Grantham a lake of fish died as their water had become so toxic. The Environment Agency have even been going out with pumps to oxygenate rivers to save fish. Important breeding site for amphibians such as natterjack toads and newts are drying up. The normal high winter flows are needed for flushing out silt from the sand and gravel beds in the river systems which are important for spawning fish. Low flows can also make it difficult for fish such as salmon and eels to migrate upstream.

The grass isn't growing - the ground is hard and bare in many parts of the country farmers are taking their livestock back indoors and feeding supplementary feed. I'm worried about the grazing for my own sheep and on Thursday went to see some land near Gisburn, lower in the Dales. The grazing was fine but there was an unbearably disgusting smell and in the corner of each field were giant mounds of, what I later discovered, was human sewage in a dust form. With every puff of wind I got a lungful. I've kicked about on farms for a long time and this is the first time I have ever heard of it. It is absolutely vile. I'd been looking forward to visiting the area as I wanted to see Barnoldswick where my mother worked on the Rolls Royce aircraft engines during the war but I was feeling too ill from the human sewage cloud. Needless to say, I wasn't going to take my sheep there.

We have had to switch from old season English carrots to new season Italian ones this week. We stay with English for as long as we can but the quality has now gone beyond what we feel is acceptable. We have to bag the new season ones to keep in the moisture and stop them from going bendy. Please try and get them in your fridge as quickly as possible.

### **Cauliflower Curry**

<i>2 onions, finely chopped</i>	<i>1cm ginger, grated</i>
<i>2 tbsp curry paste</i>	<i>400g tin coconut milk</i>
<i>400g tin chopped tomatoes</i>	<i>1 cauliflower, broken into pieces</i>
<i>2 potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks</i>	<i>1 lemon, juiced</i>
<i>200g spinach</i>	

*Fry the onions in a little oil until they start to soften. Add the ginger and curry paste and fry until fragrant. Add the coconut milk, tomatoes, cauliflower and potatoes and bring to a simmer. Cook for 20-30 minutes or until the potato is cooked, then season with salt. Stir in the lemon juice and spinach and leave for 2 minutes with a lid on, but off the heat. Season and serve with naan bread and basmati rice.*

### **Cauliflower with Garlic ( as a hot Spanish tapas !)**

<i>1 cauliflower</i>	<i>2 tbsp olive oil</i>
<i>2 garlic cloves, chopped</i>	<i>1 tbsp olives, pitted and chopped</i>
<i>1 tsp cumin seeds</i>	<i>1 tsp chilli</i>
<i>salt</i>	

*Divide the cauliflower into bite-sized florets. Cook in boiling salted water until tender. Drain. Heat the oil in a roomy frying pan. Fry the garlic until it softens and takes a little colour. Add the drained cauliflower and fry for a few minutes,*

*or until it begins to sizzle and take colour. Add the olives, sprinkle with cumin, season with salt and add a little chilli, then fry gently for 10 minutes. Turn the cauliflower until it browns a little. Serve at room temperature.*

My brother has just put his Alston house on the market ( the one in the wilderness where I have spent many happy Christmases ) and has asked of me - " ...is there some way you could advertise it/ publicise it on your website ..... I think some of your customers are the types who it may appeal to as a second home ? " !!!! I of course have to obey my brother and have put a link on the online newsletter on the off-chance that you are seeking isolation and that your bank account is bursting at the seams.

I hope you have a lovely Easter holiday,

Kind wishes,

Isobel

**Please note that because of the Easter Bank holidays, next week your delivery will arrive one day later than normal. So Tuesdays will come on Wednesday, Wednesdays will come on Thursday and Thursdays will come on Friday.**