

Monday 7th October 2013

Dear Customer,

Hello ! It's still so mild isn't it. Up here it is warmer outside than in. We have Jonnie Watson's caulif, cavolo nero and purple sprouting broccoli, trade name 'psb', in the bags this week. We have leeks and Florence fennel from Ormskirk and Little Gem lettuces and Desiree Potatoes from the Yorkshire Moors. Someone asked if last week's purple cauliflowers grew wild on the moors. Indeed they do, and the clear water streams erode their banks and red Desiree potatoes come tumbling out of the peat, down the waterfall, and are caught in a net. Farmaround vegetables are magic vegetables.

When cooking your PSB, the heads cook quicker than the stems so you could either cross the stems like a sprout or chop them off and give them a couple of minutes before adding the heads. They are delicious with butter and lemon or you could try with soy sauce, fresh grated ginger and olive oil. It is a great accompaniment to a soft boiled egg. You could cover it in stock with some garlic and bake in the oven for 30 minutes – this mellows and sweetens it. Your cavolo nero should be cooked in plenty of salted water for 5 or 6 minutes. It is delicious in garlicky soups or tossed through pasta. It is rich in iron and vitamins. Here are a few recipes to get you going :

Cauliflower and Fennel with Coriander Vinaigrette

1 medium cauliflower, in florets
1 little gem lettuce, shredded

1 head fennel, sliced
25g creamed coconut

Dressing:

110ml olive oil
2 tsp crushed coriander seeds
salt and pepper to taste

1 tbsp white wine vinegar
fresh coriander leaves, chopped finely

Stir the olive oil into the vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Next, add the coriander seeds and fresh coriander and leave to marinate for an hour. Meanwhile, place the coconut in a saucepan and pour a pint of boiling water over the top. Stir until dissolved. Add the cauliflower florets and fennel and simmer for around 4 minutes. Drain and then leave to cool. Just before serving, dress with the vinaigrette and arrange on the lettuce.

Vichyssoise (Leeks and Potato Soup)

375g leeks, finely chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
570ml stock
2 tsp sugar

30g butter or margarine
375g potatoes, peeled and diced
splash milk

Melt the butter or margarine in a pan, add the onion and leek and cook until softened – about 10-15 minutes on a low heat. Add the potatoes, stock, sugar and seasoning and simmer until the potatoes are tender. Liquidise to a puree and add a splash of milk. Serve warm or chilled.

Leek and Potato Pie

500g shortcrust pastry
3 leeks
150g Cheddar cheese
1 tsp dried thyme

1 egg
450g potatoes
salt and pepper
knob of butter or margarine

Finely chop the leeks. Place them in a large pan with the butter/margarine, salt and pepper, and thyme and cook them very slowly on a low heat for a good 20 minutes or so. Meanwhile chop the potato into thin slices and place them in a pan of cold, salted water. Bring to the boil and cook them for 5 minutes, then drain. Stir the cooked, drained potatoes into the leeks, add the Cheddar cheese and seasoning. Leave the mixture to cool. Heat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Divide the pastry into two pieces and one out to the size of a dinner plate. Transfer the first piece of pastry to a baking sheet. Roll out the other piece into a circle shape about 5cms bigger than the first one. Pile the leek and potato filling onto the centre of the first pastry circle, leaving a gap of at least 4cms around the edges. Brush this with egg wash and drape the other piece over the top of the pie, neatening the edges and pressing the pastry together all the way round with your thumb. Cut a hole in the top of the pastry to let the steam out and brush all over with egg wash. Bake until golden.

When I go to the office, I invariably find Diane at her desk surrounded by all the dogs from the Trading Estate – one by one they have got to know that the bottom drawer of her filing cabinet is full of gravy bones. Ellie the golden retriever from the pet store is there, Bobbie from the carpenters, Dave the black lab from the tiling supplier, to name but a few. She got told off last week, the pet shop owner stormed across the estate and told Diane to please stop feeding his dog – he was furious. So the next day she had to ignore Ellie as she sat in the pouring rain staring at Diane mournfully through the glass door. When I next came to the office, Ellie was there again, lying at Diane's feet. Myfa won't get out the car when I pull up until I say "where's Diane ?" her ears prick up, she cocks her head to one side and leaps out the car. Diane has a dog of her own, Sophie, a rescue dog. Sophie has the body and colouring of an alsatian with the legs of a dachshund and the longest, sharpest nose I have ever seen. Anyway, she now has two dogs. Yesterday she rescued a cocker spaniel called Jagger. Cockers are like collies up here – chucked out at a certain age for a younger, fitter replacement. Diane said 7yr old Jagger had lived in a cage and had never had a biscuit or a cuddle in his whole life. That's all set to change ! My only concern is the dog's name and that infernal song that has been going round my head ever since she told me about him. So next time you call in to change your order, ask Diane, 'does Jagger move like Jagger ?'. I don't know the answer to that one yet.

Kind wishes,

Isobel