

Monday 10th June 2013

Dear Customer,

We have the first English new potatoes in the bags this week from Lyncroft Farm in Ormskrik. They are Premier new potatoes. We also have his pak choi. I just had a phone call from John in Fadmoor saying he was starting up next week with the first of his new season crops – lettuces and spring greens. A blessed relief that the English season is finally starting !

I made a delicious new potato and pea salad this weekend – add mayonnaise, heaps of fresh chopped mint and the all the zest and a squeeze of juice from a lemon.

You can add pak choi to a stir-fry, it needs 2 minutes. Ginger, garlic, soy sauce and sesame seed oil all work well with it. You can steam it too – 2/3 minutes if sliced and up to 8 minutes if whole. You could try this delicious recipe:

Sesame Tofu with Pak Choi

3 tbsp toasted sesame seed oil

300g mixed stir fry type veg, chopped (eg peppers, broccoli, mushrooms, courgettes)

2 pak choi, leaves separated and halved if large

2 tsp dark soy sauce

good squeeze lime

150g marinated tofu

225g tin bamboo shoots, drained

2 tbsp sesame seeds

lime wedges

Heat 1 tbsp toasted sesame seed oil in a wok or large, deep frying pan over a high heat and fry the tofu for 4 minutes, until golden. Remove from the pan and set aside. Add another tablespoon of the oil to the wok with the stir-fry vegetables, pak choi and bamboo shoots and stir-fry for 5 minutes. In a bowl, mix 1 tbsps oil with 2 tbsp soy sauce, 2 tbsp sesame seeds and a good squeeze of lime. Stir this into the wok with the tofu, warm through and serve with lime wedges to squeeze over.

Garlic Roasted New Potatoes

800g new potatoes

3 tbsp olive oil

3 cloves garlic, unpeeled and lightly crushed

coarsely ground sea salt and black pepper

Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/ Gas 5. Put the potatoes in a roasting tin, drizzle over the oil and turn them to coat them. Put the garlic in between the potatoes and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast for about 45 minutes, shaking the pan occasionally, until golden and crispy.

I finally got my new car. I couldn't tell you before why the other had to go, I didn't want to tempt fate. It was cool and yuppy to some people, but to me it was a hearse ! The reason I ended up with the hearse in the first place was my previous car, was going down quickly and I needed a new one urgently - the engine was losing power. I found one near Liverpool on the internet which I thought I liked. Not keen on it being black but it was ok in all other ways. I drove the eight y or so miles to Liverpool on back roads. When I set off I could manage 20mph but it gradually got slower and slower until it was hilarious, I could only manage 5mph, changing up and down between 1st and 2nd gear – almost rolling backwards on inclines. I literally just made it onto the forecourt. They weren't very impressed with my trade- in, said they had no idea how I got it there as the engine had blown up. They showed me to my new car and I was dumbstruck with horror - it had black tinted windows at the back. I had no option but to take it, the deal had already been done on the phone and my lovely old car wouldn't drive another inch. On day 1, new car felt like a rapper's car, day 2 a drug dealer's, on day 3, a hearse and that is how it remained. For one whole year I have been driving a hearse. Not a great feeling when passing lorries in fog on the A1. I never read the manual, never learned out how to use the computer or how change the radio station. I didn't want to take it to London in case I got clamped and they towed it away with Myfa in because they wouldn't see her in it. It was never my car. Nice and roomy inside though. I felt terrible abandoning her on another forecourt just 12 months later, like a rescued, unloved puppy.

My new car is happy and frosted beige, the first automatic I've ever driven. I'm still in wonderment that I don't stall at junctions and roll backwards on hills. My left leg is very confused and twitchy but I'm getting used to it, it's great, like being in a dodgem. This is my car. Sunshine, wheels, map, flask, banana..... I'll be off soon.

I checked on my exiled sheep the other day. Another beautiful place on the edge of a village called Galphay – four adjoining field with lush grass full of herbs and clover, bordered by trees and hedges. Ernest came with me for a run out. I noticed that a herd of cows had arrived in the neighbouring field and some ewes with lambs. I said to Ernest " oh that's really good there are cows next door as they won't be inclined to break into that field". I don't think they'd ever seen cows before. Just as I'd said it I spotted the ominous, horned silhouette of one of my Shetlands looking very happy grazing with a little family group comprising a normal white ewe and her 2 lambs, then I saw another of my Shetlands with another ewe and her 2 lambs, a pattern repeated 40 times across the field– all cheerfully hanging out and nonchalant about the cows. They just adore baby lambs. I had this same problem when I took them to Exmoor, it's where I first noted their fixation. It took us about 2 hours to get them back and then patch the fencing to try and keep them in overnight until a new, high, tight fence could be erected the next day. They were always bad but never this bad. And Rocky was found on his own just wandering round the village looking for some human company.

I had the great honour of some wonderful farmaround customers making the gruelling trip up from Chelsea for a weekend in Richmond. Meeting farmaround customers is like meeting old friends. I could always pick one out in the crowd, they have a glint in the eye. Anyway, this was to include an informal business meeting / lunch with my friend who lives further up Swaledale. We had a lovely meal in the garden. After lunch we then decided to move to a different sunnier spot. We turned back and noticed 'farmaround customer' wasn't with us, she'd vanished.' That was odd' we thought. Becoming concerned we started looking for her.

Eventually.....“over here”, my friend beckoned me over and pointed down the river bank, a small pile of clothes and there was ‘farmaround customer’ swimming down the river in her underwear – doing a magnificent crawl. ‘Aaaagh, a farmarounder through and through’, I thought proudly.

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS There were some problems at the dairy this weekend and they were unable to cut our Cow Nation Cheddar so I am sorry for the inconvenience, it will be back on as normal from next week onwards. Also there was no availability of round bottles so had to use square ones for this week only.....same milk, different bottle.