

Monday 30th July 2012

Dear Customer,

"Have you got any potatoes Romeo ?" It's around this time of year I send my message to Pembrokeshire to get some earlyies. He has sent us a mixture of Casablanca and Coleen which are in the bags this week. Romeo is Italian. His father was caught and taken to Wales as a prisoner of war in WW11. He liked it so much he stayed there and never returned to Italy.

It has to be said – the UK farms are still struggling to get into full production and it's nearly august, which is unheard of.

Some of you will have a kohlrabi in your bag this week (the asteroid). It is actually a brassica. You can peel it, cube it then steam until tender and dress with olive oil or molten butter, a squeeze of lemon and chopped parsley. You could also cut it into batons, sauté until it softens, add a glug of white wine and simmer until tender serving with some chopped dill or tarragon. They are two excellent side dishes. Alternatively you could grate it raw into a salad, use it as a remoulade instead of celeriac, or simply dress with a garlicky, lemony vinaigrette. You could slice it thinly with some chopped red onion, some capers and lettuce. The leaves can be added to soups or stews.

Kohlrabi and Spinach Gratin

1 tbsp sunflower oil

2 medium onions, halved and finely sliced

250g potatoes, peeled and cut into 3mm rounds

200ml double cream

1 handful spinach, chopped

For the topping:

60g fresh breadcrumbs

45g Cheddar or hard goat's cheese, grated

1 knob butter

450g kohlrabi, peeled and cut into 3mm rounds

2 tsp thyme leaves, chopped

200ml water or vegetable stock

1 tbsp parsley

25g butter, melted

Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Place a medium-sized frying pan over a medium heat. Add the oil and butter and wait until it foams then add the sliced onion and a pinch of salt and sauté for 12 minutes, until soft and starting to take on a little colour. Throw in the kohlrabi, potatoes, thyme and season generously with salt and pepper. Cook, tossing the mixture occasionally for another 5 minutes. Pour over the cream and stock, simmer gently until the liquid is reduced by half, stir in the spinach and parsley then place in a lightly buttered gratin dish and level mixture out with a spatula. Place the gratin dish on a baking tray. Blitz together the breadcrumbs, butter and cheese in a blender and sprinkle over the top of the filling. Bake the gratin in a hot oven for about 35-40 minutes until all gold and bubbling.

If you haven't got kohlrabi, you've probably drawn the turnip straw. As with kohlrabi, you can cut into cubes and steam and dress. You could try roasting them in a hot oven – trimmed – baby ones whole and larger ones cut into chunks, drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with sea salt. Roast them in a hot oven until tender and browned – 30-60 minutes depending on size. You can also grate them raw into salads, mash them like, or with, potatoes with lots of pepper and I suspect the above gratin would work well too.

You may have a butternut squash !

Roasted Squash

1 butternut squash

a handful of fresh sage leaves

olive oil

1 dried red chilli

1 stick cinnamon, broken into pieces

Preheat oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Halve the squash, remove and reserve the seeds, then cut squash into slices or chunks with skin left on. Using a pestle and mortar, bash up the dried chilli with a good pinch of salt. Add the whole sage leaves, the pieces of cinnamon and enough olive oil to loosen the mixture. Rub this all over the squash pieces so they are well-covered. Place the squash in one layer on a roasting tray and season lightly with salt and pepper. Sprinkle over the seeds, cover tightly with tin foil and bake for 30 minutes, or until the skin of the squash is soft, then remove the foil and cook for another 10 minutes until the squash is golden and crisp. Remove the cinnamon and serve.

I am going/coming to London this week. I am expecting traffic chaos and to be bathed in a strange glow coming from the East. I loved the opening ceremony. If the world didn't know it before, they know it now – that we are completely mad.

I haven't managed to get very engaged with the sport - have been a bit busy weeding. I saw Rebecca Adlington's 'emotional swim'. What I really like is the diving and the gymnastics. Well I got back to very iffy weather in Richmond. Dark clouds have gathered again this morning. The sheep aren't clipped yet and this week is unlikely again. They can't clip when their fleeces are sodden. I did clip the guinea pigs' toe nails this morning which was remarkable as my eyesight is so bad at close range even the guinea pigs are just a blur let alone their tiny feet. Will have to get a specs upgrade.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel