



Monday 21st November 2016

Dear Customer,

It's very wintry here – very freezing - the type of cold that chills to the bone.

I am pleased to say that you have sprout tops in your bags this week. They have the sweetness of young spring greens with a hint of brussel and until recent years have been discarded despite being the best part of the plant. Along with kale, they are part of the green renaissance. They are hot. Sprout tops have very high levels of glucosinolate compounds, believed to protect against cancer. These compounds also help de-toxify the body. They are full of vitamins, particularly vitamin K and vitamin C. You can cook them as you would any other green - steamed or boiled, stir-fried or added to stews and soups. You could try roasting them by tossing with olive oil and salt and roasting until crisp.

Sprout Tops with Hazelnuts

75g shelled hazelnuts
50g butter or margarine

bag sprout tops
1 tbsp lemon juice

Toast the hazelnuts in a preheated oven at 200C/ Fan 180F/ Gas 6 for 6 minutes until golden brown. Coarsely chop and set aside. Bring a pan of salted water to the boil and discard any tough leaves and stems from the sprout tops. Tear the remaining leaves into big pieces. Cook them in the boiling water for 3-4 minutes until just tender. Drain well and return to the pan. Melt the butter or margarine in a small frying pan. Once hot and browning, tip it over the cooked greens, add the hazelnuts, lemon juice, salt and pepper and toss well together then serve.

Baked Swede

500g swede
500ml vegetable stock

35g butter or margarine

Peel the swede and cut it into small pieces no bigger than 1cm. Melt the butter or margarine in a shallow pan over a moderate heat and add the swede. Do not stir or move around the pan for a minute while the sides colour. Then turn them. When they are golden brown around the edges, pour in the stock and bring to the boil. Turn down the heat to a simmer and cook until the swede is soft enough to squash with a fork and the liquid reduced to a buttery juice. Serve straightaway with a good grind of black pepper and salt.

Leek and Romano Pepper Tagliatelle

200g tagliatelle
1 leek, cut into 8cm lengths then cut into ribbons
1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed
a few sprigs of fresh thyme
pinch dried chilli flakes or fresh chilli

1 tbsp olive oil
2 Romano pepper, deseeded and cut into thin strips

Optionally you can add sautéed mushrooms, seeds, olives, nuts or and/or grated cheese.

Cook the pasta according to packet instructions. Meanwhile warm the oil in a large frying pan and add the leek and pepper strips, garlic and thyme and cook for 5-8 minutes until tender. Drain the pasta and return it to the pan. Stir in the leek and pepper mixture, season well and sprinkle with chilli and drizzle with more olive oil.

Richmond was overwhelmed by the news that the Co-op, our only supermarket, was selling up. Super-controlled by planning it had built a very nice stone building to house itself in 12 years ago. There was great speculation, and in keeping with the politics of the day, divisions opened up. There were those who hoped for a Morrisons or a Sainsburys while others longed for a Waitrose. Then came the announcement, it was going to be Lidl. For some it meant a cheap weekly shop, for others it was the final nail in the coffin.

It is such a pretty Georgian town with cobbled streets, the Norman castle, the river Swale cutting through it and the dramatic waterfall, spectacular views, but the shops are abysmal and a huge disappointment to any visitors – we're used to it. The weekly market sells only biscuits past their sell-by date and grade 2 Spanish vegetables. It's no Ludlow. There are about 8 charity shops which circle the marketplace, a frozen store similar to Iceland, one little deli, a WH Smiths, a bank, a few tea rooms, a few other odds and sods and that's about it.

On Finkle Street there is a small art gallery and a perpetual churn of interesting shops which open up and are shut within months. My heart sinks whenever I see a new store. You know how much they are paying in business rates, you know they have signed a 5 or 7yr lease, have probably given personal guarantees to secure the funding, and you know that it will only be a matter of a few weeks before their dreams, optimism and business plan are in tatters. I walk past and pray for them. The latest arrival is selling olive oil at £20 a bottle. They haven't a hope in hell.

I think we are soon to be gobbled up by adjacent Catterick Camp – already the biggest military camp in Europe. Bases all over the North are being closed down and moving to Catterick which is to receive another 2000 military personnel and a billion pounds of investment. We are well-protected but also a target. I am particularly vulnerable sitting on the hill, first house in any bombing raid coming from the East.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel