



courgette

September - October 2020

CAMBRIDGE ORGANIC GAZETTE

BRAND new LOOK

EXPLORING SQUASHES
Roasted squash with
almonds and kale

KEEPING HUB TO DATE
News of our Food Hub project

Back in a box Post-lockdown plans to return to cardboard



We've been quite busy over the summer – not only keeping up with the unprecedented demand for our organic veg boxes, but also doing a bit of a re-design of our logo and branding and the general appearance of things. This issue of the Courgette magazine is the first unveiling of the new look. In time, it will roll out across everything we do. Next, you'll see your veg box order on new stationery (and yes, you'll find there are four different designs, you're eyes aren't deceiving you! Why not collect all four?). The much heralded, but still not-quite-ready, new website will share the same feel.

As you'll see on page 3, we've done it all ourselves. Our key aim was to capture and reflect who we are and the values we've always stood for, rather than to have a re-branding exercise forced upon us, which might have tried to manipulate or shape our established way of doing things. Please let us know what you think!

You'll notice that we've contracted our name to Cambridge Organic. That gives us the initials C and O to play with. As you read the **COURGETTE** magazine, you'll see a **CO**-theme emerging. Does it give us a **COHERENT** approach or is it a bit **CONTRIVED**?

I write to you on this occasion from the confines of home, having gone into a period of self-isolation due to coronavirus. Don't worry, I'm absolutely fine, just following government guidelines. One of the things about quarantine that I have found particularly interesting is how focussed I have become on food, especially fresh produce. Under normal circumstances I have no problem at all getting my hands on fresh fruit and vegetables (one of the many things I absolutely love about my job), but during this period I have only had the produce that I started out with and I have been forced to carefully plan my meals to make the best use of it all. Naturally, the most perishable foods were the ones that were eaten first, and I have been ultra-careful with everything else to ensure that none of it went to waste. The experience has reminded me of a talk that Dame Ellen McArthur gave at the Harmony in Food and Farming conference a few years ago. She told us how, on her famous round the world voyage, she had a finite number of provisions with her and so she became intensely focussed on ensuring that those provisions went as far as possible. This experience was, for her, one of the influences that made her respect the world's finite resources to a much greater degree, and from this position go on to found the Dame Ellen McArthur Foundation, which is one of the most forthright exponents of the principles of the circular economy

I have been using my time in quarantine productively. In particular I have made good progress with the book that I have been writing. This book is all about the concept of the 'Local Food Ecosystem', which is the innovative new approach to local food supply-chain coordination that is being implemented by the Cambridge Food Hub. The book is going to be published, but that whole process will take a few months yet. When the book does come out it will be sold as a means of raising further money for the Food Hub building project, so please put it on your Christmas wish list (or probably your Easter wish list is more likely!).

And finally, how do you like our new branding? Running out of branded stationary during coronavirus, along with the work that has been going towards our new website made us think that this was a good opportunity to refresh our look after our last rebrand in 2010. Much of the work on the new branding has been done by David, so I'll hand over to him to tell you more about it on the next page...

HEALTHY RE-START I'm especially proud of the work that the Cambridge Organic team – and Alice in particular – has put into the Healthy Start veg box scheme. This is a scheme we piloted over the summer in collaboration with Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance, which is designed to make organic veg boxes more affordable for people who receive Healthy Start vouchers. The pilot went well and we are now going to continue with the scheme on a permanent basis.

Do you receive Healthy Start vouchers and would like to take part in the scheme? Or do you know anyone who receives them who might be interested? The scheme offers families with Healthy Start vouchers, the opportunity to have either a Original Medium Vegetable Box (£11) or an Original Small Fruit and Vegetable Box (£12.50) each week in return for their Healthy Start voucher and a £2 charge.

We at Cambridge Organic will fund the first twelve places available. If we are successful in filling those slots, we hope to expand the number of people we can help by asking our veg box members to sponsor a place. We'll let you know how you can help if and when that time comes.

A fresh image

We've been having a little play around with our logo and the appearance of our stationery and the other elements that might come under the heading of 'branding'. We're introducing the new look for the first time in this edition of the Courgette, and thought it might be nice to explain why we've made some changes.

We've taken a very homegrown approach: no ad agencies were harmed in the making of this logo. Instead co-manager David has been working with Kat, who makes our wholesale deliveries. It helps that Kat's other role pre-lockdown was as a graphic designer!

One big change we've made is to prune our name: the Cambridge Organic Food Company has been trimmed to Cambridge Organic. It's shorter and the two words express our core principles: we're committed to staying a local company which only delivers to the area in and around Cambridge and does its best to source its produce from local farms. And we're organic, certified as such by annual inspections with all our produce being guaranteed to come from organic growers. The other three words, 'the', 'Food' and 'Company', didn't really tell you any more about what we do. We've been answering the phone as Cambridge Organic for a long time, so thought we'd make it official.

