



Monday 22nd May 2017

CORRECT PHONE NUMBER IS 01748

850700

Dear Customer,

Where have all the April showers gone ! We had one little drip at the weekend. I suppose they are hanging out backstage - plotting and accumulating for a weather event. Beware Cockermonth. I took Myfa to the river for a swim but the river Swale had diminished to a stream, barely more than ankle deep. I walked across it looking to see if I could see any ancient artefacts laid bare. It all generally rights itself eventually doesn't it, the weather.

We have delicious Cornish new potatoes in the bags this week, the first of the season. We also have sweet and nutritious butternut squash. They deliver dietary fibre, vitamin B6 to help the nervous and immune system, folate, beta carotene which our bodies convert to vitamin A, vitamin C and antioxidants.

Here is one solitary recipe you could try this week:

Roasted New Potatoes and Butternut Squash

1 butternut squash	500g new potatoes, washed and halved, unpeeled
4 springs rosemary	3 sprigs sage
100g butter or margarine	squash seeds, toasted
vegetable oil	

Preheat the oven to 185C/ !60C Fan/ Gas 4. Peel the squash and cut into 6 wedges. Remove the seeds then toast them on a non-stick baking tray in a moderate oven until golden brown to use for the garnish. Warm the butter or margarine in a saucepan until it turns light brown, add the sage leaves and cook gently until crispy then reserve to use later. Put the squash and potatoes in a roasting tray and spread evenly. Drizzle with oil, add the rosemary and a generous seasoning of sea salt and black pepper. Roast in the oven for approximately 45 minutes until soft. Garnish with the crispy sage leaves and toasted seeds and serve.

The only bread to be found in the vicinity is Gregs and Warburtons, that's how grim it is. Saturday afternoon I set off for Northallerton, to Betty's Tea Rooms to buy some proper bread. I was really tired and haven't been getting enough sleep lately. I parked on double yellow lines just off the High Street, I wasn't going to be long. Brought Myfa with me and there sitting on the pavement against the wall of a 1970's office block was a little bird. It didn't seem to have a head, was that possible ! I then realised it's head was tucked under its wing. I looked around, no trees, no gardens, no other birds, it would be dead by the end of the day. Everyone else was walking straight on by. My heart sank, it was the last thing I needed, I just wanted to get my loaf of bread and go. It's bad enough around me in the countryside and in my own garden, you don't expect it on the High Street.

I picked it up, a little fledgling, it weighed nothing. I carried into a nearby café hoping someone there might take responsibility for it given it was their town, their bird. There was a lot of sympathy but no offers. 'I've only come here to get a loaf of bread'. I asked them if they would call the lady with a Wildlife Rescue Centre in Thirsk. Eventually they got through to her. They gave me a small cardboard box and I drove over there.

The Wildlife Rescue Centre is actually just one lady who lives in a cul-de-sac on the edge of Thirsk who takes in every injured pigeon, baby rabbit, orphaned fox in the whole region. Feeling guilty I asked her how many she had in at the moment. She had 150. She said she could barely cope and was getting 40-50 calls a day. It was reassuring to know that that many people care enough to call and take animals there, often driving very long distances. She said mine was a baby starling, that is was extremely thin and must have been separated from his parents who would normally continue to feed him for a month. She had a group of baby starlings that he would go in with and she would feed him and he would eventually be released with them. Once old enough and strong enough, or recovered from injury, all the animals get released onto the 20-acre estate of a local lady. She doesn't mind that they burrow there and eat her flowers – they are safe.

I handed over baby starling, on the doorstep was a giant sack of mealworms for the baby hedgehogs and giant bags of seed for the pigeons – just arrived from a local supporter. I only had £10 on me. I gave her that and asked what she needed most. 'Money' she said. Not only does she work 18 hours a day caring for the animals, she also has to worry about how to pay for their food and the vet bills. Regional centres like this should be state funded. Take some of the single farm payment money from the landowners and give them to places like this. That would be something worth voting for, a National Health Service for wildlife.

It's very difficult when you find a young, abandoned animal – you bed them down in a cardboard box, put in water that they don't touch, they are too much in shock to move, you go on the internet to find out what to feed them but they're too terrified to open their mouths. On their own without the company of their own kind it's hard to keep them alive. This is why these centres are so fantastic, a baby rabbit will go in with a group of other baby rabbits and the outcome is generally positive.

I am back to trying to sort my house out to try and rent it out this summer. Airbnb is my best option as unlike holiday homes, guests do not expect empty drawers and cupboards, they know they are coming into your home which will be full of.... stuff. Nevertheless, I am trying to get rid of stuff. I don't remember where all my stuff came from and how I came to accumulate it. I haven't bought anything whatsoever for decades and every year I peel back another layer and get rid of a load more.

So I am on with that again and have turned my ruthlessness up a notch. I am literally going to tip clothes drawers into bags and take them to Oxfam – no messing about going through each item. The best thing is to not think about it and just get rid of it. The big ugly cold box in the cupboard, all the piles of curtains in the airing cupboard and patterned duvet covers, just get them out. As for my food cupboards, I have tons of tins and jars of things sent as samples from Italy or Spain. They are years out of date but still probably edible. I wouldn't eat them unless there was a life/death situation, but in anticipation of that situation occurring in my lifetime, they take all the space up in my food cupboard. They're going. It's this thing isn't it, not knowing what the future holds. Maybe one day I won't be able to afford to buy a cheap t-shirt to wear under my jumper. As ever, the over-worrying about things which may never happen. So, I'm not going to do that anymore. If I starve to death when bubonic plague breaks out and the supermarket shelves are empty – then so be it. If I one day die from hypothermia because I threw away that Dorothy Perkins black t-shirt – then so be it. Live for today !

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel