

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014**

Dear Customer,

Blimey, December already. I've got a feeling there's something happening this month. .... it's bound to come to me. You haven't been quite as naughty this week so the swede has been deferred as a suspended sentence. And you even have a copy of the fantastic 'The Taster' magazine, a present from Catrin its brainchild and former farmarounder in exile in Wales.

**Golden Beetroot Halva**

450g golden beetroot	1 litre milk
3 tbsp caster sugar	5 tbsp butter
3 tbsp raisins	handful chopped cashew nuts
pinch ground cardamom	

*Coarsely grate the beetroot. Place in a large, non-stick saucepan with the milk and cook, stirring occasionally, until the milk has dried off. It will take more than an hour. Add the caster sugar and 4 tbsp of butter and cook, stirring for another 15-20 minutes to help the beetroot caramelise. Meanwhile, gently heat 1 tsp of butter in a pan, then fry all the raisins with the cashews and a pinch of ground cardamom until the nuts are lightly golden. Stir into the halva. Taste, adjust the sugar and serve hot.*

**Golden Beetroot Risotto**

250g beetroot	small onion, peeled and chopped
2 cloves garlic, peeled	850ml vegetable stock
35g butter or margarine, plus knob for later	splash of olive oil
175g risotto rice	80ml white wine
juice of ½ lemon	50g parmesan, freshly grated
salt and black pepper	a little fresh thyme (optional)

*Boil the beetroot in their skins for about 20 minutes until tender and set aside to cool. Pour the stock into a pan, bring to the boil and lower to a simmer. Peel the beetroot and blitz with a blender adding 4 tbsp of hot stock to make a thick, smooth puree. Dice the onion and garlic. Put a second pan on the hob. Add the butter or margarine and oil. Once hot, add the onion and garlic. Reduce heat and cook gently for 5 minutes until onions soften. Tip the rice into a pan and stir well to coat. Cook for a minute, stirring. Increase the heat. Add the wine and stir until most of it is absorbed, then immediately add a large ladle of hot stock. Add the thyme, if using. Reduce the heat so the mix keeps bubbling but doesn't cook too fiercely. Once absorbed, add another ladle of stock and keep stirring. Repeat this step until you have used virtually all the stock and the rice is just about cooked. This takes about 15-20 minutes. Add salt, pepper and lemon juice. Stir in two-thirds of the beetroot puree. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Add the rest of the puree and half t parmesan. Stir in the butter or margarine to make it glossy. Taste and adjust. Turn off the heat, put the lid on the pan and leave to rest for 3 minutes then serve with the remaining parmesan.*

Well the fog is back - a nice thick, grey, melancholy blanket of it. I drove over to the office on Thursday and to my horror in the adjacent field, there was a pen full of lambs and old ewes being belly clipped ready for slaughter. The lambs looked really cheerful and excited, the old ewes looked unbearably sad. The trailer was parked next to them and the ramp was down. I couldn't bear it. 'Where are they going' I asked. 'Darlington mart - the ewes will go for xxxxxx meat ( I can't write that here ) 'Halal ?' I said. " Don't mention that to me, I've seen it, what they do to them is indescribable'. Yet he was sending these ewes which had given him so many lambs to that exact indescribable fate. 'How much will you get for them ?' They told me £73 to £74 for the lambs and £30 for the ewes. I told them I'd buy them. At first they said they wouldn't sell them to me then they said they would be £100 per 'piece' because if they slaughtered them and sold the meat, they would get £145 each. I had no option. Twenty minutes later they arrived and were unloaded at my paddock. " God Bless you" they both said to me as they were leaving. I am not only a liability to myself but to some dear friends who helped me out with this purchase. I hope my brother doesn't go and read this online after he had to bail me out a few weeks ago. He keeps telling me I have to get rid of the sheep. " What send them to slaughter ?" I got this email from him:

'Yes I said I would lend you this money. I would like to make it dependent on you selling the sheep but I won't. That is how the IMF operates with countries that can't manage their debts. They make conditions with the loans to force the countries to be responsible.

I am really fed up Isobel. We talk about things but then you just carry on as before and hope for the best which never materialises. So you end up back in the same position again and again. I think you have 3 unpleasant options ... sell the sheep, sell the house, or go bankrupt and lose both. The way you are carrying on it will end up as option 3 by default. You never follow my advice on anything. So I don't really want to know anymore. I just end up worrying about things I can't do anything about'

Which leads me nicely onto the launch of my new business today, the one which my brother thinks is so ridiculous he won't even allow me to mention it to him. It's called Swaphopper ([www.swaphopper.com](http://www.swaphopper.com)) We are beta testing, meaning first draft and improvements are ongoing, but please check it out and come and join up. Pioneering Farmarounders must surely be the founding members populating it. I would love to get any feedback. It's a new world, a new way of living ..... the way of the future. And for anyone struggling financially, this is your new game. I'll say no more.

I've always told Ernest about this wonderland called The Internet where you can find, and find out, anything at all. The other day he popped in and asked me if one day I could look on the internet for a piece of music he has heard on Classic FM. I told him I'd look now. He told me it was by Baroque composer Jean Philippe Rameau and that it was a piece called 'Dance of the Slaves' from the opera 'Sonan Gun'. I went onto Wiki and ran through all the operas, he didn't recognise them then I said 'Les Indes galanates'. 'That's it' he said. I went straight onto YouTube, found the opera and the piece 'les Sauvages' and gave him the laptop to watch. He

couldn't contain his excitement. I guess it's the equivalent of 'Hey Ya' for a classical music fan, which I'm not. He was bouncing about on his chair as he watched it. I asked him should I get the CD for him and went onto Amazon. In three seconds it was done and I told him to would be here tomorrow. " NO.....JESUS CHRIST....THAT'S INCREDIBLE.....WHAT ? YOU'VE DONE IT ?" he shouted. " I CAN'T BELIEVE IT". It was so funny.

Kind wishes,

Isobel, a wretched third world country