

**Monday 18th June 2012**

Dear Customer,

Our new potatoes this week are from the Ile de Batz (pronounced Ba), a small island just 4km long and 1½ km wide off the coast of Brittany. Batz is famous for its tasty, early potatoes fertilised with the abundance of diverse seaweeds found on its white sandy shores. It has a microclimate thanks to the passing Gulf Stream and the island is devoted to horticulture with no cars allowed.

The watermelons in most of the fruit bags are from Andalucia and the cherry tomatoes are from Sicily. The peaches are a mixture of Sicilian and French -from Roussillon.

After a month or so of absence, John at Newfields on the Yorkshire Moors is back on the block and kicking off with his first new season crop – your favourite - pak choi.

**Soy and Sesame Pak Choi**

400g pak choi, quartered lengthways  
25ml soy sauce

25ml sesame oil  
white or black sesame seeds

*Pour 50ml water into a large frying pan and place over a medium heat. Add 1 tsp salt and the pak choi. Cook, tossing occasionally, for about 5 minutes or until all the water has evaporated and the pak choi is just cooked. The leaves should be soft but the base of the stalks still slightly crunchy. Drain very well then place on a serving dish and drizzle with the sesame oil and soy sauce, then sprinkle with the sesame seeds.*

**Ginger Sweet Tofu with Pak Choi (serves 2, double quantities for 4)**

250g tofu, drained  
1cm piece ginger, sliced  
1 tbsp rice wine  
½ tsp dried chilli flakes

2 tbsp groundnut or sunflower oil  
200g pak choi, leaves separated  
1 tbsp rice vinegar  
cooked jasmine rice, to serve

**For the Marinade:**

1 tbsp grated ginger  
1 tbsp brown sugar

3 tbsp soy sauce

*Gently prick a few holes in the tofu with a toothpick to help marinade soak in, then cut into bite-sized cubes. Mix the marinade's ingredients together in a bowl and toss in the tofu pieces. Set aside to marinade for 10-15 minutes. Heat a wok over a high heat and add half the oil. When the oil starts to smoke, add the ginger slices and stir-fry for a few seconds. Add the pak choi leaves and stir-fry for 1-2 minutes. Add a small splash of water to create some steam and cook for 2 minutes more. When the leaves have wilted and the stems are cooked but still a little crunchy, season with salt and transfer to a serving dish. Rinse the wok under cold water then reheat it and add the remaining oil. When it starts to smoke, add the tofu pieces, retaining the marinade liquid, and stir-fry for 5-10 minutes. Get the tofu evenly browned on all sides. Season with the rice wine and rice vinegar, add the remaining marinade liquid, bring to the bubble and let the liquid reduce. Sprinkle over the chilli flakes and toss well. Spoon onto the pak choi and serve immediately with the rice.*

**Cauliflower, Egg and Potato Curry**

3 tbsp vegetable oil  
1 red chilli, finely chopped  
2 large potatoes, peeled and cut into bite-sized chunks  
1 cauliflower, in florets  
6 hard-boiled eggs, halved lengthways  
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 large onion, peeled and diced  
thumb-sized piece ginger, peeled and grated  
2 tbsp curry paste  
400ml can coconut milk  
large handful roughly chopped coriander

*Heat a large frying pan or wok or shallow saucepan over a low heat. Add the oil, stir in the onion and fry over a medium heat for 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally until softened and going golden. Stir in the chilli, garlic and ginger and fry for 2-3 minutes. Raise the heat a bit, add the potatoes and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring frequently until the outsides are softening. Stir in the curry paste, cook for a minute then toss in the cauliflower and stir-fry for a further minute. Pour the coconut milk into the pan and stir. Add some salt, raise the heat and bring to the boil then half-cover the pan and reduce to slow simmer. Cook for about 20-25 minutes, stirring often until the sauce has thickened and vegetables are tender. Half bury the eggs, yolk-side up in the sauce then cover and continue to simmer gently for a further 1-2 minutes. Serve with the chopped coriander.*

There are few thumb-sized bits of blue in the sky today and bite-sized chinks of sun. Not much for the middle of June. I am waiting for a few good days so that we can cut and make some winter hay for the sheep and then shear them. Diane has set up office in London this week to be able to spend some time with the packing team after an email came through..... "white hair is growing out of the onions" ..... she was very keen to see this. Boringly it turned out to just some fine roots pushing out which happens if they have become damp and not some sort of onion Barbie doll. In fact I've had a boring week. Boring except for looking at prospective properties for a couple of friends who are likely to be moving up here – which is very exciting.

It has led me to wonder if I shouldn't be trying to down-size and lose my mortgage. I've been thinking about potential scenarios – you know ..... England going bankrupt and sliding into anarchy....no form of energy, no food....my sheep being hunted for food.....that sort of thing. I don't feel an impending danger but who knows. Well, there could be worse places to live than here in the Vale of the Catterick Garrison.

I hope all is well with you and that it might stop raining soon,

Kind wishes,

Isobel