



**Monday 25th June 2012**

Dear Customer,

Another miserable, record-breaking, wet week. Where are those long summer evenings - I've been going to bed at half past nine. The Olympic torch ran past the bottom of my road on Tuesday. Rosemary Wass in an email asked if I was going to see it. I read the email at 1.08pm, googled, and found it was coming past as 1.13pm so stuck Myfa's harness on and bolted down the hill to catch the 'historic', fleeting, 'once in a lifetime', moment.

The English crops are so slow this season. There is still very little UK produce yet but it is imminent. One of the supermarkets is even importing broccoli from California. John at Wass' farm is desperate for sun and dry weather as he battles the weeds. The fat hen, red shank and may weed ("the rubbish") are rampant in the wet and are smothering his other crops. He and his men are in the beds, weeding by hand this morning, having just cut our spring greens which he says are looking fantastic. Soon to be harvested there will be his first spinach, broccoli, baby bunched turnips and kohlrabi. The carrots and potatoes were drilled late because of weather.

Spring greens are delicious stir-fried or steamed and cooked with onions and garlic and a little cream. The stems are sweeter than the leaves and full of vitamins and minerals, they just need a little extra cooking time.

**Spring Greens with Toasted Pine Nuts**

3 tsp sesame oil	50g butter or margarine
½ onion, finely chopped	1 clove garlic, crushed
500g spring greens, shredded	salt to taste
2 tbsp lemon juice	30g pine nuts, toasted

*Heat the oil and butter/margarine in a large pan or wok. Add the onion and sauté for 3 minutes. Turn up the heat and add the garlic and the greens. Stir-fry for 3-4 minutes and add the salt and lemon juice. Stir-fry for another minute. Serve sprinkled with the pine nuts.*

**Apricot, Peach and Apple Crumble (serves 8 – reduce for less)**

450g apples, sliced	450g peaches, sliced
450g apricots, sliced	finely grated zest of ½ a lemon
juice of 1 lemon	150g caster sugar
150g plain flour	125g ground almonds
175g butter, chopped	30g flaked almonds

*Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Put the fruit and lemon juice and zest into an ovenproof dish and stir in 40g of the sugar. To make the crumble: mix the flour, ground almonds and remaining sugar together and rub in the butter until the mixture becomes crumbly. Put the crumble on top of the fruit, scatter the flaked almonds on top and bake for 40 minutes. The top of the crumble should be golden and the fruit tender. If your fruit is still a bit hard but the crumble already golden, cover the top with some foil to stop it getting to dark and bake a little longer. Leave to cool a little and serve with yoghurt, crème fraiche or whipped cream.*

I'm having an anxious morning. According to the forecast, there are supposed to be 3 dry days, just enough of a window to make the hay. I therefore instructed the contractor to cut the field yesterday. The skies are darkening and I am terrified the heavens will open and spoil the sheep's winter food.

I got a very distressed phone call from a tearful Ernest on Friday saying he didn't want anything more to do with the sheep..... he didn't care about them anymore..... he couldn't cope..... it was never ending.

"That bloody Mrs Bennett, the bloody woman, that bloody Mrs Bennett" he kept saying. When I eventually got to the bottom of it, he had been up to Croxdale to check on the sheep and in the corner of the field he found 4 newborn lambs.

In January Mrs Bennett had asked me if I would buy 6 old ewes from her, else she was sending them to slaughter. They arrived, lovely ewes but one with an eye infection – all very old and they were put in a paddock with 10 rescued male lambs which we had had castrated 2 weeks earlier. Mrs Bennett has insisted that her ewes have been nowhere near any of her rams and Ernest is insisting that it is impossible that any of those male lambs could have been fertile. I'm calling the vet today. We've put pics of the lambs on farmaround facebook – they are tiny and gorgeous.

Diane is still in her temporary Farmaround office and getting a taste of London life, living on a barge.

Kind wishes,

Isobel