



Monday 8th August 2016

Dear Customer,

I feel sure no-one is reading this and that you are all scattered across the world having fabulous holidays. If you are still here with me, at least we are having some vaguely decent weather – though there is a gale blowing today. Good drying weather. It's Sunday and I've been hoovering and doing my washing. I normally drape it all around the garden to dry – on chairs, the wall, the gate. Well finally I have put up a washing line. I bought two packs of wooden pegs and have turned a Patrick Cox shoe bag into a peg bag. It all feels very romantic. I love washing lines in the same way I love allotments – they are so earnest and wholesome. It's a longstanding affection which dates back to childhood. For my Art O-level I painted a washing line – it was suspended between windows above some back street in Naples - the unapologetic exhibition of one's underwear and over-wear blowing about in the wind for all to see and surmise.

Warm Chard Salad with Carrots and Balsamic

400g carrots	2 tbsp olive oil
bag chard	1 clove garlic
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar	

Preheat the oven to 200C/ Gas 6. Scrub the carrots and cut them diagonally into 2cm slices. Toss them in 1 tbsp of the oil and put them in a baking tray and roast for 20 minutes. Meanwhile wash the chard and tear the leaves from the stalks. Slice the stalks into similar sized pieces as the carrot and shred the leaves roughly, keeping both separate. Heat the remaining oil in a large pan and when it is hot, add the garlic. Cook for a minute then add the chard stalks, a pinch of salt and the vinegar. Stir, cover and allow to 'sweat' on a low heat for 10 minutes, or until the stalks are very tender. Then add the leaves to the pan and cook until wilted. Mix the carrots with the leaves and all their juices in a large mixing bowl then season to taste. Garnish with toasted sesame seeds or pine nuts.

Pasta with Chard, Courgettes and Carrots

500g penne pasta	1 bag chard
2 tbsp olive oil	2 garlic cloves, minced
2 carrots, sliced	1 courgette, julienned
120ml white wine	200ml single cream

Cook the pasta to al dente according to packet instructions. Drain and reserve some of the cooking water. Wash the chard and separate the stems from the leaves. Cut the leaves into strips (roll up like a cigar and slice), and dice the stems. Wet the chard leaves and put in a saucepan, cover and cook for 5-6 minutes until wilted, stirring occasionally. In a large frying pan, heat the oil and saute the chard stems and carrots for 5 minutes until tender. Add the courgette and stir-fry until tender too. Pour in the white wine, bring to the boil and cook until the alcohol has evaporated. Yes, this may seem wasteful. Pour in the cream and simmer for a few minutes until the sauce is reduced to roughly half its volume. Drain the chard well and add to the cream sauce. Add the pasta to the pan and stir well. If the sauce is too thick, add some of the reserved pasta water. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Garlic and Mustard Buttered Greens

250g french beans	250g broccoli, in florets
2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed	2 tsp wholegrain mustard
50g butter, softened, or margarine	

Trim the beans and steam or cook in boiling water with the broccoli until tender. Meanwhile, mix together the garlic, mustard and butter and season with salt and pepper. Once the greens are cooked, stir in the butter mixture and serve straight away.

I had a very close shave last week - funnily enough, it wasn't at the hands of the ladies of the Women's Institute. It was shearing day at Hornby. As my wool is now moving on to be processed, I needed to be there retrieving the fleeces as they fell away from the sheep, making sure they went straight into the right back for the colour and breed. I was crouched down pulling off some dirty bits from a fleece when something travelling at high speed skimmed the side of my head. It was a sheep in full flight. I think he'd been going off back to the field after being shorn then got startled and shot back. I was a centimetre away from having 60 kilos of mutton travelling through the air at 100mph hit the back of my head.

Normally I don't watch the shearing, I greet them, then go away and let them get on with it as I get too anxious and worry that my anxiety will cause the shearers to nick the sheep. But this time I had to be there. The shearers I use are incredible – they are father and son and shear in an unconventional way - it's an art-form, like watching sculptors working with clay the way they manipulate the bodies to shear all round in one continuous action to take the whole fleece. The sheep look tiny now their wool has gone – they look so clean and new, like they've just been born. And they are so happy. I looked across and saw one of the ancient Shetlands under the clipper, an old bony black one with huge horns who must be at least 18 years old. Normally we don't shear these ones. I retrieved his fleece – just a little handful, a few tufts really but it was just as beautiful and soft and fine as when he would have been in his prime. It was full of hay seeds but I couldn't bring myself to just add it to the scraps and spent ages picking out the seeds. I added it to the black bag, his contribution.

Kindest wishes and hope you're having a good week,

Isobel