



**Monday 14th October 2019**

Dear Customer,

It's a wet and foggy Sunday morning here in Richmond. Meanwhile the EU and UK negotiators are in 'the tunnel' with hapless public waiting expectantly outside, pacing the corridors, slumped on chairs nursing dregs of cold tea in paper cups. Will a baby deal be born. Simultaneously, MPs on the politics shows of every persuasion are shredding it. We can't move forwards and we can't move back, we're not in, we're not out, like being stuck on a broken-down Eurostar in the middle of the Channel tunnel with the entrance and exit caved in. Urgh.

However, we have the ruggedly attractive celeriac in the bags this week. Healthily full of fibre, vitamin C, vitamin K and B6, potassium, manganese and potassium, once you've peeled him you can turn him into anything you want – chips, a puree, a remoulade. You could even not peel him. You could preheat the oven to 200C/ Gas 6, scrub clean, pat dry, put on a large foil sheet, rub with olive oil, sprinkle with salt, add a few thyme springs and garlic cloves then wrap tightly in the foil and roast for 2 hours. Unwrap from the foil and roast for a further 20-30 minutes to crisp the skin. It should be soft and squidgy like a baked potato. Cut open and put a knob of butter or margarine in the centre and serve.

Or you could try one of these tasty recipes:

**Celeriac and Roasted Garlic Soup**

|                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 garlic bulb                    | 1½ tbsp olive oil             |
| 2 onions, chopped                | ½ tsp celery salt             |
| 1 celeriac (about 700g), chopped | 1 litre fresh vegetable stock |
| 25g chives, chopped              | 50g pine nuts, toasted        |

*Preheat the oven to 190°C/ 375F/ Gas 5. Cut off and discard the top of the garlic bulb. Drizzle with ½ tbsp olive oil, season, wrap in foil and roast for 40 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the remaining 1 tbsp oil in a large saucepan. Add the onion, celery salt and a grinding of black pepper, then sauté for 8 minutes. Add the celeriac, stock and 250ml water; simmer for 25 minutes or until very soft. When the garlic is cooked, squeeze the cloves from their skin into the celeriac pan. Purée everything in a food processor or blender until smooth and season. Serve scattered with the chives and pine nuts and drizzle over a little extra olive oil.*

**Celeriac Puff Pastry Tart**

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| olive oil                                  | 2 onions, sliced   |
| 100g celeriac                              | 1 lemon            |
| 320g ready-rolled sheet butter puff pastry | 130g crème fraiche |
| 2 tsp wholegrain mustard                   | 1 Hen Nation egg   |
| 2 fresh sprigs rosemary                    |                    |

*Heat a little oil in a frying pan and fry the onions until soft. Meanwhile peel the celeriac. Then, using a peeler, slice the celeriac very finely. Drop the slices into a bowl of cold water with a squeezed lemon half to prevent it discolouring. Heat the oven to 200C/ 390F/ Gas 6. Unroll the pastry onto a baking sheet then score a 2cm border. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and press a baking sheet on top to flatten. Zest the remaining lemon half then put in a bowl with the crème fraiche and mustard, mix and season. Beat the egg, brush over the pastry border then spread the crème fraiche in the centre. Dry the celeriac on kitchen paper, layer over the crème fraiche then top with the fried onions, rosemary and a drizzle of olive oil. Bake for 15 minutes.*

My phone has kept ringing day and night with a dodgy 0345 number. I ignore it then get a text message, 'flood alert', panic. I've signed up to get flood warnings from the Environment Agency on the lower river Swale... where the sheep are. After the first alert a month ago we moved them off the river and to the farm and it's been pouring down ever since so that's where they've stayed. The farmer, and Mick, who helps me look after them, think I overreact, they don't believe the river will ever flood that badly, that the sheep aren't stupid and will move to higher ground. Yes, if they can. If the sheep drowned, they would get over it, I never ever would.

I had been frightened they would be snuggled down asleep at night on the riverbank and the river would come up and they'd go floating off to the confluence with the Ouse, pass through York and head out to sea. However, I have since learned from the professor of Physics at Durham University who lives on my road that they see in the dark. Ironically, his main recent research, and on which he has written papers, has been on sheep's eyes. They have a rectangular lens giving them excellent peripheral vision but they are barely able to see up or see down. Mmmm, would they see the river rising beneath them. Anyway, I'm not prepared to take any risks with their lives.

I decided not to do an Izzy Lane collection this year. I needed a year off and to start processing this year's and last year's clips, spend the time preparing for next year's collection. Apart, that is, from the tufted rugs which I have been very excited about.

Some time back. I sent to the scourers all the miscellaneous raw wool and fibre I had been collecting. It was an incredible mix of alpaca, Greenland dog fur from the Arctic explorer who sent me a small box of it each year, the wool from my 'brillo pad' rescued sheep which can't go into apparel as well as wool which can, from my silky Wensleydales and my Shetlands. It all went into one big pot. After sending it to be scoured ( washed ), in Bradford, it went straight from there to a spinner in Halifax.

They spun a sample of yarn which I sent to a rug maker in Turnberry in Scotland who made a couple up. They are the most beautiful, soft, luxurious rugs I have ever walked on. Wool mixes like paint and the resulting natural colour was a warm, light stone with a blue hue, like the colour of a chestnut mushroom or a Weimaraner dog. I was delighted. The blend was so unique, would never be repeated, and probably the only slaughter-free animal fibre tufted rugs in the world. I emailed the spinner a few weeks ago to ask them to spin the rest of the fibre as I planned to launch them this autumn. He eventually got back to me and told me they couldn't find it. He has had all his men turn the warehouse upside down and it has gone, a quarter of a ton of it, vanished. What can I say ! It's probably ended up being accidentally added to the wool of some batch that's come from the fellmonger, shaved off the skin of slaughtered sheep heading for Wilton carpet, something like that. I am flabbergasted and completely gutted, that mix was priceless.

As my sheep age and the numbers start to dwindle, their wool is becoming all the more precious to me. I was planning to have a few of those rugs for myself, huge ones ! They were going to be a present to me from the sheep.

Hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes, Isobel