

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well and getting back in the swing. Still no real sign of winter, it is calm, eerily warm, and midgy, with the sky looking as if it's about to burst into snow.... but it isn't. I even think the grass has been growing. I doubt we will escape a freeze so easily – but so far, so good.

We have golden beetroot this week, or 'betterave doree'. You can cook and use them in the same way as red beetroot. You could roast them. Peel and chop them into cubes, toss with vegetable oil and spread in a single layer in a baking tray. Season with salt and pepper and roast at 200C/ 400F / Gas 6 for about 25 minutes or until they are soft with golden brown edges.

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

**Golden Beetroot and Carrot Soup**

500g golden beetroot, peeled and diced in 2cm chunks  
500g carrots, diced in 2cm chunks  
2 tbsp chopped root ginger  
vegetable oil  
chopped parsley, lemon juice, paprika optional

3 onions, chopped  
1 leek, chopped  
1 litre vegetable stock  
salt and pepper

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F/ Gas 4. Place the beetroot and carrots in a roasting tin and drizzle with oil. Roast in the middle of the oven for 20-30 minutes until soft. Meanwhile, put a table spoon of oil in a large pan and saute the onions and leeks. Add the garlic and root ginger. Remove the roasted vegetables from the oven and add to the pan of hot stock along with the onion mixture. Season to taste and simmer for about 5 minutes. Allow to cool for a few minutes then add a little lemon juice. Whizz with a hand blender. Taste, season and serve garnished with chopped parsley and a sprinkling paprika.

**Golden Beetroot Risotto**

400g arborio rice  
1 small leek, finely sliced  
1 litre vegetable stock  
40g butter or margarine  
salt and pepper

3 medium golden beetroot  
2 cloves garlic, mashed  
100ml dry white wine, optional  
olive oil  
handful vegetarian/vegan Parmesan

Bring a pan of water to the boil, add a pinch salt and sugar and the beetroot. Boil for 20-30 minutes until tender. Remove the skin and chop into small chunks, then puree in a food processor. Meanwhile fry the leek and garlic in olive oil. When translucent add the rice and incorporate completely. If using wine pour it in and cook until absorbed. Start adding the stock little by little until it has all been absorbed – this should take around 30 minutes. When the rice is nearly cooked through, stir in the beetroot puree and add the butter/margarine and Parmesan. Remove it from the heat and put the lid on. Set aside for 2-3 minutes. Season to taste, stir and serve.

**Cavolo Nero and Potato Bake**

800g potatoes, finely sliced  
1 onion, finely chopped  
½ tsp chilli flakes (optional)

1 tbsp olive oil  
3 garlic cloves, chopped  
bunch of cavolo nero, chopped

**Gruyere Sauce:**

120g Gruyere, grated  
50g plain flour  
pinch grated nutmeg

50g butter  
500ml milk

Preheat the oven to 220C/ Gas 7. Boil and simmer the potatoes in water for 5 minutes until just tender and drain. Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat and saute the onion for 8 minutes till softened then add the garlic and chilli, if using, and fry for another minute until fragrant. Stir in the cavolo nero, cover and cook for 6-8 minutes until wilted. Season and set aside. Meanwhile make the sauce. Melt the butter in a saucepan over a low heat then add the flour and cook, stirring constantly for 3-4 minutes until pale golden. Gradually whisk in the milk until you have a silky sauce. Heat, stirring almost to a simmer then take off the heat and stir in the nutmeg and two thirds of the cheese and season. Lay half the potatoes in a 1.8 litre baking dish and cover with the cavolo nero mixture. Top with the remaining potatoes, pour over the sauce and scatter with the remaining cheese. Bake for 25 minutes until golden and bubbling.

Living here in Richmond, close to Catterick Camp, from time to time one comes across wounded soldiers. I was on the Georgian racecourse where locals take their young dogs. Lainey loves it up there, it is high up, sheep-free, gamekeeper-free, wild, vast and beautiful. She started a game of chase with another young black lab called Jura and I chatted to his dad, an ex-soldier. He was shot in the back, he has a huge hole at the base of his spine making walking agony, he was in a wheelchair for 3 years. He can't work, has seen friends blown up. He was sent back to civvy street with no support, £4000 compensation and a pension of £37 per week. One could expect more for tripping on a crack in the pavement. I told him it made me ashamed of being a human being, which I am, always, for one reason or another. The human race is a nasty piece of work, and where nothing is fair.

I'm a bit miserable because I've got a bug. I'm usually quite good at not breathing when I'm anywhere near someone who is ill. Using this method I rarely catch anything. The problem is when you find yourself in an enclosed space, breathing normally, with someone who doesn't tell you they're ill, as has happened a few times in recent days. They just casually mention it when it's too late. 'I've been really ill, I've got the bubonic plague but it's fine I'm not contagious'. Were I not ill I would probably be feeling quite happy – a wake-up call that good health is at the foundation of being able to lead a happy life. Diet and exercise are the two big ones, and I hasten to add, exercise for the brain too. Here's to stepping it all up for 2019

Hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel