

Monday 11th June 2012

Dear Customer,

It's been another wet week hasn't it. Someone pointed out to me that it will soon be the longest day – 2nd June ! The bags have been distinctly Mediterranean lately. We hope that the English produce will get a move on and start growing - if only we could have some warm weather. On a brighter note, the soft fruit is starting and we have Sicilian peaches in all the fruit bags and French apricots and cherries in some of the bags as well as Galia melons. The new potato variety is Spunta.

Here are a few recipes you could try with this week, especially if you have an onion backlog:

Stuffed Onions

4 medium onions
2 cloves garlic, crushed
100g breadcrumbs
leaves from 4 sprigs thyme
1 apple, grated

25g butter
salt and freshly ground black pepper
100g strong Cheddar
grated zest of 1 lemon
4-6 tbsp white wine

Heat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. Bring a saucepan of water to the boil and drop in the peeled onions. Leave to simmer for 5 minutes then drain well. Cut in half through the root and scoop out all but 2 layers of the onion. Finely chop the scooped out onion centres. Melt the butter in a frying pan and add the chopped onion along with the garlic and a pinch of salt. Cook over a medium heat for 6-8 minutes until soft. Tip into a bowl, then add the breadcrumbs, cheese, thyme, lemon zest and grated apple. Stir until everything is well combined, then season and mix in with enough wine to make everything come together without getting it too soggy. Stuff the breadcrumb mixture into the onion halves, then pack closely into an ovenproof casserole or roasting tin. Pour 100ml water around the outside and cover closely with a lid or a double sheet of foil. Put in the oven for 25 minutes, then remove the lid and cook for 10 minutes more until golden. Spoon over any sticky juices from the pan before serving.

Peaches with Almonds and Cream Cheese

4 ripe peaches
2 tbsp caster sugar
2-3 drops vanilla extract
a little Demerara sugar

8 tbsp cream cheese or mascarpone
1 tsp grated orange zest
4 tbsp ground almonds

Slice the peaches in half and twist out the stone. In a mixing bowl, stir together the cream cheese, sugar, orange zest and two or three drops of the vanilla extract. Scatter the ground almonds on a baking sheet and toast them in the oven for a few minutes until they smell aromatic and nutty. Fold them into the cream cheese. Put the peach halves, snugly together and hollow side up in a baking dish. Pile the filling on top of the peaches, then dust lightly with Demerara sugar. Bake for 20 minutes or so until the top has just started to turn gold. Serve warm.

Last Thursday I had to come to terms with my 'willingness' to talk to the Methodist Guild. I managed to not think about it until the actual day. I then decided I would turn up early and tell the organiser that I thought it best if we just sat about and had a chat rather than me doing a 'stand-up'. On that basis, I got myself there. I arrived and suggested this to my host and she showed me the posters of me on the walls and led me through to the hall – a pulpit and in front rows and rows of seats. She brushed over my suggestion of a chat – it was obviously a non-starter. The hall filled up and we sat down to prayers. I was then asked if Ernest was coming. That was a stroke of genius. I was on after the hymn. I ran downstairs as they were singing and rang Ernest. Without explaining anything, I asked him what he was doing – watching TV. I said he had to come immediately to the Methodist Hall and told him to park in the car park opposite. They were still singing as he pulled into the car park. I could see him dithering as the parking places all said 'private parking'. 'They're offices – noone there in the evening – just bloody park' I muttered to myself, and gesticulated sternly to that effect. I rushed him up the stairs. The singing had stopped. We entered the hall and Ernest took a seat on the front row. "No Ernest" I said, "Up there" and pointed him towards the pulpit. He didn't know what the hell was going on but went and stood up there. I launched into a very nervous, edgy and spontaneous talk all about Izzy Lane and animal welfare. Each time I faltered I'd pass it over to Ernest who I found – could talk for England – I had problems trying to shut him up so I could start talking again. After the talk were more prayers and another hymn. Then at last, the tea and fig biscuits.

The Reverend came to speak to me. He launched into the problems in Europe - that was more like it - but I kept saying 'oh God' and 'bloody hell', and the more I tried to stop myself, the more it kept popping out. I think he was sympathetic to what I was doing with Izzy Lane and spoke of the poor animal welfare he found when visiting Canada. He said that he had never performed any sheep funerals before but that he would quite like to and gave me his card. I have one very, very old Wensleydale who is the last remaining of my original four. 'Pope', he's called. I love him and it

would seem fitting that he has a proper send-off when that day comes. I would have to film it and share it with you on YouTube.

The Reverend said he's been here for two years and had come up from Salford. He said that whilst he loved Richmond and the countryside and liked doing the weddings and funerals..... I could feel a 'but' coming. It was a very big 'but'. But he didn't like his congregation. He said there were two warring factions and sometimes it's so bad that people storm out of the services. I will have to ask him round for tea to find out more. (I sincerely hope no-one from Richmond reads this letter !).

That was my stupendous week – that and removing about two tons of buttercups, thistles and docks from the garden. And I went to Yorkshire Sculpture Park for the first time. What a great place – a 500 acre park full of Henry Moore, Hepworth, Gormley and Goldsworthy, a good tea room and there's even a Joan Miro exhibition on. (In Yorkshire!) Still feeling sad about Robbie.

I hope all is well with you,

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS I have only just found out that we had some printer problems last week and you may not have received the newsletter. I apologise for this. The newsletters are published on the website each week www.farmaround.co.uk. If you do not use the internet, we can always post them to you if you let us know.