



Monday 19th March 2018

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It is officially the first day of spring on Wednesday and the clocks go back on Sunday. The snow is blasting horizontally past my window. It is so bitterly cold, it burns. My poor, poor sheep and all the poor sheep, lambs and every other creature living outside. At least the forecast is looking better for this week with even a glimpse of the sun – apparently. I don't know what's more upsetting – the weather, or the tension with Russia. I can't watch the news because of it. I'm sure we all have plenty enough stress in our lives without that kicking off.

We have kooky, candy-striped beetroot in the bags this week – Chioggia beetroot by its other name. It is marginally sweeter than normal red beetroot but you can use it in the same way.

You could make a beetroot puree. Cook the beetroot and whizz it in the food processor with a dollop of crème fraiche. Mix it with an equal quantity of mashed potato, taste and season. Reheat gently, stirring in a pan and serve topped with some chopped dill. You could make a beetroot and carrot salad. Peel and grate equal quantities of raw beetroot and carrots into a bowl. Mix two tablespoons of olive oil, a tablespoon of sesame oil and a tablespoon of lemon juice plus a pinch of salt. Mix the vinaigrette with the carrot and beetroot then sprinkle generously with pumpkin and sesame seeds.

Here are a few other tasty recipes you could try:

Beetroot Tarte Tatin

75g golden caster sugar
splash of sherry vinegar
6 thyme sprigs
250g puff pastry

40g butter or margarine
1 tbsp honey
4 fresh beetroot, cooked
salt and black pepper

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F/ Gas 4. Place a small, heavy, oven-safe frying pan over a medium heat. Add the sugar to the pan and stir until it dissolves then add a pinch of salt, all the butter or margarine and a splash of sherry vinegar. Keep stirring until it has turned mahogany brown. Be careful to not let the sugar burn. Add a tablespoon of honey to the pan. Pick the thyme leaves from 6 stalks and add them too. Remove from the heat and stir. Cut the cooked beetroot into fat slices and arrange them on top of the caramel, working from the edge to the centre in a spiral pattern. Season with salt and pepper. Roll out the pastry on a floured surface so it's big enough to cover the beetroot then place it on top tucking the edges down into the pan. Put it in the oven for about 30 minutes or until the pastry is golden. When cooked place an upturned plate over the frying pan and flip it over. Leave it for 30 seconds to allow the caramel from the pan fall onto the plate then slowly lift the pan. Serve by the wedge, possibly with a drizzle of honey.

Chard, Beetroot and Mozzarella Frittata

9 Hen Nation eggs, beaten
200g chard
125g cooked beetroot, sliced
salt and pepper

2 cloves garlic, crushed
125g mozzarella, sliced in rounds, then halved
2 tbsp olive oil

Put your grill on very hot. Add oil to a pan then the garlic. Let it sweat for a few minutes. Remove any tough stalks from the chard and set aside for another recipe. Roughly shred the leaves and any tender stalk and add to the pan. Let the chard soften on a medium heat, stirring often for about 10-15 minutes. Season and beat the eggs then pour into the pan. Move the chard around to ensure eggs have total pan coverage. Top with the slices of beetroot and mozzarella. Allow to cook for about 5-10 minutes until almost done. Pop under the grill for a few minutes until bubbling and brown.

Beetroot, Carrot and Ginger Soup

1 large onion, chopped
2 large carrots, diced
juice of 1 orange
salt and pepper

3 medium beetroot, peeled and diced
25g ginger, peeled and grated
1.25 litres vegetable stock
vegetable oil

Heat a tablespoon of oil in a saucepan. Add the onion and fry gently for 10 minutes until soft and translucent. Add the beetroot, carrot and ginger. Stir for a minute then add the orange juice and stock. Season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 25-30 minutes. Blend until smooth. Reheat and check seasoning before serving.

I've been catching up on work after my extended vacation. I've been doing household chores too – cleaned some windows in readiness of wanting to look out of them, went to the recycling bins, did some washing, distributed toilet rolls round the house.

Yet again I found the rat by the pond with another toad in its mouth. And that despite having bought and erected a domed frame and netting to cover it. The rat got caught up in the net and wound itself up. This is the moment that many would take a spade but I stood over it with a laundry basket trying to work out how to catch it but in a split second it had got free. The dome protects the goldfish from the herons, dogs can't drink from it, the leaves can't blow back into it, theoretically the rat can't get to the toads. But how are the toads which are lurking in the flower beds going to get to the pond for mating. I will have to roll a bit back I suppose giving the rats full access to them. It's very hard trying to referee and preside over all these creatures with their natural instincts.

Somehow that rats have to go. I half heartedly poured some disinfectant in one of their hidey holes. I will try and make life as horrible here for them as possible. Instead of just watching out the window, I now run out the door, clap my hands and shout at them.

Please let these next days roll into spring,

Kind wishes,

Isobel