



**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

Dear Customer,

Weather absolutely horrendous – dark, blustery and rainy ever since my last letter – dull, grey and miserable for as far as the BBC forecast can see. It's good growing weather though. Less good for shearing sheep, which is supposed to happen this week. It is likely to be cancelled as the rain electrocutes the sheep shearers.

The English season is in full swing, we have lots of beautiful local produce in the bags this week and here are a few recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

#### **Spinach and Puy Lentil Soup**

2 <i>tbsp olive oil</i>	1 <i>onion, peeled and finely sliced</i>
1 <i>carrot, finely diced</i>	1 <i>tsp thyme</i>
3 <i>cloves garlic, peeled and minced</i>	4 <i>tomatoes, diced</i>
150g <i>Puy lentils, rinsed</i>	1.3 <i>litres vegetable stock</i>
150g <i>spinach, tough stems removed, leaves chopped</i>	<i>small bunch parsley, finely chopped</i>

*In a large saucepan warm the olive oil over a medium-low heat. Add the onion, carrot and thyme and saute gently for five minutes. Add the garlic and tomatoes and saute for a minute more. Tip in the lentils, stir, then add the stock and a little salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 25 minutes, or until the lentils are tender. Add the spinach and parsley and simmer for 5 more minutes or until spinach tender, season to taste and ladle into bowls. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil and some grated cheese if desired.*

#### **Potato, Spinach and Chickpea Curry**

400g <i>potatoes, chopped</i>	250g <i>spinach, stems removed, leaves chopped</i>
1 <i>onion</i>	2-3 <i>cloves garlic</i>
1 x 400g <i>tin chopped tomatoes</i>	<i>tinned chickpeas, drained and rinsed</i>
2 <i>tsp ground cumin</i>	1 <i>tsp ground ginger</i>
1 <i>tsp turmeric</i>	1 <i>tsp chilli powder</i>
1 <i>tsp oil</i>	<i>fresh coriander, handful, chopped</i>
<i>salt and pepper</i>	

*Finely chop the garlic and slice the onions. Add to a large pan then fry the garlic and onions on a low heat for 5 minutes. Turn up the heat and add the potatoes, add the spices and stir to coat the vegetables. Cook for 3-4 minutes stirring constantly. Add the tin of chopped tomatoes then add 200ml water. Simmer on a low heat for an hour or more until the potatoes are tender, adding the spinach in the last 5 minutes or so and seasoning to taste. Finish with coriander and serve.*

#### **Spinach, New Potato and Gruyere Bake**

600g <i>new potatoes, halved or quartered if large</i>	200g <i>spinach, tough stalks removed</i>
1 <i>tbsp cornflour</i>	150ml <i>milk</i>
3 <i>Hen Nation eggs</i>	250ml <i>double cream</i>
$\frac{1}{4}$ <i>tsp nutmeg, grated</i>	100g <i>Gruyere cheese, grated</i>
<i>salt and pepper</i>	

*In a pan of boiling water cook the potatoes for 12-15 minutes until just tender. Drain and keep to one side. While the potatoes are bubbling away, cook the spinach in a separate pan for 2 minutes. Drain and plunge into cold water to refresh and drain again. Use your hands to squeeze out as much water as possible and roughly chop the leaves. Preheat the oven to 200C/ Gas 6. Grease a 2-litre gratin or baking dish with butter or margarine. Blend the cornflour with 2 *tbsp* of milk in a bowl. Break in the eggs and whisk together then whisk in the rest of the milk and the cream. Add the nutmeg and cheese and season. Mix the potatoes, spinach and egg mixture in the baking dish. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until golden and puffy.*

I am having to write in haste this morning as I have a short window to use Diane's computer. My laptop has broken. It has opened up at the seam and won't charge. It was probably the heat in France made the plastic curl up. It worked for a while when I lay a heavy rock on it which I brought in from the garden. It looked like the Flinstones' computer – it's where I got the idea from. But even that then stopped working. My car has broken down and sits useless in the drive – I need to try and make one with some more rocks and logs. And last week an essential dental bridge collapsed when I bit into a cookie, taking an essential eating tooth with it. I need to find a goofy dinosaur. Again I blame France and trying to eat day-old baguettes. So I am lacking in critical hardware and feeling a little persecuted.

I do dread the shearing. The sheep are fine and very chilled about it – they are all getting on a bit now and know the routine. They stand in the pen bored for a few hours waiting their turn, it takes about 3 or 4 minutes for each sheep then they are back in the field and hang about watching the others being done. I have great shearers. But for me it is hell. It is the one opportunity to see every inch of every sheep to look at body condition and look for any ailments, overgrown horns, foot problems then treat anything which needs treating. At the same time as doing this, as the fleeces are flying off I need to make sure no debris is attached to any of the fleeces – a thistle, a twig – or anything else that will find its way into the yarn and fabric. I have to make sure that each fleece goes into the right bag according to breed and colour. I can't leave the scene at all during the whole event as if I turn my back for a moment, it is sure that a Swaledale fleece which is like a brillo pad, will end up in the Shetland bag.

Even a handful of Swaledale wool is enough to ruin all the Shetland wool during processing. The Swaledales are sheep which I rescued when I saw them penned up near our old office being prepared to go to the abattoir. I am going to add their wool to a rug mix which I am doing this year for the first time.

Well that's all my news. I hope you are having a better week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel