



Monday 10th March 2017

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. Another week, another bag of delicious produce to keep you busy and out of mischief. It's been lovely and sunny here. I've been out having another go at the garden but it's a hopeless task. It's an anarchy of dense, tangled, fibrous mess. Every known British weed has colonised it. I feel so sorry for the crocuses and polyanthus crushed against walls and hiding under shrubs. Baby daffodils are trying to grow through old ferns. Everything is growing in the wrong place, nothing is where I put it. New trees have appeared - sycamores. I had such a nice suburban garden in London. French doors leading onto a patio then a lawn, a border down each side and a big pear tree at the bottom - simple. The borders were full of plants I chose from the Garden Centre, not ones which had flown in on the breeze. It was tidy and under control. Plants stayed in their own gardens. Here, in the end, the countryside requisitions your garden and there's nothing you can do about it. Respect to nature and to our organic vegetable growers who have 200 acres of this to contend with and to extract an edible crop from. I'd like to dig it all up and start again but as with any organic plot however large or small, an awful lot of wildlife and insects depend on it. The first bee was buzzing around today and the toads have emerged from the undergrowth and are now mating in the pond. It seems much earlier than usual. There's a pheasant hanging out there at the moment. Each morning he walks up and down alongside the bi-fold glazed doors trying to get into the house, convinced there's another pheasant living inside, his reflection. He's been pecking at the wood frame and made a big hole in it.

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

Kale Crisps with Lemon

1 tsp cumin seeds
bag of kale, washed the dried thoroughly
zest of 1 lemon
sea salt flakes
rapeseed oil

Preheat the oven to 160C/ 325F/ Gas 3. Toast the cumin seeds in a dry frying pan giving the pan a shake as you go until the seeds turn darker and nuttier. Grind them in a pestle and mortar with a teaspoon of salt flakes. Strip the leaves from the stems keeping them in large pieces, ideally a few centimetres wide. Toss gently in a large bowl with a good drizzle of rapeseed oil making sure each leaf is lightly coated. Place in a single layer on a flat baking tray and cook for 6 minutes in batches if necessary. They will crisp up as they are cooled even if they seem a bit soft when removed from the oven. Season with the cumin salt and a grating of fresh lemon zest and serve.

Pasta with Garlicky Greens

1 tbsp olive oil
2-3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
200ml creme fraiche
50g blue cheese, crumbled (optional)
400g leeks, finely sliced
200g kale, shredded
400g short pasta eg orecchiette or penne

Heat the oil in a frying pan, add the leeks and garlic and let them soften for 15 minutes. Stir in the kale for the final 5 minutes to wilt. Add the crème fraiche, stir and remove from the heat. Cook the pasta to packet instructions. Drain the return it to the pan and stir in the leek and kale sauce. Serve with crumbled blue cheese on top if using.

Kale and Leek Colcannon

400g leeks, finely sliced
800g potatoes, peeled
150ml milk
200g kale, chopped
75g butter or margarine

Melt the butter or margarine in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Add the leeks and stir round to coat. Add a tbsp. of water and season to taste. Let the leeks sweat for about 5 minutes over a medium heat, stirring from time to time, then add the kale. Add another tbsp. of water and cover. Leave to sweat for a further 10 minutes until vegetables are tender. You may need to add a little more water halfway through. Meanwhile cook the potatoes in boiling water until just tender while the greens are sweating. Heat the milk, drain the potatoes then gradually add the milk and mash until smooth and mix in the leeks and kale.

Nothing much to report here. It was a bit of a non-week having spent three days in bed with a terrible migraine. I blame the lovely hairdresser's bad attempt at head massage when she was doing the shampoo, which seems to be the thing these days.... but they aren't trained for it. It's delicate around your head and neck - one blow to your temple and you're dead. Her then pulling my head back into an unnatural position trying to get at my fringe from behind, and whatever chemical concoction she sprayed into my scalp before the blow dry, it all did it for me. The following day I developed an unnerving twitch in my forehead and the next day the migraine started. In the middle of the migraine my brother started on me again. I saw on my phone 'Isobel', not 'Hi Isobel'. I couldn't face opening the email. It has been quiet on that front. Six weeks in Australia, some time in Germany and then trips to the rugby all managed to distract him from his obsession..... that I should sell my house. When I eventually opened the email it was as expected. He'd sent me an attachment from an estate agents of a prison-like flat which if I could buy mortgage-free if I sold up. The accompanying note wasn't pleasant - he just can't be normal with me anymore. For him it's a financial calculation, for me it's my life.

There's really no let up from him. He's a control freak and now in the leisure of early retirement I'm an easy target to channel his anxieties, and he does genuinely worry about me of course. He'd advised against opening up the disastrous vegetarian farm shop and café, feels vindicated no doubt, but he would have advised against anything as he is so risk averse. Thankfully he has at least given up trying to get me to have all my beloved sheep slaughtered. Not because he understands or empathises with their sentience as fellow living creatures but because it wouldn't be a very good ending to the book I intend to writeonce I find some of that elusive of peace of mind.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS Your free copy of the latest Taster Magazine is in your veg bag – a lovely magazine started by a lovely Farmaround customer 😊