

Monday 23rd January 2017

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. We have celeriac in the bags this week, but before your heart sinks, take a look at these delicious recipes you could try with it. And on top of that it is full of magnesium, potassium, vitamin C, B vitamins, phosphorus, iron, calcium, copper and much, much more. It can be roasted, stewed, mashed or grated raw into a French remoulade, tossing it with a mix of 7tbs mayonnaise, 3 tbs Dijon mustard and the juice of 1 lemon.

Whole Roasted Celeriac

1 celeriac
coarse sea salt
2 garlic cloves

olive oil
few sprigs thyme
butter or margarine to serve

Preheat the oven to 200C/ Gas 5. Wash the celeriac to remove any dirt. Pat dry with kitchen paper. Place on a large sheet of foil on a baking tray. Rub it all over with olive oil, sprinkle liberally with salt and add a few thyme sprigs and garlic cloves. Wrap the foil tightly around the celeriac to seal it. Roast for 2 hours then unwrap the foil from the top and roast for a further 20-30 minutes so the skin crisps up a little. The celeriac should feel soft when you squidge it. To serve, cut open and add a large knob of butter or margarine like a giant jacket potato. Serve.

Potato, Celeriac and Carrot Burgers

1 celeriac, peeled and chopped into small chunks
225g potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped
1 tsp dried thyme
4 tbs plain flour

1 tsp lemon juice
sunflower oil
225g carrots, peeled and grated
75g breadcrumbs
1 free-range egg, beaten

Put the potatoes and celeriac in a saucepan of water, bring to the boil and cook for 10 minutes until tender. Drain, place in a bowl and crush with a fork until roughly mashed. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in large frying pan and fry the onion until softened. Stir in the carrots and thyme and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the crushed potatoes and celeriac and stir until mixed. When cool shape the mixture into 4 round flat cakes. Dust with flour, dip in beaten egg and coat in the breadcrumbs. Chill the cakes in the fridge for about an hour so they firm up. Shallow fry the burgers in hot oil for about 5 minutes until golden brown on both sides, turning once. Drain on kitchen paper and serve on own with a crisp salad or in toasted burger buns with lettuce, tomatoes and onion slices.

Celeriac Soup with Hazelnuts and Crispy Sage

olive oil
1 celeriac, peeled and roughly chopped
few sprigs thyme, leaves picked
400g tin butter beans

1 leek, trimmed and finely sliced
4 apples, cored and roughly chopped
1.5 litres vegetable stock
salt and pepper

To serve:

handful of hazelnuts
few sprigs fresh sage, leaves picked

100g butter

Heat a splash of oil in a large pan then add the leek and cook over a medium heat for 10 minutes until soft and sweet. Add the celeriac, apples and thyme and cook for 2-3 minutes then add the stock, butter beans and season well. Simmer over a low heat for 20-30 minutes until the celeriac is tender then remove from the heat and blitz with a hand blender until smooth. Toast the hazelnuts in a frying pan until golden brown then remove from the pan and put to one side. Add the butter to the pan and once it is hot add the sage and fry until it is crispy and butter is light brown. Keep the heat low for this last bit and take the pan off as soon as you see the butter turn brown. Ladle into bowls and top with the sage and hazelnut brown butter.

On Saturday I received the text which I had been expecting for the last month. It was from the landlady at Hornby where the sheep have lived happily for the last 5 years. In early December someone sent me a scan of a newspaper clipping announcing the death of Mrs Ramsay at the age of 92yrs – the grand matriarch of the Ramsay family and owner of the farm. When the sheep moved in I was told that when Mrs Ramsay senior died, the farm would be sold by the beneficiaries and that they would be safe there until then. So then has now come and when I was summoned I knew it would be to receive our notice.

The sheep have 70-acres of parkland which wrap around the farmhouse – with hillocks, trees, hedges, 2 large barns to shelter in, a paddock adjacent to the village where they hang out in late summer to eat the Cox Pippins which drop from the villagers gardens, another with a fresh stream running through it. It's a really delightful place and I was so lucky to get it. Grazing of any description is almost impossible to find round here let alone somewhere like this. And any that does come available, it is usually just from 1st April to 1st December as per the dictates of a certain EU subsidy - but what of winter grazing and of winter housing. So I have until the 27th May. It may sound a long time but in these terms it isn't and it will fly. I have previously had to take my sheep down to Exmoor to get grazing so heaven knows where they will end up now, and I shall have to go with them. I did a quick search – farms to rent in France – they are a fraction of the price. I wonder if they'd fancy the Loire Valley or the Limousin.

Kind wishes,

Isobel