

Monday 15th July 2013

Dear Customer,

I talked to a supplier in Roussillon in the South of France who told me that last week was the first good weather they had had and the first week the locals had gone to the beach – and even then it wasn't great, rain in the forecast - the middle of July !! As I roused myself from a siesta, I was very apologetic and said I didn't know who had stolen their climate, told her it was still freezing here with endless rain and wind every day here, so it certainly wasn't us.

Needless to say, the farms having struggled through the endless cold spring are now struggling with the endless heat. We were due to have our first fresh peas in the pod this week but they have shrivelled to un-pickable. We have the first English caulis in the bags from Fadmoor and Polybell and broccoli from Polybell. Purple mange tout in some of the bags from Ormskirk and 'Rocket' new potatoes from Cornwall. Broad beans are from Jono Smales in the New Forest and lettuces from Tadcaster. If you aren't currently getting fruit bags, the fruit is wonderful at the moment – with Mediterranean peaches, apricots, plums and melons. John from Fadmoor has been at the Great Yorkshire show and won 2 x 2nd prizes with his hens. At the end of the month is his local Ryedale Show where his entries include - hens, potatoes, hay, a swede, a cauliflower, a lettuce, carrots – everything on the farm he can lay his hands on. Yesterday John started irrigating for the first time this year having been advised to start just before you need it. I remember when the wonderful, inspirational, late Howard Wass dug his 120m deep bore hole into an aquifer of Hodge Beck where it passes deep underground. I remember it took a lot of finding and was very expensive but it ensured a constant supply of water to the farm. Fadmoor is 650ft above sea-level on the North Yorkshire Moors and not far from the sea. A thick sea mist fell as light rain this morning for an hour, though not enough to penetrate into the ground. The crops are growing well in the heat, it is a few degrees cooler at their altitude – a blessing in this weather but less of one in cold months. He should start lifting potatoes for us next week and his carrots will be ready soon.

Sicilian Cauliflower Salad

1 cauliflower, in florets	1 red pepper
12 black olives, pitted	2 tbsp capers
4 tbsp olive oil	2 tbsp lemon juice
fresh parsley, chopped	

Char the pepper under the grill and leave to cool in a plastic bag before peeling and slicing. Blanch the cauliflower florets in boiling salted water for 2-3 minutes and drain thoroughly (or steam for 3-4 minutes). While still warm toss with the peppers, olives and capers, then mix in the olive oil and lemon juice. Add seasoning to taste and sprinkle with chopped parsley, then chill for several hours before serving.

Courgette and Broad Bean Bolognese

350g spaghetti	1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 courgettes, finely chopped	400g tin chopped tomatoes
1 tsp mixed herbs	1tbsp tomato puree
300g broad beans, podded	2 tbsp chopped parsley
salt and black pepper	

Cook the spaghetti according to packet instructions. Saute the onion and courgette in the stock for 5 minutes until softened. Add the tomatoes, mixed herbs, tomato puree and broad beans. Cook until the beans are tender and the sauce slightly thickened. Drain the pasta and serve topped with the Bolognese, chopped parsley and seasoning.

Broccoli Tabbouleh Salad

100g cracked wheat	250g small broccoli florets
300g tomatoes, finely diced	4 spring onions
4 tbs chopped mint	4 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
2 tbsp olive oil	juice of 1 large lemon

Put the cracked wheat in a saucepan with about 300ml water. Bring slowly to the boil, then bubble gently for 10 minutes or until most of the water has evaporated away. Take the pan off the heat, cover with a lid and leave to steam for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, drop the broccoli florets into a pan of boiling salted water and cook for about 3-5 minutes or until the broccoli is just tender but still quite crunchy. Drain and run under the cold water to prevent it from overcooking. Roughly chop the broccoli. Finely chop the tomatoes and spring onions. Stir the wheat with a fork to break up the grains then tip into a salad bowl. Add all the other ingredients plus some salt and pepper to taste. Add an extra squeeze of lemon juice and serve.

Given the appalling weather I decided to extend my stay in Devon. You see I can work from anywhere as long as I have my phone and laptop. This is when technology comes into it's own. I managed to get a last minute cheap deal on a place on the Dart Estuary. I was surprised to discover on a promenade that I am almost next to Agatha Christie's house.....a bit unnerving. I'm not a fan. I don't like thrillers or anyone being killed, but it's a beautiful house and a stunning location. It's Sunday today and I'm going to look round the house and gardens this afternoon and take the little ferry into Dartmouth, and then head back to Richmond at first light before the heat gets up. I have a busy week ahead. I am making hay and I have two batches of sheep to be clipped. Escape to the Country are coming to film it – I have a few minutes slot for Izzy Lane for which I am grateful. But it means I have to see a hairdresser as I'm looking a bit New Age traveller'ish, having left my wash-bag at home and what with the heat and sea-salt.

I'm dreading the baby coming this week and the endless boring news coverage. If you have little children , this royal baby will one day be their monarch. We will be long gone my friends. That will be my one and only thought on the matter.

I hope this finds you well and not too sweltering,

Kind wishes,

Isobel