



Monday 13th January 2014

Dear Customer,

Three cheers for it being 'Swede Week' ! Swedes from the sandy earth of the Yorkshire Moors – full of nutritious minerals to bolster the immune system in case Polar vortex sweeps in.

The farm at Fadmoor, is split into two sites with 2 different soil types – one part is a sandy loam over limestone which retains the water, making it sticky and hard to manage, and the other is a peat soil over sandstone which is free draining. John said he didn't like the look of the vegetables which come out of the peat as they are dark. There was the first white frost this morning but not enough to freeze the ground. Whilst it is commonly believed that we need hard frost to kill off all the bugs, he found that the last two hard winters did not reduce the bug count at all, and said he would be happy for this mild weather to continue through to the spring. He hopes we wouldn't then get the 'payback' of winter arriving in spring. He has been busy ordering modules for this year's crops which he will start planting out the last week of march. It is Sunday morning and he is just off to York with his - seemingly new – girlfriend to buy a new suit for a friend's wedding. His current suit, he said, is looking tatty.

We have cavolo nero in the bags this week, also known as Black Tuscan Palm. It is highly nutritious, packed with iron, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin K and folic acid. To cook, you could boil well for 5-7 minutes after discarding tough stems. You can also braise or steam. It is delicious sautéed with a little olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper, which you could serve on toasted bread as an antipasto.

Cavolo Nero Pasta

400g dried penne pasta

250g cavolo nero, tough stems removed

125ml olive oil

2 garlic cloves, peeled

3 tbsp pine nuts, toasted

2 handfuls Parmesan, grated

Cook the pasta according to packet instructions. Meanwhile, in another large pan, bring some salted water to the boil with the garlic cloves. When it is boiling, cook for 5-10 minutes until tender, then drain and reserve the garlic and a cup of the cooking water. Transfer the cavolo nero, garlic and pine nuts to a blender and blitz to a fine puree. Add the olive oil and Parmesan and season to taste. You should have a glossy, rich, dark green sauce. Add the sauce to the drained pasta and toss the sauce through it, loosening the pasta a little with bit of the cooking water. Finish with another drizzle of olive oil and a dusting of Parmesan.

Mediterranean Soup

1 tbsp olive oil

1 red pepper, diced

400g tin chopped tomatoes

200g cavolo nero, shredded

1 onion, chopped

1 litre vegetable stock

400g tin cannellini beans, washed and drained

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and fry the onion and pepper for 4-5 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients and season. Bring to the boil, simmer and cover for 6 – 8 minutes. Serve with warm crusty bread.

Roasted Cauliflower

1 head cauliflower

lemon juice from half a lemon

coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper

2-3 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced

olive oil

Parmesan cheese (optional)

Preheat the oven to 400F. Cut the cauliflower into florets and put in a single layer in an oven-proof baking dish. Toss in the garlic. Sprinkle lemon juice over cauliflower and drizzle each piece with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Make sure the oven has reached the full temperature then place the baking dish of cauliflower florets, uncovered, for 25-30 minutes, or until the top is lightly brown. Test with a fork for desired doneness. Sprinkle generously with Parmesan cheese (if using). Serve immediately.

If I buy the local paper, the Darlington and Stockton Times, I always feel compelled to have a quick look at the farming pages, with squinted eyes, just to check there's nothing I need to know re the sheep. It always makes me feel sick – the livestock auctions with the upsetting terminology – dedicated slaughter sale, etc. And there's always a horse and pony auction – one in York next week. Then, as this week there is a photo of a row of five podgy little lambs' bottoms in a pen with a farmer wearing a big proud grin holding a red rosette and in the text 'bought by Stephenson's butchers. I suppose it is better than them being bought and shipped live to Greece, but it is really upsetting nonetheless. I remember some time ago a similar photo and 'bought by xxx halal butchers. What was once shocking is now commonplace, it terrifies me. Did you see on the One Show the other night about the chain of 140 halal take away Fried Chicken outlets, they never even told viewers on the broadcast what halal is, that the animals are not pre-stunned before slaughter. How can these exemptions on animal welfare be made on religious or any other grounds. We were once a proud nation of animal lovers....weren't we ?

From reading another article in that paper, I also deduce that having just signed a £100 million deal with Russia to supply beef and lamb, and with pork exports to China having grown from £5 million to £14 million in the first 9 months compared to the same period last year, that Britain is fast becoming a meat factory for the rest of the world. Dear God please save us !

I am ashamed of David Cameron – while the progressive world is advocating eating less meat and that meat should be 'ethically reared' and with Bill Gates and the Google and Twitter founders developing meat substitutes and vegetable-based proteins - Cameron gives China £45 million of pig semen to help them factory farm and increase their meat consumption.

It's a beautiful sunny day here in Richmond. Hope this letter finds you well.

Kind wishes,

Isobel