



Monday 6th July 2015

Dear Customer,

What we'd all been waiting for up here happened – the Yorkshire summer – which as the farmers say is 'One hot day and a thunder storm'. So that's it now. We've had our summer. A man was showing off his brand new car in the market place yesterday – the craters on his roof and bonnet which had been bombarded with golf ball-sized hail stones. I don't think anyone slept the night of the storm, the full moon, the flashing sky, and a torrential rain which turned into hail which sounded like tiles and chimney stack debris clattering and rolling off the roof. The local plant nursery up the road in Ravensworth (where Ian Botham lives!) was so smashed to bits it made the national news. The shop and café were empty the next day. I can't decide if it was the stressed, sleepless nights or Murray playing at Wimbledon. I guess I'll find out next time he playsand hope for an early exit. If I had the big flat screen up it might have been full of people. I've been trying to find one on ebay for £5 but they all seem to go for £5,000.

Anyway, back to what is more important – your cauliflower. Here are more recipes you could try:

Caramelised Cauliflower Soup

1 cauliflower

½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg

for the Broth:

2 tsp olive oil

1 garlic clove, chopped

1 tsp dried thyme

for the Topping:

1 tsp olive oil

black pepper

fresh thyme leaves

olive oil

salt and black pepper

½ onion or a shallot, chopped

750ml vegetable stock

1 tbsp white balsamic vinegar

50g bread, torn in pieces

60g hazelnuts, toasted and chopped

Preheat the oven to 220C /450F /Gas 8. Cut the cauliflower into florets and spread them in a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with fresh nutmeg and a big pinch salt and pepper and toss everything to coat. Bake for 35-45 minutes, tossing halfway through, until the florets are fully roasted and you see a good amount of brown edges. Remove and cool. While the cauliflower roasts, start the broth. Heat the oil in a saucepan and saute the onion/shallot and garlic for about 5 minutes to soften. Add the stock, thyme and vinegar and warm through. When the cauliflower is cool to touch, add it to the broth and blend until smooth. Season to taste then return to the pan to keep warm. For the croutons, heat the remaining oil in a small pan, add the torn bread and a pinch of ground pepper and stir for 5-8 minutes, until crisp with browned edges. Serve each portion with a few croutons, chopped hazelnuts, a pinch of fresh thyme leaves. You could also add some shaved Parmesan.

Spanish Crisp Cauliflower

1 cauliflower, broken in florets

2 tsp paprika

2 dessertspoon red wine vinegar

2 tbsp chopped parsley

2 tbsp capers, soaked in cold water for 20 minutes, then squeezed dry and chopped

4 tbsp gram flour

sunflower oil for deep-frying

salt and black pepper

Cook the cauliflower florets in boiling salted water for a few minutes, until just tender. Drain the cauliflower well and while it's still hot, put in a bowl with the flour, paprika and some salt and pepper. Mix it all together until the cauliflower is coated with flour. Heat the sunflower oil to 190C in a deep-fat fryer or deep, heavy-based saucepan. Fry the cauliflower florets in batches until crisp and golden, then remove from the oil and drain on kitchen paper. Sprinkle with the vinegar, chopped capers and parsley, and serve.

It's Sunday morning and I am worried sick now about not having started my chapter and now have just 10 days before the deadline, so my attention has turned to the garden. I like my garden going a bit wild – however, not anymore, it has become imperative to start weeding. There's a lot to do – masses of dandelions pushing up through the gravel drive, the fatal attraction of the docks and nettles in competition to intertwine with the roses. It's hard not to get lacerated by the sprawling rose bushes while trying to dig down into the core of concrete-set earth to extract the dock roots headed for Australia. However, it is much easier than the alternative. The spectre of 8000 words hovers above me like a huge, dark, brooding cloud.

On a lighter note Grace our cook, has started making pickles and preserves from our 'Good Food Nation Kitchen' – not certified organic but all the fruit and vegetables of course are. They are available on our website. We have a Garden Pickle and a Fruit Conserve.

I hope this finds you well,

Kind Regards,

Isobel

It is now Monday morning and I have 9 days to go. I can't see me kicking it off today – not in the right mood. Tomorrow I will be down to 8 days which makes the mathematics easier – 1000 words per day. This reminds me of when I was little. On holiday I would divide my spending money up into a daily ration and seal each ration into a little brown envelope. We had long holidays so I had my stash of 40 or 50 envelopes – ensuring I could enjoy doughnuts and 1 peseta 'naranja' ice lollies through to the last day. However, every day I overspent and every evening I had to open up all the envelopes and recalculate. My daily ration diminished as the holiday progressed. There was an important lesson there to be learnt I didn't learn it.

All I can say is 'please can I find it in me, the courage and the motivation, and have started it by the next newsletter'. I may have to take to the hills to do it – go to my brother's house perched high on 'England's last great wilderness'. There are too many distractions here – too many emails, too many animals, too many businesses and too many weeds.