

Monday 8th July 2013

Dear Customer

Thank you weather – ok, we accept your apology. (for last winter and a missing spring)

It's so hot. Maybe even..... too hot. I remember the days when I thought the optimum temperature was around 36 degrees. Midday in August, on Crete – perfect. As time went on , 36 became 30, then 28, then with the onset of middle age , it settled at around 25 degrees. Yesterday I spent from 8am till 11am on my computer with the French doors open and I am sure it gave me sunstroke. I felt woozy and wonky and couldn't walk in straight line for the rest of the day. I had to take to my bed. So where I am at now.....worryingly a mere 18 degrees is my perfect summer's day. How on earth people travel to countries where temperatures are in the 40's, I will never know, nor how one's flesh does not cook.

We have our first broad beans in the bags this week from Jono Smales in the New Forest. Our new potatoes are 'rocket' variety from Penzance. Purple mange tout in some of the bags from Ormskirk and their pretty Ormskirk multi-coloured chard and cavolo nero as well as the first English carrots. We have pointed cabbages from the Yorkshire Moors and Batavia lettuces and salad packs from Tadcaster.

Here are a few recipes you could try with this week's contents:

Pasta with Potatoes, Broad Beans and Pesto

600g small new potatoes, halved or quartered 275g broccoli, cut in small florets
85g shelled broad beans 2 courgettes, cut in bite-sized chunks
300g pasta.

Tomato Pesto Sauce

2 tbsp pine nuts 100g fresh basil leaves
55g Parmesan cheese, grated 4 tbsp olive oil
2 ripe tomatoes 4-5 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped

Cook the potatoes in boiling water for about 15 minutes or until they are tender. Add the broccoli, broad beans and courgettes and simmer together for a further 5 minutes. Meanwhile cook the pasta in boiling water until al dente. While the pasta and vegetables are cooking, make the pesto sauce. Pound the garlic with a pinch of salt and the pine nuts in a mortar using a pestle. Add the basil and continue pounding until the ingredients form a green paste, then work in the Parmesan cheese and oil. Finally, work in the tomatoes. Alternatively, you can make the pesto in a food processor. Drain the pasta and vegetables and toss both together. Top with the pesto, garnish with sprigs of basil and serve immediately.

Tomato and Chard Pie

300g chard 350g tomatoes, chopped
2 tbsp olive oil 1 clove garlic, crushed
1 onion, peeled and chopped 4 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
1 tsp dried sage 2 eggs, beaten
115g Cheddar cheese, grated shortcrust pastry

Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7. Line a 20cm flan dish with pastry and bake blind for 3-4 minutes. Reduce the heat to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Heat the oil in a pan and sauté the onions and garlic. Add the tomatoes, chard, herbs and seasoning and simmer the mixture for another 5 minutes. Pour this into the pie dish when ready. Place the beaten eggs over the sauté mixture, top with the grated cheese and bake for 15 minutes. Serve hot.

Chard, Chickpea and Mushroom Curry

2 tbsp sunflower oil 2 onions, peeled and chopped
4 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped 1 tsp grated fresh ginger
2 tsp ground coriander 2 tsp ground cumin
1 pinch chilli flakes 300g chard, leaves separated from stalks
1 tin chickpeas 1 tin plum tomatoes
200g mushrooms, thickly sliced 1 tsp garam masala
fresh coriander leaves, to serve

Heat a tablespoon of oil in a large saucepan and sauté the onions for 10 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger and spices and cook for a minute or 2 more. Add a splash of water if necessary. Remove the stalks from the chard and chop into bite-sized pieces. Add to the pan, cook for 5 minutes, then add the chickpeas. Crush the tinned tomatoes to a pulp with your hands and add these too as well as the juices from the tin. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 15 minutes stirring from time to time. Meanwhile heat the remaining oil in a frying pan over a medium-high heat and fry the mushrooms until all liquid has been driven off and they take on some colour. Shred the chard leaves, add the curry pot along with the mushrooms and cook for a few minutes, stirring often, until the leaves are tender and wilted. Stir in the garam masala, add salt and pepper and scatter with the fresh coriander. Serve with rice and/or nan bread.

I happen to be in Devon for the weekend visiting a possible solution for the hens. It is very hot and surprisingly quiet. Myfa has turned from black to white – her sun-dried coat, thick in salt after swimming in Hope Cove. I am going to have an evening swim with her when the relative temperatures between air and sea make an entry less excruciating.

I have just had a text to say that 12 of my sheep are in with the neighbour's cows - a different field and a different set of cows from last time. Sitting here looking across the bay, over a turquoise sea, there's not much I can do about it.

Hope you're enjoying the weather and that you enjoyed Wimbledon. Life is sweet !

Kind wishes,

Isobel