

Monday 25th May 2015

Dear Customer,

We have a new phone number. It's a long one, looks a bit French and it's got a hell of a lot of 3's in it but calls costs no more than a normal number. It is **033 33 232 664**

I hope you have had a nice Bank Holiday weekend whatever you were doing. The English season is slowly starting and we have Lyncroft Farm's first chard, spring onions and Romaine lettuces in the bags this week. We are almost through the 'hungry gap' which didn't seem as dramatic this year as it has been. I remember horrendous years when I would sit down to work out what to put in the bags but there would be nothing anywhere. We will be switching to new season potatoes very soon, I think Lyncroft are about to start 'lifting' their first ones.

Here are a few quick and easy recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Quick Braised Chard and Puy Lentils

<i>bag of chard</i>	<i>2 tbsp olive oil</i>
<i>1 clove garlic, sliced</i>	<i>1 red chilli, deseeded and chopped</i>
<i>250g pouch cooked puy lentils</i>	<i>squeeze lemon juice</i>

Cut the chard stalks into batons and roughly shred the leaves. Heat half the olive oil in a large saute pan. Add the chard, stalks, garlic, chilli and a splash of water. Cook over a low heat for 8-10 minutes until softened, then add the leaves and cook until completely wilted. Prepare the lentils following pack instructions. Take the chard off the heat and stir through the lentils. Season, dress with the olive oil and the lemon juice then serve.

Roasted Potato, Onion and Rosemary Potatoes

<i>4 medium potatoes</i>	<i>1 small onion, finely chopped</i>
<i>2 tbsp vegetable oil</i>	<i>2 tbsp chopped fresh rosemary or 2 tsp dried</i>
<i>1 tsp chopped fresh thyme leaves or ¼ tsp dried</i>	<i>¼ tsp salt</i>
<i>1/8 tsp pepper</i>	

Heat the oven to 450F. Grease an oven tin. Cut the potatoes into 1" chunks. Mix the remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Add the potatoes and toss to coat. Spread the potatoes in a single layer in the pan. Bake uncovered for 20-25 minutes, turning occasionally, until the potatoes are light brown and tender when pierced with a fork.

Well it's been another horrendous week here in Richmond !

We've been having all sorts of inspections – the Fire Service and then on Friday, the Health and Hygiene Inspector. I left Lorraine and Grace, our new cook, to it. Piles of paperwork, they sat there going through it 'blah, bah, blah' – hours of common sense regulation topped off with hours of unnecessary burden. As I passed through the open double doors into the shop area, I saw a rat going behind the counter. 'There's a rat' I shouted, then remembered the inspector so started whispering 'there's a rat', I managed to usher it out the front door by which time panic had set in and all the workmen had dropped their tools to go and 'find the rat'. I was shouting 'don't kill it, don't kill it'. They were saying it had to be killed. I'm not sure the inspector realised what was happening – he was so engrossed with his Hygiene legislation forms. He'd told Lorraine that someone has to walk the perimeter of the building at least once a week checking for rats. The rat wasn't well, it was slow and disorientated, I think it had been poisoned. It isn't normal behaviour to wander into a populated building. Don't worry, we are rat-free in the building !

We have made some progress and we are now in the Garden Centre with our phones and computers and everything we need to function – just the 20 years of accumulated rubbish to drag over here now, and before we can hand over the keys to the other premises. It's Sunday night, our place of work is now definitively Brompton and tomorrow we do our first pack here! We could have opened the café but we didn't, it was just too much and we didn't have the stamina. Some of our helpers, the ones with muscles have fallen ill. I can't remember when I last had a meal, I think it was weeks ago. I keep going to the fridge to look for something but it's all shrivelled up or out of date. On Friday all I had was a hot chocolate (testing out the new machine) and a coca cola and was violently ill with a migraine all night which I'm still recovering from. I knew a migraine was in the offing so maybe, like a dog eating grass, I needed to bring it on and get it out my system,

The work still isn't completely finished.....nor the bills. The electricians are back again this week, the foorer is back, the joiners are back ...but it's nearly there. Half the signage is up and people are trying to drive in now (encouraging !). The rest of the signage is up on Wednesday. The café is ready to go, we hope to get the shop ready by the end of the week and open them both together. Diane for some unknown reason was there at 6am this morning and an ambulance drove in with 2 paramedics wanting to buy coffees. Diane served them, they were very excited about it, they raved about the transformation and she put £3 in the till. They said they were going to tell all the other ambulance drivers about it. Our first customers – a triumph ! And for me a relief as I've been worried about my outlandish décor - it would look banal in London but up here I thought might frighten and alienate – it still may.

I was driving to Richmond from Brompton and there was a little blob on the road, it looked like a dead rabbit, the car in front drove over it, I drove over it, it was in the middle of the lane. I then thought it didn't look dead at all. I found a place to turn round and drove back, in time to see another car drive over it at great speed. I stopped and put my hazard lights on. It was a tiny baby rabbit rigid with fear. I picked it up and took it home. I didn't find any injury except a grazed nose and bedded it down in a box, I tried to feed it but it wouldn't take anything. Myfa went gooey and maternal over it and slept next to its box. Today I drove it over to a wildlife rescue centre in Thirsk, gave them a donation and offered to take collection boxes for the cafe. I knew they would be inundated with baby rabbits at the moment and so it wouldn't be alone. When they are well enough and old enough they get released into the 20-acre garden of a local lady which is surrounded by woods and meadows where they won't get shot or squashed. Apparently she doesn't care that they eat all her garden plants.

We shall see what this week brings and if we finally open. I hope so, but yet again.....the pressure's on.

Kind wishes,

Isobel