

Calamity's Corner

We have always thought carefully about our use of packaging, and although we would prefer not to use plastic at the moment there is not a viable lower carbon alternative. So we will again pack leafy veg that would otherwise wilt in the very thin plastic bags. We have concerns about the use of plant based biodegradable bag's as the land needed to grow such crops is huge and causing yet more destruction of rainforests and displacement of small indigenous farmers, on top of which it often takes as much or more carbon to produce than the plastic alternative. I'm sure the scientific community will find a low carbon non land-using source of plastic but as yet we haven't discovered one although we are trying to source punnets made out of cornhusks (usually a waste product). This is far too important an issue to start using something that looks good but is in fact just window dressing.

Sadly our cat died earlier in the year. We decided not to replace him, as they are such mean killing machines. We have certainly noticed a difference in the amount of wild life close to the house. There seem to be more fledgling birds, bats and weasels around. The joy of sitting in the garden watching a weasel running back and fore carrying mice to its nest more than makes up for the loss of a cat to stroke.

We have always tried to encourage as much biodiversity as possible on the farm. Sometimes this brings grief as we are forever having to protect the veg from rabbits and pigeons. Mostly it brings opportunities to see the natural world at its best and a bank of predators to eat some of our pests> Last week I spent a pleasant hour collecting adult and young ladybirds and releasing them in the cucumber tunnel. One week on most of the aphids on the crop are gone. This would not have been possible without the stinging nettles that had earlier been covered with aphids and their predators.

Dave worked his magic on the website and as Julian mentioned you can now get an up-to-date statement of your account online. For this you will need to know your password. Although you cannot pay online you can pay us via direct bank transfer (BACS) inquiries email boxes@oxtonorganics.co.uk. The customer adds page has been brightened up (Dave insists I make sure you know the colour scheme is my handywork), if you would like to advertise your business or local events on this page send them via email. There is no restriction on the size of adverts for the website. In the photo gallery we intended to photograph some of the insect predators to help you identify what's what in your garden or veg box! Unfortunately I knocked our camera of the shelf (Calamity Jayne strikes again). Hopefully it will be fixed or replaced soon so I can add useful pic's to the gallery. We are now selling a limited selection of wholefoods online. You are welcome to email if there are any organic wholefoods you would like us to stock. Please let us know your email address if we do not already have it this can be a very useful way of keeping intouch.

SALADBAGS

This year we are trying different summer salad leaf varieties. For a delicious colourful and nutritious side dish wash the leaves and mix with lettuce and herbs.

You can make a green salad taste very different by changing the herb mix, here are some of my favorites:- Basil, red perilla and sweet marjoram: sorrel and mint: tarragon and sorrel: Sorrel and lemon basil:

BEETROOT

Beetroot stains hands an interesting colour. To avoid this use gloves when peeling. If necessary stains can be removed using lemon juice.

RAW BEETROOT SALAD

Cut tops of (these can be cooked and used like spinach). Peel using a potato peeler and grate then toss with a little orange juice.

SPICY BEETROOT SALAD

One bunch beetroot cooked and diced

Juice of one lemon

1/4 tsp ground cumin

1/4 tsp ground paprika

Pinch ground cinnamon

2-3 tbsp chopped fresh parsley or tarragon or marjoram

3-4tsp olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

mixed salad leaves

Mix together the lemon juice, cumin, paprika, cinnamon, salt, pepper and oil. Toss with the diced beets and parsley. Cover and chill for an hour or more. Serve over the lettuce leaves

BEETROOT AND YOGHURT

This is my favorite

Simply boil beetroot, let it cool and mix with natural yogurt and ground pepper. Makes a delicious fresh tasting colourful salad, far nicer than pickled beet.

SPINACH

The spinach we grow is perpetual spinach or spinach beet.

It is one of the most nutritious vegetables you can eat. High in beta carotene, vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber, copper, calcium, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, protein, phosphorous, vitamin B1, zinc. Beetroot tops, chard and rainbow chard are all just as nutritious if not more as they contain even more beta carotene.

On top of all this they are simple to cook and taste great.

Steam the well washed leaves, remove from pan squeeze out moisture, chop, melt a knob of butter and sauté for one min with a little grated nutmeg.

My favorite quick standby meal at the moment is

EGGS FLORENTINE

Cook spinach as above. Add a little cream or yoghurt. Put in oven dish and make hollows to hold the eggs. Break eggs into these then sprinkle grated cheese on top. Bake gas 6, 200c for 10 mins till eggs have set.

Served with boiled potato, salad and courgettes fried in garlic, fresh marjoram, pinenuts and olive oil.

COURGETTES WITH TARRAGON AND CHEESE

500g courgettes, sliced

40 g butter, 2 tbsp spring onions (ours will be available very soon)

2 tbsp fresh tarragon

150 ml single cream

25 g parmesan or cheddar, grated

Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the courgettes. Season with S&P. Sprinkle on the spring onions and tarragon and pour in the cream. Heat through for 5-6 minutes. Sprinkle the grated cheese over the top and brown quickly under a hot grill.

Aubergines are also delicious cooked in a similar way, Just grill them with olive oil rather than sauté in butter.