

From FIELD to FORK

BY SAL HANVEY

I have just come in from planting vegetables in the garden, and now that summer is finally underway all of my batch have been set. I have an array of delights growing this year – last year was merely a trial run in comparison. Among them are broccoli, scallions, onions, leeks, courgettes, carrots, cucumbers, two varieties of tomato, Jersey Royal potatoes, pumpkin and various squashes, beetroot, broad beans, strawberries, rhubarb, lettuce, red peppers and chili peppers. There's a range of culinary and medicinal herbs including dill, fennel, coriander, basil, mint, rosemary, thyme, chives, flat leaf parsley and lemon balm.

I could be almost self-sufficient at this rate. It has always been a passion of mine,

if not a dream, to imagine living completely self-sufficiently. It would be difficult as a lot of time and energy would be required to create that lifestyle. However growing your own shouldn't be a terrifying concept. Even just growing on a small scale will give satisfaction to those curious enough to try.

I suggest starting off with some simple herbs, parsley, and mint – although contain it in a pot as it can take over and spread easily. Tomatoes plants can be set in a grow bag, use bamboo rods to secure them once they starts to grow. They thrive in a warm

area, preferably a greenhouse.

I recommend watching a variety of YouTube tutorials to get you started. Soon I will be in a position to share my own short gardening video clips. I'm learning from scratch and I am embracing the errors, challenges and even the dreaded slugs, but also the great satisfaction of creating something myself from field to fork.

Speaking of forks, that brings me to this month's recipe Cream of Broccoli Soup. 'Cream of' connotes dairy was used in the recipe to create that rich, smooth texture

