



Monday 17th June 2019

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It hasn't really stopped raining all week. The sad reality is that this is a normal English summer. Last year's summer was just a freak weather event which we will look back on as the Summer of 2018, up there in history with the Summer of 1976. Again, one look at the forecast shows rain stretching as far as the British Met office can see. By this time last year we were parched, I was begging shearers to come and rid my sheep of their thermal insulation as they lay panting under the trees. This year it would seem cruel to take it off their backs. But anyway....

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

Fennel Pasta

1 large fennel bulb	3 tbsp olive oil
50g capers, rinsed	10 Kalamata olives, chopped
4 garlic cloves	3 tomatoes, chopped
1 tsp brown sugar	1 tsp tomato paste
5 tsp balsamic vinegar	salt and pepper
pinch chilli flakes	200-300g pasta
1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley	2 tbsp pine nuts, toasted

Heat a heavy-based pan on a medium – high heat. Trim the fennel and cut into 8 wedges lengthwise. Brush the wedges of fennel and unpeeled garlic cloves with a small amount of olive oil. Place on a hot pan and let fennel caramelize and garlic cloves brown for a few minutes. Once the fennel is browned on one side turn it over and let the other side caramelize and soften. Also turn the garlic over. Once the fennel is soft, take it off the pan, season with salt and pepper and set aside. Peel the roasted garlic and chop into small pieces. Heat up 2 tbsp of olive oil in the same pan. Add the roasted 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. Add chopped capers and olives. Mix in the cooked pasta. Serve topped with the caramelised fennel, toasted pine nuts and fresh parsley.

Banana and Pear Sweet Loaf

140g butter or suitable margarine	150g soft brown sugar
2 Hen nation eggs, beaten	2 ripe bananas, mashed
2 ripe pears, peeled and cut in 1cm cubes	100g pistachio nuts, roughly chopped
250g strong white flour	1 tbsp baking powder
pinch salt	2 tsp vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 360F/ Gas 4. Grease a 1k loaf tin and line the base with baking parchment. Cream the butter and sugar in a large bowl and whisk together until fluffy and pale. In three stages, pour in the eggs, whisking well after each addition. Add the bananas, pears and pistachios. Add the flour, baking powder, salt and vanilla extract and fold together until well combined. Transfer to the prepared tin and bake in the middle of the oven for 55 minutes. Test with a skewer into the middle of the cake to check it comes out clean and dry. If not cook for a little while more. Turn onto a wire rack to cool.

The rain starts each day just as I've set off on my walk. I've only got one raincoat and it's broken. A few weeks ago I got stuck in it. It's fitted and well toggled, a winter rain coat. I got home, boiling after some strenuous exercise, went to unzip it but the zip was jammed up around my neck. I started overheating and was panicking.... I couldn't get it off. It flashed through my mind to run round my neighbours to see if anyone could get it off me but there was no time for that. With all the force I could muster I ripped the zip apart. It's like getting scissors stuck on your thumb, or getting locked in the toilets, it's horrible. As I consequence I've been having to wear coats that absorb all the rain instead. They get heavier and heavier.

My dog is the sweetest little dog in the world. I put my boots on the other day and they were covered in mud and grass. I went round the side of the house and started hosing them clean. She stood next to me lifting her own paws up to be hosed but her feet were clean and dry. She breaks my heart. She runs up to other dogs to lick them on the nose irrespective of breed and demeanour. It makes me so protective. I had to give her a good talking to this morning, we don't go on the moors very often but today we did and she disappeared over the brow of a hill chasing a rabbit. Coming home in the car - ".... I'm not pleased with you at all, you were a naughty girl not coming back and going out of sight like that...you could have got lost on the moor and mummy would never have seen you again....". She understood every word.

It's one thing going into hospital for a routine operation and dying from an antibiotic resistant superbug – already unforgivable that it has come to this - but going into hospital and being killed by a sandwich as five people did last week.....! I've known about the listeria and e-coli and salmonella in prepacked sandwiches and pre-prepared washed salads for a long time. In Farmaround's early days, as one of the first companies to develop organic supply chains across the UK and the Continent, we did at the same time as the box scheme, supply to some supermarket packers and processors. One of the products was lettuces and leaves for pre-prepared salad bags. This is when I became aware of how often these products are recalled for their varying levels of listeria, salmonella and e coli. I also remember buying a bag of prewashed baby leaf salad from Waitrose when my father and sister came down to stay. It was the only thing we all ate and we were all violently ill with food poisoning. Since then I have never bought any of these bags and if I eat out I will rarely eat the salad.

Unless you are eating at Le Manoir aux Quatre Saisons and it's summer and your baby leaf has been picked fresh from the kitchen garden, it is likely to have come from the veritable breeding ground of a catering-sized, sealed plastic bag of leaves. Of course, listeria, e coli and salmonella are all killed by cooking.

Kind wishes from here in Richmond where the sky is darkening again for the next deluge,

Hope you have a good week,

Isobel