



**Monday 29th May 2023**

Dear Customer,

I hope you've had another good Bank Holiday weekend. We have had beautiful summer weather all this week and I am startled to see cow parsley growing on the verges opposite our houses for the first time ever. They have not been to mow !

In fact all across Richmond nothing has been mown and there are wild flowers blooming everywhere. Is this a turning point I wonder ? I am not holding my breath. 'No Mow May', while it has a catchy ring to it, ends this week and I fear it's being taken literally. I fear carnage in 3 days' time. In fact, I had to correct a neighbour who thought all was good to go on the 1<sup>st</sup> June. The needs of our invertebrates - which have seen a 60% decline in numbers in the last 20 years, and on which our amphibians, birds and small mammals depend, need long grasses and so-called 'weeds', to lay eggs and go through their life cycle. Their needs carry on through the summer. I am reminded of a quote by naturalist Joseph Krutch ( 1893-1970 )

**"If we do not permit the earth to produce beauty and joy, it will in the end not produce food either"**

I must add, never has organic farming, producing our food in tune with nature, and with respect for our eco-systems, been so important. So thank you to you all who support it.

Here is a tasty recipe you could try this week with your cauliflower:

**Polenta with Agrodolce Cauliflower**

*1 onion, finely sliced*

*2 garlic cloves, crushed*

*15g parsley, roughly chopped*

*2 tbsp capers*

*1 tsp sugar*

*100g polenta*

*20g sultanas*

*1 cauliflower*

*30g pine nuts*

*2 tbsp red wine vinegar*

*1 tsp bouillon powder*

*knob of creamy margarine*

*Heat some olive oil in a frying pan and gently cook the onion for 8 minutes, to soften. Meanwhile place the sultanas into a small bowl and pour over 5 tbsp of boiling water and set aside to soak. Chop the cauliflower into bite-sized pieces. Add the pine nuts to the onions and fry for 2 minutes then transfer to a plate and set aside. In the same pan, add a little oil and stir-fry the cauliflower on a medium-high heat for approx. 5 minutes, with a lid on, until it starts to soften and colours slightly. Add the garlic to the cauliflower, fry for 30 seconds, then add the onion and pine nut mix. Stir the sultanas into the frying pan mix, along with their soaking water, the capers, vinegar and 1 tsp of sugar. Bubble for 1-2 minutes, until the cauliflower is just tender. Season well, adding more sugar to taste. Keep warm by covering with a plate off the heat. Mix the bouillon with 500ml boiling water and add to a medium saucepan. Pour in the polenta stirring continuously with a whisk until the polenta is thickened and bubbling, approx. 2-3 minutes. Remove from the heat and add a knob of margarine and combine. Season the polenta and top with the cauliflower and parsley to serve.*

I was just adding the finishing touches to this letter, sending 'kind wishes', then my hand slipped, and I deleted everything. Nice. I hadn't 'saved' as I was on a roll. So here I am starting again. Just to try and understand that crazy little thing called 'economics'. To curb inflation, interest rates must go up and up, reach for the skies, taking our mortgages and loans with them to reduce the amount of money ( the heat ! ) we have to spend. We all must be reduced to subsistence. Small businesses must reduce their prices then kindly fall off the cliff. Supermarkets must cap the prices of food basics to stop us from starving to death. It's a vote winner.

High energy prices are a key component of the high inflation. Can the government not act to bring down the cost of energy - subsidise it, take the VAT off it - wouldn't that bring down inflation - no because it lets people keep more of their own money and they will spend it and that will drive inflation. What a mess. Nothing makes any sense. Does Andrew Bailey, governor of the Bank of England really know what he's doing, as millions of homeowners - especially young people who bought their first homes, maxed out, bought at the top of the market, now coming out of their fixed rate deals, face losing their homes that they spent years saving deposits to buy. Crippling rents, buy to let landlords selling up. Food, homes, basic healthcare - we can take nothing for granted anymore. But more important of course than all that - Phillip Schofield - he seemingly lied to Holly Willoughby.

I spoke to Will Edwards last week. The lovely Edwards family in Wrangle, Lincolnshire were one of our very first growers. Will has taken over running the farm from his father John. He told me that they'd been paying £20,000 a month in energy just to chill one of their cold stores. " £20,000 a month !! ?", " Yes, £20,000 a month, an increase of 500%". It is unfathomable.

We have been in the 'hungry gap', and are looking forward to the English produce starting up again soon. But meanwhile in the southern Mediterranean where we turn to to get through this period, they have been enduring drought ( apart from the recent flooding ). Hence why the pointed cabbages have been half the normal size.....and twice the normal price. Producing food anywhere is getting harder and harder with the combination of the effects of climate change, energy costs, labour supply, and every other cost. I can't really see this changing.

Usually when I am out and about I only ever see things which upset me: a baby squirrel or a hare run over; a dead deer or badger; a lorry full of cows going off to slaughter; sewage frothing in the river; macerated hedgerows and verges. And yesterday, while chatting to my neighbour, a fledgling crow fell onto the road with a thud on its maiden flight and died. However, the other day, apart from the cow parsley, something else gave me a glimmer of hope. I had a walk on a military area a few miles from Richmond where I hadn't been for a while. Last time I was there, they had just felled an area of *"non-native commercial conifer trees, all the same species and the same age, planted in lifeless, lifeless rows, offering habitat for next to nothing.... ugly dead zones in our countryside..."* ( Ben Goldsmith ), these make up the majority of 'woodlands' here in the Dales. In its place a broad-leafed wood had appeared: young beech trees and oaks; rowans and limes. The military has 1.4% of the land in the UK. I hope this is some new policy in action and not just an aberration.

Very best wishes,

Isobel