



Monday 14th December 2020

Dear Customer,

It's Sunday morning, rain is heavy, visibility poor. Visibility of what happens on 31st December, especially poor. Went to bed last night on WTO terms. This morning a glimmer of hope from von der Leyen, snatched away again abruptly an hour later, when Boris told us to 'Get Ready'. Just eating a piece of toast now with almond butter on. Was going to sprinkle some milled flax seed on it as well but under the circumstances it felt a step too far. We are waiting. Waiting to see if the hurricane will change course or if we will be macerated in the eye of the storm.

You don't mess with 'les marins de St Malo'. The Royal Navy will have no chance. The ports will be wrapped up in fishing nets and the autoroutes, a slithery, writhing mass of plaice and sardines before you can say Jack Robinson. We are a cold little island surrounded by sea with a short summer if we're lucky. Our greens stop growing in the frost, we haven't got any oranges or peppers. And, we are bearing the brunt of the worst growing season in memory. The end of the English season is upon us, it could be turnips all round - turnip chips, turnip stew, turnip roulade, twice-baked turnipscaramelised turnips with custard. But we've done it before.

There's trouble at the ports already. A lot of the tropicals come via Europe, shipping containers of bananas are broken down in Rotterdam.

A few extra cans in the cupboard, cartons of orange juice and bags of frozen spinach would seem sensible. I'm not advocating panic buying, just a controlled stocking up. Consensus is that it will be the first couple of weeks which will be the most difficult. Consensus is also that we just don't know anything.

Yep, it's scary stuff. It will be bumpy. But feeling sick that I sound like Boris, exactly like Boris, 'we will get through this'. On our side we will do everything we can to carry on with your Farmaround deliveries and bring you whatever we can.

Who knows, by the time you get this letter there may have been the razzamatazz of a deal, Barnier and Frost emerging, smiling to flashing cameras, the historic handshakes that seal our future.

And, in no particular order, if you've still got any appetite, here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Roast Parsnip and Bean Soup

450g parsnips	1 onion
4 cloves garlic	5 sprigs rosemary
2 tbsp olive oil	2 x 400g tins butter beans, drained
1-2 tbsp bouillon powder	

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ Gas 6. Peel and chop the parsnips and onion and spread on a baking tray. Smash the garlic cloves in their skins and add with the rosemary to the tray of vegetables. Drizzle with olive oil, season, and toss it all together. Roast for 25 minutes, until the parsnip and onion are starting to char at the edges. Squeeze the garlic out of their skins and put back in the tray. Scrape the tray of roasted veg into a saucepan, add the beans and 1 tbsp of bouillon powder. Cover with boiling water, boil and simmer for 5-10 minutes, until the parsnips are tender. Whizz to make a smooth soup, adding more water if necessary.

Pasta with Creamy Tomato and Garlic Sauce

300g tomatoes	1 tbsp olive oil
2 cloves garlic, finely sliced lengthways	300-350g pack dried pasta
2 tbsp crème fraiche or dairy-free alternative	handful fresh basil

Preheat the oven to 180°C / Gas 4. Halve the tomatoes and put in a roasting tray. Drizzle with the olive oil, scatter the garlic over and season. Bake for 30 minutes, until the tomatoes are soft. Meanwhile cook the pasta to pack instructions, then drain thoroughly. Tip the cooked pasta into a large serving dish. Add the crème fraîche and the roasted tomatoes and toss everything together. Season to taste. Roughly shred the basil, stir into the pasta and serve immediately.

Braised Red Cabbage (one to get under your belt for Christmas perhaps as it will keep)

1 small red cabbage	25g butter or margarine
1 red onion, finely sliced	½ tsp ground allspice
¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg	1 apple, peeled, cored and grated
4 tbsp red wine vinegar	2 tbsp light brown muscovado sugar

Finely slice the cabbage, discarding the core and any tough pieces. Melt the butter in a pan and cook the onion for 5 minutes until soft but not browned. Stir in the spices then add the cabbage, apple, vinegar and sugar plus 100ml cold water. Stir until mixed and the sugar has dissolved. Bring to the boil then cover tightly and simmer for about 1 hour, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage is very tender and the liquid has evaporated.

Otherwise, my neighbour had the Covid vaccine last Wednesday morning. I can report she is still alive and looking quite normal. No extra limbs have sprouted, no smoke coming from the house. She said her arm hurt and she felt a bit under the weather for 24 hours, then fine. She's looking smug and says she feels liberated. Anyway, I'll monitor her.

I had a Facebook message from someone in SE19 asking if we had mislaid a van. One had been badly parked opposite their house for the last couple of weeks, seemingly abandoned. They checked the registration number, the plates had been changed. It's the van we had stolen. Heaven knows what it got up to with its false plates on. I've called the police and am waiting to hear when we can retrieve it. Never expected to see that again.

Anyway, it's time. I've got to start thinking about writing some Christmas cards

I leave you, poised as we are at the crossroads of our future. Hard to overstate the magnitude of what is about to happen. Hold onto your hats.

Kind wishes,

Isobel