

CAMBRIDGE ORGANIC GAZETTE

courgette



It's Organic September

Our favourite month of the year!

Feeling the Heat?
Climate change and growing organic

Bulking Up
Products to buy in bulk and save

Sweetcorn Fritters
A fresh recipe for fresh corn

What is Organic?
What it means for you and your food

Comment from Duncan:



Founder and owner of Cambridge

As I'm sitting here writing this the temperature gauge is reading well into the 30's, and the thing is, it doesn't even feel that hot anymore, at least, not compared to some of the extreme temperatures we have experienced recently. There's no ignoring it... something is definitely up with our climate.

A deep-seated love of our planet, coupled with a strong sense of purpose that we have to do whatever we can to prevent climate change, has always been a main driver for everything that we do here at Cambridge Organic. I am often struck by a sense of frustration, which I know is shared by other local organic box schemes and social food enterprises in the UK, that we have to play the same economic game as the many other food businesses who are vying for consumer spend. In this game 'climate friendly' is merely a selling point that consumers have to choose amid the noise of marketing messages and economic forces that might influence a person's food shopping habits. This essentially means that our hopes of having a sustainable food system, basically comes down to a few conscientious consumers.

Well, those conscientious consumers are you, the members of our box scheme, and we love you to bits for it. We know times are hard right now, and that an organic veg box can seem like an expensive luxury compared to the cheap food that can be bought elsewhere. But of course, it isn't a matter of 'luxury' at all, it's all about doing

things the right way; sustainably. Your continued support means that we can continue to do things the right way. It means that we can continue working towards creating the Cambridge Food Hub, and take things to the next level in terms of food sustainability. Hopefully, while there is still time, we can achieve this as our contribution to avoiding the most catastrophic of climate change scenarios.






Bulking Up


Let's face it who doesn't like a deal?! We want to offer money saving options where possible. One way we are doing this is by offering some favourite items in bulk sizes. These products are now online and available to add to your order.


 **Minor Figures oat milk -
box of 6 @ £10.99**
saving you over 12.5%


 **Savoursmith crisps -
box of 24 x 40 grams @ £19.99**
saving you over 16.5%
(salt & vinegar, desert salt or
cheddar & shallot)

 **Biona orange juice -
box of 6 @ £24.99**
saving you 16.5%

 **Biona fusili -
box of 12 @ £19.99**
saving you over 23.5%

 **Biona sweetcorn -
case of 6 @ £8.99**
saving you over 16%

 **Lemonaid drinks -
case of 24 @ £32.50**
saving you over 19.5%
(blood orange, ginger, lime or
passion fruit)

 **Biona baked beans -
case of 6 @ £6.99**
saving you over 16%

 **Biona chopped tomatoes -
case of 12 @ £10.99**
saving you 16%



Climate Change & Organic

With record-breaking heat waves across Europe this summer, the impacts of a changing climate – which are already ravaging other parts of the world – are starting to feel closer to home.

Changing rainfall patterns, increased evaporation driven by atmospheric factors and the reduced availability of water for irrigation all threaten agricultural production. In areas such as the South East water supplies are already under pressure, leading to drier soil conditions that can reduce growth of crops, pasture and trees. In contrast our winters are set to become warmer and wetter, leading to floods and further crop damage. Some cereals and fruit trees depend on the colder winter temperatures for their flowering and life cycle.

Organic farming methods help to mitigate



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the effects of this severe weather. The high humus content in the soil found in organic farming helps to prevent nutrient and water loss. This makes soils more resilient to floods, droughts, and land degradation.

Moreover organic farming practices, such as cover crops, long rotations and the use of nitrogen-fixing plants, help to fix more carbon into the soil, instead of it being released into the atmosphere. Minimum mechanised tilling practices also help to keep carbon stored in our soils.

Another impact of climate change, especially the rising temperatures, is its effect on insect and pest populations. The effects are various and complex. For example, warmer winters are leading to higher survival rates and expansion in population numbers of some pests. There is an increased risk of invasion by migratory pests from other geographic areas as the climate here becomes more hospitable. Some plants stressed by drought are more susceptible to insects, leading to increases in insect-transmitted plant



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diseases. In addition there is a decrease in natural enemies, due to climate change and the use of fertilisers and pesticides. Many agree that this all presents a threat to food production and that the agriculture industry

needs to adjust to help reduce the impact of pests in a changing climate.

The organic food system already employs strategies that naturally assist with managing pest populations. Typically those working in organic food systems

aim to preserve seed and crop diversity. Planting diverse crops instead of a single-crop approach has been shown to support more wildlife. Also preserving seeds means future plants will be more adapted to grow in your particular climatic and soil conditions. This increases crop resistance to pests and disease.

Cropping practices such as long crop rotations are common on organic farms and can help to prevent the build-up of large populations of pathogens in the soil. Moreover the practice of maintaining wild field margins and areas of wildflowers helps to boost the population of natural pest eating enemies such as insects and birds.

