

Monday 3rd September 2012

Dear Customer,

Commiserations if you're just back from your holidays. I hope you had a lovely time wherever you were and thank you for capturing the sun and dragging it back here for us. You certainly haven't missed much – lots of rain, lots of clapping, a marrow.....

We have posh Lady Balfour potatoes in the bags this week. We're also state of the art with seaweed kale.

Recognisable because it looks like coral cut from the Great Barrier Reef. It's delicious. And we have some pretty cauliflowers - Emerald, Sunset, Romanesco, Graffiti or, if you draw the short straw - ordinary ones. We have charred red globe grapes and pre-roasted red peppers from Andalusia. The squash in some of the bags are Patty Pan which you can halve, scoop out the seeds and bake in the oven drizzled with oil.

There's Royal Oak rhubarb in all the fruit boxes. Cut up 500g rhubarb into 3cm slices and put in saucepan with 160g sugar, 2 tablespoons of water and a tablespoon of lemon juice and put on a low heat, simmer, covered on a low heat for 10-12 minutes until rhubarb is tender. Delicious with yoghurt, crème fraiche or custard. Here's a delicious pizza recipe you could try with your seaweed – perfect for the lunch box:

Kale and Onion Pizza

(makes 3 pizzas, each serving

Dough:

250g plain white flour

1½ level tsp fine sea salt

1 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra

250g strong white flour

1 tsp instant dried yeast

325ml warm water

Topping:

3 tbsp olive oil, plus a little extra

2 cloves garlic, sliced

100g mature cheddar, grated

2 onions, halved and thinly sliced

300g kale, thick stalks removed

salt and black pepper

To prepare the dough, mix all the flour, salt and yeast in a bowl. Add the oil and 325ml warm water, and mix. Lightly flour your hands and knead the dough for 5-10 minutes until smooth and loose. Trickle some oil into a bowl, add the dough and turn it in the oil so it's lightly covered. Cover and leave to rise in a warm place until it has doubled in size (1-2 hours). Preheat the oven to at least 220C/Gas 7. Put a baking sheet in to heat up. For the topping heat the oil in a frying pan and add the onions. Once sizzling, lower the heat and cook gently until golden, adding the garlic halfway through. Shred the kale, stir into the onions and cook for 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Tip the dough on to a lightly floured surface and deflate. Leave to rest for a few minutes, then cut into 3 portions. Roll out one piece as thinly as you can and place on a floured baking sheet. Spread with a third of the kale and onions, and top with a third of the cheddar. Lay the baking sheet on top of the hot one that's already in the oven, trickle with oil and bake for 10-12 minutes. Repeat with the remaining dough, topping and cheese. Serve.

Rhubarb and Custard Tart

28cm blind-baked sweet pastry case

zest of ½ orange

3 tbsp caster sugar

500g rhubarb, cut into 5cm pieces

3 tbsp fresh orange juice

1 vanilla pod, split and cut in half

For the Custard:

250ml double cream

5 egg yolks

1 vanilla pod, split

2-3 tbsp caster sugar

Preheat the oven to 200C/400F. Gas 6. In a roasting tin, mix the rhubarb, zest, juice, sugar and vanilla, then bake for 30-40 minutes, until soft and slightly caramelised. Leave to cool, strain off the juices and remove the vanilla (save juices for stirring into some natural yoghurt). Reduce the oven temperature to 130C/250F/Gas ½. Meanwhile make the custard. Pour the cream and split vanilla pod into a pan and heat until the cream is just scalded. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar, then pour into the cream, whisking to combine. Pour through a fine sieve into a jug. Scrape the seeds out of the pod and into the custard. Spoon the rhubarb into the pastry shell and pour over the custard until it's about 5mm from the top. Bake on a tray in the middle of the oven for 30-40 minutes until the custard is just set but not too firm. Serve cold.

I've been in the wars this week. I sat in a bed of nettles when crouching down behind a hedge to hide from a lamb which I was trying to get back in it's field. Incredible how painful stinging nettles are - formic acid in the bottom. Then later when I was puffing up a cushion I bent my thumb back and heard something snap, I felt sick with shock

and was in agony. I couldn't use the computer, I tried brushing my teeth with my left hand – what a mess – foam everywhere – I had no coordination and certainly no Paralympian courage. That same day, my friend Annie, got poked in the eye by a leaf from her window box. It was so bad she had to go to the Moorcroft Eye Hospital. Not exactly extreme sports – cushion puffing and tending a window box – just goes to show !

It's a glorious, glorious day barely a cloud in the sky. I hope you have a lovely week,

Isobel