



Monday 15th August 2016

Dear Customer,

Another week of bucolic bliss and it was also my birthday again, one spent with the sheep shearers as I had the previous day when we were rained off halfway through. It's dangerous when it rains as the shearers skid on the shearing platform, a slippery mix of lanolin and water, and they also get electrocuted. They said I was 'stressy'. It's a serious business making sure the right fleeces go into the right bags. One moment's lack of concentration and a brillo pad of a Swaledale fleece could end up in the Wensleydale bag. At the same time I get to have a really good look at every inch of every sheep including their tummies and their feet. The shearers very kindly trimmed and treated any sore feet for me but I had to keep it to myself as 'they couldn't possibly get through the thousands they sheared each summer if they did it for everyone'. I was also stressed because one of the little white Shetlands jumped off the shearing platform and instead of running off into the field she crawled under the trailer. It was very low with lots of pipes sticking out and she lay there like a cat all afternoon - I thought we'd never get her out. I was worried it might rain again. I was worried about the sheep who we didn't manage to get in the pen who was still loose in the field, a wild one, I was doubtful we'd ever be able to catch it. I was worried that I had to go back to my house to make a flask of tea for them and I only had soya milk in the fridge and my car was trapped in the field so I couldn't go to the shop. I could fill this page with all the other things that I was worried about. After shearing I was desperate to get them back to the other field a mile up the lane where there was more grass. Ernest won't help me any more, he said he's too weak. He never could cope with walking the sheep up the lane and would insist on about 10 helpers blocking every snicket and possible exit route. He always had visions of them fleeing in every direction, ending up in the Market Place. There was no one to help me so I thought I'd just give it a go on my own. I opened the gate and called them. They stampeded out, passed me immediately and charged up the road, a torrent of 110 of them. They were all ahead of me except one who walked next to me with his nose on my hand and another who just strolled quietly 40ft behind me with a car behind it. They would all come to a halt for a quick snack, grab a few leaves off the trees or a flower head, then would run on. I hoped they would all turn left off the tarmac onto a farm track and then turn right into their field rather than carrying on down the Coast to Coast path to Reeth. They were so good and went straight to their field, and in. Clever sheep, I was so proud of them. So all sheared and done. The wool was collected tonight and will be delivered to the scourer in Bradford in the morning. Phew. Now I can start worrying about the haymaking. We are very late, I am waiting for them to come and cut it, I'm concerned it's going to seed. It's quite droughty.

It's Sunday evening and we are now second, ahead of China in the medal tables. This is remarkable. We are brilliant. I always knew we were good rowers but this is more than just rowing. We must be on the evolutionary fast track to becoming a superhuman species.

Here are some super-tasty recipes you could try with this week's delicious superfood kale:

Kale Pasta with Pine Nuts and Capers

200g kale
30ml olive oil
2 cloves garlic, finely sliced
2 tsp capers
1 tbsp pine nuts

370g tagliatelle
1 small onion, sliced
½ red chilli, chopped
salt and freshly ground black pepper
grated cheese (optional)

Tear the leaves from the kale stems and cut into strips. Blanch these in a pan of salted boiling water for 4 minutes until cooked. Drain from the pan using a slotted spoon then bring the water back to the boil. Add the pasta and cook according to packet instructions to 'al dente'. Meanwhile add the olive oil and onion to a pan and saute for about 3 minutes. Throw in the garlic and chilli for a further minute. Add the kale and capers, season with salt and pepper and toss everything together. Remove pan from the heat and leave to one side while your pasta cooks. Drain the tagliatelle and add it to the kale and onion. Toss well together and finish with the pine nuts and grated cheese.

Balsamic Kale and Potatoes

400g small new potatoes, or chopped
2 tbsp olive oil
1 small chilli pepper, deseeded and finely chopped
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 small onion, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
200g kale shredded
1½ tsp dried oregano

Preheat the oven to 375F. In a medium bowl toss the potatoes and onion with 1 tbsp olive oil. Spread the potato and onions on a baking sheet and roast until the potatoes are tender, about 30 minutes. When cool enough to handle, chop the potatoes into bite-sized pieces. In a large frying pan heat 1 tbsp olive oil over a medium heat. Add the garlic and chilli pepper and cook for 30 seconds. Add the kale, potatoes and onions. Cover and cook until the kale is wilted. Add the oregano, salt and pepper to taste. Toss and serve.

Kind wishes and hope you are well,

Isobel