

Monday 23rd July 2018

Dear Customer,

One night last week we had thunder, lightning and a massive downpour. Five inches of rain collected in the wheelbarrow..... and it's got a hole in it. But that's all gone now. It has helped the garden a bit but hasn't done anything for the sheep's grazing which remains steadfastly yellow. It's Sunday and 26C with intermittent cloud and a light breeze. It's peculiar to actually be experiencing a summer. A proper summer like the ones from of our imagination and Enid Blyton novels.

We have magnificent earthy beetroot in the bags this week, the first of the English crop. It is known to reduce blood pressure and fight infection with its high nitrate levels. Its anthocyanins help counter the effects of pollution in the body by fighting free radicals, its lycopene and betacyanins are thought to be protective against cancer, the betaines and pectin help eliminate toxins once they have been processed by the liver. On top of all this comes generous levels of vitamin C, iron, potassium, magnesium, folate and other nutrients and minerals.

You could cook your beetroot and whizz it in a food processor with a dollop of crème fraiche to a smooth puree then mix with an equal quantity of mashed potato and season to taste, finishing with some scattered dill. You could grate it raw with equal amounts of carrot into a salad then dress it with a mix of 2 tbsp of olive oil, 1 tbsp sesame oil, 1 tbsp lemon juice and a pinch of salt and scatter with pumpkin or sesame seeds. You could make a fabulous hummus by blending a tin of chickpeas with 300g of cooked beetroot, a large, crushed clove of garlic, 2 tbsp olive oil and the juice of half a lemon plus some water to achieve your desired consistency.

And Here are some simple recipes you could try with your beet and this week's other ingredients:

Beetroot Burgers

400g raw beetroot, peeled and chopped
1 onion, peeled and chopped
200g tinned chickpeas, rinsed
150g porridge oats
2 tsp ground cumin

2 carrots, peeled and chopped
3 cloves garlic, grated
2 tsp tamari
2 Hen nation eggs
2 tsp ground coriander

Blitz the beetroot, carrot, onion, garlic, chickpeas and tamari in a food processor. Add the oats, eggs, cumin, coriander, salt and pepper, and blitz again until well blended. Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and add enough oil to cover the base. Form the beetroot into patties with your hands or dollop it into the pan and flatten into a burger shapes. Gently fry for about 10 minutes turning them once or twice until they are lightly charred on the outside and hot through. They can be eaten hot or cold.

Roasted Beetroot Toast

4 raw beetroot
5 sprigs fresh thyme
2 tbsp creamed horseradish

4 tbsp red wine vinegar
4 slices sourdough

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F/ Gas 4. Scrub the beetroot really well then chop into wedges and place in a roasting tray. Add the vinegar, thyme and 4 tablespoons of water then toss to coat. Cover with tin foil and roast for 45 minutes or until cooked. Toast the bread and spread with the horseradish. Top with the roasted beetroot.

Lightly Pickled Beetroot and Carrot Salad

200g carrots
2 tbsp cider vinegar

200g beetroot
1 tbsp olive oil

Peel the carrots and beetroot and cut them into thick matchsticks, 3-5mm wide. Toss the batons together. Sprinkle the cider vinegar and a good seasoning of salt and pepper over the veg. Stir and leave for a couple of hours to allow the vinegar to soften the veg and the flavours to mingle. Add the olive oil and mix again. Check seasoning and serve.

Lemony Courgette Linguine

300g dried linguine
30g fresh mint

400g mixed-colour courgettes
1 large lemon

Cook the pasta according to packet instructions then drain, reserving a cupful of the water. Slice the courgettes lengthways then again into long matchsticks. Place a large frying pan on a medium-high heat with a tablespoon olive oil, then add the courgettes. Cook for 4 minutes tossing regularly. Finely slice the mint leaves and stir them into the pan. Toss the drained pasta into the courgette pan with a splash of the reserved cooking water. Add some lemon zest, squeeze in all the juice, toss well, then taste and season with sea salt and black pepper. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil.

They say people look like their dogs don't they, at least in the hair department. I think I looked a bit like my golden retriever Daisy, though nowhere near as attractive. I used to wear a head scarf as a hairband and it created what probably looked like two fluffy ears, of blonde hair. Myfa had been a surprise Christmas present. She looked nothing like me but did look like my mother. Anyway, I say this because I realised this week that Lainey looks exactly like my cousin Bayard in Bristol – it's the eyes.

Nothing much going on here – all very slow and Mediterranean. Yesterday I had a 60ft pine tree felled in the garden. It was a sad day, but it cast gloom across my neighbour's garden so it had to come down. It was then sawn into pieces and left there in a heap. I went to bed later with a migraine leaving the garden door open for Lainey to go in and out. This morning I came down to the tree in my living room. She must have been up all night ferrying all the logs and dragging all the branches in – then shredding them and stripping them of their bark. She'd obviously come up to the bedroom at some point as the TV remote controls had been gathered up, even from the spare bedrooms, picked off the bedside tables, and were scattered across the carpet, crunched up, their batteries hanging out. My migraines are very boring for her. She doesn't whine or disturb me though, she just gets on with it.

I hope you have a good week,

Kind wishes,

Isobel