

CAMBRIDGE ORGANIC GAZETTE

courgette



**Join the Cambridge
veg-box community**

**HALF PRICE BOX
FOR NEW CUSTOMERS**



**A veg-box
adventure with
Charissa**

**Meet Heron,
an organic
grower in
Cambridge**

**And a spicy new
food producer:
Peichin's Table**



A word from Duncan

Founder and owner of Cambridge Organic

We are entering that time of year when there will be plenty of produce in season from our local growers, including Heron, who you can read about in this newsletter. During these summer months our boxes will be at their very best. If you have yet to experience the delights of an organic box scheme membership, but were considering it, then this is definitely the time to give it a go. And if you want a little encouragement we currently have an introductory offer of a half price trial box.

I'm so pleased to see that we are now stocking a range of South East Asian foods from Peichin's Table. Peichin embodies the local food hero we need more of - she is passionate about her craft and committed to producing products that far surpass what the mainstream food industry offers. Try stir frying an aubergine in sesame oil, with two cloves of garlic, soy sauce and two heaped teaspoons of Peichin's Szechuan chilli crisp oil. Seriously, it's a taste sensation; my new favourite food.

And finally, a big well done to all who entered the drawing competition featured in the last edition of the Courgette. Congratulations to Mori, aged 8, Edwyn, aged 5, Marianne, aged 4, Mark, aged 6, and Daisy, who will all be receiving a bag of Biona gelatine-free sweets.



NEW Local Producer: Peichin's Table

Cambridge-based Peichin's Table creates small batch chilli oils, hot sauces and Asian-inspired pickles.

Founder Peichin is an inspirational and energetic character. She confesses to not being able to sit still, a fact evident from her impressive list of hospitality businesses over the last 10 years. At one stage she had three culinary companies running simultaneously! She came to Cambridge with her family to help quieten the workload and within months had started up a new venture; Peichin's Table. She supplies a range of Asian condiments that reflect her roots growing up in the family restaurant business in Taiwan and her products have already gained two Great Taste Awards in 2024.



Each product is created with loving care in central Cambridge. The quality of ingredients is essential. Peichin even handpicks her Szechuan peppers to ensure ultimate taste.

"drizzle-on, spoon-over, stir-in, pour-over"

Use these products as you would other condiments; for example spicing up dips, adding on top of eggs or fish or mixing into rice and stir fries at the end of the cooking process, as the chilli flakes are best suited to cooking with residual heats.

Szechuan Chilli Oil and Szechuan Chilli Crisp Oil. Bold and irresistibly aromatic, slow-infused with unique blend of spices. It delivers the perfect balance of heat and flavour. Elevate your noodles, dumplings, dips, or even pizza with every spoonful!



Korean Gochujang Sauce. Sweetened with a touch of honey, strikes the perfect balance of sweet and spicy. Bold, rich, and unforgettable, this versatile condiment earns its spot on your table.

Taberu Ra-Yu. Our textured Japanese Ra-Yu highlights umami rich miso, creamy cashew nuts, and a touch of heat. It gives a wonderful lift on morning eggs, ramen, salad, rice, roasted fish and vegetable.

Find under 'preserves & sauces' at www.cambridgeorganic.co.uk to add to box

Meet The Grower: Heron

We spoke to Heron, a local organic grower who has been farming with nature around Cambridge for 15 years.

We've met before, as Heron often supplies Cambridge Organic with produce from the ten acres they farm on Fenland owned by Paul and Doreen of Waterland Organics near Lode. We speak while they are mowing the grass headlands around their fields. This is something they only do when necessary as Heron is a strong advocate of leaving as much natural habitat as possible. Once they are flowering, the grasses, cover crops and over-wintered vegetables provide food and habitat, not just for pollinators, but also for predatory insects such as ladybirds, wasps and beetles. These help to keep pests such as aphids to a manageable level.

Heron splits their time between growing vegetables on their own land at Waterland, dabbling in pop-up markets and growing heritage grains. At Waterland Heron rotates the 10 acres, so around half is growing vegetables while the other half is sown with cover crops. This approach contributes to long term aims of regenerating the soil, improving its microbial health and looking after the natural habitat. Heron is always thinking ahead, considering new methods of production that could offer high yields of quality organic produce. It takes 7 years to truly learn how to grow a crop and as Heron grows multiple crops - that's a lot of constant learning to be done! They are technically minded and hard working, finding short leisure moments during the



day rather than taking full days off from the farms. It's a passion that has developed since childhood, with Herons' parents being a gardener and a tree surgeon. Heron studied first Botany, before taking a more applied approach to agricultural learning. Then they started volunteering at Waterland Organics, attracted by the positive farming methods used by the owners Paul and Doreen, before finally entering a shared farm agreement.

“You can't farm in a box, it's all part of a natural system. You need nature to farm.”

Heron is currently applying a very water conscious approach to growing, as we are talking at the end of a dry Spring. They have been delaying cultivating and cultivating as shallowly as possible. This means they are

only disturbing the top layer of soil, avoiding bringing up damp soil from deeper down, so helping to conserve moisture.

They are also considering more direct drill crops. This is a farming technique where seeds are sown directly into the soil without prior tillage, meaning the soil is not ploughed or cultivated before planting. This method aims to minimize soil disturbance, which helps retain moisture, improves soil structure, and reduces water loss through evaporation and runoff. Furthermore, seedlings that have been sown directly outdoors are more resilient to the elements than those started in polytunnels and then transplanted as baby plants.

Heron is fortunate to have a water wheel planter on the farm. This is a piece of farm equipment that uses a wheel with attached dibbers to create holes for planting seedlings, while simultaneously watering them with water from a tank attached to the planter. It means the water is targeted at the roots of the plants. Heron suggests we can all take this approach in our gardens, by watering less frequently but targeting the plants at the roots using a watering can as opposed to spraying with a hose.

Recent developments are helping Heron grow even more: she has a brilliant new employee and a new large fridge is enabling them to keep the produce harvested even fresher.

The heritage grains that Heron grows, such as the wheat variety Maris Widgeon, offer several potential benefits, including enhanced flavour, nutritional value, and support for soil health. Instead of relying on

fertilizers, their vigorous root systems are adept at extracting essential minerals from the soil with the help of mycorrhizal fungi, while their broad leaves effectively shade out weeds. It's all about working with nature to protect the soils and environment.

As Heron says “you can't farm in a box, it's all part of a natural system. We literally farm with nature, I need nature to farm.”

We are so thankful to Heron for their continued hard work, growing delicious produce for local people while continuing to support the environment through their natural farming techniques. They are a true local hero.



Heron is seed saving the open pollinated late May organic purple sprouting broccoli seeds as this variety is experiencing a worldwide shortage.

A Veg-box Customer Adventure

With around 1,000 box deliveries a week, we take great pride in providing organic produce to our local community. But without a shop front, we don't get to meet members as much as we'd like. To help remedy this we went to meet one customer whose Instagram account @vegboxadventures chronicles the amazing meals she makes with her veg box.

In 2013 Charissa relocated from Canada for a position at the University of Cambridge. Living then out in the countryside she found it challenging to settle into British life. Until a work-friend, and maker of delicious looking lunches, informed her about Cambridge Organic. She began with a Choice box but soon realised 1; she was only choosing things she already knew and 2; she was just too tired to make her picks! So she shifted to an OriginalPLUS box (so she could exclude the items she had allergies to) and let us do the choosing for her. This, she says, is "when things got really fun and exciting". She began to embrace a "British seasonal lifestyle," receiving unfamiliar ingredients that challenged her usual cooking habits and inspired her to explore British chefs and recipes.

"It was exciting because all of a sudden I was cooking like everyone else. When I sat at the table I had something to talk about, because people had allotments and were having regular conversations and now I had conversation topics too. It was one little thing that very gently put me on the page with everybody else."

Charissa began to recognize the local produce - the names of the people, the farms, and the villages where it was grown - helping her feel grounded and placed.



"For the first 5 years my veg-box made me feel a bit more like being at home. It connected me in a soft and gentle way."

After 12 years as a member, Charissa has become a truly imaginative veg-box customer. Her quaint town-flat is brimming with pots of fragrant spices and homemade sauces. With a small kitchen she swears by her compact Kenwood Multipro Go and instant-pot to support her creations. She eagerly awaits her weekly delivery and

delights in the creative challenge of crafting meals inspired by the fresh produce. She posts about her veg-box adventures on instagram account @vegboxadventures, a way to share her foodie passion and to keep connected with friends and relatives back in Canada. Unfortunately a prolonged illness caused by a rare autoimmune disease often leaves Charissa low on energy. Through her Insta account she shares recipes that are healthy but low effort, using just a few good quality ingredients.

"When you get really nice veg, like really nice potatoes or runner beans, you don't need a lot of fancy things, or a thousand hours or a lot of work."

Charissa had to take a veg-box break when dealing with her illness. One of her 'recovery goals' with Addenbrookes Hospital was to restart the deliveries. The weekly veg-box plays an important role, not just because it delivers healthy food, but

because it is a form of intellectual exercise that's incredibly important to her, especially during periods of recovery.

"it's a fun thing for me to do. I get a box, it's very pretty and exciting, and then I get to think about what I'm going to make with what I've got. It's a lot about the creativity."

For Charissa her box 'just fits'; its size is just right and the food is of high quality, but there is more to why she has remained a customer all these years;

"You pick from farms that do good work, so I feel that all of the money that I put in goes to good places. I don't have to think about the ethics of my payment, it's all being done, so I feel like this is good investment in my meal."

Thank you to Charissa for sharing her veg-box adventures with us!

Charissa recommends making this 10 minute Carrot, Miso and Ginger salad dressing inspired by chef Mark Bittman.

It's vibrant and fresh, perfect to dress a summer green salad, but also versatile, being delicious drizzled on top of rice dishes or grilled fish. She simply whizzes all the ingredients up in her trusty food processor until smooth and then seasons with salt and pepper. Can be stored for several days in an airtight container in the fridge.

- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 1-inch piece Ginger, peeled and chopped
- 3 tbsp Miso, mild or sweet
- 1/4 cup Peanut oil (or an alternative neutral oil)
- 1/4 cup Rice vinegar (or lemon juice)
- 1 tbsp Sesame oil



Veg-boxes filled with summer delivered
to your home by a local company



Healthy and organic
Tastes like food should



HALF PRICE BOX FOR NEW CUSTOMERS

Go to www.cambridgeorganic.co.uk
to sign up and use code **SUMMER25**
to get your first box half price

or call us on 01223 873 300



CAMBRIDGE
organic

Offer applies to the veg-box only and not to any additional items added. Includes any sized vegetable or fruit & vegetable box. For new customers only, the offer only applies to the first box. As always we happily thank current customers that refer us by sending a gift. So do let us know if a friend referred you. Offer requires you to sign-up as a customer with a regular delivery, however you can cancel at anytime. Valid until August 31st 2025.