

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well and all back to normal after the holidays. It's a beautiful sunny day here after a deluge. I just hope the US snow bomb isn't going to head for us next.

We have lots of wonderful produce straight from the farm to kick off the New Year – including our prize-winning purple sprouting broccoli !

Here are some tasty recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

**Slow Roasted Fennel**

fennel bulbs  
pinch caraway seeds

tomatoes  
olive oil

*Preheat the oven to 160C/ Gas 2-3. Trim and quarter the fennel bulbs then lay them in a roasting tin with halved tomatoes and scatter the fennel with the caraway seeds. Season all with salt and black pepper and drizzle with the oil. Cook for an hour or until the fennel is tender and caramelised.*

**Potato, Leek and Lentil Casserole**

450g potatoes  
200g puy lentils  
3 garlic cloves  
600ml vegetable stock  
1 tsp ground coriander  
1 tsp fenugreek seeds  
1 tbsp fresh grated ginger  
juice of 1 lemon

2 leeks, trimmed  
1 onion  
400g tin chopped tomatoes  
1 tsp ground cumin  
1 tsp turmeric  
1 tbsp curry powder  
2 tbsp coconut or vegetable oil  
bunch of fresh coriander

*Heat the oil in a saucepan. Add finely chopped onion, crushed garlic, cumin, ground coriander, fenugreek seeds, turmeric, ginger and curry powder. Fry gently until soft to release aromas. Peel the potato and cut into 1cm dice. Trim and cut the leeks into ½ cm slices, wash to remove any dirt and drain. Add the potatoes, leeks, lentils and tinned tomatoes to the onion mixture. Top with the vegetable stock. Bring to the boil then lower to medium heat and covered for 20-30 minutes until the vegetables and lentils are soft. They should still have bite. When the casserole is cooked, add lemon juice and season to taste. Serve with warm pitta bread and fresh coriander leaves sprinkled over.*

**Leek, Butterbean and Roasted Purple Sprouting Broccoli Salad**

1 bunch purple sprouting broccoli  
1 tsp fennel seeds  
1 tbsp olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 tsp sumac  
salt and pepper

1-2 tbsp olive oil  
200g pack freekeh (or brown rice or quinoa)  
2 leeks, washed and sliced  
1 x 400g tin butterbeans  
small handful flatleaf parsley, finely chopped

*Preheat the oven to 200C/ 180C Fan/ Gas 6. Trim the purple sprouting broccoli, drizzle with olive oil and fennel seeds and roast in the oven for 35-40 minutes, or until tender and starting to char, stirring halfway. Cook the freekeh or other grain according to packet instructions. Drain and set aside. When the cauliflower is almost done, fry the leeks in olive oil, stirring often, until cooked. Add the crushed garlic and cook for a few further minutes. Add the butterbeans, cooked freekeh, roasted broccoli and chopped parsley. Stir well, season with salt and pepper and sprinkle with sumac before serving.*

I finally got back into my house on Tuesday when the Airbnb guests set off back to London. They had tidied up before they left and I could see they had even dusted. Black sea salt flakes had appeared in the cupboard, and limes, sloe gin and port in the fridge with an empty Fortum and Mason wicker hamper. In the freezer were special dog ice cubes. They'd left a nice note telling me where they had visited and that they had fallen in love with Richmond. And also to say that there was a rat swimming in the pond. I emailed to apologise for the rat, said I'd been worried it might make an appearance and that I hadn't found the time before Christmas to sort out a humane trap. They said they weren't bothered, just thought I had better know. I of course already knew – however I had never seen him actually in the pond.

It was good to get home, and all would be fine except that Myfa is still ill. She's on antibiotics now but they don't seem to be doing anything. Apart from being off her normal food, she won't eat chicken now or pork pies, just ham, sausages and rich tea biscuits – delicately, reluctantly and in moderation. I am in dread every time I try to give her something lest she refuses and I run out of options. I managed to get her to eat a little tin of mackerel spoon-feeding her. She's still keeping me up all night, every night with her restlessness and whining. She has always been spoilt and whines if I'm busy on the computer instead of giving her attention, whines if I leave the room to go to the toilet, whines if she's bored. It's therefore hard to know how much of this whining is being bored and fed up and wanting attention and how much is her being poorly. The whining builds and builds to a crescendo which stops as soon as I stroke her. But she isn't well, and I am very worried. I will take her back to the vet tomorrow. I caught her drinking out of the pond before Christmas so have ordered a pond guard. I have put the humane trap next to the rat hole with some food in but he now seems to have disappeared.

So basically, it's all about Myfa now. Hard to think about anything else when someone we love is not well, it's like treading water – it becomes all that matters.

Kind wishes,

Isobel