



**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. I am still in France. It is so hot here, too hot to be out or do anything. My bedroom leads onto a small terracotta courtyard which is like a clay oven. I went for some shade under the fig tree where the car is parked, it felt much cooler there, I switched the car on for a temperature check and it was 35C. I can only imagine that the courtyard temperature must be at least 45C. I can't remember what a cloud looks like. My ideal temperature is 24-25C. Anyway, best for me not to think about it as there is no sign at all of the temperatures coming down in the forecast. The BBC weather is about 10 degrees adrift every day, one has to check the French sites.

As for insect bites, things have improved. For about 4 days not a single bite but then I got complacent ....cocky, and started going out without my vinegar on and got another 8 bites so I am back to spraying myself with 50% apple cider vinegar / 50% water. It really works actually and it's cheap and non-toxic. It's great to spray on bites too.

We had no wifi and a TV with just French channels so couldn't watch the British election, just the headlines on the French news. It is interesting to hear their take on British politics. What a mess. Yesterday it was the 'Legislatives' here and the 'En Marche' landslide. I love Macron, I wish we could have him instead.

So I am here in France, trying to switch off, have a holiday, recharge my batteries, get a new perspective on things. We are staying in Ramatuelle now and last night went up to the medieval hilltop village of Gassin where there is the narrowest road in the world which only one person at a time can fit down. We had an ice cream, it was 10pm and still 29C. A man was sitting in his car playing saxophone, improvising along to some jazz on his radio. He was brilliant. We sat on the wall to listen a while, beneath us the twinkling lights of the Cote d'Azur the simmering Mediterranean sea.

We have kohlrabi in the bags this week. They can be grated raw into salads, used as an alternative to celeriac in a remoulade, or simply dressed in a garlicky, lemony vinaigrette. You could peel it and cut it into cubes then steam it lightly until just tender and dress with melted butter or olive oil, a squeeze of lemon juice, some chopped parsley and salt and pepper. You could cut it into thick batons, saute in butter or margarine until slightly softened and add some white wine to it and simmer until tender, stirring in a bit of dill or tarragon. You can also add it to stews and soups.

If you fancy a gratin with your kohlrabi you could try this:

### **Kohlrabi and Potato Gratin**

*200ml double cream*

*100ml milk*

*2 sprigs lemon thyme, leaves only*

*2 garlic cloves, crushed*

*500g potatoes, peeled and very finely sliced*

*1 kohlrabi, peeled and finely sliced*

*3 tbsp Parmesan or other cheese*

*salt and pepper*

*Preheat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4. Grease a gratin or baking dish with a little butter. Put the cream, milk, lemon thyme and garlic in a pan to heat until steaming. Turn off the heat and leave to infuse for 15 minutes. Layer the potatoes and kohlrabi in the gratin dish, seasoning each layer. Pour over the infused cream. Cover with foil and bake for about an hour or more until the veg is tender. Remove the foil and scatter over the cheese. Bake until golden.*

When we decided to do cross-country across France and avoid the autoroutes I was suddenly filled with the horror that driving through half the towns in France, that we might pass an abattoir. I remember staying with a friend once in Belfort and there was an abattoir right in the centre of the town as one would find an indoor market. I have no idea if it is still there. I will never forget it. However, we did not pass one, nor did we pass one single lorry with animals on. We were lucky, but France is changing. On Saturday there was a 4000-strong 'abolish meat' demonstration in Paris and a certain Fabien was on it. I am planning to visit him in Paris on the way back. A few weeks ago I did a phone interview with 'Science et Vie', their main science and technology magazine. She wanted to discuss slaughter-free farming and it is she who introduced me to Fabien who has just started to organise slaughter-free egg production here and is acquiring a farm in the Limousin.

The shops and even the garages are full of organic food now – Casino, one of the big supermarket chains, has its own label organic food. There are TV ads for organic food in each ad break and vegetarian and vegan products seem widely available. I thought this would never happen here but it is happening quickly, there is a revolution underway.

It's 9.30am Monday morning and already almost too hot to go outside, but I have to go to the boulangerie.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel