



# courgette

The Cambridge Organic Gazette

We deliver veg boxes to homes in and around Cambridge

October - November 2019 - Issue 148

## *Harvest Festival* *a celebration of local organic produce*



**A little history of  
harvest  
traditions**

**Make our  
spectacular  
wheatsheaf pie!**

**Give to our Harvest  
Appeal**

**Back by popular demand:  
another of Angie's cakes**

The theme of this issue of the Courgette magazine is Harvest Festival. At this time of year, we're feeling thankful for all the wonderful produce our local organic farmers have produced over the summer. It's also a time of transition: with the days growing shorter, the first winter vegetables are appearing in our veg boxes. While we give thanks and say goodbye to summer's bounty, we're starting to feel excited about the return of the heartier roots and greens to come.



# Duncan writes ...



**Crisp packets are notoriously difficult to recycle, so the thing which makes**

**Savoursmiths Crisps' two new flavours so exciting is that they come in 100% recyclable polypropylene packets. Most crisp packets, of course, are made from a composite of plastic and metal foil, that makes them very difficult to recycle. Because Savoursmiths' new packets are 100% polypropylene, they can be easily be recycled, along with other plastics bearing the code 5 PP logo.**

**Savoursmiths are based in Duxford, making them our most local crisp brand, and the two new flavours are their luxurious take on two of the nation's favourite crisp varieties: Desert Salt & Vinegar, and Somerset Cheddar & Shallot. As a follow-up to the phenomenally successful coffee grounds recycling scheme, Cambridge Food Hub will be starting a crisp packet collection scheme, gathering these special packets from the outlets the crisps are supplied to. If you happen to see these new crisps when you're grabbing a coffee or down the pub with your mates, please do buy a bag and put the empty packet in the box provided. You can also put bags into your empty veg box for us to pick up. Please only return the new Savoursmith packets to us: our current batches of the other flavours are still in conventional crisps packets and can't be recycled along with the new packs.**

**Another really exciting product which is about to launch is the first UK-grown chickpeas, brought to you by one of our all-time favourite food companies, Hodmedods. Previously, it hasn't been possible to grow chickpeas commercially in the UK as the climate wasn't suitable.**

**The fact that there is now a commercial crop is in some ways a worrying indicator that climate change is happening. All the same, chickpeas are an incredibly popular pulse which are imported into this country in huge quantities, so having some home-grown ones is very special indeed. In fact, they will be very local to us indeed: this first experimental crop was grown in the Brecks and 'cleaned' in Whittlesford. The first batch is not organic, it is going to be much more expensive than imported chickpeas, and will be in very limited supply, but boy, oh boy, a bag of these chickpeas is like eating a little piece of history!**

**The keen-eyed among you may have seen a brief appearance by yours truly on BBC Look East back in August. They came to do a feature on the Green Coffee Shop Scheme and we spent the day filming with them at the Hot Numbers Roastery in Shepreth and the Biobean factory, where we deliver the used coffee grounds. Another local business that made a TV appearance recently was BeeBee wraps, whose founder, Kath Austin, pitched to the Dragons in Dragons Den. Although unsuccessful in her bid for investment, we think Kath came across really well and by showcasing her product, the programme gave extra exposure to the need to rid the world of unnecessary packaging and plastic.**

# Harvest at Home

## *memories of a cheshire childhood*



When I was growing up, the Harvest Festival at our local chapel was as important an event as Christmas or Easter. On the first Sunday of October, the chapel was decorated with fruit and vegetables and ears of corn. Everyone would donate groceries and tins of Campbell's soup would sit alongside the ornate wheatsheaf-shaped loaf that Margaret Oultram baked for the occasion. I can remember hiding on the steps up to the pulpit, eating damsons pilfered from the decorations. The service was followed by a Harvest Supper and an auction, where the fruit and veg would be sold off, the proceeds being given to charity, along with the donated groceries. There was always a giant marrow on the communion table, which my mum would bid for and make into a chutney that would last us through the following year.

