

Monday 29th July 2013

Dear Customer,

I am so pleased we have had some rain. And in between the downpours it is still warm, it is still summer, it is good growing weather. We have the first English tomatoes, cucumbers, runner beans and courgettes in the bags this week. We have Jonnie Watson's Bambino new potatoes (he's just returned from Spain and I'm not sure if he is joking), Rosemary Wass' rainbow chard. We have plums and Galia melons from the south of France in the fruit bags. Here are a few easy recipes you could try this week:

Roasted Courgettes

4 tbsp chopped olives
2 tbsso chopped rosemary
salt and pepper

6 tbsp Parmesan, grated
4 tbsp breadcrumbs
450g courgettes

Set the oven to 180C/Gas 4. Cut the courgettes in half lengthways. Score the cut sides. Put them in a roasting tin cut-side up, then rub olive oil over the cut side. Mix the chopped olives, Parmesan, rosemary and breadcrumbs together in a mixing bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon this stuffing over the courgettes, pressing down without compacting the stuffing. Trickle the olive oil over them and bake for 45 minutes to an hour until sizzling.

Courgette Cake

200g butter
2 eggs
1 small apple
pinch salt
pinch cinnamon
80g sultanas

200g caster sugar
150g courgettes
200g plain flour
½ tsp baking powder
60g pecans

Preheat oven to 180C/Gas 4. Grease and line the base of a loaf tin measuring 20cm x 12cm x 9cm deep. Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat the eggs and mix them in, one at a time, making sure each is fully incorporated before adding the next. Coarsely grate the courgettes and the apple. Squeeze them with your hands to remove any excess moisture, then add to the mixture. Stir in the nuts and fruit. Transfer to the lined loaf tin and bake for about an hour, or until golden and firm to the touch. Allow to cool in the tin before turning out.

Chard with Balsamic Vinegar

bag chard, chopped
1 tsp balsamic vinegar

2 tomatoes, chopped
freshly ground black pepper

Saute the tomatoes over a medium heat in a large pan until cooked, about 10-15 minutes. Add the vinegar, chard and a little water if the pan is dry. Cover and steam the vegetables until tender.

My friend Liz and I sneaked into the grounds of an incredible, abandoned Georgian mansion, for sale 5 miles from Richmond, and in a magical location. Within 10 minutes we had planned for it - haute B & B, afternoon teas, literary festivals, restaurant, concerts, weddings, Izzy Lane boutique, an open air cinema, classical concerts, open air theatre, a private members club, laboratories for developing dog shampoo, opera, business HQ - offices for all the businesses, sculpture park, spa with swimming pool, rescued pigs in the woods, rescued thoroughbreds in the stables and eventually our care home.

I was delighted to be contacted by an old friend the other day from 25 years ago. They remembered a great deal about everything except for the fact that I don't find jokes funny and on one email was a pre-scripted joke. It's ok because with a deadpan face it's easy to write 'lol haha ha ha ha'. It's harder to be hit face to face with a joke and force a polite, unconvincing laugh. It's not to say I don't find anything funny because I do..... but not jokes. I'd even go as far as saying that jokes depress me. I remember once, and not that long ago, being with my cousin somewhere. I was upset about something so she started telling me jokes from a joke book to try and cheer me up. it was just ridiculous she must have read me the whole book and after each joke I had to force a laugh. All the while thinking 'God, is she bloody joking..... is she demented !' It's strange what amuses people. I used to laugh at my dad laughing at ridiculous things on TV -someone slipping over on a banana skin, he found hilarious. It amazed me that an intelligent, learned man could laugh at such stupid jokes. I found that in many men actually ☺

It's Sunday night and I have a dental appointment lasting one and a half hours. I am being treated with a new technology in an attempt to save a tooth. It means that I won't be there when a load of my sheep are collected from Galphay and brought back to Hornby. It's the shearers who are gathering them up for me. Of the three hundred there, they are to bring back about 180. I have just sent a text " There is one extremely friendly male Shetland, chestnut with horns, medium-sized, if you come across him, it would be good if he comes to Hornby (about 20 fit this description) and there are two little white twins with pink faces, can you send them too ". They'll love me for that.

Hope all is well with you,

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS we had a few problems with soft fruit melting in the heat last week. If you were affected, naturally contact us and we will gladly credit you. I would rather attempt to give you interesting soft fruit and occasionally it turn, than to play it safe with a perpetuity of apples, pears and oranges. That would be too dull for words and of course, as you know we will always credit you with anything that doesn't arrive in good condition.