



[Monday 24th October 2011](#)

Dear Customer

We have John at Newfield's first parsnips in the bags this week. It's wild and blustery there on the Yorkshire Moors this morning. John and his men are busy cutting the white cabbages and beetroot and getting them into store before the bad weather comes. He's been cleaning and oiling the potato harvester to put into store for the and getting the tups ready to be let out with the ewes tomorrow. The days are shortening and the number of useful hours. Clocks, of course, go back, yet again, this weekend. We have John's spinach in the bags – we'll make the most of it until the first frosts obliterate it. Jonnie Watson's delicious Savoys are also in the bags this week. We need the iron and vitamins and minerals from our organic greens and roots to build up our defences to whatever this year's alarming, mutated super-virus will be. Here are some tasty recipes you could try with this week's ingredients:

Spiced Parsnip and Savoy Bubble and Squeak

500g parsnips, peeled and cut into chunks

½ tsp turmeric

200g savoy cabbage, finely shredded

handful of frozen peas

juice of ½ small lemon

35g butter or margarine

½ tsp cumin

½ tbsps garam masala

small bunch coriander, chopped

½ red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped

Put the parsnips into a pan of cold water with the turmeric and a little salt and boil for about 12 minutes until very tender. Meanwhile, blanch the cabbage in another pan of boiling water for about 3 minutes until tender, adding the peas for the final minute, then drain well. Drain the parsnips then tip back into the pan and roughly mash with the lemon juice and half the butter or margarine. Then beat in all the other remaining ingredients except the remaining butter, and season with salt. Heat remaining butter or margarine in a non-stick frying pan and press the parsnip mixture into the pan. Cook until crisp underneath then turn over with a fish slice and cook the other side until crisp. Keep flipping it over until you have a crisp cake. Serve on a plate or board cut into wedges and delicious served with a chunky tomato chutney.

Spaghetti with Spinach and Walnut Pesto

1 garlic clove, crushed

50g walnuts, roughly chopped

small bunch mint, roughly chopped
small bunch parsley, roughly chopped
zest and juice of 1 lemon
350g wholewheat spaghetti
50g raisins
150g spinach, finely chopped

Whizz the garlic, walnuts, herbs, lemon zest and juice with some seasoning in a food processor until finely chopped. Cook the spaghetti according to packet instructions, then drain reserving a little of the cooking water. Return to the pan and stir in the pesto, raisins and spinach with a splash of cooking water. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil.

Parsnip and Maple Syrup Cake

175g butter plus extra for greasing
250g demerara sugar
100ml maple syrup
3 large eggs
250g self-raising flour
2tsp baking powder
2 tsp mixed spice
250g parsnips, peeled and grated
1 medium eating apple, peeled and grated
50g pecans, roughly chopped
zest and juice of 1 small orange
icing sugar, to serve

For the filling:

250g tub mascarpone
2-4tbsp maple syrup

Heat the oven to 180C/160C fan/Gas 4. Grease 2 x 20cm sandwich tins and line the bases with baking parchment. Melt the butter, sugar and maple syrup in a pan over gentle heat, then cool slightly. Whisk the eggs into this mixture then stir in the flour, baking powder and mixed spice, followed by the grated parsnip, apple, chopped pecans and orange zest and juice. Divide between the tins, then bake for 25-30 minutes until the tops spring back when pressed lightly. Cool the cakes slightly in the tins then turn into wire racks to cool completely. Just before serving, mix together the mascarpone and maple syrup. Spread over one cake and sandwich with the other. Dust with icing sugar just before serving.

It's that time of year when all the local mice are making their way to my place for the winter. At the side of the house a few charred Edwardian bed-heads (from the arson attack on our premises in Forest Hill - the bed I was born in and my grandmother's bed), slabs of stone and useful wood, are propped up against the wall with a canvas slung over them. In other words – Sangatte. I heard them rustling about the other night and saw one pop out. I don't know their entry point into the house but it must be easy, I don't think they're in the camp for long. I'm trying to get them out the house as quick as they come in so they don't accumulate. I load the humane trap with guinea pig food each night and place it under the sink in the utility room, then,

first thing in the morning I ring Ernest to take it a mile up the road for release in the barn. They run off into the straw. Then I suspect they run under the straw, round and back to Ernest's car where they climb up his wheel and sit in the undercarriage. As he passes my house on his way for breakfast, they throw themselves out, up the drive and back to Sangatte.

I was being given a tour of a goat milk farm the other week and a small rat ran past us. The farmer ran after it trying to stamp on it. "Oh no don't" I shrieked in a little, high-pitched voice. I don't think he appreciated the sentiment. Thankfully he didn't get it. Life's so unfair if you're a rodent. I really love my guinea pigs. When I got back from my trip, 'Badgie' came running round the kitchen squeaking, he couldn't contain his excitement.

I talked to my neighbour over the wall the other day. She said she wouldn't be cutting her grass again this year. I was very relieved and told her I didn't think I would either. To my horror, two days later I came home from the office and her lawn had been cut. So yesterday, I decided 'ok', it would get one more cut. I mowed and I even weeded and raked up some leaves. This morning I ache all over but feel very proud.

Hope all is well with you,

Kind Wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Isobel', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Isobel Davies (isobel@farmaround.co.uk)