

Monday 29th December 2014

Dear Customer,

Hello, I hope you are having a nice, restful holiday.

We're into the last gasps of 2014. A year is a strange thing. It starts and it ends. Life, a continuum which spirals through the seasons, we like to chop it up into years, manageable bites that close off one period and open up a new one. At midnight on 31st December, we can slam the door shut on anything we've messed up, anything horrible and have a brand new start. We chuck in the cards and are dealt a new hand. How cool is that !

Some delicious recipes here to refocus you back on the straight and narrow - away from the trifles, twiglets and truffles. It is terrible what Christmas does to one's diet. It starts on Christmas Eve, normal meal times are replaced by freestyle food anarchy. Christmas morning, we know lunch is coming, albeit late, we're not used to big meals during the day so we skip breakfast to leave room for lunch, and instead spend the next six hours gorging on mince pies, chocolate, handfuls of crisps... biscuits... nuts. And so it goes on.....

Leeks with Mustard and Mascarpone on Garlic Toast

2 medium leeks, washed, cut in half lengthways and cut into ¼" half moons
30g butter
150g mascarpone or goat's cheese
1 tsp mustard
4 slices crusty bread

100ml single cream
2 tbsp parsley, finely chopped
black pepper
1 clove garlic, peeled

Melt the butter in a saucepan on a gently heat and add the leeks. Simmer gently for 5 minutes until the leeks are tender then turn heat up to reduce any moisture in the pan. Turn the heat down again and add the cream. Boil for a minutes until the mixture looks nice and thick. Add the cheese and beat it well into the mixture until melted and bound together. Season with pepper, parsley and mustard. Toast the bread then rub the slices with garlic, put the leek mixture on the toast and serve.

Spring Greens with Lemon Dressing

400g spring greens, thick stalks removed and shredded
zest and juice of 1 lemon

2 garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp olive oil

To make the dressing, mix the garlic, lemon juice and zest, olive oil and some seasoning together. Bring a large pan of water to the boil and cook the greens for about 5 minutes until tender. Drain well, toss through the dressing and serve.

Sauteed Spring Greens

400g spring greens
1 tbsp demerara sugar
a few spring onions, trimmed and sliced
salt and pepper

20g butter
½ tsp red wine vinegar
75ml crème fraiche

Remove any tough stems and shred the greens finely. Melt the butter gently in a pan and add the greens along with the sugar and vinegar. Cover and cook gently for 20 minutes, shaking the pan from time to time until tender. Drain off any excess liquid then mix in the spring onions and season to taste. Cover and cook for 5 minutes then take off the heat and stir in the crème fraiche. Turn into a warmed serving bowl and serve immediately.

Grilled Potato Slices

4 large potatoes, scrubbed clean but not peeled
2 sprigs fresh thyme
60g butter or margarine, diced

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
4 tbsp olive oil
salt and pepper

Boil the potatoes in a pan of lightly salted water for about 30 minutes, or until tender. Drain the potatoes and set aside to cool until they can be handled. Peel the potatoes then slice them thickly into a bowl. Add the garlic, thyme, oil and seasonings then gently toss the ingredients together to mix, being careful not to break the potato slices. Lay the slices on a baking tray and place a small piece of the diced butter or margarine on each. Place the potatoes under a hot grill and cook until browned on top. Turn the potatoes over and cook for 5 minutes more, or until crisp. Sprinkle with salt and serve immediately.

Van keys are one of our biggest nightmares at Farmaround. There is nothing quite like the phone call from a driver saying he has lost his key. A few weeks ago Terry's van key snapped in the ignition, the RAC were called and hundreds of pounds later he had a new key. The following week he called Lorraine from his round to say that he'd lost his new key somewhere between the van and the customer's door – about 15ft. Our customer came out to join the search, they searched every inch. It had gone. Lorraine suggested he get in the van and take his clothes off to check. The RAC were called, it would be a 4-hour wait. A few hours later Terry, still looking for they key, called to say he'd just found it...in his back pocket. Nice one Terry and thankfully just before the RAC arrived. I can't decide if that beats our driver who was cheerfully crossing the footbridge to take a delivery to Eel Pie Island, whistling, and spinning his van key round on his little finger, it whizzed off into the Thames....plop. Our whole business relies on the integrity and whereabouts of the van key.

I'm on with my list of New Year's resolutions. I'm trying to get ahead of myself and get some of them under my belt before the clock strikes 12. To clean my car inside and out is number one on the list. It has gone beyond being fashionably grubby into the realms of being humiliatingly filthy.

Kind wishes,

Isobel