

Monday 29th October 2012

Dear Customer,

Haven't temperatures have plummeted, but it's perfect weather for brussel sprouts. Sprouts are supposedly nothing before they are sweetened by a good, hard frost. We have Rosemary Wass' sprouts on-the-stalk in the bags this week. Freshly harvested from the Yorkshire Moors, they are a two-in-one. Sprouts with a cabbage on top. The sprout-tasting cabbage can be cooked as a normal cabbage or shredded in a salad.

Back to your sprouts, once cooked you can toss them in olive oil or butter with plenty of black peppers and perhaps some chilli flakes. Adding toasted almonds or fried breadcrumbs also works well. You could prepare them with lemon juice and or zest, chestnuts, nutmeg or caraway seeds. Brussel sprouts don't have to be quick and easy - you could have a go at one of these delicious recipes:

Brussel Sprouts with Caramelised Garlic and Lemon Peel

4 heads garlic, cloves separated and peeled	150ml olive oil
2 tsp balsamic vinegar	50g caster sugar
90ml water	salt and black pepper
1 medium lemon	600g brussel sprouts
1 chilli, finely chopped	50g Parmesan shavings
20g basil leaves, shredded	

Put the garlic in a pan, cover with water and blanch for 3 minutes. Drain, dry the pan and pour in two tablespoons of oil. Return the garlic to the pan and fry on a high heat for 2 minutes, stirring, until golden all over. Add the vinegar, a tablespoon of sugar, the water and some salt. Bring to a boil and simmer on medium heat for 5 minutes, until barely any liquid is left, just the caramelised cloves in a syrup. Set aside. Use a vegetable peeler to shave off wide strips of lemon skin, avoiding the white pith. Cut the strips into 1mm-2mm thick slices, or julienne, and put in a small pan. Squeeze the lemon into a measuring jug and add water to bring the juice up to 100ml. Pour over the strips of peel, add the remaining sugar and bring to a simmer. Cook for 12-15 minutes, until the syrup is reduced to about a third. Set aside to cool down. Trim the bases off the sprouts and cut them in halves. Heat the 4 tablespoons of oil in a large, heavy-based pan, add half the sprouts, season and cook on a high heat for 5 minutes, stirring once or twice so they char well without breaking up, adding extra oil if needed. They will soften but retain some firmness. Transfer to a bowl and repeat with the remaining oil and sprouts. Stir the chilli, garlic and its syrup into the sprouts and set aside. Stir in the Parmesan, basil and peel (without the syrup), season and add oil if necessary. Serve at room temperature.

Brussel Sprout Salad

100g hazelnuts	300g brussel sprouts, trimmed
zest of 2 lemons	juice of 1 lemon
1 tsp fresh thyme	pinch chilli flakes
1-2 tbs olive oil	80g goat's cheese
sea-salt and freshly ground black pepper	

Heat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Scatter the hazelnuts on a baking sheet and roast in the oven until browned - 9-11 minutes then set aside. Cut the prepared sprouts into slices, the thickness of a 50p piece. Put in a bowl and toss with the lemon zest, thyme, chilli flakes and a tablespoon of oil. Season with salt and pepper. Add more olive oil, lemon juice and/or chilli flakes to taste. Arrange on a plate, scatter the hazelnuts over and crumble on the goat's cheese. Trickle over a little more olive oil and serve.

An old friend has arrived from France to stay with me for a week with her two daughters aged 2 and 5. I was really looking forward to seeing them. They could have come any day, any time but announced they would be at the station 8pm on Saturday. I couldn't believe - utterly gutted. I wondered if I could drive back from the station at 90 miles an hour and then, having not seen her for 10 years, ask her if she would mind me ignoring them for an hour while I watched X Factor. Being French I knew she wouldn't understand, she wouldn't get it. She doesn't even watch TV and prefers her children to be creative. I had to stay up and watch the repeat at 12.45am. I was exhausted. I don't know much about children so had a lot of research to do before their arrival. What they do? What they eat? Just mashed up food? Will they be in prams? Day 1 I suggested we go for a walk and have a picnic on the moors. It was the coldest day so far - around 5 degrees. Charlotte got out the car and screamed in agony as the icy drizzle hit her face and the wind pierced into her ear-drums. Despite this she would not put her hood up so was fastened, sobbing, back into her car seat. I went and threw stones for Myfa with Juliette for about 2 minutes, she was frozen solid so we came home. When they left their home-town, Perpignan, it was 23 degrees. That's my whole week's itinerary with them completely up the spout. I was planning on taking them to a different moor each day. Luckily my neighbour has had contact with children in the past and she brought me some exercise balls for them to play on. They've just gone off to York for the afternoon while I catch up on my work and remove soggy

digestive biscuits and scrambled egg from the carpet. I won't worry too much though, I'll just get them all cleaned when they leave.

Hope you're having a good week,

Isobel