



Monday 2nd July 2018

Dear Customer,

Hello from here in Richmond del Sol, something I never thought possible. I have known summers up here, most of the them, where there's not been one single day warm enough to wear a t-shirt. We are crackling in the heat. The farmers have still managed to quarry some produce out. Eat while you can.

Roasted Summer Cabbage and Carrot Vinaigrette

- 1 cabbage
- 3 sprigs thyme, leaves picked
- 250g carrots, scrubbed
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 medium onions
- sea salt and black pepper

Vinaigrette:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp mustard
- 1 tbsp cider vinegar
- ½ clove garlic

Preheat the oven to 190C/ fan 170C/ Gas 5. Trim and quarter the cabbage then cut each quarter in half again giving 8 wedges each held together by a section of core. Put the wedges into a large bowl and trickle over 2 tablespoons of oil. Add a quarter of the them and some salt and pepper. Massage the cabbage wedges with your hands to distribute the oil and seasoning evenly then transfer to a large roasting tray. Cut the onions into 8-12 wedges each and put them into a bowl. Halve the carrots lengthways or cut into chunky batons and add to the onions. Trickle over another tablespoon of oil, a quarter of the thyme and more salt and pepper and add to the roasting tray tucking them between the pieces of cabbage. Roast for 30 minutes then take the tray out of the oven and turn the cabbage wedges over. Return to the oven for another 30 minutes or until the cabbage is wilted and browned and the other veg are soft and caramelised. Meanwhile make the vinaigrette by whisking all the ingredients together and seasoning with salt and pepper. Trickle the vinaigrette over the roasted vegetables and scatter with the remaining thyme.

New Potatoes with Broad Beans, Mint and Lemon

- new potatoes
- handful fresh mint
- large knob of butter or margarine
- podded broad beans
- a grating of lemon zest
- olive oil

Heat the oven to 200C/ 180C Fan/ Gas 6. Tear off a square of non-stick baking paper and put on a baking tray. Halve the potatoes and put in the centre of the paper, drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Fold the paper over the potatoes then crimp the edges to seal. Roast for 30 minutes until tender. Meanwhile cook the broad beans in a pan of boiling water for about 3 minutes then drain and refresh under cold water. At the end of the potato cooking time, open up the parcel and toss the beans into the potatoes with a large handful of fresh mint, a grating of lemon zest and a large knob of butter or margarine. Taste, season and serve.

Courgette and Broad Bean Soup

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 pint vegetable stock
- 1 tbsp fresh mint, chopped
- 100g Gouda, optional
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 400g courgettes, chopped
- 150g podded weight broad beans
- 1 tbsp fresh basil, torn
- salt and pepper

Heath the oil in large pan and saute the onions gently for 5 minutes until they soften but don't colour. Add the garlic and courgettes and cook for a further two minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the vegetable stock and pop the lid on the pot. Leave to simmer for 15 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Meanwhile boil the broad beans for 4 minutes then plunge in some cold water. Remove the skins if you like. A few minutes before the end of cooking time add the chopped mint and basil to the soup pot then puree until smooth. Stir in the grated Gouda if using, and the broad beans and reheat to serve. Season to taste and serve with crusty bread.

Solar-charged, I haven't stopped all week, tackling things I have put off for years, and in some cases, for years and years. The shed which I couldn't get into, I emptied it out, washed it, took half the stuff to be recycled and organised the rest in new, stackable containers with stickers on. It is an utter joy being able to walk in and out of it. But the really big one was tackling my parents' crockery. After they had both died my brother and sister would take nothing and I ended up with almost the entire contents of the family home which I couldn't bear to get rid of. I put as much as I could in my roof and the rest has been moved about in and out of storage places ending up in a barn. When the owner said he needed the barn back, I went to clear it out but found the rats had been living in all the boxes. Everything was contaminated. I had to put almost everything in the skip. It was heart-breaking but a bit of a relief once I had come to terms with it. I could finally stop moving it about, it had gone. However, I salvaged the crockery – the hundreds of sherry glasses and dinner services and little cups with matching saucers – there was so much. Each piece had been wrapped in newspaper which was now yellow and encrusted with dried rat urine. I brought it all home, transferred it into plastic dustbins, filled them up with hot water and bleach, put the lids on and left them like that for about three years at the side of the house.

I couldn't face them.

Well thanks to the sun, I did it. Bin by bin I transferred each piece into a bucket of hot water with disinfectant. I let them simmer then scrubbed them in the sink, put them in the dishwasher, into some fresh paper and into new stackable containers ready to try and squeeze into the roof. I intercepted a few things which I'd always loved like some heavy goblets. I can't overstate how momentous this is. I finally have everything where it should be.

Still no sign of the sheep shearer. The grass is just dead now so this week I have to start buying in feed. It feels like the Mediterranean in late august - dusty and yellow and hissing with grasshoppers. Fantastic if you haven't got hundreds of starving sheep.

Hope you have a good week – set to be another sizzler,

Kind wishes,

Isobel