

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015**

Dear Customer,

**HEN NATION EGGS ARE BACK NEXT WEEK – SEE BELOW:**

Hello, I hope this finds you well. We have parsnips, leeks, Savoy cabbages and Maris Piper potatoes from peaty Ormskirk and our carrots are from the peaty fens of Lincolnshire. The pears are French Louise Bonne and to add variety, we are trying the first Spanish strawberries, which is always terrifying as they are so fragile so please let us know if you have any problems with them. I hope you won't. Here are some easy, tasty recipes you could try this week:

**Roast Potatoes, Carrots and Parsnips ( Jamie Oliver's )**

600g potatoes	450g parsnips
250g carrots	½ bulb garlic
sea salt	freshly ground black pepper
large sprig rosemary	olive oil

*Preheat the oven to 200C /400F /Gas 6. Peel the vegetables and halve any larger ones lengthways. Break the garlic bulb into cloves, leaving them unpeeled, and bash them slightly with the palm of your hand. Pick the leaves off the rosemary. Put the potatoes and carrots into a large pan of salted boiling water, bring it back to the boil and cook for 5 minutes, then add the parsnips and cook for another 4 minute. Drain in a colander and allow to steam-dry. Take out the carrots and parsnips and put to one side. Fluff up the potatoes in the colander by shaking it around a little. It's important to chuff them up to have the crispy bits. Put a large roasting tray over a medium heat and add a few generous lugs of olive oil and add the garlic and the rosemary leaves. Put the vegetables into the tray with a good pinch of salt and pepper and stir them around to coat them in the flavours. Spread them out evenly in one layer. Put them in the oven for about 1 hour or until golden and crisp.*

**Savoy Cabbage and Chestnut Saute**

1 tbsp olive oil	half a savoy cabbage, finely sliced
150g cooked chestnuts, finely chopped	150g tinned chickpeas, drained
freshly grated nutmeg	sea salt and pepper
splash soy sauce or truffle oil (optional)	

*Heat the olive oil in a deep-sided frying pan on a medium heat. Add the chestnuts and chickpeas and cook for 5 minutes. Add the cabbage and continue to cook until the cabbage has softened slightly, taking care not to brown it. Season well with a good grating of nutmeg, sea salt, plenty of pepper and soy or truffle oil if using.*

I guess I've been a bit miserable and flat these last weeks, as you probably noticed as I'm not very good at feigning anything. However there's nothing quite like driving past a 'To Let' sign on a Garden Centre to rouse oneself from a winter stupor. I knew the moment I saw it that I was having it. That we have no money is irrelevant. The lease is in the process of being drawn up. Farmaround will move there, we will open a Farm Shop and turn the café vegetarian.....and sell Scandinavian pods. We will start baking bread and making jams, curds and chutneys, soup and ready meals. The site is vast and we will do yoga and tai chi classes, language classes, book club, show art films, have an Izzy Lane boutique. The possibilities are endless. I emailed Diane, Lorraine and Eve to give them the news and not one of them responded to my email.

I've got a headache from overthinking – sleepless nights doing the makeover, mentally imaging it all.

At least now when any of you are coming up or down the A1 or visiting the Dales we will have somewhere to welcome you with a special Good Food Nation afternoon tea, a yoga stretch and a Russian class. I almost fancy running some 'Back to School' classes for adults – a chemistry class, a physics class – revisit gravity and the periodic table - for all those who were too distracted the first time round. I'd be there in the front row.

Anyway, I have good news. The Hen Nation eggs are back next week so from next Thursday's delivery onwards, if you have eggs on your order, they will automatically resume and if they aren't on your order and you want some, please add them. This is a new flock of hens. All the 2,800 from the 2 previous flocks have now gone into retirement so thank you everyone for saving these little animals lives.

I'm sure I've told you many times how pioneering we are ☺. Noone knew what happened to the egg-laying of commercial flocks of hens beyond 68-72 weeks, their normal slaughter date. The industry graph stops there. We now know what happens. For the next year the hens continue to lay moderately well but after that the egg laying becomes erratic. It got to the stage where we were paying over £2,500 a month to feed and look after the hens but what they were laying could not justify the labour of collecting, packaging and transporting the eggs. It was a very costly for us, but someone had to do it. If we were bigger and more robust as a company, the size of Abel and Cole or Riverford for example, then this cost would have been easily absorbed but it was hard for us. All of these hens have now been rehomed / retired with families where the erratic nature of their laying is less of an issue and there are not labour, housing and transport costs involved.

With this knowledge, we are now working with Fresh Start for Hens. This means that our new flock, at the end of their commercial laying, Fresh Start will rehome them with families. Twenty pence from each half dozen eggs will be saved as a fund for each hen, their little retirement package, and will be given to Fresh Start for their work to ensure that nice homes are found for them..... and that they have that fresh start where they are loved and pampered for the rest of their lives. The price of our eggs will be £2.45 per half dozen.

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS If you know of any foolhardy, risk-taking investors, please send them my way !