



Monday 22nd April 2013

Dear Customer,

Well the English winter crops have all but gone and we are getting into the Mediterranean groove to cover the 'hungry gap' which long-standing customers will be all too familiar with. To any new farmarounders - from april through to late may, UK produce is scarce as it lies between the between seasons. Now is the time when crops are being sown but not harvested so we bring things in from small cooperatives in Spain, Sicily and the South of France where they have already started on their new season crops. They have the sun.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try with the ingredients of this week's bags:

Sweet Potato, Red Pepper and Coconut Soup *Nigella's!*

25g butter or margarine	1 onion, chopped
300g red peppers, chopped	1 clove garlic, crushed
450g sweet potatoes	700ml vegetable stock
400g tin coconut milk	

Melt the butter or margarine in a large pan and cook the onion and garlic over a low heat until soft. Add the coriander and cook for 1 minute. Add the sweet potato and pepper and cook for 5 minutes. Pour in the stock and ring to the boil, cover, then simmer for around 20 minutes. Allow to cool then puree. Return to the pan, add the coconut milk, heat gently until piping hot, then serve.

Creamed Spring Cabbage and Potato Tart with Gruyere

450g shortcrust pastry	350g spring cabbage, shredded and cooked
310g new potatoes, scrubbed and sliced	110g Gruyere cheese, grated
375ml single cream	3 eggs
black pepper	freshly grated nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 180C/Gas 4. Roll out the pastry and use it to line a 23-25cm tart tin with a removable base. Chill the pastry case for 30 mins in the fridge, then line with greaseproof paper or foil and fill with baking beans. Bake blind for 15 minutes. Remove the beans and foil or paper and bake for a further 5-10 minutes to dry out without letting it brown. To make the filling, squeeze all the water out of the cabbage with your hands. Cook the potatoes in a pan of boiling water for 4-5 minutes until just tender then thoroughly drain. Mix together the cabbage, potato and all but 2 tbsp of the Gruyere. Beat the cream with the eggs and generously season with salt, freshly ground black pepper and grated nutmeg. Place the tart tin on a baking sheet. Fill the pastry case with the cabbage and potato mixture, smoothing down. Pour in the cream mixture and sprinkle the remaining Gruyere over the surface. Carefully transfer the tart, on its baking tray, to the oven, and bake for about 35-45 minutes until just set and lightly browned on top. Serve warm or at room temperature.

My sheep were rounded up and brought down from Ernest's land on Wednesday night to the paddock next to my house. They looked like they were just back from the Somme – some limping, wretched and bedraggled from their battle to survive the terrible winter. I sat amongst them and it was strange but those with ailments came to me and showed me them - a little black Shetland with an eye infection, one with a piece of hard mud stuck in the cleft of his foot which lamed him, a Wensleydale with a big abscess on her face. I'd get them moved then I'd get them treated. On Thursday morning Steven Metcalfe, the haulier turned up and I went over to Hornby, to await them. I don't know how emotional they were feeling, but I welled up as the lorry arrived and saw their eyes peering through the slats. I hoped I'd found them a nice place to live and they'd be happy there. It also marked the end of an era. Their life with Ernest as their shepherd. There was no hand-over, Ernest was so done with it! There I was for the first time, on my own with my 400 sheep but actually, it was liberating..... we were free. Just me and them. From now on it would be done my way. They poured out of the lorry and round the perimeter of the first field, followed each other through the gate into the next, then back into the first. The second lorry- load turned up and en masse they set off to explore the whole breadth and depth and the contours of their new terrain. There are about 5 fields, all adjoining but not boring, square, flat fields – they have hillocks and clusters of trees and hedges and walls. After the exploration, they settled and started grazing the new shoots of fresh green grass. It's been three days they are there now and they are so happy and relaxed. I love just watching them and how they react in their social groups, the way they mess about, the sets of identical twins which are never seen apart. One little one won't leave the backs of the garden walls in the first field as she has found some lush grass there even though all the others are hanging out 2 fields away. I've filled a bucket of water for her from the village stream so she doesn't have to trek to the trough where the others are.

Being with them has been a tonic for yet another migraine. I've been getting them really badly since just before Christmas and whereas they used to last 1-2 days, they now last 3-4. They are so disruptive. I didn't emerge from my migraine until yesterday evening, but thankfully just in time for The Voice. So anyway, today, Sunday, I've had post-migraine mania. Cleaning, gardening, shepherding and clearing down an inbox of several hundred emails. I think the migraine came about because last week after a lot of computer problems, Rupert our computer man, decided to take our emails off the server and get them hosted somewhere else. That unleashed horror. I have so many email addresses and all my emails go to three devices - my laptop, my pc and my blackberry. When the change happened everything went berserk, all my emails started appearing in triplicate on my blackberry. My hundred folders on my pc triplicated themselves, my pc stopped mirroring my laptop. It was meltdown. And then Rupert came and took my pc away because I had to have some new software. I watched out of the window as he drove off with it – drove off with all my folders even though they were in triplicate. It was like removing part of my brain. There is nothing more stressful than not being able to file your emails in their correct folder and have hundreds of them accumulating in the inbox not knowing which you've

answered and which you haven't. You have to have a rhythm with emails, it's deadly to allow unanswered ones to accumulate. You have to keep on top of them. Anyway my pc is back and I have finally managed to file everything where it should be and answered all my emails. An empty inbox to start the new week, a clean house, a mowed lawn and the daffodils have come out. Bliss !

Kind wishes,

Isobel