

Monday 23rd September 2013

Dear Customer,

We have the darling of Masterchef, celeriac, in the bags this week. Jamie Oliver would smash it, in that he would peel it, cut it into 1/2" cubes, into a casserole with a glug of olive oil, some fresh thyme leaves, garlic and salt and pepper and cook quickly for around 5 minutes until colouring. Then he would turn it down to a simmer, add 3 tablespoons of water or stock, put the lid on, turn down the heat and cook for around 25 minutes. When tender, he would stir round with a spoon to smash the pieces up a bit. You could also mash your celeriac with potato or potatoes and carrots, roast it in chunks, bake it or slice it thinly or grate it into a salad.

Pear, Potato and Celeriac Gratin

1 knob butter
400g celeriac
salt and freshly ground black pepper
100ml whole milk
1 bay leaf

400g potatoes
2 pears (300g)
400ml double cream
1 clove garlic, peeled and halved
1 good grating of nutmeg

Heat the oven to 170C/335F/Gas 3. Rub a gratin dish with butter. Peel the potatoes and slice them thinly. Cut the outer layer off the celeriac and slice this thinly. Peel, quarter and core the pears and slice each quarter thinly lengthwise. Combine the vegetables and pear in a bowl, season and toss. Arrange the mixture in the gratin dish, pressing it as flat as possible. Put the cream and milk in a saucepan with the garlic leaves, the bay leaf, the nutmeg and plenty of salt and pepper, and heat to just below boiling. Pour over the veg in the dish, taking the bay leaf out. Bake for an hour and a quarter to an hour and a half. The gratin is ready when the top is golden and bubbling and a small, sharp knife easily pierces the vegetables all the way through.

Potato Tart with Garlic, Parmesan and Greens

1kg potatoes
300g fresh breadcrumbs
6 cloves garlic
2 tsp dried oregano
200g grated Parmesan
8 eggs, beaten

500g leaves eg Savoy cabbage, cavolo nero, kale
350ml milk
125ml olive oil
4 tbsp flat-leaf parsley
125g ricotta cheese
extra olive oil and Parmesan to serve

Preheat the oven to 200C/Gas 6 and grease two tins (25 x 20cm) with olive oil. Boil the potatoes with ½ teaspoon salt until tender. Drain and mash by hand then set to one side in a large bowl. Bring a second pan to the boil and cook the greens for 5 minutes, then drain and chop finely. Soak the breadcrumbs in the milk and set aside. In a pan, fry the garlic in the oil for one minute over a low heat, then add the oregano, parsley and greens. Cook for another 2 minutes, then transfer to the large bowl with the potatoes. Add the Parmesan, ricotta and eggs. Mix, adding a teaspoon of black pepper then spoon into the tins equally. Smooth the surface then score with a knife to show where to cut. Squeeze the milk for the breadcrumbs and scatter over the surface. Bake for 30-35 minutes until golden, then remove from the oven. zig-zag some oil over the tart and a little Parmesan. Cut into diamond shapes when cooler, and serve warm. (for just one tin, halve the quantities)

While I sweat and panic, the hens are having one hell of a time. They are having a big party. If you aren't signed up to Farmaround facebook, we are posting lots of pics there so please sign in and 'like' us, for updates. They are joyous in their new home, hanging out with the goats, sheep, pigs, ducks, horses. The only problem for me is that they have decided not to bother with any egg-laying – they are just happy, happy, happy. This would be fine if they weren't costing over £650 a week to keep. It's incredible how much little creatures can eat. The most they can be bothered to lay is an average of one egg each a week. We are hoping this can be improved with some artificial light and more nest boxes but in the meantime it is a financial nightmare. The upside is that we have now rescued a further 1400 birds whose date with the Grim Reaper was in early October, they are now Hen Nation hens, are protected, and will live out their lives.

So friends, you and we, have now rescued a total of 2800 birds since we started this – so congratulations and thank you. The animal haven where our original hens now reside does not have organic status, that is because of the cost of onerous bureaucracy. No chemicals are used on the land and the hens are fed a wholesome, vegetarian 'Heritage' non-GM food. So from now on, your eggs may come from either flock. I hope you don't mind that from next week I am increasing the egg price to £2.35 per half dozen so that the layers can make a contribution to those who won't.

Here is one of your hens.....dancing ! I hope all is well with you, Kind wishes, Isobel



PS If you are just buying eggs and milk / dairy from us, please can I urge you to try and take some organic fruit and/ or vegetables too. It's just that we really don't have the margin on Good Food Nation products to support all our costs. Thank you