



Monday 5th August 2019

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It is a very steamy and sultry Sunday morning here with storms expected this afternoon. It's not very British apart from that the temperature is modest.

Last Monday I went out for the afternoon into the Dales. After going to Leyburn and through Wensleydale I drove across the moors and dropped down into Reeth. It was warm and quiet and people were sitting at tables in front of their cottages reading, drinking tea, doing crosswords. I walked down with Lainey into adjacent Grinton and along Arkle Beck which was a mere dribble. I was going to go up the back lane in Reeth village but a land rover and trailer had blocked the road off and the farmer was walking young cows down the lane and into the field next to the river, beautiful cows. I carried on up Silver Street back to the car.

Next day I decided I needed to tackle my overgrown and ancient clematis on my front terrace. It once offered privacy but now shrouded it in darkness and obliterated the view. I checked the internet - how to prune it, or indeed 'renovate' it. I decided on the latter, it had to be hacked off leaving just a foot of root. I was outside all afternoon, I think it rained just once briefly.

That night just before bed I checked emails. There was an alert from North Yorkshire Police saying not to travel on the roads around Richmond due to the flooding. What flooding, it had barely even rained. I then looked on the BBC website. It was national news, Arkle Beck and the river Swale were in flood, Silver Street was a torrent, the road from Richmond to Grinton had collapsed. The little bridge on the moor that I'd driven over the previous day was washed away and was appearing on the next day's Times. And just at the bottom of my road the Swale had burst its banks, our famous waterfall had disappeared under the depth of water. The lower roads, car parks, parks, all submerged. Preoccupied by clematis I'd been oblivious that that there was a natural disaster occurring all round me. My sheep. I started freaking out. They are on the banks of the Swale further down and I am stranded in Richmond and it is now dark.

The farmer had been to check the river, the river had come up, was lapping into the field but he said the sheep were ok. The river would have to rise another 10 foot to get them and in which case his house and all his crops would be under water. I didn't trust them not to fall in, or the Swale. I slept badly, checking the phone every 10 minutes to monitor the river level. The next day we moved them into different fields. I am worried about those cows I saw being walked into the river field in Reeth. Did they survive? I know livestock was lost.

With the clematis gone I have no privacy on the terrace. Maybe I should have just pruned it after all. Looking very stark and overlooked by the empty neighbouring house I went to the garden centre and bought a tall plant to stand on the terrace and a wisteria to grow up the fence where the clematis was. I'd organised for it to be delivered here in the morning. But after reading about wisteria and how hard it is to manage and look after I've been worried about not being able to cope with it, not with having to look after all the sheep too. So today I went to the garden centre and cancelled it, swapping it out for a new trowel and some secateurs. I hope the new trowel will give me the impetus to plant the 20 mini plants I'd also bought to replace the dandelions, ivy and clumps of dead grass growing on top of my front wall. I can't find the willpower for it. Buying plants is easy, planting them isn't.

My life seems to be on a loop at the moment reduced to keeping a nice garden and a nice house....not great and a bit pointless. But here are some tasty recipes you could try this week with your beetroot:

Roasted Beetroot Spaghetti

500g bunch raw beetroot, scrubbed	1 large onion
1 tbsp olive oil	2 garlic cloves, unpeeled
300g spaghetti	75g walnuts, toasted and roughly chopped
handful dill, roughly chopped	50g vegetarian feta, crumbled (optional)

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ 400F/ Gas 6. Top and tail the beetroot and cut into 1-2cm wedges. Cut the onion into 8 wedges. Toss the beetroot and onion in the oil on a roasting tray, season and roast for 20 minutes. Add the garlic, cook for 15 minutes more until the beetroot is tender. Meanwhile, cook the spaghetti in salted boiling water for 1 minute less than pack instructions. Scoop out a mugful of the cooking water then drain. Put half the cooked beetroot in a blender along with the onion, 65g toasted walnuts and a pinch of salt. Cut the ends off the garlic and squeeze the cloves out of their skins into the blender. Add 6 tbsp reserved pasta water and blend until almost smooth. Return the spaghetti to the saucepan over a low heat and stir through the beetroot sauce. Season and serve scattered with the dill, feta, if using, and remaining beetroot wedges and walnuts.

Beetroot, Carrot and Orange Salad

500g carrots	500g raw beetroot
olive oil	2 oranges
1 tbsp sesame seeds	handful fresh coriander

Preheat the oven to 200C/ 400F/ Gas 6. Peel and halve the carrots then scrub the beetroot and chop into wedges. Parboil the carrots in a pan of boiling salted water for 5 minutes then transfer them to a colander. Then parboil the beetroot in the same water for 5 minutes, then drain. Transfer the beetroot and carrots to a large roasting tin. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 30-40 minutes or until stick and shiny. Meanwhile finely grate the orange zest. Trim off the pith and skin and cut the orange into segments. Toast the sesame seeds in a dry pan on a low heat for a couple of minutes until golden, Roughly chop the coriander leaves. After roasting, let the carrots and beetroot cool a little then toss with orange zest and segments, some olive oil and a little extra seasoning. Serve scattered with toasted sesame seeds and coriander.

Beetroot and Pepper Pesto

1 pepper

100g cashew nuts

15ml lemon juice

50g hard cheese, grated

200g beetroot, cooked

3 cloves garlic

85ml olive oil

500g fresh tagliatelle or bruschetta

Grill the pepper until blackened. Put into a dish and cover tightly for 15 minutes. Peel off the skin, cut in half and remove the seeds. Put the pepper with all the other ingredients in a food processor and blend until smooth. Stir into the cooked tagliatelle or serve on bruschetta topped with fresh basil.

Kind wishes,