



Monday 4th September 2023

Dear Customer,

Hello autumn. Oh ! And hello summer. Where have you been ? It's Sunday evening and after a glorious day I went out to sit on the bench on Westfields to watch the sun setting. A big black owl flew over me.

We have Pink Fir Apple potatoes in the bags this week from Herefordshire. They are an old French heritage variety dating back to the mid 19th Century with an earthy, nutty flavour and eat like a new potato: great boiled, steamed or in salads. You could cut them in half horizontally, toss them in some olive oil and salt, spread them out on a baking tray and roast at 200C / Gas 6 until tender in the middle and crispy on the outside. Serve with a dollop of oat or dairy crème fraiche mixed with chopped chives or spring onions.

We also have new season sweet potatoes in the bags, here are a few tasty recipes you could try:

Sweet Potato Pancakes

sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 2cm chunks
120ml milk
oil for frying

80g buckwheat flour
2 Hen Nation eggs
salt and pepper

Peel the sweet potatoes and cut into 2cm chunks then boil in a pan of salted water until tender, approximately 15 minutes, then drain and mash. Meanwhile tip the flour into a bowl and add the milk. Crack in one of the eggs. Whisk until smooth and lump-free. Season and leave it to rest until the sweet potato is cooked and mashed. Separate the second egg into yolk and white. Whisk the egg white in a separate clean bowl until it forms stiff peaks Whisk 400g of sweet potato mash into the pancake batter with the egg yolk. Gently fold the egg white into the batter, keeping as much air in the mixture as possible. Put your oven on a low heat. Cooking in batches, heat 2 tbsp of oil in a large frying pan on a medium heat. Dollop in 2 tbsp of batter for each pancake. Cook until golden on each side and slightly risen (approx. 2-3 mins per side). Keep warm in the oven while you cook the rest. Serve as a savoury meal with, for example ratatouille. You could also eat it with sliced banana and maple syrup.

Sweet Potato and Broccoli with Penne

320g penne
250g sweet potato, cut into cubes
3 tbsp olive oil, plus an extra splash
½ fresh red chilli, finely chopped

head of broccoli florets
sea salt
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

Bring a big pan of water to the boil and add the pasta, broccoli and sweet potato. Cook until the broccoli is tender, 4–5 minutes. Remove the broccoli with a slotted spoon and set aside to drain in a colander. Continue to cook the pasta and sweet potato, until the pasta is al dente, 8–10 minutes. Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat, add the garlic and chilli, and sweat for about 30 seconds. Add the drained broccoli and stir-fry for 1 minute or so. Remove from the heat and transfer the broccoli mixture to a food processor. Add a further splash of olive oil and blend until smooth. Return the mixture to the frying pan. Drain the pasta and sweet potato, reserving some of the cooking water. Add to the broccoli mixture, mix well and heat through, together with a little of the reserved cooking water if needed.

Lentil and Sweet Potato Shepherds Pie

2 tbsp olive oil
1 carrot, scrubbed and finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, crushed
400g tin chopped plum tomatoes

1 onion, finely chopped
10g rosemary, leaves picked and finely chopped
2 x 390g tins green lentils
450g sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks

Heat the oil in a large frying pan over a medium heat and fry the onion and carrot for 6-8 mins until lightly golden and tender. Add the rosemary and garlic and fry for another 1-2 mins. Add the lentils and the water

in the tin, the tomatoes and 250ml water. Season well; bubble over a medium heat for 15-20 mins until thickened and saucy. Meanwhile, boil the sweet potatoes for 15-20 mins until very tender. Drain well, then tip back into the pan; season with black pepper and mash until smooth. Heat the grill to high. Spoon the lentil mixture into a 25 x 20cm baking dish. Spoon on the mash, smooth over to cover the filling, then swirl with a fork. Grill for 10-15 mins until the mash is turning lightly golden in places and the filling is piping hot.

The moment of truth is coming to the field next to me and the planning application for 32 houses. It doesn't look too bad on a sheet of A4 paper with little, watery brown squares and a few corners of pale green. However, some neighbours went in there with special poles and equipment to measure the heights, some of the houses are three storeys. They said 'it's colossal'. On Thursday the group of councillors are being taken to the top of the castle to be shown how the site lies within the landscape. Although it's thought many won't make it up the stairs. Then at 10.30am they come to the site, where we will all be waiting. There's a new leaflet, a last call to action, which I've been out putting through letterboxes today. And then a week on Thursday, it's the vote.

There have been some edgy pieces in the local press about the favouritism being shown towards 'the aristocrat' by the Council in postponing the meeting over and over again, for two years, giving him time to continually tweak the plans, and 'scant consideration being given to the local residents'.

And in Westminster It's all kicking off again. They're back. Rishi is racing against time trying to salvage what he can of his five hopeless pledges. I think he could well lose his seat here - Tory since 1910. But times are changing and he will need the votes of more than a few beef farmers and grouse moor landowners. Starmer is getting ready for government but one does wonder how long his tenancy might be. The left are being very tame and quiet as he takes them to the middle ground. Once they're safely in, will they want his head and a leadership election. Interesting times ahead as ever !

I hope you have a good week,

Best wishes, Isobel