



Monday 14th August 2017

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. In the bags this week we have freshly harvested carrots grown in the sandy loam soils at Bagthorpe Farm in rural North Norfolk, aubergines and mini Cucumbers from the Haslum family in Alderton, near Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire, lettuces from Cambridgeshire and spinach from Langridge Farm in North Devon.

Spinach is delicious simply braised. Put in a pan with a little butter or margarine, a grating of nutmeg and some lemon juice and a lid on and let it steam until tender. Or you can try one of these quick, tasty recipes:

Spinach Houmous with Pittas

250g spinach, trimmed	400g tin chick peas, drained
1 clove garlic	2 tbsp tahini
juice of 1 lemon	2 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp ground cumin	pitta bread

Wilt the spinach in a pan on a low heat then put it in a food processor. Add the rest of the ingredients (except the pitta bread !) and blitz until smooth and season. Toast the pittas and cut each into 3 triangles and serve.

Superfood Smoothie

2 tbsp rolled oats	400ml apples juice
100g spinach	1 tbsp agave nectar
1 ripe banana, roughly sliced	

Place the oats in a liquidiser for 5 minutes. Add all the remaining ingredients and puree until smooth. Pour into glasses to serve.

Scrambled with Spinach

200g spinach	2 Hen Nation eggs
50ml semi-skimmed milk	½ red chilli, finely chopped
2 slices wholemeal bread	1 tbsp pesto

Wilt the spinach in a pan. Meanwhile, beat the eggs with the milk, chilli and seasoning. Pour into a small pan and cook, stirring for 1-2 minutes until scrambled. Toast the bread and spread with the pesto, tops with the spinach and spoon over the scrambled eggs and serve.

Macaroni Cheese with Tomatoes

350g macaroni	50g butter or margarine
50g plain flour	some spring onion, or chives, finely chopped
1 litre semi-skimmed milk	175g mature Cheddar
1.5 tbsp Dijon mustard	200g spinach, thick stems removed and chopped
250g tomatoes, sliced	

Preheat the oven to 200C/ Fan 180C/ Gas 6. Cook the pasta in boiling water according to packet instructions to al dente. For the cheese sauce, put the butter or margarine, flour, onion and milk in the pan and slowly bring to the boil, whisking all the time until it thickens. Simmer for a few minutes and remove from the heat. Season and stir in two thirds of the Cheddar until melted, then add the mustard. Stir in handfuls of spinach so it wilts in the sauce. Mix the cooked pasta with the sauce. Tip it into a 2.5 litre or 20cm square ovenproof dish, scatter over the tomatoes and remaining cheese and bake for 25-30 minutes until golden. Leave to rest for 5 minutes. Serve with a crisp salad.

I was all set to drive down to Lewes, Sussex for a family wedding, and given the distance, make a weekend of it. Not a traditional family wedding, the invitation said 'Love Fest' and there was a big tipi in the graphics. There would be a ceremony of some description and then an all-night party, camping was advised and directions to the fields. Too busy to have any contact at all with any of my family I wondered if my 90-yr old uncle would be there, or indeed my brother, for such an event. I was determined to go and had beautiful matching Izzy Lane sweaters made for my cousin, her husband to be and their three year old son – all in natural grey with golden arm-band representing their union. On Friday night I was exhausted and decided I'd do the drive early Saturday morning. Then I got the call from the shearers that they were coming on Sunday. I was faced with having to do the journey there and back in the day – about 14 hours of driving, and then be in no fit state to deal with the shearers, sheep and shearing – or not go to the wedding. I was forced to choose between sheep and family. I have been waiting for months for the shearers, for health reasons they needed to be sheared so I had no option but to choose the sheep. I sent a message to my cousin apologising for not being able to make it. I was gutted as I knew it meant a lot to her that I go. Unfortunately after sending the message, which I know would have disappointed her, my finger slipped and I sent her one of those 'thumbs up' icons. I have had no response back. She's has taken it badly. It was my birthday on Friday, yet again. I picked up an envelope off the door mat which looked like my brother's handwriting. It was not possible ! He had stopped speaking to me earlier in the year because he was angry and sick of worrying about me. And in any case, he hasn't sent me a birthday card in years. I always used to have to send him reminders for my parents'

birthdays. He wrote a note in it saying that he hadn't fallen out with me but that he hadn't been in touch out of frustration. He said he hoped I was ok and signed it 'with love'. It was probably the best birthday present. It has felt awful each time I pass through Harrogate en route to spinners or weavers in Bradford, not feeling able to call in on him.

The three shearers arrived yesterday with their shearing trailer/platform, 20,000 sheep into the season. Ernest had got them into a large pen the night before. I had bought some cakes and brought flasks of tea. 210 of the Shetlands were sheared – all now looking fresh, clean and happy. I sorted their fleeces into different bags and checked every sheep as they were being done. They are in pretty good shape, especially given their age. I was reminded again of the misconception that their wool deteriorates as they age. It doesn't at all, even if in some cases there is less of it – they produce beautiful wool – and I went round at the end picking up any tufts, not to waste any of it. Weather permitting they are back on Thursday to do the Wensleydales and the miscellaneous Swaledales, Poll Dorsets and others which I have rescued along the way.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes, Isobel