

Monday 15th October 2012

Dear Customer,

It's a foggy Monday morning and the leaves are goldening at a dramatic rate now the frosts are piquing. I know it has been in the news this week how badly crops have been affected by the constant rain and lack of sun. So much has been decimated - drowned, killed by disease or pest - much of what survived has stunted growth. As a result prices have soared and will continue to do so. The crops in the ground now are supposed to be picked off to order right through to spring but already rationing is in place ! I am doing my best to get you the best quality and variety and will continue to do so. I know these are hard times all round which is why I am loathed to put up prices but our margins are being very squeezed. Potatoes are 100 % more expensive than normal and most other things at least 50 % more. I would just ask that if you are in a position to add a few groceries or additions to your order, it would really help us to keep bag prices as they are. I may eventually have to put on an 'exceptional, bad weather supplement' which would come off again when normality resumes, but will see how it goes over the coming months.

John at Newfields has been struggling to lift any potatoes this weekend. He had 40ml rain on Thursday night with heavy showers since. The land is so wet and weedy the harvester keeps getting clogged up and breaking down. Of course non-organic farmers will just spray the weeds so their problems are reduced. John said that normally they get some decent weather to make up for bad but that it just hasn't happened. It's been bad on bad.

Having said that – we do have some lovely produce which has survived. We have parsnips making their first appearance this week, we have sweet potatoes, some nice crunchy Primo cabbages and crunchy cucumbers. The potatoes are Red Cara from Ormskirk, the grapes are Autumn Flame, apples are Elstar and the plums, Angelino. Being late variety plums they are slow to ripen but you could pop them in a pot and stew them. Oh, and pomegranates from Almeria !

Roast Potatoes, Parsnips and Carrots

600g potatoes

300g carrots

sprig of fresh rosemary

salt and freshly ground black pepper

450g parsnips

½ bulb garlic

olive oil

Preheat oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Peel the vegetables and half any large ones. Separate the garlic into bulbs but leave unpeeled. Put the potatoes and carrots into a large pan of salted boiling water on a high heat and bring back to the boil. Boil for 5 minutes then add the parsnips and boil for another 4 minutes. Drain and allow to steam dry. Take out the carrots and parsnips and put to one side. Fluff up the potatoes in the colander by shaking them around. Put them in a large roasting tray on a medium heat with some olive oil and spoon some of the oil over them. Add the garlic and rosemary leaves. Put the vegetables into the tray with a good pinch of salt and pepper and stir them round to coat in the flavours. Spread everything into one layer. Roast for approximately 40 – 50 mins until the potatoes are crispy outside and tender in the middle.

Sweet Potato and Parsnip Curry

400g parsnips, peeled and chunked

1 onion, sliced

280ml coconut milk

2 cinnamon sticks

salt

400g sweet potatoes

vegetable oil

2 tsp turmeric

½ tsp fenugreek

plain yoghurt for serving

For the Coconut Rice:

225g long grain rice

6 tbsp vegetable oil

55g desiccated coconut

560ml water

Heat the oil in a large frying pan and fry the onion until it is soft. Add the spices and cook for another few minutes. Add the parsnip and sweet potato and stir together well making sure they are well-coated with the oil. Add the coconut milk and bring to a simmer. Simmer for 20 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Fry the rice in a pan with 2 tbsp of oil, stirring continuously. Add the desiccated coconut and the water. Cover the pan and simmer gently until the rice is tender. Drain the rice well and stir in the 4 tbsp oil. Serve the curry on a bed of coconut rice with a bowl of yoghurt.

Aren't you sick of the sight of the vile Jimmy Savile. He always made my skin crawl. Top of the Pops with him presenting and Dr Who – both sent me hiding behind the sofa. I always thought he was a paedophile – dressed like a clown to woo children, like Gary Glitter.

I hope you have a lovely week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel