

CAMBRIDGE ORGANIC GAZETTE

courgette



It's Christmas!



Comment from Duncan:

Founder and owner of Cambridge Organic

It just doesn't seem right to be thinking about Christmas for me right now. As I write this editorial it's the middle of October, and you know what, I'm still wearing shorts and a summer shirt. Don't get me wrong, I love a sunny day, and I love wearing my shorts, but really...25° in October!?!

This very 'in your face' reminder that climate change is happening is good to bear in mind as we enter the Christmas period. Traditionally this is a time to be with loved ones, to show goodwill to all, and to look after those who are less fortunate than ourselves. However, it increasingly seems that commercial values have taken over; it's when the modern patterns of consumerism, which are driving climate change, seem to go into overdrive. I don't know about you, but I prefer the traditional values. With this in mind it's worth thinking about what you buy and where you buy it from.



The theme of this newsletter is waste. Waste is the ugly sister of consumption (like my seasonal pantomime reference there?). If we can do less of both then we can all enjoy a happier and more fulfilling Christmas. Take a look at our waste funnel article on how we tackle waste here at Cambridge Organic.

We've now launched our Christmas appeal. As we do every year we will support two charities in Cambridge who help those who are rough sleeping, vulnerably housed or in danger of losing their homes: Wintercomfort and Jimmy's. You can contribute by adding a donation to your weekly veg box in your online account. You'll find the donate option in the 'add items to your order' menu on the website.

Wishing you all a joyous and peaceful Christmas.



Christmas Treats



As Christmas approaches we have festive items from our producers to tempt you with. These are all produced locally. You can order them online now: find 'Christmas Treats' under the 'add items to your order' option.

- Christmas Jam, Boxing Day Chutney and Onion Chutney (perfect for this editions Christmas recipe) from **Prospects Trust** based near Reach.
- Newton's cinnamon and apple Christmas Tea from **Kettle Leaf Tea**.
- Hazelnut and orange vegan chocolate bars and chocolate baubles from **Ombar**.
- Locally made mince pies, Christmas puddings and cakes from **Fitzbillies**.
- Christmas coffee blend from Cambridgeshire's **Hot Numbers**.
- Vegan **Savoursmiths** crisps: Christmas Ham with umami truffle glaze.



The Cambridge Organic Waste Funnel



Christmas is a time of celebration, but it can also be a time of waste. From wrapping paper and gift bags to discarded food and broken decorations, the holiday season can generate a significant amount of waste. As a Cambridge Organic member you are supporting a company that takes waste seriously. So how do we tackle the big W? Introducing our waste funnel... which begins with our whole packing system:

We have developed a special process for packing vegetable boxes that is designed to minimise waste. Our 'Original' box range is key to this.

Cambridge Organic was founded with a vision to support local organic farmers by providing a direct route to market for their produce. However, because we deal with farms of different sizes, the supply of this produce can vary considerably: rarely, if ever, do we find that the availability of one type of produce exactly matches the number of boxes we need to pack. If all our customers chose their own box contents, or we packed all our boxes according to a published 'menu', we would be left with a substantial quantity of produce in our packing shed. These same challenges exist in the mainstream food industry just as much as they do with us, which is why systemic food waste is occurring on such an industrial scale. We have managed to overcome this challenge, and balance the needs of our farmers with the needs of our customers, through the offering of both 'Choice' and 'Original' boxes.

Original boxes are packed by us, and a surprise for you. The flexibility to pack these boxes in the optimal way means that we can take whatever produce our local farms have in season and ensure that all of it finds its way to a good home, keeping surplus and waste to a minimum. It's for this reason that we don't tell you what is in the box prior to it arriving on your doorstep. This way, whether you order a choice or an original box you know that you are buying from a minimal waste system.



Despite our best efforts, we do end up with excess items from time to time. When this happens we donate our still good-to-eat produce to local schemes, such as The Harston Community Food Hub.

Based at the Harston Baptist Church they operate a self-referral (no documents required) service every Wed & Sat 11.30am-1pm. This is split into 2 sections. The 'Food Bank' provides emergency food support for residents of the surrounding areas using non-perishable foods. The 'Fresh Food Larder' is an initiative to minimise food waste by collecting surplus fresh stock from local shops and growers. Everyone is welcome to use the Fresh Food Larder no matter where they live or the circumstances they are in.

Drop off for donations can be found around Harston and Royston. They are currently collecting for special Christmas food bags which are circulated to all the households they support. For more information you can find them on Facebook or www.scams.gov.uk.

With fresh produce, however hard you try, you will always have items that spoil. Either they don't last as long as you expect or arrive on site over-ripe and uneatable. Fortunately we know a local farmer from neighbouring Coton who rears pigs as a hobby. Jane and her partner live on an otherwise arable only farm. Her curly tailed 4 legged friends will happily consume anything we have sifted out during the packing process, minus some alliums which they don't like very much!

Twice a week Jane will collect any left-over produce and take it to her small drove of pigs and piglets. They are an important part of our waste management system and probably the cutest part too!

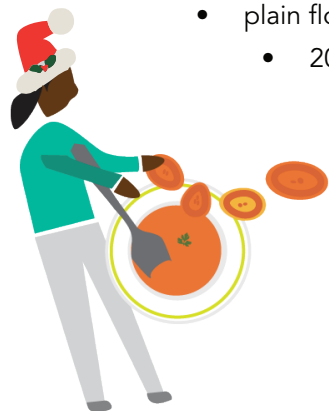


Recipe : Vegetable Christmas Crackers

These squash and chestnut Christmas crackers are a tasty vegetarian or vegan centrepiece for the festive season. They can be made ahead of time and frozen, making on-the-day preparations that much easier! Lots of room to alter ingredients to your liking too. We will be sure to have the veggies ready to add to your box and Prospects Trust in Reach are doing a fab red onion chutney.

INGREDIENTS: makes 4 crackers

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp butter (or vegan alternative)
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 250g butternut squash (½ medium squash), deseeded, peeled and cut into 1cm cubes
- 250g chestnut mushrooms, chopped
- 100ml Madeira, port or dark sherry
- 100g cooked chestnuts, chopped
- 1 tsp dried sage, or a few finely chopped fresh leaves
- 2 prunes, pitted and finely chopped (you can also use dates, cranberries etc)
- 2 tbsp red onion chutney or relish
- 40g soft breadcrumbs
- 2 x 320g sheets ready-rolled puff pastry
 - plain flour, for dusting
 - 200g strong hard cheese, like vegetarian mature cheddar or vegetarian emmental or a vegan cheddar, cut into 1cm cubes
 - 1 egg, beaten to glaze (or use vegan milk)



METHOD

STEP 1 Heat the oil and butter in a frying pan. Fry the onion and squash for 15 mins until the onion is golden and caramelised, and the squash is tender. Add the mushrooms and cook for another 8-10 mins until the water given off has evaporated. Pour in the marsala/port and bubble for 2-3 mins until it reduces. Stir in the chestnuts, sage, prunes, relish and breadcrumbs, and season well. Leave to cool.

STEP 2 Unravel one of the pastry sheets onto a lightly floured surface and cut a 2cm-wide strip from one of the long sides of the pastry. Reserve this to decorate. Cut the remaining pastry into four long rectangles – these will be your cracker bases. Cut the remaining pastry sheet into four and chill all the pastry on a lined baking sheet for 15 mins.

STEP 3 Stir the cheese into the cooled filling, then divide the mixture into four portions. Mould into sausages and position on the pastry bases, leaving lots of room for what will be the scrunched ends of the crackers.

STEP 4 Brush the exposed pastry around the filling with the beaten egg and drape over the larger pastry tops, sealing the pastry all around the filling. Trim, if you need to, and pinch in the ends to create the Christmas cracker shape. Press the ends with a fork, trimming again, if you need to, then glaze with more of the beaten egg. Chill for 30 mins or up to 24 hrs. Use the reserved pastry to create stars or Christmas trees, or whatever you fancy to decorate the crackers.

STEP 5 Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Glaze with more beaten egg (or vegan milk) and bake for 35-40 mins until golden and puffed. Serve with veggie gravy and plenty of trimmings. Enjoy!

You can freeze these when uncooked and then cook from frozen on the day. Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Glaze the pastry with more beaten egg (or vegan milk) and bake for 35-40 mins until puffed up. Lower the heat to 180C/160C fan and bake for a further 20 minutes or until piping hot in the middle - if they look as if they might burn at any point then cover loosely with foil.





CHRISTMAS DELIVERIES

We'll be delivering veg boxes right up to Saturday 23rd December, but then we'll take a break. We'll be closed from Sunday 24th and throughout the whole of the following week. Veg-box deliveries will resume on Tuesday 2nd January.



ORDERING EXTRA FOR CHRISTMAS

Though you will miss out on a delivery over the Christmas period you can always increase your order the week before, by adding on extra items to accompany any veg box. Be sure to check out what is available under the 'Fruit & Vegetables to add to your veg box' option online.

DOUBLE UP

Alternatively, you may find it easier to double up on your last delivery before Christmas.

To do this, just enter the code DOUBLE23 on your basket page online. Or you can give us a ring on 01223 873300 or email hello@cambridgeorganic.co.uk. We'll deliver two of your normal veg boxes and we'll knock 20% off the price of the second one. Those of you with Choice boxes, please make your selection as usual and we'll pack both boxes to the same list.



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