

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014**

Dear Customer,

The fog comes but it also goes now too. For the moment, on this Sunday morning, it has gone, pushed away and replaced by a cold wind from the North - from Siberia I think. However, we have lovely Easter bags for you this week – cauliflowers, globe artichokes, aubergines, broccoli, cucumbers and other bits and bobs. Here are a couple of delicious recipes you could try with your cauli:

**Caramelised Cauliflower Soup**

1 cauliflower  
½ tsp fresh grated nutmeg

**For the broth:**

2 tsp olive oil  
1 garlic clove, chopped  
1 tsp dried thyme

**For the topping:**

1 tsp olive oil  
black pepper  
fresh thyme leaves

olive oil  
salt and black pepper

1 shallot or small onion, chopped  
750ml vegetable stock  
1 tsp balsamic vinegar

50g bread, torn into 2.5cm pieces  
60g hazelnuts, toasted and chopped  
shaved Parmesan (optional)

*Preheat the oven to 220C / 450F/ Gas 8. Cut the cauliflower into florets and spread them on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with fresh nutmeg and salt and pepper, and toss everything to coat. Bake for 35-45 minutes, tossing halfway through, until the florets are fully roasted and you see a good amount of brown edges. Remove and cool. While the cauliflower roasts, start the broth. Heat the oil in a saucepan and sauté the shallot or onion and garlic for about 5 minutes to soften. Add the stock, thyme and vinegar and warm through. When the cauliflower is cool to touch, add it to the broth and blend until smooth. Season to taste and return to the pan to keep warm. For the croutons, heat the remaining oil in a small pan, add the torn bread and a pinch of pepper and stir for 5-8 minutes, until crisp with browned edges. Serve each portion with a few croutons, chopped hazelnuts, some fresh thyme leaves and shaved Parmesan if using.*

**Spanish Crisp Cauliflower**

½ cauliflower, broken in small florets  
1 tsp paprika  
1 dessertspoon red wine vinegar  
1 tbs chopped parsley  
1 tbs capers, soaked in cold water for 20 minutes, then squeezed dry and chopped

2 tbs gram flour  
sunflower oil for deep-frying  
salt and black pepper

*Cook the cauliflower florets in boiling water for a few minutes, until just tender. Drain the cauliflower well and while still hot, put in a bowl with the flour, paprika and same salt and pepper. Mix together until the cauliflower is coated with flour. Heat the sunflower oil to 190C in a deep-fat fryer or deep, heavy-based saucepan. Fry the florets in batches until crisp and golden, then remove from the oil and drain on kitchen paper. Sprinkle with the vinegar, chopped capers and parsley, and serve.*

I've been feeling discombobulated all week. Sometime before Christmas I was contacted by the organisers of Women of Letters in Australia saying they were coming to London for the first time and invited me to participate. WOL has developed cult status in Australia - writers, comedienne, artists and 'others', are given a topic and have to write a letter – 'a letter to....'. One then reads ones letter at their event to an intimate audience. It is not recorded and there is no press. The idea being that it is a space to enable people to express things they might otherwise want to remain private. They have a book deal with Penguin and the letters are published, by consent, in a book. They have had three out so far and they have been bestsellers and all proceeds go to an animal charity. They recently did events in NY and LA and this is their first time in the UK. I felt very honoured and since the event was to be in the spring, a long way off, and despite a terror of public speaking, I accepted to do it. I then forgot all about it. That is until a few weeks ago when I received an email saying the date was the 10<sup>th</sup> April and the venue was the Leicester Square Theatre. The line-up included Peaches Geldof, seven other well-known and accomplished women and me. I checked the Leicester Square theatre website, yep, there I was 'Isobel Davies - fashion designer, animal welfare activist, columnist. Columnist? But of course, columnist on the Ffarmaround Newsletter. I went into shock and couldn't read the rest of the email, it just sat there in my inbox for a week. My horror of public speaking knows no bounds. I thought it was going to be in a dark room above a pub, not a West End Theatre. The next week we received the title of our letter 'A letter to the thing I wanted most of all'. I wanted to write something funny and things flitted through my mind but they all felt insincere. On the Sunday, the quiet day before the event on the Thursday I had to address it but there's something about writing a letter, the only thing I kept coming back to over and over again was that I didn't want my parents to die, that was the only truth. It is what I wanted 'most of all'. I would try and get some humour into it and some odd angles but I just ended up sobbing, I couldn't write it and deferred it until the next day. I wondered how the other participants were wrestling with our topic. The next day I got a text saying that Peaches was dead. I was so shocked. I knew straight away the event would be cancelled so I never wrote the letter. Everyone involved with the event was traumatised. So as you can see, an odd week!

There is so much toad spawn in my pond, it almost makes me feel sick. I had netted the pond over the winter to stop the herons feasting on my goldfish and stop the leaves from blowing in and putrefying the water. But one night a month ago I found dozens of toads on my path – they wanted to get into the pond to mate. I quickly removed the netting to allow for the annual week-long toad orgy – which I couldn't watch I hasten to add. And now there is nowhere for my fish to swim as it is so full of gluck. Mmm I wonder where gluck goes when the tadpoles swim off, I guess they eat it!

I hope you have a lovely Easter wherever you are planning to be and whatever you get up to,

Kind wishes,

Isobel