



Monday 11th December 2017

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It's bitterly cold and crispy, but thankfully the snow didn't reach us. Sometimes miracles happen and we don't have the worst weather in the country. Just two weeks to Christmas and 10 days to the shortest day then we'll be off into a brand new year. Our Jumbo Christmas Vegetable Bags and Christmas Fruit Boxes are now available to order for delivery next week.

So the last week of normal food and normal recipes before the sprouts:

Poor Man's Potatoes (Patatas a lo Pobre)

6 medium potatoes, peeled and sliced
10 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp sherry vinegar

2 peppers, deseeded and sliced
2 large onions, sliced into rings
3 cloves garlic, minced

In a heavy pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil and fry the onions for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until golden. Add the peppers and fry until soft. Add the remaining oil, allow to heat, then add the potatoes and cook for a further 15-20 minutes until they are tender. Season with salt and drain off any excess oil. Mix the vinegar and garlic together. Pour over the potatoes and then stir. Serve immediately.

Chard with Tagliatelle

bag chard
1 clove garlic, crushed
370g dried tagliatelle

50ml olive oil
pinch salt
150g Gruyere cheese, grated (optional)

Separate the green leaves from the stalk and cut the stalk into strips. Put the oil in a large pan on a medium heat, add the stalks and garlic and saute until cooked. Leave to one side. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil, add the pasta and cook according to packet instructions. Just before the pasta is done, add the chard leaves to the boiling water and cook for a minute. Drain immediately and add the pasta and leaves to the pan of cooked stalks. Toss everything together with the cheese if using. Check the seasoning and serve immediately.

Chard and Butter Bean Soup

1 tbsp olive oil
1 large carrot, chopped
pinch chilli flakes
2 stock cubes dissolved in 1.5 litres water
300g tinned butter beans, drained
100g ricotta
30g Cheddar, grated

2 leeks, sliced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 tbsp chopped fresh rosemary
200g chard, shredded
4 slices of wholemeal sourdough bread
2 tsp Dijon mustard

Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Add the leek and carrot and cook for 10 minutes or until tender. Add the garlic, chilli and rosemary and cook for a further minute or until fragrant. Add the stock to the pan, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the chard and butter beans, cover again and simmer for 5 minutes or until the chard is tender. Meanwhile heat the grill to high. Grill the bread on both sides until golden. Combine the ricotta, mustard and cheddar in a small bowl. Top the toasts with the cheese mixture then grill until the topping is warm. Serve with the soup.

A friend came up from London to stay for the weekend. I haven't seen her for a long while but we go back decades. She was London music correspondent for the French paper Liberation and had a radio show on France Inter – she was the French John Peel - weaning her compatriots off Johnny Halliday and France Gall and onto British punk and underground. This was great as I used to go to the gigs with her and VIP passes and after-show parties came as part of the package. I remember standing completely alone in front of the stage watching Neil Young at Reading Festival with Neil Young right in front of me playing 'Into the Black' and the security men, barriers and tens of thousands of screaming people behind me. I hated crowds but I loved music, so it was very cool and I owe her for all that.

But I discovered how undeserving I was these last days when she told me how I used to drive her mad because I was always late. I don't remember that. I thought I was always just in time. She said that if we had to leave at 8pm she would tell me 7pm and that even then I didn't turn up until 8.30, or 9pm. We never seemed to miss the bands though. I can't believe I was that bad but she insisted that I was. I said I was sorry.

I remember visiting suppliers in Italy. I had been in the Piedmont region, had driven down to Milan where I was getting a flight to Bari in Puglia. The traffic was horrendous round Milan and I had minutes before the flight took off. If I took the hire car back, I'd miss the flight. So in a split second decision I abandoned it right in front of the airport doors with the keys in and I ran. I managed to catch the flight. I wasn't late.....I was just in time. I called the hire company when I got to Bari and they didn't even tell me off – they're probably used to it.

The rat living in the tunnel under the 'patio' is now two. He disappeared for a few days, I thought he was dead, and then he reappeared, with Rat 2. I am very concerned now, there are probably babies under the patio. I can no longer throw any food out however cold and hungry I think they are.

On my 'to do' list - find the humane trap in the loft. I can't separate them so will have to catch one and get it from the trap into another container then try and catch the other and take them together to some barn in the Dales. If I can pull that off it will be another miracle. I lay awake until about 3am this morning mentally scanning the entire area for a suitable place to take them..... should I catch them. There might already be babies under the patio, what would become of them. I will have to tell the next Airbnb guests to keep the doors closed to keep the rats out.

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS Deliveries on the week between Christmas and New Year will come one day late. So if you are due a delivery on tues 26th December it will arrive on Wednesday, Wednesdays will arrive on Thursday, Thursdays will arrive on Friday and Fridays on Saturday. The week commencing 1st January will be normal.