



Monday 1st July 2013

Dear Customer

I hope you are having a good week. Weather here this Sunday morning, moderate to good. It is 6am, I am up early to try and slip my newsletter in before my house guest awakes - no letter last week and still weighing heavily on my conscience. I was away for most of the week and unable to connect to wifi anywhere on my travels. I made a pathetic effort at one on my Blackberry but it had to be aborted. A newsletter requires an A4 sheet on a big screen at the end of one's fingertips .

I am pleased to say that this is good growing weather. Jonnie Watson's lettuces are in the bags this week with some of his radishes and salad bags. John at Newfield's has started his rainbow chard and spinach. What a blessed relief the English season is getting underway. Here is a nice little luncheon recipe you could try with your ingredients:

Braised Eggs with Spinach, Tomato and Yoghurt

2 tbsp olive oil

200g new potatoes, cut in 5mm thick slices

200g tomatoes, chopped

150g spinach or chard, chopped

100g natural yoghurt

salt and black pepper

3 medium onions, thinly sliced

½ red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

1 garlic clove, crushed

4 eggs

1 tbsp coriander, chopped

Heat the olive oil in a medium sauté pan, add the onions and cook on a medium-high heat for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the potatoes, chilli and some salt and pepper, reduce heat and continue cooking and stirring for about 20 minutes until the onions are soft and golden brown and the potatoes are cooked. Add a little water if the vegetables are sticking to the pan. Stir the tomato, garlic and spinach or chard and cook for a few more minutes until wilted. Spread the vegetable mixture evenly over the base of the pan and carefully crack the eggs on top trying not to break the yolks. Cover the pan and cook on a medium heat for 5-7 minutes, or until the egg whites are set. Remove the pan from the heat and spoon over the yoghurt. Sprinkle with coriander and serve with some good bread.

With the sheep neatly clipped the previous day and a sack of wool on my back, I set off to London to peddle my wares. Lorraine and I had a 4pm appointment at the M & S head office in Marylebone. As we descended the M1, it the cloud cover was thickening and it was getting hotter and hotter and closer and closer. What a day to come to London straight off the moors. By Luton, it was 28 degrees and humid to the point of unbearableand I had Myfa in the car. We stopped at motorway services and I marched straight in with Myfa – thinking 'don't anyone dare say a word' . Eventually a woman in overalls spotted me and yelled over "no dogs allowed." I'm not going to leave her in the car to die' I hollered back– everyone looked round and the woman paused for thought, then carried on with her business, while Myfa proudly trotted by my side to Costa. The meeting was importantbut..... I could come to terms with screwing up an M & S meeting but not leaving Myfa to die in the car on a parking meter in North Wharf Road. I was going to have to ask if she could come into the meeting or if we could have the meeting outside on the pavement. Anyway, we had a good and positive meeting then Lorraine and I went our separate ways disappearing into the sweltering city.

The next morning I set off from London on my mini tour which took me to Climping in Sussex. Myfa paddled in the sea and I had a very serious meeting about how our hens were now performing, 12 months after their normal slaughter date. I think they are doing very well - happy and healthy - but the number of grade A eggs is dropping and egg man wants us to take them away and save a new batch in, which would otherwise be killed. That's fine. I just have the problem of finding somewhere to put these 1500 hens, and he would like them out tomorrow. I knew there would be a crunch at some point but didn't know when it would come. Of course noone has ever done this before commercially so there it no data but we are learning, developing the model as we go. I now have to start a commercial production of lemon curds, cakes and quiches with the increasing number of non grade A eggs. I think the first words I spoke when I was born were..... " Please God, don't let me have an easy life".

After that I went to Bognor to meet a natural dyer who is going to be printing on our cruelty-free silk - where the silk worms burst alive and kicking from their cocoons rather than being boiled to death which is what generally happens. .We are going to have fantastic silk loungewear this autumn. Then it was on to Marlborough where I met up with my cousin who had invited me to the Housemaster's barbecue. I try to be minimal when I travel now. No huge suitcases, just a small bag containing a bundle of rolled up clothes. I thought I had sufficient with me. My cousin rang me with wardrobe crisis about the housemasters barbecue. This from a woman who has to dress for occasions almost daily. Indeed the next day she was going to a reception held by the President of Ireland at his residence. If she was having a wardrobe crisis, where on earth did that leave me with my rolled up bundle. Well it left me desperately trawling the charity shops in Marlborough. They were very good ones thankfully – I'm sure many of those clothes had already been through the college gates. Maybe the Housemaster's wife would recognise my outfit.

Half a dozen sets of parents were there with their boys who would be sharing a house from the 1st September. I ended up looking ok. In fact I looked so ok that a set of parents who were Vogue fashion photographers kept going on about how they were sure they knew me and had I modelled. That made my dayer, decade. They ended up saying it must be my spirit. I think I did come across as being very spiritual - so removed was I that I rose ethereally above the occasion. I looked at the boys who would be ruling the world in 20 years. The mini banker, dressed exactly like his father in chinos, purple polo top, loafers and flicked back hair. The photographers told me how overwhelmed they were by how super- bright their son was. He did look it. Then there was the owner of 'Downton Abbey', Highclere, and his son. The boys bonded instantly and my cousin's son ran off with them to play football – just as well they bonded – they would be eating, sleeping and breathing together for the next 5 years. I then went to see my friend in Bath who is having problems with her 3 pigs who have fallen out and are and refusing to go near each other. After that I crossed the Severn Bridge into Wales to spend a quiet 24 hours in my old haunt, The Bear in Crickhowell. I took Myfa up into the Black Mountains and felt worryingly melancholy. I thought I was having a nervous breakdown but maybe I was just tired. Myfa

decided to christen the new car, found a rotting sheep and rolled in it over and over again. She was too far away from me to stop her. I found a hosepipe in the hotel and she had a humiliating, public scrubbing. By next morning the melancholy had passed and I visited my aunt and uncle in Ludlow for lunch then got home late to 1000 accumulated emails.

Now where the hell am I going to put those hens !

Kind wishes,

Isobel