



Monday 7th November 2016

Dear Customer,

This sudden drop in temperature can only mean one thing..... a swede. It's got really cold hasn't it. We also have cauliflower in the bags. They are from Home Farm in Nacton on the north banks of Suffolk's Orwell estuary. The farm is a patchwork of woodland, heath, grass and arable land. Like much of the Suffolk coastal land it is very sandy making the soil light and perfectly suited for vegetable growing. It drains well and heats up quickly though it is prone to drying and wind blowing. Mushroom compost is worked into the soils to boost its minerals and help give it additional structure.

Here are some delightful recipes you could try this week:

Braised Swede

500g swede 35g butter or creamy margarine
500ml vegetable stock, from cube or powder

Peel the swede, cut in half and then in half again then slice it so you end up with pieces no thicker than your little finger. Melt the butter or margarine in a shallow pan set over a moderate heat and add the swede. Don't stir or move it around the pan for a minute – simply leave the pieces to colour on their flat sides, then turn them. When they are golden-brown around the edges, pour in the stock and bring to the boil. Once boiling, turn the heat down to a simmer and leave for 15 minutes or so until the swede is deep orange-gold and tender enough to squash with a fork. You may need an extra 5 minutes or so longer. The liquid will have reduced to a buttery juice. Serve the swede straightaway, hot, with a grind of black pepper and salt.

Baked Swede

1 large swede (about 650g peeled weight) 400g butter or margarine
2 medium onions, peeled and thinly sliced a few sage leaves
1 small sprig of rosemary vegetable stock, to cover

Set the oven to 220C/ Gas 6. Cut the swede into slices about as thick as a pound coin. It is easier and safer to do this by first cutting a slice from one side and using this to steady the swede as you cut. Generously butter/ margarine a baking dish or roasting tin. Lay the slices of swede and onion in the dish, seasoning them with salt and black pepper and strewing a few sage and rosemary leaves as you go. Ladle over the stock so that it just about covers the vegetables – a matter of five or so ladles – then dot on the rest of the butter or margarine. Bake in a preheated oven for an hour or so, turning the swede in the stock from time to time, until the vegetables are tender enough to crush between your fingers. Serve as a side dish with some of the juices spooned over.

Roasted Cauliflower and Coconut Soup

2 onions 600g cauliflower
4 cloves garlic 1 heaped tsp ground cinnamon
1 heaped tsp ras el hanout (or ground coriander) olive oil
1 handful of coconut flakes 1 x 400g tin coconut milk
600ml vegetable stock 2-3 tbsp chilli oil

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F/ Gas 4. Peel the onions cut into 1cm wedges and trim then cut the cauliflower into even-sized florets including the leaves. Place it all in a roasting tray with the unpeeled garlic cloves and sprinkle with the cinnamon and ras el hanout. Season well and drizzle everything with a good glug of olive oil. Toss it all together and pop into the oven for 25-30 minutes until cooked through and a little charred. Scatter the coconut flakes onto a small tray and put in the oven for the last 4 minutes to toast. When the veg are ready, remove the garlic cloves and scrape all the veg into a large saucepan. Squeeze the garlic out of its skins and add them too. Pour in the coconut milk, add the stock and gently bring to the boil. Reduce the heat a little and simmer for 5 minutes then remove from the heat. Using a stick blender, blitz the soup until creamy and smooth, adding a splash more water if it is too thick. Taste and adjust the seasoning and serve topped with the toasted coconut flakes and a drizzle of chilli oil.

I ventured out of the Dales last week and headed for Scotland to visit our weaver in Langholm. My car was creaking. Apparently the suspension is cracked, whatever that means. As I was driving up the motorway I remembered I had to drive through Longtown straight past a livestock market. I prayed there wouldn't be a market on but was worried. I squinted my eyes as I drove through the town but couldn't avoid seeing all the triple-decker articulated lorries and dozens of trailers parked up outside. The farmers drop their lambs off and hang about to see what price per kilo they make. The lorries were waiting to take them away. I accelerated feeling sick. Thankfully I didn't see any of the animals.....but I knew they were there. I'd passed a lorry full of pigs heading south earlier - it really disturbs me.

I saw the weaver, discussed warp and weft, then decided there was no way I could drive back through Longtown so I headed east – right through the Scottish Border country, up and down, up and down, then past the Kielder reservoir and south through the Pennines. I drove near to my brother's now ex-house on Alston Moor. It was dusk and all the lights in the house were on, the doctor and his family must have been unpacking, nestling down. I think they are probably snowed in already. I snapped a pic to send to my brother – they were in. It took me 1½ hours to get to Langholm and 7 hours to get home.

The next day I made a trip up to Newcastle - well Wallsend - to collect wool back from Modrey. She had been very evasive on the phone about a cardigan that she was supposed to have been knitting. She had assured me that she had started it. When I subsequently called for updates first she said she was too busy decorating as a girl was coming over from Africa to stay with them. Then she said she'd lost the knitting, then that she was ill in bed for two weeks, then that she had lost it again. I told her I would come and retrieve it. It was the first time I'd been to her house, stuff piled up everywhere – no surprise she keeps losing the knitting. Parked in the living room was her mother's wheelchair who died about 4 years ago. She has a lovely little Yorkshire Terrier called Hewie who had been used for bait – chucked in with rottweilers. There was a knock at the door, it was the police who had come to see her son. Modrey told me they were there because her son's wife and her ex-husband were trying to have him 'bumped off'. We all have our problems.

I hope you have a good week,

Isobel