

Monday 17th June 2013

Dear Customer

John at Newfields farm in Fadmoor has just clocked in and is kicking his new season off with spring greens and Batavia lettuces. We have Coleen potatoes from Cornwall the first outdoor English new potatoes to appear. Things are looking up - we are coming home. Here are a few easy and tasty recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Plum , Peach and Banana Crumble

2 large bananas, sliced
3 tbsp soft brown sugar

500g mixed plums and peaches, cut into wedges
2 tbsp softened butter or margarine

Crumble:

100g margarine or butter, in cubes
50g rolled oats

150g plain flour
50g castor sugar

Preheat the oven to 160C. Grease an ovenproof dish and distribute the fruit evenly into it. To make the crumble, mix together the flour, sugar and oats. Rub in the butter or margarine with your fingertips until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Cover the fruit with the crumble and pat it down to make it compact. Bake in the oven for 20-30 minutes until the crumble is golden brown.

New Potato, Tomato and Egg Salad

400g new potatoes
300g chopped tomatoes

4 eggs
handful chives

Vinaigrette:

6 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp English mustard

4 tsp cider vinegar
pinch salt

Chop and boil the potatoes in a pan of salted water until tender. Drain and leave to cool. Meanwhile, bring a pan of water to the boil and cook the eggs for 8-12 minutes then run under the cold water tap until cool and peel. Mix the oil, vinegar, mustard and salt for the vinaigrette. Chop the eggs and add to the potatoes and mix them together, breaking them down a little. Then add the vinaigrette and finally mix in the tomatoes and chopped chives.

Spaghetti with Garlic and Spring Greens

400g spaghetti
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 head of spring greens, rinsed and finely sliced
handful of grated Parmesan

olive oil
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
zest and juice of 1 large lemon

Cook the spaghetti according to packet instructions. Meanwhile, heat a drizzle of olive oil in a frying pan. Add the garlic and chilli and fry for a minute or so, until the garlic is starting to colour. Add the spring greens and cook, stirring occasionally, for 3-4 minutes or until the greens have wilted. Grate over the lemon zest. Drain the pasta and add it to the pan with a splash of the water it was cooked in. Squeeze over the lemon juice and serve topped with a drizzle of olive oil and grated Parmesan.

You may have seen the same gloomy statistics that I saw in the press this weekend about the organic market. Sales of organic food have fallen from £2.1 billion in 2008 to £1.64 billion in 2012 and there is a steady flow of farmers taking their land out of organic and back to chemical agriculture. Only 32k hectares were in conversion to organic last year, a sixth of what there was in 2002 with far more hectares going out of organic. This is not good news. Lest we have forgotten in these intervening years why we all went organic in the first place:

*"If we are going to live so intimately with these chemicals eating and drinking them, taking them into the very marrow of our bones – we had better know something about their nature and their power" Rachel Carson, *The Silent Spring*(1962)*

I think we do know their power but we certainly do not know all their nature. It is now projected that half of us will get cancer in our lifetime. There has been an increase from 32% of us in 1992 to 44% in 2010. Of course there are many suggestions – living longer, obesity – but we are exposed daily to thousands of chemicals in our food and our environment. The average woman is exposed to over a hundred chemicals a day in her cosmetics alone. Only 11% of the chemicals used in personal care products have ever been reviewed for safety. We didn't even know how important the sun was to our health until last year and it's not even covered by a patent. It is calculated that hundreds of thousands died premature deaths from heeding the advice to keep out of it. How can we possibly know the interactive play of all these thousands of chemicals in our own most intimate of ecosystems - our own bodies. And we are each different with our own chemical make-up, as unique to us as our own face. Science does not understand what it has unleashed. And as with the eco-system of our body, the same applies to the ecosystems of our local environments and the ecosystem of our planet. Behind the façade our fantastic modern life, invisible things are happening, things about which we know nothing until symptoms appear. Being as organic as we can in as many ways as we can is sensible !

Well I hope the shock of me writing about organic food didn't give you a heart attack !

I am waiting for a call from the shearer. He said Monday or Tuesday of this week. I hate the shearing, hate the sheep being gathered up and penned up. However, once they've been sheared it seems to shave years off their life – they emerge from their

heavy wool cocoons reborn, and race about leaping and bucking like lambs. Mind, they are all so fat now, gorging themselves on the feast after the famine that was last winter. Not a bad thing. The fatter they are, the less holes they will be able to seep through and the lower they will be able to jump.

I hope you are having a lovely week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel