



Monday 16TH January 2023

Dear Customer,

I hope this finds you well. It's Sunday, and finally the wind has dropped. It was so vicious I could barely sleep with branches and twigs being pelted into my windows for two nights running. Tomorrow comes the snow.

We have Cheryl's rainbow carrots in the bags, grown on her peaty farm in Ormskirk, Lancashire. But only just. They are devastated having lost most of their crops from that frost which came before Christmas. This is their main harvesting and selling season, but when they went to walk the crops in the New Year after a break when they both had Covid, as the frost had thawed, she found their crops had melted with it. Normally resilient, beetroot and celeriac, all ruined, along with 60% of their carrots. Their whole crop of 75,000 Romanescos were ruined. The brussel sprouts fared the best, but even so, the tops were damaged on all 45000 plants, the leaves broken down. They have trimmed them top and bottom to get our stems for this week. They lost even the Siberian cabbage. All the kale was gone.

It is both demoralising and financially devastating for them. With so much effort and money spent all through the year: on labour to work the land, to plough and sow and weed; on purchasing seed and plants and everything else they need; the costs of fuel, energy, machinery and all the other miscellaneous costs like insurance, organic certification etc. etc. that any business has. Then to have barely anything to harvest and another year of investment before seeing if the weather enables your crops, or indeed destroys them. She says it's all just one big gamble now. It's like betting at the casino. It's heart breaking. And this comes of course after the summer drought and the struggle to keep the crops alive. She puts the blame firmly on climate change and worries we won't be able to grow food in this country for much longer. Climate change should worry us all. Yet somehow it doesn't seem to.

We have Jerusalem artichokes in the bags this week, the nutty, knobby roots. You could try a delicious Jerusalem artichoke salad. Boil them in their skins until tender, slip the skins off, slice them up and serve them mixed in a mustardy, lemony vinaigrette. Or you could try roasting them, or a tasty 'Boulangere':

Roasted Jerusalem Artichokes

400g Jerusalem artichokes	4 cloves garlic
1 sprig of thyme	½ tbsp olive oil
lemon juice, to serve	

Preheat the oven to 180C / 350F. Scrub the artichokes, keep the skin on and halve lengthways. Coat them in olive oil and season well with salt and pepper. Lay them out on a baking tray with some thyme and the garlic. Roast for 45-50 minutes until browning and crispy on the outside and tender on the inside. Squeeze the softened garlic from the skins and mix with the artichokes along with a squeeze of lemon juice.

Jerusalem Artichoke Boulangere

400g Jerusalem artichokes, peeled, thinly sliced	700g potatoes, peeled, thinly sliced
2 onions peeled, thinly sliced	270ml vegetable stock
150ml nut or soya milk (dairy, optional)	30g margarine
1 tbsp rosemary leaves, chopped	1 tbsp thyme, chopped

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F. In an ovenproof dish or roasting tin (roughly 20cm x 20cm, layer up the vegetables as follows: a quarter potatoes, a quarter artichokes, a third onions, a third herbs. Season generously with salt and pepper. Repeat the layers two more times ending with topping with the remaining potato and artichokes. Combine the stock and milk in a jug and pour over the vegetables. Dot the margarine on the top. Bake for 1 hour or until the top is golden and the vegetables are tender.

Not much news here. Just trees. First thing on Monday morning a van pulled up opposite and the man who manages the Trust land and a man with a spade got out. They'd come to plant the oak tree in my little bit of view. I wasn't even dressed. I had to stop them. I ran upstairs, threw some clothes on, my coat. I exploded into fight or flight mode and ran out for the confrontation. They were unfastening the young oak from the tree that they'd temporarily secured it to (opposite my house as mentioned last week).

"Hello. What are you doing ?" I said, as if I didn't already know.

"We're planting a circle of Rowan trees in memory of Veronica" said John the Trust man.

"Oh"

All that anxiety for nothing. Jumping to conclusions as usual, of worst case scenario, as usual. Veronica used to live 4 doors down. It was windy and raining when I'd read the fluttering label, which said, I thought 'quercus'. How come it was actually 7 rowan trees. Some sort of sorcery. The rowan circle was being planted to the right of my house. I wished they didn't have to be in a circle but at least my view is preserved for the moment. The tree surgeons are in my neighbour's garden chopping down a beloved, massive eucalyptus which soars into the sky. The leaves glisten like silver discs in the sun but the tree isn't well and she's worried about it crashing through her house. We will miss it. Suddenly the sky is enormous in my back garden.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel