Monday 3rd June 2013

Dear Customer

What a glorious morning! We have those English spring cabbages in the bags this week, a sign that something at least is stirring in our fields. Everything must be at least a month late. The fruit bags are perking up with melons and stoned fruit ripening in the Mediterranean - though the weather has been lousy there too.

Here are a few recipes you could try – this salad is wonderful and refreshing::

Tomato, Melon and Cucumber Salad

250g cherry tomatoes 1 small Galia melon

½ cucumber

Dressing:

1¾ tbsp white-wine vinegar2 tbsp groundnut oil4 tbsp olive oil18 mint leaves½ tsp Dijon mustard2 tsp caster sugar

4 tbsp double cream (optional)

To make the dressing simply put everything except the cream in a whizzer. Add the cream, if using, and check seasoning. Halve the cherry tomatoes and put in a bowl. Halve the melon and remove the seeds. Cut into wedges and then into chunks and add to the bowl. Very thinly the cucumber into the bowl, toss with the dressing and serve.

Roasted Squash (by JO!)

butternut squash 1 dried red chilli

sea salt freshly ground black pepper

handful fresh sage leaves 1 stick cinnamon, broken into pieces

olive oil

Preheat your oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Halve the squash, remove and reserve the seeds, then cut the squash into slices or chinks with the skin still on, Using a pestle and mortar, bash up the chilli with a good pinch of salt. Add the whole sage leaves, the cinnamon and enough olive oil to loosen the mixture and rub the whole lot over the squash pieces so they are well covered. Place the squash in one layer in a roasting tray and season lightly with salt and pepper. Sprinkle over the seeds, cover tightly with tin foil and bake for 30 minutes, or until the skin of the squash is soft, then remove the foil and cook for another 10 minutes until the squash is golden and crisp. Remove the cinnamon and serve.

Sweet Potato Brownies

100g unsalted butter 200g dark chocolate, chopped

200g baked sweet potato, flesh scooped out125g brown sugar2 eggs2 tsp vanilla extract100g plain flour½ tsp baking powder

100g chopped pecans

Line an 18cm square tray-bake tin, or similar, with non-stick paper or foil, and heat oven to 180C/ 160C fan/ 350F/ Gas 4. Melt the butter in a saucepan then add the 125g of chocolate and stir until that's melted too. In a bowl, beat the sweet potato flesh with the brown sugar until almost smooth, then mix in the butter and chocolate. Add the eggs and vanilla, beat until thick, then stir in the flour and baking powder until evenly combined. Fold in the pecans and remaining chocolate, then spoon into the tin, smooth the top and bake for about 20-25 minutes, until barely cooked but still a bit soft under the crust. Leave to cool completely in the tin before slicing.

I was starting to despair that my life was falling apart because the man who was going to mow my lawn once a fortnight didn't turn up. The weeks passed and no sign of him. I kept looking at my lawn as it grew into a wild flower meadow and thought 'well, I'm not cutting it'. I decided that I would just not bother anymore... have enough on my plate. It was starting to look attractive anyway with tall dandelions in flower and grasses going to seed. But it seemed to have a bad knock-on effect. It seemed pointless to hoover when the garden was such a mess, and if I wasn't going to hoover I certainly wasn't going to tidy up, I didn't bother opening my mail which grew in a pile on a table next to the door and then not seeing the reminder letter, my phone was cut off..... all because the man never came to mow the lawn. Anyway on Friday he finally arrived and mowed the lawn and as he was doing so, I started doing the hovering...... climbing back up the downward spiral. I even planted 2 geraniums in pots – so house proud had I become

On Saturday I found Barney in the field with blood pouring down the side of his head – he'd had a scuffle and snapped one of his horns off. He was my pet lamb and lived in my garden for 6 months while I bottle fed him – he must be 8 now. Half of my sheep only have one horn – they look like bandits but Barney always looked so round and perfect and symmetrical. He still bleats like a little lamb when I call him. I was sitting down in the field with Rocky and Lily. Rocky is a big, wise, gentle Shetland who adores humans and Lily, a tiny female who adores humans.. I was sitting making a fuss of them. Rocky was so happy and lay down next to me. Bucolic bliss in the sunny meadow. When he was struggling to get back up, Lily suddenly pulled away from me, dived at him and head-butted him in his ribs. "you b******* she said . Jealousy ? An easy target ? Both probably. I know for a fact that sheep have the same range of emotions as us.

The joy of doing this film or series, if it ever gets made, will be someone else playing me and I will just be able to sit back as an observer. Which brings me to the newsletter. I would absolutely love to invite you to write a farmaround newsletter. Possibly including your favourite non-meat recipes and any other interesting vegetably things and then anything else you care to write

about , including yourself. Though I must maintain editorial control should there be too much sex and violence in your content. It would be great for us to hear about you for a change and less about me, the old stuck record.

I hope all is well and you are enjoying this beautiful, beautiful weather,

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS If you did not receive a delivery last week, please check last week's newsletter on the website www.farmaround.co.uk about our necessity to increase prices. Thank you

PPS The Artisan Bakery has closed for 2 weeks for a summer break so there will be no bread until week commencing 17th