In our agricultural community, the Harvest Festival seemed a timeless part of the religious year, but the service was in fact invented only in Victorian times. The first harvest festival was held by the Reverend R. S. Hawker in 1843 in his church in Morwenstow on the north Cornwall coast. The Reverend Hawker was a wonderfully eccentric character. He built himself a hut from the timbers of some of the many local ship-wrecks part-way down the cliff, and would sit there, smoking opium and staring out to sea, while composing florid Arthurian

poetry. The hut is still there and the Rectory Farm Tearooms at Morwenstow produce one of the best cream teas in the county. The next place where church harvest festivals are recorded is in Cambridgeshire: in the village of Elton near Peterborough in the 1850s. The tradition soon spread and became a popular part of the calendar in both Anglican and non-Conformist churches.

Harvest is, of course, celebrated by many cultures and religions. The Jewish harvest festival, Sukkot or the Feast of Tabernacles, for example, is a seven-day celebration falling this year on 13-20 October. The traditional practice is to live (or at least, to eat all your meals) in a sukkah, a temporary booth with a roof of raw vegetation, for the duration of the festival. Given the intimate connection between harvest and religious observance in so many cultures, it seems surprising that the first Christian harvest festival in this country was only 176 years ago.

Before that, there had always been celebrations to mark the end of harvest, but they had consisted of more secular, folk traditions. In most areas, the cutting of the last sheaf of corn was accompanied by special celebrations. The person who cut it was in some areas treated with honour, while in other places, it was a source of shame. The last sheaf was then paraded back to the farmhouse, sometimes decorated and dressed in women's clothes. The sheaf was then kept till the following year, sometimes to be broken up and spread on the fields, or ceremonially fed to animals. The end of harvest was celebrated with a Harvest Home, a lavish supper put on by the farmer, which constituted a big part of the reward for his workers. It would have been a much more raucous affair than our teetotal chapel gatherings!





# Wheatsheaf harvest pie

While preparing this issue of our magazine, and reflecting on the idea of Harvest Festival, we began to wonder whether it might be a good idea to create our own harvest celebrations in our homes. Whether or not we have a connection to an established faith, it seems appropriate at this time of year to take stock, to somehow give thanks for the gifts that both nature and our hard-working farmers have provided for us in the year so far. As autumns creeps up on us, it's also a good time to pause and look ahead to the darker months that lie ahead, months which will have their own harvests, of winter roots and greens.

The centrepiece of most harvest celebrations, from at least the Middle Ages to today, has been the Harvest Supper, so we've tried to come up with a seasonal recipe, fit for a harvest feast. We decided against trying to recreate the Elizabethan banquet described in Robert Herrick's (1591–1674) poem, 'The Hock-Cart or Harvest Home':

Ye shall see first the large and chief  
Foundation of your feast, fat beef:  
With upper stories, mutton, veal  
And bacon (which makes full the meal),  
With sev'ral dishes standing by,  
As here a custard, there a pie,  
And here all-tempting frumenty.

Our harvest meal does feature a pie, one that combines seasonal vegetables, mushrooms, chestnuts and pulses. It's made special, we hope, by the wheatsheaf decoration, which reproduces the harvest loaves that provided the focal point of the harvest festival displays of my childhood, complete with a little pastry mouse.

## Ingredients

### For the filling:

- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, cut into 1–1.5 cm dice
- 2 celery sticks, sliced
- 125 g mushrooms, halved or quartered
- 1 small to medium squash, peeled, deseeded and cut into 2 cm cubes
- ½ tsp of chilli flakes
- 1 clove of garlic, finely chopped
- 180 g of peeled roasted chestnuts
- 3 sprigs of rosemary
- 1 sprig of sage
- 1 x 400 g tin of Biona Aduki beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 x 400 g tin of Biona tomatoes
- 300 ml of mushroom stock made by soaking 10 g dried porcini in boiling water (or from a cube)

### For the pastry:

- 500g Marriages plain white flour
- 250g very cold butter or hard margarine
- ½ tsp of salt
- 150–200 ml chilled water
- 1 egg beaten with a splash of milk to glaze



## Making the filling:

On a low to medium setting, heat 2 tbsp of oil in a heavy cast-iron casserole for which you have a lid. Prepare each vegetable in turn and add to the pan in the order listed. With the lid on, sweat until the vegetables are starting to soften (poke the carrots with a fork as they may be the most recalcitrant). Add the chilli flakes, garlic and chestnuts towards the end of the time sweating.