The new logo incorporates two typefaces: the one for 'Cambridge' is the one we used for our 'Dig In' boxes, introduced in the early days of lockdown. Back then, the aim was to provide an echo of the 'Keep Calm' poster, but we liked the font. Although influenced by sans-serif fonts of the 1920s, we think its geometrical shapes have a very clean, modern feel. The font for 'organic' is an older design, hailing from the mid-nineteenth century; it's solid and a little bit rustic. You may have seen the two fonts already on the new mini-logos for our Choice and Original boxes. The Choice range has the geometrical font: choice boxes, with their online selection of contents, are rather cutting edge, hence the modernist look. Original boxes hark back to our pioneering days packing veg boxes twenty-odd years ago: they represent the traditional way of doing things, so a typeface from the foundries of Victorian England seems apt.

We hope the two fonts together represent who we are: modern but traditional, online but hands-on, efficient but friendly.

As you can see from previous incarnations of our logo, it has usually incorporated an apple to commemorate Duncan's family's organic apple orchard. This apple was drawn in biro by David on a scrap of paper to show Kat the sort of thing he was thinking of. She digitised it, smoothed out the edges, and so the sketch became part of the logo!



Alice's exploration into the world of squash

I have always loved squash, but it is certainly the case that the ones you can buy in a supermarket are unremarkable. Pumpkins are pretty tasteless, particularly if you're repurposing the offcuts of a Halloween supermarket purchase. Butternuts are basic but dependable. You know what you are getting. Last autumn, working at Cambridge Organic meant I was opened up to a whole new world of squashes: I discovered the delicacy of a Delicata (now, my favourite type of squash); tackled a Turban squash and feared for my fingers (clearly a better method of peeling than the one I employed was needed); excitedly scooped out the insides of a Spaghetti squash as part of a meal.

Roasting is, in my opinion, the best way to cook a squash. I love the ease of roasting, the flavours it brings out, the fact you don't have to peel the squash beforehand... In this recipe, I used Uchiki kuri squash. It has a creamy flesh that's sweet and nutty when roasted. The roasted almonds bring a complementary crunch and saltiness, whilst the kale – I used Cavolo nero but you could use curly kale instead – brings a splash of green and is a classic pairing for squash.



ROASTED SQUASH WITH KALE, ALMONDS AND CAMELISED ONIONS

Ingredients

Oil for roasting

1 squash, cut into 1cm thick slices

A couple of fresh sage leaves or dried sage to replace

1 bag of kale

2 onions, sliced. Preferably red but white work too

2 tablespoons soft brown sugar

1-2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

200g of almonds (this will make more than you need but you can store them in an airtight container for 3 days)

Salt and pepper to season.

Focaccia to serve

Method

1. Preheat oven to 180C.
2. Put the squash slices in a roasting tin and drizzle with oil. Season with salt, pepper and sage. Place in the centre of the oven and roast for 30 minutes.
3. While they are roasting, start making your caramelised onions. Heat a tablespoon of oil in a large frying pan over a low heat. Add the onions and cook for 30 minutes until soft and golden. Add a splash of water to the pan if they look like they might catch.
4. After 30 minutes, add the kale to your roasting tin and roast for another 15 minutes.
5. Place the almonds on a new roasting tin and roast at 180C for 15 minutes. I added them to the oven at the same time as I added the kale to the squash. Be vigilant, because they burn easily.
6. Finish the caramelised onions. Add the soft brown sugar and balsamic vinegar to the pan. Cook until the sugar has dissolved, and the vinegar has reduced.
7. After your almonds have roasted for 15 minutes, take them out of the oven and put in a bowl with two tablespoons of oil and a teaspoon of sea salt. Mix to coat. Then put the almonds back into the oven for two minutes to dry them.
8. Serve the roasted squash and kale with the roasted almonds, caramelised onions and focaccia.

CO-CREATING A FAIRER FOOD SYSTEM

Cambridge Food Hub 'Hubdate'

Although we still haven't found a site for a building, the Cambridge Food Hub is already very much in business! We have been running a pilot operation from our existing premises for over a year now. Stage one was to deliver grocery products made by our network of local producers to businesses in and around Cambridge. Then came our Green Coffee Shop Scheme: we've been collecting the spent coffee grounds from Cambridge's cafés and taking them either to be made into coffee logs by Biobean, or into compost by Waterland Organics. Of course, the collection of coffee grounds had to be suspended when coffee shops closed at the start of lockdown. We are planning to resume that service later this month.

The Food Hub gets fresh

There have been two big developments in the evolution of the Food Hub in the last month. At the start of August, we moved what had been Cambridge Organic's wholesale supply business over to the Food Hub. That meant that business customers could order fresh produce using the Open Food Network in the same way that they had been ordering other Food Hub products. The Open Food Network is a website platform, which offers a shopfront for lots of small food businesses to connect to their customers. It provides a lovely online ordering process for the businesses buying from us. And it produces convenient invoices and order summaries for us, cutting down on a lot of admin! If you'd like to have a nosey at our shopfront on the Open Food Network, I'm afraid you'll find that our part of the site is restricted to our wholesale members.

