



Monday 3rd October 2016

Dear Customer,

The glorious sunny weather continues here in the Dales, it's a revelation. But what's this about 4 months of snow – hopefully just a newspaper-selling headline. There is now a nip in the air though, the season is turning. We have delicious kale in the bags this week to boost our immune systems. It is high in magnesium - good for blood circulation, nerves and bones. It contains 5 times more calcium than sprouts and lots of vitamins A, C, K, antioxidants galore, and a heap of iron. You could try making your own crispy seaweed with it, aka Crispy Kale, and for future reference you could also try this recipe with Savoy cabbage:

Baked Crispy Kale

200g kale, shredded	1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp sesame seeds	¼ tsp salt
2 tbsp Demerara sugar	

Preheat the oven to 190C/ Fan 170C/ Gas 5. Put the kale in a large bowl and mix in the olive oil, salt and sesame seeds. Spread out on a large baking tray then sprinkle over 2 teaspoons of sugar. Bake for 7 minutes then remove from the oven and give it a toss. Sprinkle over the remaining sugar and cook for a further 7 minutes until crispy. Mix well before serving.

Kale, Butter Bean and Orange Soup

olive oil	1 large onion, chopped
1 potato, peeled and finely sliced	1 carrot, peeled and finely diced
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped	½ chilli, finely chopped
sprig rosemary, finely chopped	pinch ground cinnamon
juice and zest of 1 orange	1 litre vegetable stock, warmed
2 x 400g tins butter beans, drained and rinsed	4 large handfuls shredded kale
large handful almonds, chopped	pinch chilli powder
drizzle of honey	

Add a splash of olive oil to a saucepan and add the onion, potato and carrot. Cook over a low heat until the onions are glossy and tender. Stir in the garlic, chilli, rosemary, cinnamon, orange juice and zest. Cook until the orange juice reduces to a sticky glaze. Add half the stock and the beans. Let it gently bubble until the potatoes and carrots are tender. Add the kale and cook for a few minutes. Whizz in the food processor until smooth, season to taste, adding more orange or chilli if needed. Fry the chopped nuts in a little olive oil over a medium heat until just golden. Add a pinch of salt, a hint of chilli powder and a trickle of honey. Once the honey has formed a sticky glaze, remove from the pan. Scatter nuts over each bowl of soup.

I've been doing a lot of sheep these last weeks since being on my own with them. The best of it is they are funny, make me laugh, give me solace, the worst of it is that I am on the frontline of finding the dead. As you know I have rescued well over 600 sheep, probably more like 1000, and it all started 13 years ago. Many were lambs, many were already middle-aged, so as you can imagine, death is a regular and increasing occurrence. I often wondered how these days would unfold, would I have hundreds of ancient sheep hobbling about and how it would be to have to endure so much death.

I walked round the flock yesterday and took photos. Most of them are incredibly fat and fit – huge barrels on little short legs – just how I like them as we head for winter. This puts paid straight away to the notion that old sheep can't eat when they lose their teeth – half of mine have lost all their teeth, their gums harden and they continue as normal. I am a world expert now on elderly sheep and their natural death process. They are lucky, they die quickly, it is never long and lingering. I think they have an in-built evolutionary mechanism to 'switch off'. In the Wensleydales in the lead-up, the last weeks, they drop weight, they are ravenous and no amount of food satiates them or puts on the pounds. They carry on as normal, quite happy, gorging themselves, startlingly emaciated and then they lay down and die. In the context of a long 12 to 13 years of happy life it's not a bad exit. I'd be quite happy with that.

I had two current such Wensleydales in the flock and this weekend both died. In the middle of the week one of them had entered into the process but was rudely awakened by me when I found it lying flat out on the side of a hillock. I thought he has died. I could tell he had been there a while, tufts of fleece on the grass as if the crows had already started on him. He was about to go but when I sat down next to him he roused and put his head up. I told him not to die there with the crows and that he should go into the barn. The crows peck their eyes out. He got to his feet and stumbled off, started pulling at grass. The next morning he was dead, in the barn.

The other ancient, thin Wensleydale was hanging about in the village field with cottages backing onto it and a footpath crossing it. I think one of the villagers was feeding him over the wall. I saw a pile of carrot peelings, half a cucumber, an apple. I pulled up to find him there, on his own in that field, the other sheep were the other side of the farm. I took him a bowl of sheep mix and went and sat in the car as it was raining, I watched him. A couple came walking down the footpath and gasped and looked horrified seeing this bony sheep. I don't know what they said but I heard the word 'elderly'. I happened to be sitting in the car eating a McDonalds veggie burger which I'd grabbed on my way past. They gave me a filthy look. There was I stuffing myself in front of my emaciated sheep. Should he should be euthanased? No, he absolutely should not be, he will die when he is ready to die and I will not take his life unless I see that he is suffering and he was not suffering, he was enjoying his food and the sun on his back. It is very easy for people to look in from the outside and make judgements when they have no idea what is going on. People in the Dales aren't used to seeing old sheep, they are all dead by the age of 5, most by 5 months. I'm sure it's easier,

looks tidier, if you cull out the old and unsightly. But we have something profound me and my sheep and I promised them that they would live out their whole natural lives and that is what we do. I will never get used to their deaths, it's hard every time, but I will never take their lives, not unless they need me to.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind regards,

Isobel