

Monday 15th December 2014

Dear Customer,

I'm trying to second guess your frenzy of activities this week and possible unwillingness to want to cook. I have put a mixture of Golden Globe and Red Beetroot in the bags that you may want to carry over for Christmas and also Butternut Squash which you could carry over too a good stockpile.

I'll start the recipes with Rose Elliot's Carol Singers' Onion Soup. I know you are busy but it is the season of goodwill to all men. I mean.....come on !

Carol Singers' Onion Soup

2 tsbp oil	900g onions, peeled and thinly sliced
4 tsp sugar	sea salt
freshly ground black pepper	1.75 litres stock
2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed	soy sauce
lemon juice	6 slices baguette
125g Gruyere or Cheddar cheese, grated	

Heat the oil in a saucepan, add the onions and fry, for 10minutes or until they are tender but not browned. Add the sugar and some salt and pepper, and continue to fry for a further 15-20 minutes until they become a deep golden brown but don't let them burn. Add the stock and garlic, bring to the boil and let the soup simmer for about 10 minutes. Add soy sauce to taste and a few drops of lemon juice, salt and pepper as necessary. When the carol singers have finished 'Oh come all ye faithful' and you are ready to serve the soup, grill the bread with the cheese on until the cheese has melted. Ladle the soup into hot bowls, top each with a piece of the cheesy bread, take your apron off and serve to each carol singer on your doorstep. Then start peeling some more onions for the next lot.

Stuffed Butternut Squash

1 large butternut squash	1 garlic clove, finely chopped
50g butter	olive oil
75g walnuts, lightly toasted and coarsely chopped	200g blue cheese or goat's cheese, crumbled
2 tsp chopped thyme	1 tbsp runny honey
sea salt and black pepper	

Cut the squash lengthways and scoop out the seeds and soft fibres. Put in a roasting dish, add the chopped garlic and a knob of butter to each cavity, then brush with a little oil and season well. Place in a preheated oven to 190C / Gas 5 and bake for ¾ - 1 hour, until the flesh feels very tender when pierced with the tip of a knife. Scoop the soft flesh and all the buttery, garlicky juices out into a bowl, leaving a 1cm thick layer of flesh attached to the skin. Roughly mash the flesh. Keep back a little of the cheese and walnuts, then fold the remaining into the soft squash, along with the thyme and some more salt and pepper. Spoon the filling back into the empty squash halves and scatter on the reserved cheese and walnuts. Finish with a trickle of honey and return the squash to the oven and bake for 15 minutes or until the cheese is bubbling.

Ernest popped in the other day. He said a young deaf and dumb lady had knocked at his door with a portfolio of drawings. He said her drawings were "simply breathtaking" - all of animals. He said he flicked through and saw one which caught his eye. The lady had held a card up with prices on. He had £15 in his wallet so she accepted it for his chosen drawing. "What's it a drawing of Ernest?" I said.... concerned. "It's a picture of a little kitten coming out of a vase" he told me. He sat there quietly as I rolled about in hysterical laughter. It's ok, he's used to it.

Wow, I had to see it. I went round a few days later and there it was, pride of place, pinned up on his wall. The cutest, fluffiest little kitten ever, with big black eyes, sitting in a coffee cup with 'café' written on it. When he went out to make the tea I spit on my finger to see if the charcoal smudged, which it did, I suspect that underneath the charcoal was a print. I told him I needed to take a statement. He spoke, I typed into my phone:

"It was about 5pm, I was just about to put my tea on and there was a knock on the door.....for some reason I picked that one..... I was just drawn to it.....it just seems as if it's real, just real....it looks like a kitten.....it's quite possible it could have got in the vase, little kittens do that, they get into all sorts of places.....it's just so natural.....you just look up and see that little kitten there.....look at how its ears are and its eyes....if I'm honest, it wasn't just the kitten but the markings on the vase.....the more I look at it the more I like it..... you must have a heart of flint if you couldn't be amused by something like that, even for a bloke" he said.

I agreed, I said I thought it was beautiful and could understand why he was drawn to it. He really is such a special person. I have every intention of immortalising him in a screenplay. That's my plan for next year. Somewhere in the Crocodile Dundee, Educating Rita, Hannah Hauxwell, Calendar Girls genre there is a film brooding. I shall not rest until I get him on Breakfast America. If you have been with Farmaround a while, you will know the background and the amount of material I have for this. I don't need to add in any fiction, it's all there.

I have to keep this brief as Diane is not very happy with me saying she needs to print the letter off as she has to get back to the office to process Christmas orders. I'm typing as fast as I possibly can.

I know this will be the last delivery of the year for many of you as you set off on your holidays. So I just want to thank you so much for all your support in what has been our 20th year. I hope that you have had a good 2014 and that 2015 will be even better. 'Happy Christmas' to you from all of us at Farmaround.

Kind wishes,

Isobel