

Monday 22nd December 2014

TO OUR LOVELY FARMAROUND CUSTOMERS

‘HAPPY CHRISTMAS’ TO THE REVELLERS

AND FOR THE REST ‘IT WILL BE OVER SOON, JUST SIT IT OUT’ FIZZY WATER IS VERY GOOD FOR EXISTENTIAL NAUSEA

As a departure from tradition and a radical, sadistic move on my part, I have put celeriac in your bags this week. I thought you might like to try a celeriac puree for your Christmas dinner and impress your guests with a Masterchef-inspired, inverted comma smear oryou can just smash it up.

Braised Red Cabbage with Apple

1k red cabbage

1 large onion, finely sliced

¼ tsp grated nutmeg

4 tbsp red wine vinegar

2 tbsp redcurrant jelly

25g butter or margarine

½ tsp ground allspice

an apple, peeled, cored and grated

2 tbsp light brown sugar

Finely slice the cabbage, discarding the core. Melt the butter or margarine in a pan with a lid. Cook the onion, uncovered for 5 minutes until soft but not browned. Stir in the spices then add the cabbage, apple, red wine vinegar and sugar plus 100ml cold water. Stir until thoroughly mixed and the sugar has dissolved. Season generously. Bring to the boil, then cover tightly and simmer for about an hour, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage is very tender and the liquid has evaporated. Stir in the redcurrant jelly, allow to melt then serve. If you make this ahead, reheat in the pan, stir in 2-3 tablespoons of cold water, cover and cook gently over a medium heat for 5-10 minutes, stirring occasionally until piping hot.

Smashed Celeriac

1 celeriac, peeled (☹, I do understand) olive oil

1 handful fresh thyme, leaves picked

sea salt

3-4 tbsp water or stock

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

freshly ground black pepper

Slice about 1cm off the bottom of your celeriac and roll it onto a flat edge, so it's nice and safe to slice. Slice and dice it all up into 1cm cubes. Put a casserole-type pot on a high heat, add 3 glugs of olive oil, then add the celeriac, thyme and garlic, with a little seasoning. Stir around to coat and fry quite fast giving a little colour, for 5 minutes. Turn the heat down to a simmer, add the water or stock, place a lid on top and cook for around 25 minutes, until tender. Season carefully to taste and stir around with a spoon to smash up the celeriac.

Celeriac Puree

1 small celeriac, peeled (☹), and cubed

1 tbsp honey

salt and pepper

50g butter

400ml milk

squeeze lemon

Melt the butter in a saucepan over a medium heat and add the celeriac. Sweat the celeriac for 4-5 minutes, stirring to prevent it from browning or sticking. Pour the milk into the saucepan and bring it to the boil. Lower the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, until the celeriac is very soft. Remove the celeriac with a slotted spoon and put in the blender. Add a tablespoon of honey, a squeeze of lemon and salt. Blend until smooth adding some of the cooking liquid for a looser constituency if needed. Season and serve.

It's Sunday and the Winter Solstice today – fantastic. An extra two minutes of daylight to play with each day. We'll just get this little lot over and done with then the snowdrops will be popping up and a New Year to look forward to an election year. And what an exciting, basket-case of an election this is going to be.

Anyway, I hope you do have a lovely Christmas whatever you are doing,

Very best wishes,

Isobel

PS I found out that a few of you didn't receive my letter last week as there was a printer problem. I was very upset. When it comes to my letter, it is sacrosanct and I am a prima donna. I know that you can read it online but it's not the same, and the thought of you turning the invoice over to just see a blank sheet is just dreadful. I sent a very strong email copied to every employee "...I don't want to find out about this when it's too late to do anything about it...there's always a solution...make sure this never happens again...." I think they were all more concerned about getting the Christmas orders on and the packing done.