Membership not margin

The other change we've made is more experimental. We're trialling a radical new approach to how we charge for the service we provide. Instead of us adding a margin to the produce we sell, Food Hub members buy at direct-from-producer prices. The Food Hub's operational costs are covered by its members paying a membership fee instead. There are several different bands of membership fee, so a business with bigger orders pays more towards the cost of getting the produce to them than a smaller business. We've tried to calculate the bands of membership so that the businesses who buy from us are saving money compared to us adding a traditional margin.

It's too early to decide if this new model for generating income is going to be kept in the longer term. One thing we've learned in these early days is that it's so novel that it takes a lot of explaining! Whether in the end it is kept as the way the Food Hub supports itself, it's a brave attempt to separate profit from the provision of the Food Hub's services.



OPEN FOOD
NETWORK



COMMUNICATING WITH OUR MEMBERS

The road back to boxes

At the start of the coronavirus lockdown, we made the reluctant decision to switch from delivering our veg boxes in cardboard to using non-returnable plastic bags. The concern that prompted the move was the possibility of the virus being transmitted on a box returned by one of our members to one of our staff.

In the last Courgette magazine, we started a consultation with our members (and with our own colleagues) about whether it was time to return to our traditional boxes. The response from members was very largely in favour of us going back to cardboard. We aim to make the return to boxes from now on.

However, we don't have a sufficient stockpile of boxes to be able to pack all our boxes in ... erm ... boxes in the short term. We'll try to pack as many we can in cardboard, but we'll still have to use some plastic bags until our supply of cardboard boxes builds up.

We also have a limited stock of fabric bags, which we'll use aim to use as well. These were ordered for a scheme we organised with Addenbrookes to deliver subsidised veg bags to their staff. Unfortunately, the take-up of the offer wasn't very good and we had to end the scheme after a few months. These bags bear what is now our old logo, so it's time to get them into circulation before they become obsolete. If you get one, you'll see they are quite a nifty design: they fold up into their base and then close with press-studs. As well as our old logo, they are emblazoned with the call to return them to us: you are very welcome to do this, but we'd also be very pleased if you decide you'd rather parade them round the local shops!

To help us replenish our stock of boxes, we're asking anyone who has kept their boxes from pre-lockdown to return them to us now. We know that some very kind people have been doing that and we are keen to get them back.

If you do receive your order in a box, it is more crucial than ever that you return it to us on your next delivery. Some of our newer members may only have known the era of plastic bags, so for you this 'return to normal' will be a novel thing. Please put your empty box in the place where we leave your order. It would be best if you could leave the box out the day before to reduce the risk of virus transmission. If the place you leave your box might get rained on – and there's rain in the forecast – please do cover the box as there are few things less useful (or more unpleasant) than soggy cardboard! It's perhaps a use for those big plastic bags we've been foisting upon you ...

Newer members will see that the boxes we use for delivery are ones which originally came to us containing produce. They can get a bit tatty, but they are a very precious resource to us. It's actually a bad time of year for us to be trying to replenish our cardboard stockpile. At the moment, the vast majority of our produce is coming to us from local farms in trays that we return to them, so many useful boxes are coming in.

Although the majority of respondents were very much in favour of us ditching the plastic, there were some people who very kindly replied to voice their opinion that the use of plastic was still a necessary precaution. Please get in touch if you are concerned about us making your delivery in cardboard. As I've said, for us, the use of plastic was to eliminate possible virus transmission on the return journey of our boxes back to us, but if you would feel safer continuing with deliveries in plastic bags, please let us know.



COMPETITION FOR KIDS

Draw leaf animals

Draw leaf animals by sticking different leaves below and drawing arms, legs, heads, faces around them. Poppy did a chard leaf hedgehog as part of one of her school art projects. Either return your entry back to the driver or ask a grown-up to post a photo of it to their Facebook or Instagram page tagging us @camorganic to make sure we see it. The best one will win a goodie bag.



20% off your first veg box

If you're not yet getting veg boxes delivered, why not join us? Just sign up on our website and enter the code 'ANIMAL20' to get 20% off your first veg box.

Joining Cambridge Organic is a great way to ensure a regular supply of fresh, locally grown, organic vegetables, delivered to your door (or left wherever you like, if you're not in). With our veg boxes, you can choose the contents yourself, if you prefer – or trust us to put together a great selection, which can be tailored to exclude anything you dislike.

This offer doesn't apply to existing loyal members: sorry! But if you know someone who might like to join, then please pass it on. If they join – and put your name in the 'How did you hear about us?' box when they sign up – we'll make your next veg box 20% off as well.

**NOT
GETTING
A VEG BOX
YET?
Sign up
here**



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@camorganic

COMMITTED TO LOCAL
veg boxes sourced from local farms and
delivered to the Cambridge area