



Monday 5th June 2023

Dear Customer,

Blue skies and sunshine - perfect summer weather. Has to be said though, all getting a bit dry. I followed the river Swale up towards the source at the weekend to get upstream of the sewage for Lainey to swim, but it was barely ankle-deep.

I spoke to Will Edwards again who farms in Boston, Lincs. He said everything needs a drink, there has been no rain for three weeks and none coming soon. They have been planting out into bone-dry topsoil. The moisture level from the wet March is now too deep for the young plants' roots to reach. They can irrigate using water from the adjacent dykes if the water levels are sufficient, with an abstraction licence. However, if the Environment Agency deem the water level too low then they just have to watch their crops shrivel. Will said that it is rain that makes the crops grow and that irrigation just stops them from dying. They need rain. We have Will's spring greens in the bags this week.

Andrew Ward, another one of our longstanding growers in Kent has just lost all his broad beans - his long-awaited first crop of the year - to chocolate spot. Growing organic food has always been a labour of love. Organic growers can't resort to an arsenal of toxic agrochemicals. Last summer when aphid was rife some conventional growers were spraying their broccoli with pesticides every 2-3 days. I would not have wanted to eat any of that! Of course, it's all getting tougher still with climate change.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try this week:

Carrot and Courgette Fritters

*1 large courgette (350-400g)
80g carrot
½ tsp chili powder
½ tsp paprika powder
black pepper to taste
50g chickpea flour*

*300g potatoes
1 large clove garlic
½ tsp ground cumin
½ tsp sea salt*

Grate the courgette, potatoes, and carrot. Squeeze out as much liquid as possible using a clean kitchen towel. Add the grated veg and garlic to a frying pan and stir in the spices. Cook over a low-medium heat with a lid on for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, then turn off the heat. Add in the chickpea flour, stir to combine and season with salt and pepper to taste. Let the mixture cool, until you can touch it. Shape the mixture into 6 patties, using your hands. Heat some oil in a frying pan and fry the patties in batches on both sides until crispy, about 4-5 minutes per side.

Carrot Salad

*400g carrots
½ red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
50g mixed seeds (eg pumpkin, sunflower, sesame)
fresh coriander, chopped
to taste
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil*

*small piece root ginger
30g raisins
2 spring onions, trimmed and sliced
1 tbsp lime juice, or some lemon juice*

Peel and coarsely grate the carrots and ginger and put into a large bowl. Add the rest of the ingredients, season and toss well.

Apple and Peach Upside Down Cake

for caramel layer:

3 tbs melted butter or margarine

300g peaches, sliced

for cake batter:

180g flour

pinch of salt

200g sugar

5 tbs butter or margarine

120ml milk

100g dark brown sugar

200g apples, sliced

1½ tsp baking powder

3 Hen Nation eggs

1 tsp vanilla

3 tbs oil

Preheat oven to 180C / Gas 4. Line a 9" cake tin with parchment paper - preferably spring-form. In a bowl mix the butter with the brown sugar, distribute it evenly and press it evenly into the bottom of the cake tin. Arrange the peach and apple slices on top of the brown sugar mixture and set aside. In a bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt and set aside.

In a different bowl, add the butter, sugar and oil and beat well. Then add the eggs one at a time and beat for two minutes. Add the vanilla and beat for two more minutes. Add half of the flour to the wet batter and mix gently. Add the milk and mix well. Add the rest of the flour and mix gently. Pour the batter evenly into the cake tin. Bake for 45 minutes or until a skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean. Let the cake cool in the tin for 5 minutes then flip onto a serving plate.

No news here. It was wishful thinking last week when I thought maybe Richmond had stopped cutting the verges - they'd been blooming like never before. Next day I heard the ominous sound of the mowers coming up the road and managed again to run out and stop them from doing opposite my house - lush and buzzing with insects, in stark comparison to the deadness of the scorched, mown earth of the rest of the 'verge'.

Speaking to my neighbour neither her nor I have heard any owls in a while. Nor have we seen any bats. Normally at dusk you'd be bombarded by them if you dared walk up the lane. I have an eerie feeling they know what's coming and that their habitats are about to be lost. The planning meeting is finally taking place on 11th July to decide the fate of the paddock next to our houses. Latest news is that the builders have now fulfilled all the requirements for affordable housing - all boxes ticked. Thirty-two houses, some 3-storey, crammed into that small field. On the plans in the corner nearest my house some sort of water / sewage tank. It will take a good two years to build as the site is complicated with rock and underground streams. We put up a hell of a fight but are all demoralised now - we think the decision has already been made. It will surely be the end of this beautiful peace and tranquillity that we came here for.

Very best wishes and hope you have a good week.....Isobel