Add the herbs, aduki beans, tinned tomatoes and stock (along with the rehydrated porcini if using) and bring to a simmer for twenty minutes. Taste and season accordingly. Allow to cool completely before topping with pastry.

## Making the pastry:

Put the flour and salt in a large mixing bowl. Coarsely grate the butter or margarine directly into the flour, pausing three or four times to stir the grated fat into the flour with a rounded table knife. Once all the fat is coated in flour, give it a final stir to make sure the fat is thoroughly mixed, but don't break the fat up into breadcrumbs. Stir 150 ml of the water into the flour with the knife. Then, with your hands, try to squish the mixture to see if it will come together to form a dough. You may need to stir in the remaining 50 ml to get the dough to form, but try to use as little water as possible, so the resulting pastry isn't too sticky. Mould the pastry into a ball, put it back in the bowl, cover the bowl and refrigerate for at least an hour.

## Assembling the pie:

We found that the filling fitted nicely into an oval 1.8 litre dish, which was 27 cm long. Roll out half the pastry and, with the dish upturned, cut round the rim of the dish with a sharp knife. Cut a strip the width of the rim of the dish from the remaining pastry. Put the cold filling into the dish and brush the rim with a little water. Press the thin strip of pastry onto the rim, then brush it with water and lower the pie lid into place. Crimp the lid to the pastry strip with the base of a table knife and knock the edges up with the back of the knife to fully seal the two. Brush with egg wash and then construct your wheatsheaf decoration (see side panel). When the decoration is complete, brush again with egg-wash and put into an oven pre-heated to 175°C for 40 minutes, until the pastry is cooked and golden and the filling is piping hot.

## How to make the pastry wheatsheaf

Start by cutting out the basic shape of the sheaf from rolled-out pastry, so roll out about half of the pastry that's left. Find a saucer whose diameter just fits inside one end of the oval of the pie dish. Place the saucer on the pastry and cut around three-quarters of its circumference. Then cut down from the arc to form a rough rectangular base for the stems of the sheaf. Put the resulting keyhole-shaped piece of pastry onto the pie lid and brush with egg-wash.

Next, cut out a rectangle the same length as the rectangular base and cut it into thin strips. Place the strips on the rectangle part of the sheaf outline, but don't make them too parallel, to give the appearance of the stems of the wheat. Cut out three further thin strips to make the strands binding the stems together and apply them between the head of the sheaf and the stems.

Next, we need to make the ears of corn. Create lots of pastry balls about 1.5 cm in diameter. Pinch each one into a rough teardrop shape and then make a central indentation along its length with a knife, followed by a couple of side marks like the veins of a leaf. Apply the resulting mini-ears around the circumference of the circular head of the sheaf. Then add concentric, overlapping arcs of ears until the whole head is filled in.

Finally, fashion a pastry mouse by shaping a slightly larger ball of dough into a teardrop shape with a flattened base. Add little ears and roll a thin strip of pastry for his tail. Finish with two cloves for his eyes. Stick the mouse to the sheaf with more egg-wash.



In recent years, as well as harvest festivals held in individual local chapels, a new tradition has developed of a joint service held at one of the farms. This is the harvest wheatsheaf loaf (but with no mouse!) displayed at a service last year.

# Harvest collection

donate groceries to our Harvest Appeal

One of the key elements of the Harvest Festivals of my childhood was the donation of groceries to local charities with which we had a close connection. We wondered whether our veg-box members would like to contribute their own donations to the two charities with which we at Cambridge Organic have a long-standing relationship. As many of you know, we have for many years made a collection of cash from our customers at Christmas for the homeless in Cambridge, dividing the proceeds between Jimmy's and Wintercomfort. We'll be giving details of this year's Christmas appeal in our next newsletter. In the meantime, we thought that these two charities could benefit from our new Harvest appeal.

Both Jimmy's and Wintercomfort publicise the groceries that they desperately need to provide meals for the men and women who use their service. We've drawn up a short list of the products that we sell which the two charities need. On our website, you'll find duplicate entries for each of these key products that you can add to your order so that you can donate. The products that you can donate are grouped together within a new product category, 'Harvest Festival: donate to our appeal', as well as appearing alongside the normal versions of the products in their usual product groups. We'll collect up the donated goods and then divide them up and deliver them to the two charities.



## Ideas in a Jiffy

Loyal veg-box member, Daisy Zoll, has asked us to canvas our readers for ideas of new uses for jiffy bags. They can't currently be recycled, as they are a composite of plastic and paper. Daisy uses them to store fragile things at home, like her camera lenses, but she wonders if more creative uses could be found? Are there any craft-making ideas that our members could suggest, or any other ideas to save them from going to landfill? Could they be collected and sewn together to find some new use?

If we can find a good use for them, then we could trial a scheme, where people return their jiffy bags to us along with their empty veg box for Daisy to transform into something new.





# Angie's Stem Ginger Tray Bake

In the last issue of the Courgette, we featured our colleague Angie's recipe for a raspberry and almond cake. We know that a lot of veg-box members made it, because – to our very great shame – there was an item missing in the list of ingredients, so a lot of people got in touch to ask what it was. We're ever so sorry to have made such a dreadful mistake. The bright side of our error was that it was so nice to see how many people were making the cake! The corrected list of ingredients is included in the panel to the left.

This time, we're featuring another of our favourite Angie cakes, a wonderful rich and moist ginger delight.

Here's the corrected list of ingredients for Angie's Almond and Raspberry traybake from the last issue of the Courgette.

**Ingredients**  
180g ground almonds  
320g vegetable margarine or butter  
320g self-raising flour  
320g caster sugar  
4 eggs  
1½ tsp baking powder  
1½ tsp almond or vanilla essence (or some of each)  
Flaked almonds  
Fruit: e.g., raspberries, blueberries, rhubarb or apples

The full, corrected recipe can be found on our website by following the link in the News section. The same link can be found in a post on our Facebook page. Please get in touch if you'd like a paper copy of the original magazine.

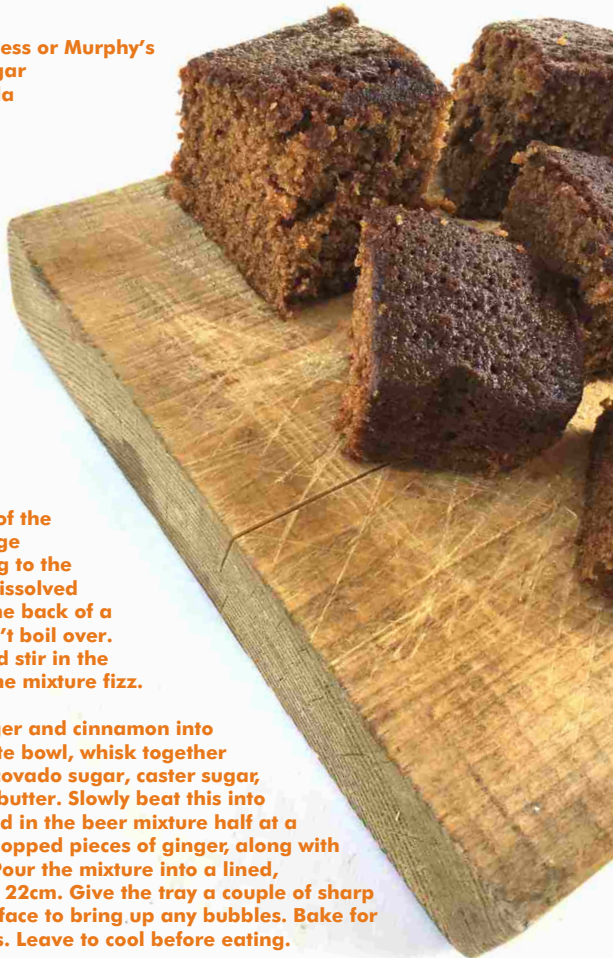
300ml of stout, like Guinness or Murphy's  
350g dark muscovado sugar  
1½ tsp bicarbonate of soda  
400g self-raising flour  
2tsp ground ginger  
2tsp ground cinnamon  
4 eggs, beaten  
200g golden caster sugar  
250g butter, melted  
6–8 pieces from a jar of stem ginger in syrup, chopped into smaller pieces  
An inch of fresh ginger peeled and grated  
4tbsp of the ginger syrup from the same jar

Pre-heat oven to 180°C.

Place the stout and 200g of the muscovado sugar in a large saucepan and slowly bring to the boil, working out any undissolved lumps of the sugar with the back of a spoon. Be careful it doesn't boil over. Remove from the heat and stir in the bicarb, which will make the mixture fizz.

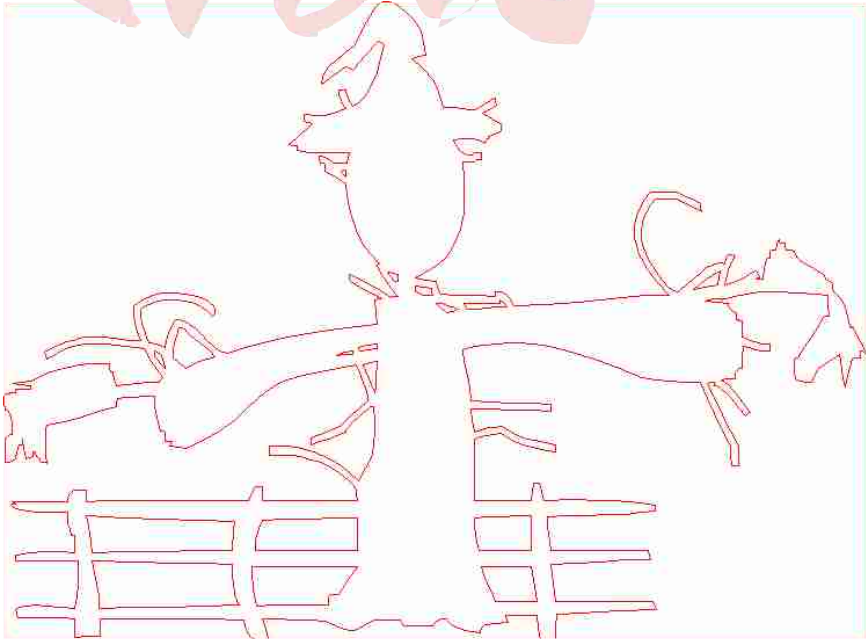
Sift the flour, ground ginger and cinnamon into a large bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, remaining muscovado sugar, caster sugar, ginger syrup and melted butter. Slowly beat this into the flour mixture. Next fold in the beer mixture half at a time. Finally, stir in the chopped pieces of ginger, along with the grated fresh ginger. Pour the mixture into a lined, rectangular cake tin, 36 x 22cm. Give the tray a couple of sharp taps against the work surface to bring up any bubbles. Bake for approximately 40 minutes. Leave to cool before eating.

**Variations:** Instead of incorporating the stem ginger and its syrup into the cake mix, you might like to put just half the chopped ginger into the mixture and sprinkle the rest on top when you take the cake out of the oven, drizzling the syrup over the cake at the same time.



# Scarecrow competition

Draw, decorate and name the scarecrow. The best entry wins a goodie bag. Please return your entry back to your driver or post it on our Facebook page.



Scarecrow's name

Name

Age

Veg-box member's name

## 50% 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 'HARVEST19' to get 50% 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, based on any likes or dislikes.

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 half-price as well.



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