



Monday 13th July 2015

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well and not too disappointed by Murray's early exit. It's been sunny ... on and off up here, but mainly muggy and midgy, but it is better than the cold wind. Yorkshire produce is starting to pop up now in the fields. Rosemary Wass' pointed cabbages have popped up on the Yorkshire Moors. We have spinach and lettuces from Jonnie Watson in Tadcaster and new potatoes, carrots and ruby chard from Lyncroft in Ormskirk. Cucumbers from Hull! The English produce is late this year after the cold spring, it's always a relief when it starts coming through. Better late than never.

Here are a few recipes you could try with your pointed cabbage:

Latin Pointed Cabbage Coleslaw

<i>half bunch of coriander</i>	<i>half a red pepper</i>
<i>3 tbsp olive oil</i>	<i>2 lemon, juiced</i>
<i>dash salt</i>	<i>½ pointed head cabbage, shredded</i>
<i>1 tomato, chopped</i>	

Place the coriander, red pepper, olive oil, lemon juice and salt in a food processor and process until the coriander and pepper are finely chopped. In a large bowl toss this mixture with the cabbage and tomato. Put to cool for at least an hour in the fridge before serving.

Creamed Ginger Pointed Cabbage

<i>1 pointed cabbage, cored and thinly sliced</i>	<i>2 tbsp butter</i>
<i>1 onion, finely chopped</i>	<i>2 garlic cloves, minced</i>
<i>1 heaped tbsp grated fresh ginger</i>	<i>200ml double cream</i>
<i>salt and black pepper, to taste</i>	

In a very large pan, heat the butter over a medium heat until it is melted and starting to bubble a little. Stir in the onion and garlic and cook for about 5 minutes, until softened. Stir in the ginger and cook for about a minute. Then add the cabbage, stirring well to coat it with the butter and other flavours. Cook, stirring occasionally for about 15-20 minutes until the cabbage is soft and caramelised. Turn the heat down to low and stir in the cream, making sure to scrape any browned bits up from the pan bottom. Cover and continue to cook over a low heat for about 10 minutes. Uncover, add salt and pepper to taste. Then cook for a few more minutes, stirring once or twice, to let some of the liquid evaporate. Adjust the seasonings as desired and serve.

I'm sure I could write 8000 words about trying to write 8000 words, but as for the chapter! I thought I was joking when I said I would need to head to the hills to write it, but on Sunday afternoon I realised I had to head for the hills. There was no way I was going to write it here. On Sunday afternoon I rushed round the house stuffing things in bags, stuffed Myfa in the car. I plucked the guinea pigs screaming out of their hay nest in the hutch and put them in their travel cot. I tried to call my brother to tell him I was going but it only went to answerphone, he was probably caught up in the asylum seekers at Calais. I knew who had the key, I'd just go and get it when I got there. I set off and as I reached Barnard Castle the torrential rain started and thunder and lightning. I didn't know if to turn back but I kept on going. There were flash floods, I had to keep stopping the car, at least I was still in reach of civilisation, once past Middleton in Teesdale you're on your own, it's the wilderness. I eventually made it to Alston and the key wasn't there – for the first time in 15 years – it was gone. I drove into Alston town to see if there was a B & B but gave up and drove home again.

The next day I spoke to a lady in the café and told her about my inability to start writing. She said 'there's nothing worse than staring at a blank page'. I told her I hadn't got that far yet.

I went back to reread the email briefing about the book to see how much of an extension I might get. It said 'THE DEADLINE IS THE DEADLINE'. So that wasn't much help. With nowhere else to turn, nowhere to run to, I opened up a blank page, and stared at it, but not for long. Then something miraculous happened. I started writing. Every few lines I'd count the words 1...2...3...20...45.....62.....85 and now only 7915 to go. At the end of the session, 1am, I'd done 2,500 words. I couldn't believe it. Maybe I will write a book. The pressure was off, another 2 days like that and I'd be almost done with just the refining to do. That was on Monday. On Tuesday I felt really tired but nevertheless that evening I opened it back up and did another 500 words. I haven't looked at it since and it is now Saturday evening. I don't know what happened on Wednesday but on Thursday a migraine struck, and with it the terror that I would lose more writing days which made the migraine worse and last longer. I have a visitor on Tuesday so I now have only tomorrow and Monday to finish it.

My brother returned from France and I emailed him that I'd been up to Alston as I had to write a chapter and couldn't concentrate here. His response.....

..” of course it's no problem if you want to spend some time there – although I'm amazed you feel you can leave the café already. Is now really the right time to be starting something else ?”

Me - “I'm not starting something else Greg. I just have a chapter of a book to write by next Wednesday.....”

Him – But surely you need to focus your attention on the café and shop ? Doesn't starting to write a book constitute 'starting something else' ?

Me – “I'm not starting to write a book !!!”

Kind wishes,

Isobel

It's Sunday now and things have gone from bad to worse. My plan was to go to the café at 11.30am to meet the jazz pianists, listen to a couple of tunes then come straight back and start writing. I ended up staying for lunch, staying all afternoon mouthing along to all the Bacharach tunes and didn't get back home till 5pm. About to start writing and Myfa started whining. Thought I'd better just nip her down to the river. En route back to the car bumped into a poet friend who was down there with his labs. Ended up talking for over an hour, then rushed home, made a cup of tea, went and picked some dandelion leaves for the guinea pigs. Answered a few texts and emails, checked the BBC news, BBC weather, the exchange rate. Now it's 8.19pm and I'm exhausted and I haven't written a word. I'm getting squeezed into a time corner with little room for manoeuvre. I'm going to make another cup of tea now.