



Monday 13TH June 2016

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. Utterly grey, damp and miserable here are as usual. I haven't been watching any of the football amid the violence but I have been noticing the crystal clear blue skies behind the commentators' heads in Marseille. But who would rather be there as we enter the countdown to our fate. The eyes of the world and of Europe are on us.

I checked out the website of Liberation, the French newspaper to see what they were saying. Their long Saturday piece focused only on the '...l'humeur Britannique...' – on Nigel Farage's tie with 'GO' printed on it; on Cameron declaring that World War III will start on the 24th June; on the 'Krauts for Brexit'; and the spoof video of two girls in union jack t-shirts singing '.....they've taken all our money and they've taken all our fish.....'

Apart from Merkel and Wolfgang imploring us there has been a very loud silence from other European leaders – they seem to be quietly watching. I must admit, the more my mind has been focused on the EU, the more concerned about it I am becoming. I am fearful of leaving, fearful of remaining. To starve people of democracy never ends well, not in the long run. It seems to have crushed the life out of the Mediterranean countries. They gained infrastructure along 50% youth unemployment. The 'peasant' countries, 'peasant' economies have the longest life expectancies, have seemingly the best qualities of life. Shaking their olives off trees, running produce into the local market on the family donkey, long siestas, wonderful simple food, happy healthy families running round in the sun, diving into the sea – a lifestyle many of us yearn for. Why would they want the northern industrial powerhouse model. The EU was about rationalisation, industrialisation, success, and the peasant economy model was inefficient. Better to industrialise food production, to centrally organise it. Turn Spain into a giant poly-tunnel to grow Europe's tomatoes. The French were paid to grub up their vineyards, we were paid to grub up our ancient apple orchards. I am very European, I love Europe but I don't like the unelected, invisible grey mass which is in control and the common denominator factor.

What's our speciality – great – we're Europe's meat factory – as well as carcasses we supply the lambs to be live exported thousands of miles across Europe and there's nothing we can do to stop it.

We have pak choi in the bags this week and here are some tasty recipes you could try with it:

Pak Choi and Noodle Soup (serves 4)

1 litre vegetable stock

1 small red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

1 tbsp soy sauce

2 heads pak choi, shredded

2 tbsp chopped fresh coriander

1 tsp root ginger, finely chopped

juice of ½ a lime

50g chestnut mushrooms, finely sliced

150g dried pine thread noodles

kettle of boiling water

Put the stock, ginger, chilli, lime juice and soy sauce in a large saucepan and simmer for 5 minutes over a moderate heat. Stir in the mushrooms and pak choi and continue cooking for another 5-7 minutes or until the green stems are cooked but not soggy. Place the noodles in a bowl, pour boiling water over them and stir to separate the strands. Leave according to packet instructions. Drain off the water and divide the wet noodles between the 4 warm bowls. Top up with the soup and finish with chopped coriander.

Stir-Fried Broccoli and Pak Choi with Chilli and Ginger

1 tbsp vegetable oil

200g small broccoli florets

½ red chilli, deseeded, finely sliced

200g pak choi, leaves separated

1 tsp toasted sesame oil

2 cloves garlic, finely sliced

1 thumb-sized piece ginger, finely shredded

1 tbsp soy sauce

Heat the vegetable oil in a large wok and add the broccoli. Add a splash of water to help steam the broccoli then stir-fry it quickly over a high heat for around 2-3 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger and stir-fry for a further 1-2 minutes. Add the pak choi leaves and soy sauce and fry for another minute or so until the greens have started to wilt slightly. Remove the wok from the heat and serve immediately.

Roast Pak Choi

2 pak choi, halved in the middle

1 tsp soy sauce

a sprinkling of Nanami Togarashi (a mix of chilli pepper, orange peel, black and white sesame seeds, ginger and seaweed) – if you don't have this, you could improvise !

½ tbsp. olive oil

Preheat the oven to 220C/ 425F/ Gas 7. Line a baking tray with foil. Lay the the pak choi in it cut-side up. Drizzle with the olive oil and soy sauce and a sprinkle of the Nanami Togarashi or your improvised equivalent. Put in the oven to roast for about 20 minutes until it starts to crisp and brown.

kindest wishes,

Isobel