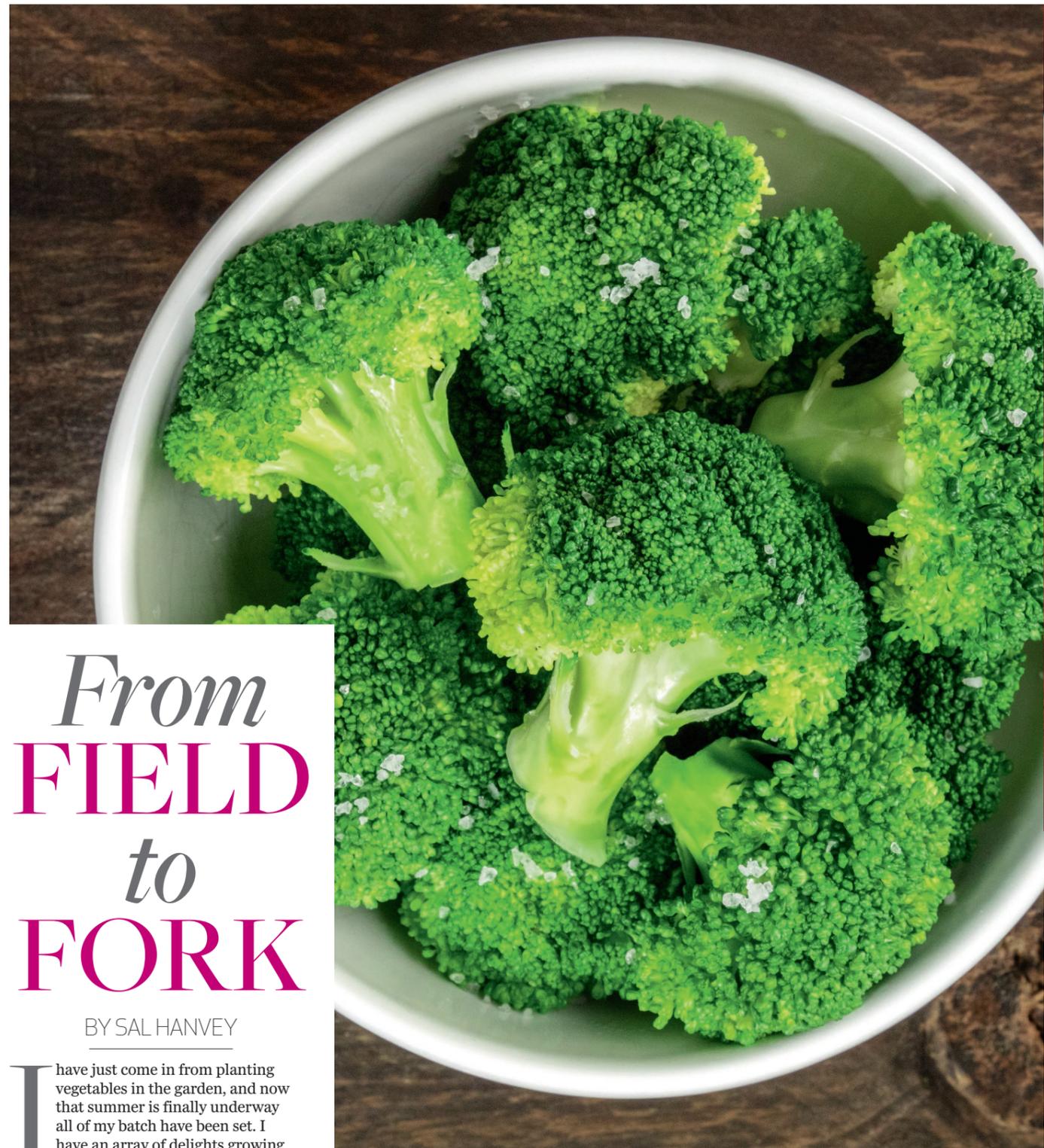


Photo credit: Ken Haddock

that often comes with this type of soup. For years I used coconut as a dairy alternative, and I still do to an extent, but I try not to rely so heavily on it for savory soups as the coconut taste can sometimes drown out some of the other amazing flavour combinations.

For this soup I have used cashew nuts. My partner Jack could eat them until the cows come home, however when he decides to leave me some, I often turn them into a cream. Cashew nuts are such a versatile food; you can make butter, milk and cream from them as I often do. This will be explained in the recipe method section of the article.

Today I planted my favourite vegetable of all time – broccoli. It reminds me of a little tree of life, offering so many nutrients and so much flavour and texture. I have been fortunate enough to have been given opportunity to volunteer at Helen's Bay Organic Farm, Bangor. Farm owner John McCormick has been teaching and guiding me well. I germinated my first ever purple sprouted broccoli from seed, a few weeks ago and it was very satisfying. I can't wait to taste the broccoli when it is ready to eat.

My recipe for Cream of Broccoli Soup is suitable for vegans. It is wheat-, dairy-,

sugar-, egg-, flour- and yeast-free. When tasting the soup, I hope you agree that dairy is not missed in this recipe, yet all the satisfying tastes and textures are very much present. Enjoy – I am away back out into the garden. There is always something to be done! **NW**



Sal Hanvey

Cream of Broccoli Soup (vegan style)

A good splash of olive oil
2 small heads of broccoli
400g potatoes
1 medium onion
2-3 garlic cloves
600ml filtered water with Bouillon
reduced-salt vegetable stock
Sea salt
White pepper
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 cup raw, unsalted cashews
2½ cups water
Pinch of kosher salt

Method

- Heat some oil in a large pan and cook the onion, garlic and potato for three minutes.
- Then add the Bouillon stock, nutmeg, salt and pepper, and simmer for two minutes.
- Add the broccoli and cook for ten minutes.
- Blend until smooth and then set aside.
- Soak cashew nuts in a cup of water for 30 minutes.
- Drain the cashews, then add the nuts, ½ cup water, and kosher salt to a blender. Depending on your own personal taste, you can add dates, lemon or flavoured nutritional yeast, for flavour. Blend on high speed until completely smooth – approx. 3 minutes.
- Finally, stir the cashew creamy mixture into the broccoli soup mix.