

Monday 10th November 2014

Dear Customer,

I hope you are well. We have Royal Oak's delicious purple sprouting broccoli in the bags this week and here are some idea of what you could do with it:

Grilled Purple Sprouting Broccoli with Tahini Dressing

200g purple sprouting broccoli

2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra to serve

Dressing:

½ clove garlic, crushed with a little salt

2 tbsp light tahini

½ lemon, zest finely grated, juiced

½ tsp clear honey

½ orange, juiced

salt and pepper

1 tbsp olive oil

For the dressing, put the garlic in a small bowl with the tahini, lemon zest and juice, orange juice, honey and a grind of black pepper. Stir well – it may thicken and go grainy or pasty, but that is fine. Thin down by whisking in water, a tablespoon at a time, till the dressing has a creamy, trickly consistency. Gently stir in the oil and season to taste.

Trim the broccoli, removing any touch ends and slice any thicker stems lengthwise. Steam over boiling water for three minutes, until not quite tender, then drain well. The broccoli will be cooked further in the grill pan, so you want it under-done at this stage. Put two tablespoons of olive oil and some salt and pepper into a bowl. Add the broccoli, toss it in the seasoning and oil. Heat a ridged cast-iron grill pan over a high heat. When hot, add the broccoli and sear for 5-7 minutes, turning from time to time, until tender and patched with dark brown char marks. Transfer to a warm dish, trickle over some of the dressing, add a little more salt and pepper, and an extra dash of olive oil, and serve.

Purple Sprouting Broccoli with Garlic Breadcrumbs

knob of butter or margarine

1 tbsp olive oil

1 large garlic clove, finely chopped

50g fresh breadcrumbs

250g purple sprouting broccoli

Heat the butter or margarine and oil in a frying pan over a medium heat. Add the garlic and fry for 1 minute. Add the breadcrumbs and fry for a further 3 minutes until crisp and golden. Meanwhile, cook the broccoli in a pan of salted water until just tender. Drain, transfer to a dish, scatter with garlicky breadcrumbs and serve.

Penne with Purple Sprouting Broccoli, Pine Nuts, Chilli and Lemon

400g penne pasta

bag of purple sprouting broccoli

100g pine nuts, toasted

2 tbsp olive oil for pan frying

small onion, peeled and finely chopped

2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

½ re chilli, de-seeded and finely chopped

sea salt and pepper

1 lemon, zest removed and juice squeezed

Wash and trim the purple sprouting broccoli, discarding any touch parts of the stalks ad cutting them into 2cm pieces. Set aside. Cook the pasta al dente, so it still has some bite and drain. While pasta is cooking, blanch the broccoli in another pan of boiling water for no more than 3 minutes. Drain and leave to cool. Toast the pine nuts in a dry frying pan – shaking them to prevent burning. In a heavy saucepan, heat the oil and add the onion, chilli, garlic and some salt and pepper. Soften the vegetables gently, adding a little water to help create steam in the pan. When they are soft, add the cooked pasta, the lemon zest, a little of the lemon juice and the toasted pine nuts. Mix well and fry for 3 minutes. Add the blanched purple sprouting broccoli, mix well, and then turn off the heat. Serve on a warm platter, with extra lemon juice and a drizzle of olive oil.

I was drifting off to sleep the other night when I had a horrible realisation – ‘hordes’ doesn't have an ‘a’ in it, I'm very sorry - you must have gasped to read such an error (last week).

A few weeks ago I had to write a big document - a proposal - and I sent it to my brother to ask him if he'd read through it for me. He emailed it straight back saying he wasn't going to look at it until I'd sorted out the grammar and the spelling. I went through it, added a few commas, tidied up a few other bits and bobs and sent it back to him. He immediately returned it saying I hadn't sorted it out at all and suggested I put it through the spell-checker, with instructions on how to use it. I eventually worked out how to do it and went through all the under-linings, corrected them, there weren't very many. I sent it back to him and he sent it straight back, he was getting angry now, saying I still hadn't done it. I told him I had done it, maybe my changes hadn't saved so went through it again and re-sent it. He sent it straight back to me yet again, now absolutely furious, saying I still hadn't done it. I gave up. He wouldn't even tell me what was wrong with it.

I'm very happy today. I was interviewed some time back for an Australian magazine. It was a really nice, in depth article about me. It was arranged that a photographer would come up from London. I was on day 4 of a very bad migraine... another one. I had to drag myself out of bed, dagger in the back of my skull, I was throwing up. I tried to cancel him but he was on deadline and had already bought his rail ticket. I have lived in dread of being googled ever since as it's been the first thing to pop up. I'm not photogenic at the best of times and am generally not bothered, but this photo, a close-up, was something else – tiny pupils, bloodshot eyes and my face screwed up in agony. So bad that one day when I went into the office, I found they had made dozens of copies of it and pinned it up all over the walls. Of course, there was no explanation with the article saying ‘she had a migraine’. Anyway I finally contacted the editor and asked if this worst offending photo could be taken down. And phew, they did.

A recent survey said that Richmondshire has the lowest anxiety levels in the United Kingdom. Life here is beyond serene and the years just flow away – and that is the problem. Living in Richmond is like living in a bubble, divorced from the rough and tumble of

normal life. There is a strange magic in the air, like being on the stairway to heaven. It's a shock to the system when you have to go anywhere – especially south on the A1.

I have had to leave my curtains open these last nights of full moon - the trees silhouetted against the bright, silvery, misty sky – it was too stunning to shut out. It kept me awake for hours. A year ago that sky would have been orange but they now switch the street lights off. There wouldn't be street lights in heaven.

Kind wishes,

Isobel