

Monday 18th November 2013

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well. After last week's colossus, I thought we should go for a farmaround-lite this week. I'm sorry, I honestly had no idea they were going to be that big and can understand your alarm when you saw them. If you didn't get a delivery last week, you missed out on the party, the farmaround swede festival, they weighed in at 3 kilos. Yummy, all that mashed swede. It does freeze well, you could cut it into 6 pieces and pop it in the fridge or cook it all at once and mash it and freeze it.

Purple and red are a strong feature of the bags this week – your favourite purple haze carrots, with red peppers, red curly kale, purple aubergine and a juicy Breton cauliflower.

Here are a few easy recipes you could try this week while you still come to terms with your swede:

Sicilian Aubergine and Rigatoni Pasta Bake

100g aubergine, chopped
1 onion, chopped
100g tomato passata
320g short pasta, like rigatoni
handful breadcrumbs

olive oil
1 garlic clove, chopped
8 basil leaves
70g grated Pecorino or other cheese

Preheat oven to 240C/ Gas 8. Bring water to boil for the pasta. In meantime, cut the aubergine into little pieces and sauté in a saucepan with the olive oil, garlic and onion. After 2-3 minutes, add the passata, salt, pepper and basil leaves and let it cook for a few minutes. Boil the pasta until al dente as per packet. Drain and add the aubergine mixture to the pasta and half the cheese. Put everything in a greased ovenproof baking dish and sprinkle with the breadcrumbs and rest of the cheese. Bake in a preheated oven for about 15 minutes.

Grilled Pepper and Aubergine Soup

2 red peppers
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp grated lemon rind
1 tsp dried oregano
900ml vegetable stock
2 tbsp chopped fresh basil

1 aubergine, thinly sliced lengthways
2 garlic cloves, chopped
3 tsp chopped fresh thyme
400g tin chopped tomatoes
1 bay leaf

Preheat the grill. Quarter, core and deseed the red peppers. Brush with a little oil and grill for 3-4 minutes on each side until charred and tender. Transfer peppers to a plate and when cool, chop roughly. Brush the aubergine slices with oil on both sides and grill for 4-5 minutes until charred and tender. When cool, chop roughly. Heat the remaining oil in a pan, add the onion, garlic, lemon rind, thyme, oregano and fry, stirring for 10 minutes until browned. Add the peppers, aubergine, tomatoes, stock and bay leaf. Bring to the boil, cover and simmer for 20 minutes and discard the bay leaf. Transfer the soup to a blender or food processor. Add the basil and work until smooth. Return to the pan and heat through. Adjust the seasoning and pour into warmed soup bowls. Garnish with basil leaves and serve.

Cauliflower and Lentil Dahl

1 onion, chopped
2.5cm piece root ginger, grated
1 tsp ground coriander
½ tsp turmeric
300ml vegetable stock
1 cauliflower, in florets
125g frozen peas
1 tbsp lemon juice

1 clove garlic, chopped
4 tbsp sunflower oil
1 tsp ground cumin
75g red lentils
2 tbsp hot curry paste
300ml coconut milk
2 tbsp chopped coriander

Heat half the oil in a saucepan and add the onion, garlic, ginger and dry spices and fry gently for 5 minutes. Add the lentils, stir well and pour in the stock. Bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Heat the remaining oil in a frying pan. Add the curry paste and fry gently for 3 minutes. Add the cauliflower and stir-fry another 3 minutes then remove from the heat. Add the coconut milk and cauliflower to the lentils and return to the boil. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in the peas, coriander and lemon juice. Cook until peas are tender and then serve. Delicious with naan bread or rice.

I had a very upsetting email from my 92 year old Welsh aunt last night. She said she had been looking into our family history online and said she discovered that my father, whose name was Theophilus (though went by his second name of David !) was named after a relative, Theophilus Rhys Jones, the grandfather of Sophie Rhys Jones. Now of all the people on the whole planet I would least like to find I shared DNA with, it would be that thick, self-serving, unattractive, clodding idiot. My father would turn in his grave. Give me real gritty ancestors from the workhouse any day. Thankfully I think she's gone off on a tangent and is wrong. The cemeteries around the Rhonda valley are full of Theophiluses. I've asked her to prove it.

On the subject of cemeteries, Myfa is obsessed with them. I can't go past a graveyard without her dragging me in. I always oblige as I'm fond of them myself and let her off the lead to run about, wondering if I am being disrespectful to the dead. I then imagine if it was me lying 6ft under and having a black Labrador playing on my grave. I couldn't think of anything better.

It's a beautiful day here today – sunny and crystal clear. I'm just popping down to the dentist to cancel my Thursday appointment, another 1½ hour one. I can't face it this week. Coco has got an eye infection so I need to go and get him some antibiotic drops and then clip his toe nails while I've got him in hold.

Something I pointed out on facebook a few weeks ago.... that it is Google co-founder Sergey Brin who has funded the development of meat grown in the lab from stem cells and it is anticipated it will one day become widely used as burger meat. And now Bill Gates and Paypal billionaire Peter Thiel have funded the development of an artificial egg, which has the same nutritional and cooking qualities as real egg but is made from 10 plants. It has already gone on sale in the US and it is suggested it will replace eggs as an ingredient in the food industry. These are the solutions to factory farming. Very interesting these developments are both from Silicon Valley. If ever there was a place which determines our world and our future !

Kind wishes,

Isobel