



Monday 8th April 2019

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well.... still hanging on in there. But not to worry, we have fabulous golden beetroot in the bags this week. You could caramelise it. Chop into wedges and toss with some thyme, seasoning and olive oil in a roasting tray. Sprinkle with a little brown sugar, drizzle with balsamic vinegar and roast until tender and caramelised, about 30 minutes at 200C, tossing halfway through.

Here are a few other tasty recipes you could try this week:

Lemony Spring Greens

1 lemon
sea salt and black pepper

3 tbsp olive oil
spring greens

Finely grate the lemon zest onto a chopping board then transfer to a jam jar. Cut the lemon in half and squeeze the juice of half of the lemon into the jam jar, reserving the other half for another recipe. Add the olive oil and a tiny pinch of salt and pepper. Put the lid on securely and shake well. Taste and adjust if desired. Half fill a large saucepan with cold water and add a pinch of salt. Bring to the boil on a high heat. Cut the spring greens in half lengthways then finely slice them. When the water is boiling add the greens and cook for 3-4 minutes until tender but still bright green. Drain them in a colander, allow to steam-dry for a minute, then return to the pan. Shake the dressing again then drizzle over the greens and gently toss while still hot to help them soak up all the dressing. Transfer to a warm bowl and serve straight away.

Spring Green with Garlic, Chilli and Yoghurt

2 tsp coriander seeds
½ - 1 tsp crushed dried chilli flakes
3 big garlic cloves, thinly sliced
50g butter or margarine, in cubes

2 tsp mustard seeds
2 tbsp olive oil
300g spring greens, washed and sliced into ribbons
4 tbsp plain yoghurt

Preheat a large pan over a medium-high heat. Dry roast the coriander seeds, mustard seeds and chilli flakes for about a minute. Drizzle half the oil into the pan, add the garlic, and heat together for about 30 seconds. Pack half the spring greens into the pan and season with salt and pepper, add some olive oil and stir to mix. Add the rest of the spring greens, season with salt and pepper and add another drizzle of olive oil. Cover with a lid and cook for 3-4 minutes, shaking the pan occasionally to stop the greens from sticking. This will enable the greens to steam-cook and fry at the same time. Remove the lid, stir well making sure the spices coat them thoroughly. Add the butter or margarine and stir to melt. Tip the greens into a serving dish and dollop the yoghurt on top with a grinding of pepper.

Romano Pepper and Green Chilli Cornbread

375g polenta
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
50g butter
284ml tub buttermilk
100g Cheddar, grated
2 green chillies, deseeded and sliced

1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
2 Hen Nation eggs, beaten
200ml whole milk
2 tbsp chopped coriander
1 red Romano pepper, deseeded and sliced

Preheat the oven to 190°C / Gas 5. Combine the polenta, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and salt in a large mixing bowl. Melt 30g butter and add to the dry ingredients along with the eggs, buttermilk, milk, cheese and coriander. Mix lightly, then stir in ½ the green chilli and ½ the red pepper. Put the remaining 20g butter in a 23cm ovenproof frying pan, dish or cake tin and place in the oven for a few minutes, until the butter sizzles. Immediately add the cornbread mixture, smoothing the top and pressing the remaining chilli and pepper into the surface. Bake for 35-40 minutes, until well risen, firm and golden. Rest in the pan for 15 minutes before slicing into wedges.

It's always a moment for reflection when I sit down to write this letter. It's Saturday morning, the birds are singing, and I am lazing in the cluttered, wallpapered room, with which I am at peace today, in the glorious morning sun. It has bi-fold doors over a paved area with a pond in the middle. The pond is tranquil now the toads, twenty of them this year, have been in, mated, and gone again. Opposite is my raised bed which turned from snowdrops into daffodils, with my newly planted tulips about to bloom. I think the succession planting is working. Laine is going in and out collecting sticks and chewing them up on the carpet, the blackbirds are pecking at an old avocado. But it's just occurred to me that I haven't seen the squirrel for some weeks. He's usually running back and fore across the garden wall, checking on the bird table, then up the pine tree. Squirrel has gone missing.

So I'm reflecting, very profoundly, on whether to clean the windows, whether to do some weeding, some dusting, some hoovering, whether to visit a friend in Durham. Or indeed just carry on sitting here in my dressing gown with my cup of tea and do nothing at all.

When you move to the country, you have to accept that your days of being dynamic, relevant, and on the cutting edge are over, and the most you can hope to achieve here is nothing. Or perhaps a congenial affinity with nature.

Needless to say, my old sofa is still here. In the end on Monday night at 9pm, I panicked and emailed and left messages all over the Council offices cancelling the collection. It would be like sending my old cow to slaughter. But next day I changed my mind again and tried to cancel the cancellation but I was too late. It's terrible to get so sentimental about objects, especially big ones. A show home is easy to create but a home with soul, that takes some nurturing.

More importantly where is Nick Clegg. As Facebook scrambles about telling the government to start calling the shots and lay down the rules, Nick Clegg is hiding out in a futuristic, spaceship-shaped James Bond bunker under the Arizona desert - new master of our social networking.

"Mark, whatever you do, don't say any of this is coming from me..... you know I'm a standing joke in Britain"

" Don't worry Nick, I know that... won't say a word"

Let's see what this week will bring.....

Kind wishes, Isobel