In the face of unpredictable weather patterns, rising temperatures and high CO2 levels, farming practices need to adapt fast. Overall, practices found in organic farming can help mitigate some of the impacts of climate change, minimise risk to crops and preserve our future food security.



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James Foskett Farms

James Foskett is a large-scale farm based in Suffolk, with 220 hectares allocated to organic farming. Much of their year round produce rolls into your weekly veg-boxes, including: potatoes, carrot bunches, squashes, beetroot and sweetcorn. We talk to organic farm manager Nikola Tonev about the challenges that face organic growing.

Nikola was born in Bulgaria where he grew up on his father's organic farm. With a degree in farming, he headed to the UK and started working at James Foskett around four years ago.

What changes have you seen on the farm since you arrived?

James Foskett became certified in 2009 with just 5% of the total land allocated to



Organic farm manager Nikola Tonev



organic, this has now grown to 40% and each year we add more.

The pandemic brought huge demands for organic produce, almost doubled the demand for carrots, from

700,000 bunches to 1.4 million bunches in just one year. Box schemes were at the forefront of this increased demand.

James Foskett potatoes are in our veg boxes all year round, what are the challenges you face when growing organic potatoes?

Blight is a major issue for organic potatoes, whereas conventional farming methods will spray with pesticides, we can't. So, we grow blight resistant varieties, such as Maris Peer, which are relatively small, new potatoes – these can be planted early (March) and harvested early (June, July), therefore avoiding the high season for issues with blight. Potato blight is a disease caused by a fungus-like organism that attacks the foliage and tubers of potatoes, causing rotting.

Potato cyst nematodes (PCN) is another big challenge for potato farming. PCN is the primary pest of potatoes within the UK and

infestation can result in tuber yield losses exceeding 80%. Prevention includes using long rotations, which means it actually affects the organic side less, as we often use long 'no cash' crops to allow the soil to rest. Each year we take soil samples to ensure the ground is suitable for planting, if it isn't you have to change the crop you choose to grow in that specific field.

“ ...with weather conditions like we had during the July heat wave the pressure has been unbelievable. ”



What are the main challenges due to Climate Change?

Every year we see the impact of the weather changes. We farm on sandy soils, meaning irrigation is really important. We need a lot of water to grow our crops, and with weather conditions like we had during the July heat wave the pressure has been unbelievable. It's been almost impossible to water every crop. Sometimes we have to sacrifice crops in a heatwave – it's a tough one. That's another benefit of using the blight resistant variety of potatoes, the early harvest means we need less irrigation in the hotter months.

As and where we can, we use drip irrigation, like we do on the butternut squashes, sweet potatoes and on the salsify. The water goes straight to the root helping to decrease any water waste.

James Foskett is one of the larger local farms we buy from. It's important that operations like this continue to exemplify how organic farming can yield good quantities of produce, while simultaneously protecting our soils, environment and bio-diversity for years to come.



Sweetcorn & Courgette Fritters with Avocado Dip

Fresh corn and courgette fritters are a hit with both young and old! Perfect for brunch or a light lunch with salad, something different for your sweetcorn.

Ingredients

- ¼ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 120g sweetcorn kernels - about 2 ears
- 150g courgette – roughly grated
- 4 spring onions - sliced
- 100g flour
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 eggs beaten

Method

Step 1. Add all ingredients (except the oil) to a large mixing bowl and mix well.

Step 2. Heat the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat.

Step 3. Use a tbsp to drop heaped scoops of the fritter mix onto the pan and flatten slightly with a fork to about 1.5 centimetres.

Step 4. Leave them to cook for about 3 to 4 minutes, or until golden brown, then turn them over and cook the other side for 3 minutes before serving.

Avocado Dip

Ingredients

- 1 avocado – mashed until smooth
- ¼ cup sour cream (or yogurt, or dairy free alternative)
- 1 clove garlic pressed
- 1 tsp hot sauce
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp cilantro chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

STEP: Mix it all together!





What is Organic Farming?


Organic is a system of farming and food production. Organic farmers use methods that benefit the whole food system. Organic farming has many benefits: preserving the environment, supporting local economies, improving animal welfare and producing high quality food that can benefit the health of the consumer.

But what does organic certification actually mean for how your food is produced?




Organic Crops

 Grown with natural fertilisers such as manure and compost, which benefits the soil health and wildlife as opposed to synthetic fertilisers that have negative impacts on our environment and can be present in your food.

 Weeds are controlled naturally through crop rotation, hand weeding, mulching, tilling and with organic-approved herbicides containing natural ingredients such as clove, cinnamon and lemongrass oil.

 Pests are controlled using natural methods such as birds and insects. They can use naturally derived pesticides such as neem oil, made from the neem tree, and pyrethrin which is made from chrysanthemum plants.

Organic meat, dairy and eggs

-  Livestock are given all organic, hormone- and GMO-free feed
-  Disease is prevented with natural methods such as clean housing, rotational grazing, and a healthy diet. Antibiotics and medications will only be used when an animal is unwell, not as a preventative measure.
-  Livestock must have access to the outdoors, giving consumer's confidence that the welfare of the animal is upheld.