



Monday 7^h January 2013

Dear Customer,

Hello 2013, goodbye 'festive season' and good riddance. There is nothing better than humdrum routine. Thank God the tinsel and baubles are back under the stairs and the Christmas tree is back in its natural habitat, the back garden. But it is the ceremonial hoovering of the carpet which clinches it.

Cornish cauliflowers have swum up to London this week and have climbed in the bags. A cargo of Dutch potatoes has washed onto our shores and rolled into the warehouse. We just couldn't go on with British ones – the quality is appalling from blight and rot. While we want to use as much local UK produce as we can – there are limits to how far quality can be compromised. We have Ormskirk's spring greens making their first appearance, and with renewed focus on colour palette to kick off the New Year – purple haze carrots. They are very in voguetrending even.

Roasted Cauliflower (HFW !)

1 cauliflower	2 lemons
flaky sea salt and freshly ground black pepper	3 tbsp olive oil
½ tsp paprika	

Heat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7. Cut the cauliflower into medium florets, rinse and let some of the water remain clinging to the florets. Put them in a bowl and squeeze over the juice of one of the lemons and season well. Put the florets on a baking sheet and toss them with olive oil and more salt and pepper. Dust on the paprika, cut the remaining lemon into 6 segments and scatter these in the tin. Bake for 25-30 minutes, turning once, until caramelised at the edges. Squeeze over the juice from the roasted lemon segments and serve at once scattered with a little flaky sea salt.

Parsnip and Cauliflower Layer Bake

1 large carrot, roughly chopped	450g parsnips, roughly chopped
1 small leek, sliced	½ medium cauliflower, in florets
2 eggs	5 tbsp fromage-frais
1 tsp mixed herbs	2 slices bread, buttered or margarined

Preheat the oven to 180C/Gas 4. Boil the carrots and parsnips and steam the leek and cauliflower, all, until tender. When cooked, drain and mash the parsnips and carrots and spread them over the base of a lightly greased ovenproof dish. The layer the leeks and cauliflower over the mash. Beat the eggs in a bowl, stir in the fromage frais and herbs, and season with salt and pepper. Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables covering them evenly. Cut the spread bread into cubes and sprinkle over the vegetable layers. Bake in the oven for 30 minutes until the bread is crisp and golden brown and the egg has set.

Well, as for my new business idea, I had announced it to my brother. He ignored my texts for several days and then was reasonably positive about it:

"I've been reflecting on your idea..... I don't think it will work..... I don't think people will see the value of this model and so won't use it **even without** a subscription fee. I think you should think again – I believe this has no chance of being a success..."

His assessment of my idea came substantiated by a list of reasons. I happen to have a list of intuitions, instincts and gut sensations which suggest it will..... and quite a lot of reasoning too. Time will tell – I generally feel compelled to see ideas through – even if just to find out.

I haven't seen anything of Ernest since well before Christmas – he gets an unbearable lightness of being in the winter. Lets hope we get summer in March again – at least the starter with a main course later on. I spoke to him on the phone and he was experimenting in the kitchen. Feeling weak, he'd remembered his mother telling him that honey gives one energy. He'd got some cherry tomatoes, pulped them in the blender, heated them in a pan and melted Caerphilly cheese into the sauce. He then poured this over some mashed potato, drizzled honey over it and baked it in the oven. He is absolutely sick of the sheep and I do need to find someone else to look after them. He believes his only escape is if they drop deador he does. Sheep rustling is rife these days. I don't fear that as we are reasonably tucked away but we have the opposite problem - reverse-rustling. We keep getting sheep top-ups. The other day, Ernest told me a black-faced ewe appeared in the field and land-rover tracks backed through the gate. Where better to dump your beloved pet sheep, safe in the knowledge that they will be fed and cared for the rest of their lives !

I hope this letter finds you well, and armed with your resolutions, are ready to embrace a new year.

Kind wishes,

Isobel