



Monday 15th October 2018

Dear Customer,

What strange, hot winds have been blowing this weekend. I was online-checking the levels of the river Swale given my sheep are in fields next to it. The nearest monitoring point is Catterick Bridge. At 1.5m above normal we went up and moved them into another field. It could rise another 5m or so before getting into their fields but they do like milling about on the river banks. Thankfully though, they are a bit scared of water. The Swale was raging, all the streams and rainfall from the Dales tip into it. It rises quickly and is the fastest river in England when in full spate. I have nightmares of it sweeping the sheep away and them ending up in the North Sea.

We have the elusive and exceptionally nutritious spaghetti squash in the bags this week. Spaghetti encased in a squash, who designed such a thing. It contains vitamins A, C, E and B vitamins, folate, calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, zinc and more. You could roast it. Halve it lengthways, scoop out the seeds. Drizzle the cut-side of the halves with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place cut-side down on a baking sheet and roast until tender for 45-50 minutes. Use a fork to scrape out the spaghetti. Or you could try this squash bake

Here are a few couple of tasty recipes you could try with this week's produce:

Spaghetti Squash Bake

1 spaghetti squash	400g tomatoes
200g crème fraîche	100g Cheddar
2 tsp dried oregano	2 cloves garlic
1 onion	25g pine nuts
olive oil	sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat the oven to 200C/ Fan 180C/ Gas 6. Cut the squash into 4-6 rounds. Cut out the seeds. Place the squash on a baking tray. Drizzle with 1 tbsp oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast in the top of the oven for 30 minutes. Roughly chop the tomatoes and onions and peel the garlic cloves. Tip it onto a separate baking tray with 1 tbsp olive oil, the oregano and some salt and pepper. Put on the shelf below the squash. Grate the Cheddar and mix it with the crème fraîche. Add plenty of black pepper. Remove the squash from the oven after 20 minutes. Using a fork pull the squash into long spaghetti strands. Remove the tomatoes from the oven and crush them with a fork ensuring the garlic is mashed. Taste and adjust seasoning. Arrange a third of the spaghetti in the base of a medium dish. Spoon over the tomatoes then cover with a third of the crème fraîche and cheese mixture. Repeat the layer until all ingredients are used, finishing with a layer of the cheese and crème fraîche. Bake for about 20 minutes until the top is golden. Toast the pine nuts until golden and scatter over the bake.

Charred Broccoli with Lemon, Chilli, Honey and Garlic

1 head of broccoli	3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp honey	1 garlic clove, sliced thinly
zest of 1 lemon and juice of half	1 thumb-sized red chilli, seeded, diced

Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/gas mark 7. Use a carrot peeler to remove the tough outer skin of the broccoli stem, then trim the edge off the bottom. Slice the broccoli in half, then cut into 25mm slices. Toss with 1 tbsp of the olive oil and some salt. Place on a very large baking tray and roast for 30 minutes, or until its browned or charred at the edges. During the last 10 minutes of cooking, add the garlic and toss again. While its roasting, whisk the lemon juice, zest, chilli, 2 tbsp olive oil and some salt in a small bowl. When the broccoli is done, drizzle the dressing over and give it a gentle toss. Spoon into a serving bowl or platter.

The other day I told Diane I hadn't slept very well. I told her I've been getting a horrible tingling in my hands and feet as I'm trying to fall asleep. She told me she's been getting exactly the same thing when trying to fall asleep. For both of us, it seems to have started a few weeks ago. Someone must have put tingles in the water.

I succumbed to temptation and googled it. I read it could be vitamin deficiency, a stroke, carpal tunnel syndrome (what ?), fibromyalgia or indeed an early sign of MS. I was now rigid with fear and very, very depressed. Eventually when I could muster some words I broke the news to Diane. She said she didn't have any of those things, she just had just tingling in her hands and feet. Good, that must be what I have too.

I surprised myself by my optimism when I bought some Compassion in World Farming Christmas cards. I would generally find it presumptuous in October to assume I might still be here in December. Not for any particular reason other than the unknown. Please don't think that I think about Christmas in early October, I didn't proactively seek the cards out, just responded to an email alert. I don't find Christmas a very pleasant way to the end the year. In fact I hate it. It ruins autumn and winter which might otherwise be quite nice.

I remember Prince Charles once lamenting about homogenous and ubiquitous brick housing estates. He said that in years gone by one could be parachuted into a town or village somewhere in England and know exactly where one was from the stone the houses were built from. That came to mind when I dropped in on the Great British Bake Off and saw how few contestants there were left. One can know exactly where one is in year by the number of bakers, singers and dancers left in the GBBO, Strictly and X Factor. These elimination programmes are horrible and addictive. I am addicted at the expense of doing something more interesting with my life.

I took Lainey for a walk along the river footpath yesterday and wandered about in the magnificent ruins of Easby Abbey. Coming out I bumped into an old schoolmate who was heading into town. He owns the Abbey, it came with the house he bought last year by the river. He said he'd just returned from China and Kyrgyzstan and somewhere else, that he'd been cycling round for the last few months, said to drop by one day. He spent half his life living in China, wrote the book Mr China amongst other things. I'm fairly sure he doesn't watch Strictly Come Dancing.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel