



Monday 25th February 2019

Dear Customer,

What incredible weather. We have daffodils, crocuses, primroses and snowdrops all in full bloom at the same time, like hitting the jackpot, four cherries in a row. I could live in England with winters like this.

We have fennel in the bags this. I love it raw, just taking a bite out of it, it's so refreshing and reminds me of drinking ice cold pastis. It may surprise you to learn it's full of vitamin C, calcium, magnesium, potassium, folate, iron and niacin. You could slice it into a salad, add some to your sandwiches, braise it, saute it with some onions for a nice side dish, or you could try one of these tasty recipes:

Fennel Pasta

1 fennel bulb	3 tbsp olive oil
50g capers, rinsed and chopped	10 Kalamata olives, pitted and halved
4 garlic, cloves	250g cherry tomatoes, chopped
1 tsp brown sugar	1 tsp tomato paste
5 tsp balsamic vinegar	salt and pepper
pinch chilli peppers	200g pasta, cooked to al dente
1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley	2 tbsp pine nuts, pan roasted

Heat a heavy frying pan on a medium heat. Trim the fennel and cut it into 8 wedges lengthwise. Brush the wedges and unpeeled garlic cloves with olive oil. Place on the hot pan and let them caramelize and the garlic brown for a few minutes. Once browned on one side, turn it over and let the other side soften and caramelize. Turn the garlic over too to brown. Once the fennel is soft, take it off the pan, season lightly and set aside. Peel the roasted garlic and put through a garlic press. Heat 2 tbsp of olive oil in the same pan, add the roast garlic and chopped tomatoes and let them simmer on a low heat until they thicken into a sauce. Mix in some tomato paste, balsamic vinegar and sugar, then season and add the chopped capers and olives. Mix in the cooked pasta and serve topped with the caramelised fennel, toasted pine nuts and fresh parsley.

Broccoli and Fennel Roasted with Olives

head broccoli, chopped into chunky florets	bulb of fennel, sliced into sixths lengthways
10 black olives	½ dried chilli, crumbled
50ml olive oil	peel of a lemon

Heat the oven to 180C/ 350F/ Gas 4. Put the broccoli and fennel in a bowl, pour over the olive oil and season with the salt and dried chilli. Toss together well. Place the mixture in a roasting tray, tuck in the lemon peel and cover tightly with aluminium foil. Place on the middle shelf of the oven and roast for 25 minutes then remove foil and scatter over the olives. Return to the oven and cook for a further 15 minutes. Remove from the oven, allow to cool slightly and serve perhaps with an extra drizzle of olive oil and squeeze of lemon.

Fennel and Orange Salad

bulb of fennel	1½ oranges
¼ lemon, juice only	olive oil

Cut the tops off the fennel and thinly slice into rings. Place in a large bowl. Cut away the skin and pith of the orange and slice into circles 1cm thick then add to the fennel. Make the dressing by mixing the orange juice from half an orange, the lemon's juice and an equal amount of olive oil. Season it with salt and pepper then drizzle over the fennel and orange before serving.

Baked Aubergine Pasta

1 aubergine	3 cloves garlic
250g cherry tomatoes	8 tbsp olive oil
250g pasta shapes eg penne	

Set the oven to 200C/ Gas 6. Slice the aubergine into thin rounds. Place them in a single layer in a large roasting tin. Peel and crush the garlic and scatter over the aubergines. Add the cherry tomatoes whole to the aubergine slices and spoon over the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper then bake for 25-30 minutes. Cook the pasta to al dente then drain. Transfer the aubergines and tomatoes to the empty saucepan with a draining spoon leaving the oil behind. Add the drained pasta to the oil and toss to coat in the oil then tip into the aubergine and tomatoes. Tear up the basil leaves and toss with the aubergines and pasta before serving.

It is March this week, March 2019, the month indelibly etched into every wretched British citizen's brain. So how delightful to see Anna Soubury, and the other two, the three amigos, smiling for the cameras, linking arms, with all the razzamatazz of the Spice Girls reunion, as the political apocalypse steps up a gear. There was at least a little gravitas on display as the Labour meltdown commenced. In the Commons they've been heckling, cracking jokes, laughing, as we the people sit staring, stupefied, at the abyss, wondering what lies beyond the 29th as unfathomable as what lies beyond the end of the universe.

With the news full of everything except Brexit I had to go the Parliament Channel to watch the Select Committees. I watched hours of them. It was horrific, it was really as if it was day 1 after the referendum. There is no preparation for anything whatsoever. I watched Sir Ivan Rogers, ex-Ambassador to the EU, and the person who knows everything, giving 'evidence'. It made me shudder. Amongst other things he said goodwill towards Britain in the EU had run out. In all the 'capitals' they now think 'no deal' is more likely than a 'deal', and they are prepared. He thinks it could be a self-fulfilling prophecy. So now I have to seriously consider the effects of a 'no deal' for Farmaround. I never believed it would come to this, but it may well. The end of march is the beginning of the traditional 'hungry gap' where little grows in the UK and we are very dependent on produce from the Continent. We can't stockpile anything, except perhaps a few pennies, as overheads and wages still have to be paid. Not much time to save up now though. I'd been wondering how we could get hold of a boat and go and collect stuff ourselves, then roll up on a Cornish beach, avoiding the M20 lorry park. Worst case I can go foraging – there should be a new season crop of dandelion leaves down the lane and some stinging nettles. Nettle soup can be delicious apparently. Primroses are edible as are gorse flowers, cow parsley and hawthorn leaves. We will manage somehow.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes, Isobel