

Monday 26th January 2015

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well and that you haven't succumbed to any of these horrible bugs doing the rounds. It's the return of 'the ugly' this week, or the 'jolie-laide' as they say in France, someone with unconventional beauty, such as the celeriac.... the Shrek of root vegetables. Delicious cut into cubes and roasted or boiled and mashed with potato. We also have leeks, Maris Piper potatoes, Yellowstone carrots and Red Russian kale in the bags – all from Royal Oak who are up and about again after their imported Romanian bugs - digging and harvesting in cold Arctic wind, hands frozen scrubbing our celeriac.

Celeriac Soup

50g butter or margarine
1 potato, peeled and cubed
1 onion, peeled and chopped
1 litre vegetable stock

1 celeriac, peeled and cubed
1 leek, trimmed, washed and sliced
1 garlic clove, sliced
fresh parsley or pesto

Melt the butter or margarine in a large heavy-based pot over a medium heat. Add the celeriac, leek, potato, garlic and onion, season generously and gently sweat the vegetables until they are all starting to soften. This will take about 10 minutes. Add the stock, bring the soup to a boil, turn down the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes or until the celeriac is completely tender. Liquidise until smooth, return to the pan and reheat over a medium flame. Just before serving, check the soup for seasoning and serve with a drizzle of pesto or chopped fresh parsley.

Celeriac Fritters

1 celeriac
4 tbsp plain flour
½ lemon, juiced
100ml milk

2 free range eggs
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
2 tbsp crème fraiche
few sprigs dill, roughly chopped

Peel and grate the celeriac and squeeze out any excess liquid with your hands and place in a large bowl. Add the eggs, flour, bicarb, lemon juice and crème fraiche and beat together well with a fork. Add some salt and pepper, the dill and milk and beat again until smooth. Heat a flavourless oil, like sunflower oil in a frying pan with a knob of butter until it sizzles when a drop of fritter is dropped in, Add a large tablespoon of the mix to the hot oil, flattening slightly with the back of the spoon. Cook a few fritters and once and cook until golden brown and slightly puffed. Flip the fritters over and cook until golden on the second side. Serve with a relish, a salad, or whatever you fancy.

Roasted Roots with Apple and Rosemary

1 kg mixed roots eg celeriac, potatoes, parsnips, carrots
3 medium, tart apples, cut into eighths, core removed

3 tbsp olive oil
couple sprigs rosemary

Preheat the oven to 190C/ Gas 5. Peel all the vegetables and cut into medium chunks. Put into a large roasting tin with the oil and some salt and pepper. Toss well and roast for about 35 minutes, stirring halfway through, until the vegetables are tender and starting to brown. Add the apple wedges and rosemary, toss with the roots and roast for a further 15-20 minutes, until the apples are golden. Serve immediately.

Ten years ago it was only toy dogs and the odd whippet that wore a coat. Now, whenever there's a nip or drizzle in the air, they're all out in them. We buckle them up and tuck them in, ready to brave the elements. Myfa loves her coat. When she's in the car, she sits on the passenger seat with her back arched and chest puffed out, I undo the strap under her belly as it's too tight in that position but leave it fastened around her neck - a faux sheepskin and gabardine cloak. Our Farmaround office is always full of dogs – you probably hear them barking when you ring in, or in Suki's case – howling. Eve rescued what she thought was a dog. On further research, she realised she had become mother to a Malamute – half husky, half wolf. A few weeks ago Eve bought two little fabric toy cats, a pink one and a blue one, for Suki and her rescued terrier. Suki chose the blue cat, she adored it. She started carrying it round everywhere very gently by its leg. One day Eve got home from work and Suki had shredded Eve's bedding and had a made a nest for the blue cat on Eve's bed. She wouldn't allow anyone except Eve go anywhere near it. If any visitors came, she would turn her back on them and snuggle her toy, cradling it and licking it. When Eve took her for a walk she started trying to hunt down rabbits for the first time ever, she wanted to take a rabbit back for her blue toy. When she started producing milk Eve decided it was time to go and see the vet. The vet told her that Suki is not even a Malamute but a wolf.

I have been invaded with a bug and am feeling a bit gormless. I've been incredulous over the last month that every single person I know has been ill except me. I haven't been ill for over 7 years, not even a cold, so this is a shock. Normally Farmaround produce is bug-busting so I don't know how it's got me. Anyway, delighted with the result of the Greek election, the immediate effect on the euro/sterling exchange rate and the prospect of even better rates to come with a massive default on their debts on the cards. Very welcome for our imported produce, our 'city breaks' and our summer holidays. I don't know what the weather has done in the Mediterranean this winter but it has done something as all the ratatouille stuff and everything else is literally double the price. Slowly over time, one by one, all countries joined the European Union, then one by one they left again. As long as there is no European political union, which there will never be, there can never be stability for the Union and it's just a question of time. The 'Great European Revolt' has started – Spain, Italy, Portugal they'll all be out within a few years. The whole thing needs rewriting giving powers of self-determination back to the member states or they'll just walk. Interesting times !

I'm just going to go and feed my paddock of rescued halal lambs and Barney. They're a nightmare. I rent a small field which is one house away from me and every time I come out the house they recognise me silhouette and come running to the fence blaring, so I have to crouch down below the fence to get to my car so they can't see me.

Kind wishes,

Isobel