



Monday 10th June 2018

Dear Customer,

I hope you're having a good week. It's been grey and sultry these last few days here which has actually been quite nice, and with a good amount of much-needed rain. Time for the sun to come back again now though but there's not much of it in the forecast. As ever up here we ask ourselves, was that it, have we had our summer, our tiny quota, gone.

We have pak choi in the bags this week. You can eat it raw in salads and sandwiches. You could use it in a coleslaw or stir-fry it. Heat a tablespoon of roasted sesame oil at medium heat. Add two cloves of minced garlic and a teaspoon of minced ginger. Separate the pak choi leaves, chop them into strips and put in a pan over a high heat, cover with a lid and cook for a few minutes. You could also steam them over simmering water for a few minutes and serve with ginger and soy sauce. I can't even begin to tell you how nutritious they are.

Here are a couple of other recipes you could try this week:

Roasted Beetroot Dip

<i>450g beetroot, peeled and halved</i>	<i>2 cloves garlic</i>
<i>½ tbsp olive oil</i>	<i>juice of 1 lemon</i>
<i>½ red chilli, deseeded</i>	<i>1 tbsp water</i>
<i>1 pinch salt</i>	<i>1 pinch pepper</i>
<i>2 tbsp tahini</i>	<i>lemon zest</i>

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F/ Gas 4. Place the beetroot and garlic on a baking tray lined with foil and drizzle with the oil. Fold the foil over to cover the beetroot. Roast for 50-60 minutes until soft, adding more oil after 30 minutes if needed. Let cool then blend with the rest of the ingredients in a food processor until smooth, adjusting the spices and liquid to achieve the desired taste and texture. Sprinkle with lemon zest and serve.

Roasted Beetroot and Pak Choi Salad

<i>500g beetroot</i>	<i>4 cloves garlic, peeled and sliced</i>
<i>1 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted to golden</i>	<i>200g yoghurt</i>
<i>pak choi, chopped into large pieces</i>	<i>pinch cumin toasted</i>
<i>2 sprigs flat parsley</i>	<i>1 lemon, zested</i>
<i>olive oil</i>	

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F/ Gas 4. Wash and cut the beetroot into wedges about 2-3cm thick. Toss the wedges in olive oil, salt and pepper, place in a baking tray, cover with foil, and put in the oven. After half an hour remove the foil to allow them to take on a little colour and add ¾ of the garlic. After another 20 minutes the beetroot should be tender. Mix it with chopped flat parsley. Sear the pak choi in a wok or frying pan for a few minutes then add the other ¼ of sliced garlic, a squeeze of lemon and some seasoning. Remove from the heat. Season the yoghurt with a squeeze of lemon, a teaspoon of lemon zest, olive oil, salt, pepper and a little cumin, adjusting to taste. Combine the beetroot and pak choi, add the rest of the lemon zest. Spoon onto a serving plate, put spoonfuls of yoghurt amongst the beetroot and finish by sprinkling the sesame seeds over.

This last winter was so horrible I am already contemplating how to escape the next one. A few weeks ago I placed a tentative notice on one of the French Riviera community forums seeking somewhere affordable to live for the winter months. I kept checking back but there had been no response. Then an email popped up from a Dutch lady. She had a 7-bedroom house with pool and magnificent views a couple of miles out of St Cezaire sur Siagne, above Grasse. She was only asking 700 euros a month from October to May – the price of a one-bedroomed flat in Richmond. It was a very attractive offer, and if I could find some people to split it with, it would cost virtually nothing. But it looked so isolated. I Google earthed it – the hairpin bends, the drops. I imagined trying to drive up to it in ice and torrential rains, getting cut off. She said the roads weren't too bad. I googled 'incendies', it was surrounded by forest. Last year there were terrible fires, 45 hectares were burnt including a sheep farm. I googled the crime levels in Grasse – not very good. Beneath the swimming pool was a magnificent drop. There were no railings to the side of it, Lainey could fall off. What would the terrain be like for her living there – she would get bitten by snakes and black scorpions. I was becoming a nervous wreck just thinking about it. I mentioned it to someone and said it was at 550m, might I feel the effect of altitude. No, he said, but you might spend a lot of time in the clouds..... I hadn't thought of that.

What is strange is that the house is called Villa Maeva. Of course, Myfa should really have been spelled like that, as it's pronounced, except for my Welsh affectation.

I have parked it pending further consideration. Really if I did go to France for the winter I would want to be in civilisation, near a boulangerie. We Brits are fixated by them. The boulangerie is the French equivalent to our Royal Family.

I've just got a missed call from Ingrid, my friend in Ramatuelle. Her house is always empty in the winter when she goes up to the Alps. I could come to an arrangement I'm sure, however.....it is practically on the beach and at the bottom of a hill. My fear there is that torrential rain would accumulate, roll down the hill in a flood and meet an incoming rolling sea. Her house is just single storey. I've thought about that before when I've stayed there. In fact, last year I was in bed trying to fall asleep but the sound of the waves seemed to be getting closer and closer. I had to get up, go down the garden in the dark, across a car park in my bare feet onto the beach to see where the sea was. It was where it usually is, at the bottom of the beach, gently rolling in and out.

It's very easy to have ideas and then negate them – much easier than acting on them – and in the meantime have a dull life. I think I need to work on that.

Otherwise I'm busy trying to find a shearer to do the sheep early this year. As beautiful as their new field is by the river, there are a lot of flies and there is always the danger of flystrike, especially in this weather. The sooner I get their fleeces off the better. Stella McCartney has bought last year's clip.

Hope you have a lovely week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel