

CAMBRIDGE ORGANIC GAZETTE

courgette



IT'S CHRISTMAS! Our plans for the festive period

Festive Fitzbillies
A tour of the famous bakery

Tidings of Jimmy's and Wintercomfort
How you can donate this year

Party Piece
A tart recipe to wow the crowds

Festive Treats
Christmas items available from our suppliers

Founder and owner of Cambridge Organic

Comment from Duncan:



I write this while one of the most important climate summits to date, Cop26 is still meeting. The message we are receiving loud and clear from voices all around the summit is really the same one we have been hearing for decades: we have to stop exploiting natural resources.

The service we are providing here at Cambridge Organic, and working towards with the Food Hub project, are in line with the kind of radical change that is needed. However the reality is that sustainable food remains a 'niche' market, and is a tough industry to be in. Upsettlingly, very recently, one of our local growers, Tyler Cotton, has had to stop his farming business, 'Dynamic Organics'. Tyler is an incredible food producer, dedicated to growing high quality crops in a fully sustainable manner. He epitomised exactly the kind of food system we need to transition towards, but despite working astonishingly hard, didn't make anywhere near the amount of money most people living in or around Cambridge would consider sufficient. A couple of small changes affecting Tyler's water supply and access were more than he could tolerate, and as a result we've lost a real gem of a grower. Tyler's story really does demonstrate just how fragile our local food economy is, and how we must protect and nurture what little we have.

Christmas Deliveries

We'll be delivering veg boxes right up to Christmas Eve, but then we'll take a break. We'll be closed on Saturday 25 December and the whole of the following week. Veg-box deliveries will resume on Tuesday 4 January.

Special deliveries available for Saturday members

The way the days fall this year means that Saturday members will miss out on deliveries on both 25 December and 1 January. We are therefore offering Saturday people the chance to have a special delivery earlier in the week. You'll need to contact us directly to request a special delivery slot, and there will be a minimum spend of £50 to make it worth us including you in our special delivery round.



NEWS BITES

Jimmy's and Wintercomfort Appeal

For many years, we have organised a collection amongst our veg-box members for the homeless charities in Cambridge. Two years ago we introduced the option of adding a donation to your veg-box order online so it could be paid automatically in your direct debit. It was an enormous success. The first year we raised three times our previous record, collecting over £900, and last year we more than tripled that again, raising a record-shattering £3183! We're so grateful for the generosity of everyone who has donated.



If you'd like to donate this year, just go our website and add a £1, £5 or £10 donation to your order. It will appear on your next invoice as a product to be charged and be paid for in your next direct debit payment. As we no longer accept cash payments, we won't be accepting cash donations this year.

We'll divide the donations between Jimmy's Nightshelter and Wintercomfort. We'll also be making our own donation of fresh produce to the two charities on Christmas Eve – a tradition which is always a highlight of the festive period for us!



Double up your veg box

As you will all miss out on at least one delivery over the Christmas period, everyone has the chance to double up on their last delivery before Christmas. To do this, just enter the code **DOUBLE21** on your basket page online. Or you can give us a ring on 01223 873300 or email admin@cofco.co.uk. We'll deliver two of your normal veg box 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. You can also increase your order by adding additional quantities of fruit and veg as extras to accompany any veg box.



FITZBILLIES

Shifts begins at 2am at the iconic Fitzbillies bakery in Cambridge. By the time I arrive, at a civilised 9am, the bakers are well into their working day; they are busy preparing the new 'Cambridge Seeded Sourdough'. They are justly proud of this new loaf: it retains the 'Cambridge' name because of the wholemeal flour it contains from Priors Mill in Swaffham Prior, but it's a lighter loaf than the old Cambridge, blending white flour and seeds into the mix.

Fitzbillies first opened its doors in Cambridge over 100 years ago; it was founded by two brothers, Ernest and Arthur Mason, sons of a local baker. They specialised in fancy cakes and Chelsea buns and it quickly became a much loved institution by the university and townsfolk of Cambridge. Fitzbillies is now fully entwined in the local business ecosystem, with customers and suppliers from all over the county. Everyday Fitzbillies creates handcrafted breads, cakes and treats destined for local stores, university colleges, hospitality venues and of course its own two city centre café locations.



Its owner, Alison Wright, is showing me around the premises. Alison rescued the business from closure back in 2011. Then living in London, secure in a 20-year career in marketing, she heard about Fitzbillies' impending demise in a tweet. Her first thoughts were what a waste it would be to lose such an iconic Cambridge institution. This thought, combined with her love of baking, moulded her decision to make a bid for the cake shop business and its Trumpington Street premises.

Since taking the reins, Alison has much improved and expanded the original shop to include a thriving café, and opened a second café in Bridge Street. Before 2018, Fitzbillies' mainstay was cakes and treats, most famously, of course, their Chelsea bun. However three years ago, another much-loved Cambridge bakery, Cobs, was facing closure and Fitzbillies offered to buy them out. They combined the two businesses and now Fitzbillies make a range of both bread and cakes: from sourdough loaves to soft white rolls, muffins to croissants, brownies to birthday cakes, Chelsea buns to sausage rolls (and a whole lot more!).

Alison's approach is to create partnerships with other independent local businesses. Suppliers include Cambridge Wine, Plumbs dairy and Burtons butchers in Saffron Walden. What they bake ranges from specialised bread orders for local businesses like Parkers Tavern to individuals wanting that extra special birthday cake.

I was lucky enough to meet Gill, the head baker who has worked with Fitzbillies for over 50 years. Now an absolute expert in her role, she first applied after seeing an advert in 1971. Being only half way through her bakery apprenticeship, she wasn't confident in her chances, but was happily surprised when she got the position and has gone on to make an estimated 5 million Chelsea buns!

With Christmas around the corner, I ask how preparations are shaping up. Last year, largely due to the pandemic, the demand for festive treats was higher than ever and the bakery made a whopping ten and a half thousand mince pies! Alison talks of "mince pie parties", where the whole team gets together around the big table to turn out the incredible number of pies that are needed every day. It's clearly a hard-working, skilled and well-knit team, who clearly relish creating the fresh and tasty products that are out for delivery around Cambridge every day.

Have a look at our website to see the Christmas goodies from Fitzbillies you can add to your veg box: not only mince pies, but Christmas cakes and puddings too.





VEGETABLE SPIRAL TART

SHORTCRUST PASTRY

Enough to fill a 25cm tart tin

ONION SQUASH PURÉE

1 onion squash, roasted

100ml cream

Salt and pepper

FILLING

2-3 carrots, washed and peeled

1-3 sweet potatoes, washed and peeled

1-2 courgettes, washed

1 leek, washed and halved

Oil, for coating

2 tbsp of maple syrup or runny honey



A showstopper for any festive meal, this colourful tart takes a bit of time but is well worth the effort. Bring this to any festive party and it will be very well received. What's more you can swap in vegetables as you wish, for example parsnips would make a great alternative to squash.

Tip: I did find I had a lot of leftover vegetable pieces that didn't make the cut to be part of the swirl – so I used these with a bit of a ginger to make a lovely soup! For a vegan option simply use vegan shortcrust pastry and an alternative plant-based cream.

METHOD

1. First, make the pastry (I bought mine!). Roll out to fit a fluted 25cm tart tin. Trim the excess, line with baking paper and weight down with baking beans.
2. Blind bake for 20 minutes, then remove the paper and beans, brush with a little egg white to form a glaze and return to the oven for 10 minutes. Remove to cool completely.
3. Make your purée by quartering the squash, drizzling with oil and roasting for about 30 minutes or until soft. Once cooled enough, scoop out the flesh, discarding the peel and add it to a saucepan with the cream. Heat gently till warmed through but not boiling. Take off the heat and blitz with a hand blender to a smooth consistency. Season the mixture. Cover and allow to cool completely.
4. For the carrots, sweet potatoes and courgettes use either a thick vegetable peeler, mandolin (take extra caution) or free-hand slice them into thin lengths. Keep each of the lengths as long as possible and uniform in thickness so they are as flexible as one another and they cook in similar times. Toss them all very lightly in a little oil as they sit in preparation for assembly.
5. Spoon the squash puree into the base of the pie case and spread to make a thick layer to be the base of your spiral. Wrap one length of all four vegetables together (or four lengths of any one of them) tightly into a roll to sit at the middle of the tart. Then, working around this central point outwards to the crust, add length after length to wrap around, as tightly and compact as possible and alternating the colours and vegetables.
6. Mix the maple or honey with some oil into a loose glaze and use half to glaze the top of the vegetable spiral before putting in the oven at 170°C for 60 minutes. Cover in tinfoil for the first 30 minutes and then uncover for the remaining 30 minutes... or ultimately until the vegetables are soft, slightly coloured and the pastry is golden.
7. Allow to cool for 10-15 minutes in the tin before attempting to remove, and then glaze with the remainder of the glaze mixture just before serving.



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CHRISTMAS GOODIES

View the festive range of Christmas offerings now available from our local producers. Available now online to order with your veg-box. Let your gifts spread seasonal joy and support our local food ecosystem at the same time!



20% OFF YOUR FIRST VEG BOX

We are looking for new members: enter code **FESTIVE21** when you sign up. Regular members can get 20% off their next delivery when they refer a friend: ask your friend to email to tell us.

cambridgeorganic.co.uk

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