



Monday 9th May 2016

Dear Customer,

We have delicious Florence fennel in the bags this week – great news if you like Pernod, or aniseed balls. It is quite different cooked to raw. If raw, slice it into a salad, the thinner the better. Dress with salt, lemon juice and olive oil for a great accompaniment. You could cook slices in a pan in lots of olive oil, turning with tongs then returning to the pan with sugar and fennel seeds until soft and caramelised. This is delicious stirred through pasta.

You could stir-fry or steam your pak choi, or thinly slice it and add it to a quiche or curry. With rhubarb in the bags too, here are some freaky recipes for this week's freaky ingredients:

Pak Choi and Noodle Soup (serves 4)

1 litre vegetable stock	1 tsp root ginger, finely chopped
1 small red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped	juice of ½ a lime
1 tbsp soy sauce	50g chestnut mushrooms, finely sliced
2 heads pak choi, shredded	150g dried pine thread noodles
2 tbsp chopped fresh coriander	kettle of boiling water

Put the stock, ginger, chilli, lime juice and soy sauce in a large saucepan and simmer for 5 minutes over a moderate heat. Stir in the mushrooms and pak choi and continue cooking for another 5-7 minutes or until the green stems are cooked but not soggy. Place the noodles in a bowl, pour boiling water over them and stir to separate the strands. Leave according to packet instructions. Drain off the water and divide the wet noodles between the 4 warm bowls. Top up with the soup and finish with chopped coriander.

Stir-Fried Broccoli and Pak Choi with Chilli and Ginger

1 tbsp vegetable oil	1 tsp toasted sesame oil
200g small broccoli florets	2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
½ red chilli, deseeded, finely sliced	1 thumb-sized piece ginger, finely shredded
200g pak choi, leaves separated	1 tbsp soy sauce

Heat the vegetable oil in a large wok and add the broccoli. Add a splash of water to help steam the broccoli then stir-fry it quickly over a high heat for around 2-3 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger and stir-fry for a further 1-2 minutes. Add the pak choi leaves and soy sauce and fry for another minute or so until the greens have started to wilt slightly. Remove the wok from the heat and serve immediately.

Rhubarb and Fennel Fresh Pickle

500g rhubarb	2 large banana shallots
1 medium bulb fennel	3 tbsp olive oil
150ml cream sherry	3 tbsp caster sugar
2 tbsp green peppercorns in brine	

Peel the shallots, cut in half lengthways and separate into layers and tip into a large saucepan. Pour in the olive oil and cook over a moderate heat until they have softened and are starting to colour. Wash, trim and halve the fennel bulb then cut it into thin slices the width of matchsticks. Stir the fennel into the shallot and continue cooking. Trim the rhubarb, chop into 1½" pieces then add to the onion and fennel. Pour in the sherry, cover with a lid and simmer gently for about 10 minutes. Rinse away the brine then stir in the peppercorns, sugar and a touch of salt. Leave the mixture to cook for a further 5-10 minutes, making sure the rhubarb softens but doesn't collapse. Remove from the heat and cool. Serve with cheese on toast or whatever you fancy.

Poached Rhubarb

500g rhubarb	2 tbsp honey
3 tbsp water	3 tbsp elderflower cordial

Chop the rhubarb into short lengths and place in a pan with the honey, elderflower cordial and water. Cover with a lid and simmer for 7-10 minutes till soft and silky. Serve with yoghurt and granola.

First there was Slow Food, then Slow Fashion, and now Slow Gardening. It is a concept which I am developing and hope to bring to market very soon. Pick a warm sunny day and park the wheelbarrow alongside your weedy bed of matted vegetation. Make a cup of tea, take it into the garden and sit down on the grass next to the wheelbarrow. With a small fork dig up a dandelion and put it gently in the wheelbarrow, feeling guilty to be taking its life. Then sit there for maybe 15 minutes sipping your tea staring across the garden, saying 'hello' to any passing walkers. Then try a buttercup, extricate it and lay it in the wheelbarrow. Now lie flat out on your back for an hour looking up at the clouds. The thistle thing you leave in situ – too prickly. The nettles – don't go near them with a barge pole, or that clingy, sticky stuff. The dock is too deeply rooted, so do one more dandelion then set off with your wheelbarrow and empty your three weeds into the green bin. Done. That's plenty for one day.

I've been trying to build myself up to doing a bit of Slow Housework but I can't be bothered. Gardening and housework are the most futile of activities – they never end.

I do feel like a zombie at the moment - a combination of the tail-end of this bug and the stress of the last 18 months catching up with me. My head is completely devoid of any thoughts, which is creepy. Maybe I'm metamorphosing into something. Maybe my book is brewing, or God forbid, a new risky business. Or maybe my lifetime quota of thoughts and ideas is spent.

Just taking Myfa out for a Slow Dog Walk,

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel