

Carruthers seasonal news



The majority of the UK population grow up in urban areas, with little or no awareness of when and where various foods are produced. Imports from around the world ensure that supermarket shelves look the same week in week out. There are many reasons why you should aim to eat local and seasonal food; to reduce the energy needed to grow and transport the food we eat, to avoid paying a premium for food that has travelled a long way and to support the local economy. But most importantly, because seasonal food is fresher and tastes SO much better!

We at Carruthers aim to promote an understanding of food seasons. Each month we will focus on the fruit and/or Veg, which is currently in season, and share enlightening facts, useful tips and enticing recipe ideas picked from the web and our favourite publications. When a food is in season its quality can vary dramatically. Food produced locally, e.g.

bought from a farmers' market, is likely to be a lot fresher than its supermarket equivalent. Each fruit or vegetable has a prime time when it's at its seasonal best. Some are great for over half of the year; others only hit their peak for a month.

Perhaps the most compelling argument of all is that of simply supporting British producers. Unless you're after blood oranges or pineapples, by shopping seasonally you should, by and large, find yourself buying British. Irrespective of food miles or flavour, it is thoroughly depressing to find supermarkets selling Peruvian asparagus in mid-May. In 2015, only 23% of the fruit and vegetables we bought were home grown. We're only a small country, and far from self-sufficient, but we can do better than that.

Aah, at last April! We're finally out of the winter and have spring ahead of us – yippee!

In a couple more weeks we'll be winding our clocks forward and the lighter evenings which will help us believe that spring has arrived. The fresh new leaves are unfurling in the hedgerows and showing off at their greenest, brightest and best. And the spring vegetables have started appearing in the shops again.

Greens are probably the healthiest of vegetables, although it's only in recent years that people have sought them out rather than forcing them down in some faint hearted bid to achieve their five a day. We have now

learned NOT to over boil the cabbage and have instead started to steam or stir fry our greens and suddenly the whole experience has changed.



Right now an absolute favourite with our team is purple sprouting broccoli. This is the most lovely and tender of the broccolis and is wonderful stir fried in sesame oil and garlic. Be sure to eat your purple sprouting while its fresh as the flavour is so much sweeter. Asparagus is just coming into season and is delicious served along with purple sprouting broccoli – probably the two best vegetables, served up together!

Cauliflowers are still being cut, and again our appreciation of this unusual looking brassica has increased as we have learned to reduced its cooking time. Straightforward and honest cauliflower cheese



takes some beating with plenty of mustard powder in the cheese mix, but if you want to impress then try roasting with cumin coriander and almonds.

Then there are leeks. You can buy leeks most of the year around now, but they are so much better right now. Why else would St David's Day be at this time of the year?

There's not a lot of fruit in season right now, but there is rhubarb. Rhubarb is actually a vegetable, and once you've got your head around that then serving it with roast pork won't seem so strange. The sharp flavour knocks apple sauce off its perch as an accompaniment, yet nothing beats a Rhubarb crumble.

It feels good to be aware of the seasons. Just now new leaves are appearing and a brisk walk in the crisp Spring air makes our seasonal greens taste so much better with a Sunday Roast followed by a delicious Rhubarb dessert.

What's in Season this Spring



Asparagus, broccoli, mushrooms, jersey royal new potatoes, chicory, cabbage, rhubarb, leeks, spinach, spring onions, purple-sprouting broccoli, new potatoes, cauliflower, radishes, carrots, watercress lettuce & salad leaves such as rocket and red chard.

Conference pears(uk)

Italian kiwi fruit, Spanish Strawberries (Seasonal from further afield)

RHUBARB

The outlandishly coloured vegetable that thinks it's a fruit. Rhubarb makes deliciously comforting puddings but its sharpness works extremely well with meat and oily fish dishes.

Forced rhubarb (grown in the dark) has yellowish leaves and usually appears in January. The field-grown variety replaces it around April and is less tender but often more flavourful.



HISTORY

Rhubarb was used as a medicine in ancient China. It was brought to Europe by Marco Polo and has been eaten as a food since the eighteenth century.

Rhubarb grows best in cool climates and the effect of forcing was discovered by accident at the Chelsea Physic Garden early in the 19th century.

BUYING

Choose crisp, firm, plump stalks with good colour.

STORING

Kept in the fridge, fresh rhubarb will stay in reasonable condition for 1-2 weeks. Raw and cooked rhubarb freeze well.

PREPARING

Wash and trim both ends of the stalks, and discard the poisonous leaves. Rhubarb, in particular the later field-grown variety, is very tart and requires considerable sweetening.

NUTRITION

Rhubarb is a good source of fibre and contains moderate levels of vitamin C and calcium. Studies have linked the

fibre from rhubarb in the diet with reduced cholesterol levels.



Rhubarb puffs with oat streusel topping

- 5 sticks rhubarb cut into 3cm pieces
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 3 tbsp plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 5 tbsp soft brown sugar
- ½ a 500g block puff pastry
- 3 tbsp unsalted butter
- 50g rolled oats

Method

Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. In a bowl, toss the rhubarb with cinnamon, 1 tbsp flour and 2 tbsp sugar. Line a baking sheet with a piece of baking parchment. Roll out the pastry on a floured surface to approx 20 x 30cm, then cut into quarters and place on the sheet.

Rub together the remaining flour, sugar, butter and oats to make a rough crumble mixture. Divide the rhubarb between the pastry quarters, leaving a 1cm rim. Sprinkle the oat mixture over, then fold and pinch each corner to keep the filling in. Bake for 20-25 mins, then serve warm.

CAULIFLOWER

The Health Benefits of Cauliflower

Many popular diets advise against eating anything white. Foods like pasta, rice, white bread, sugar and other white foods are off limits. However, cauliflower is a white food you can feel good about eating. This non-starchy vegetable is a cruciferous vegetable like cabbage and broccoli. High intake of cruciferous vegetables is associated with a lower risk of some cancers. They contain vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients, or plant nutrients, that may help neutralise damaging toxins.

A brassica, like cabbage and broccoli, cauliflower is a mass of tiny, tightly packed flower heads (called curds), which grow from a thick central stem to form a single, round head, cupped by green leaves. It has a firm, almost waxy texture, and a mild, delicate flavour. Most cauliflowers are white, but it's also possible to find green and purple varieties, as well as the sweeter Romanesco cauliflower, with its distinctive pointed florets. Like all brassicas, cauliflower smells very unpleasant if overcooked, so brief cooking is essential.

Availability

All year round, but at its best from mid December through to mid April.

Choose the best

Go for cauliflowers with pure white heads with no discolouration, and crisp green leaves. The colour of the base is a good indication of how recently it's been picked - the whiter, the fresher.

Prepare it

Cut off the surrounding leaves (if they're fresh, they can be cooked, too). For large cauliflowers, cut off individual florets from the central stem and cut again if necessary. You should end up with florets of a comparable size, so that they all cook at the same pace. Then wash. Smaller, baby cauliflowers can be cooked whole.

Store it

In perforated bag in a cool dark place, or the fridge. It will keep for several days.

Cook it

The florets are great used raw in a salad or as part of a crudité selection served with dips. Cooked cauliflower florets keep their shape best when steamed (5-10 minutes) - remember to place them upright in the steamer. It can also be boiled (takes 5-10 minutes for florets; around 10 minutes for a whole cauliflower). For both cooking methods, test regularly with the tip of a knife to make sure they don't overcook.

Spicy cauliflower

Ingredients.

6 tbsp vegetable oil
large piece ginger
finely chopped
2 tsp chilli flakes
2 tbsp cumin seed
2 tsp turmeric
1¼kg (after trimming and
removing leaves) cauliflower
broken into pieces
small bunch coriander,
chopped



Method

Heat the oil in a big pan or wok with a lid, then add the ginger and spices. Swirl everything around for a few secs until the spices are aromatic. Reduce the heat, then stir in the cauliflower and some seasoning. Put the lid on and cook for 10 mins or until softened, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle over the coriander before serving.

LUNCHBOX IDEA

Crunchy refreshing fresh spring veggies are ideal for lunchbox salads. Prepare salads ahead and store in the fridge so they're ready to go.



Spring veggie, lentil & rice salad

This healthy salad is great for the school lunchbox.

1 cup rice & barley*

2 tbs extra virgin olive oil

2 tbs lemon juice

1 bunch asparagus, purple sprouting broccoli,

200g mini tomatoes,

halved lengthways

1 cucumber, quartered lengthways and diced

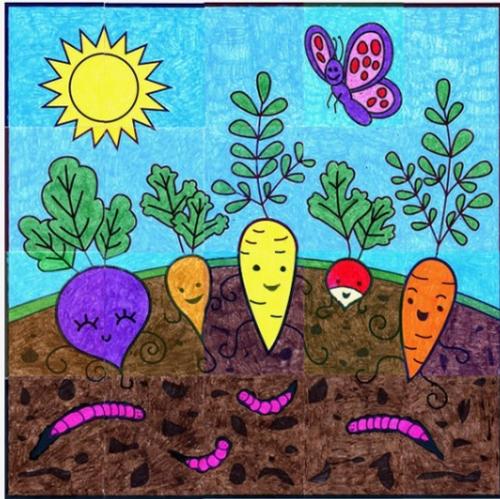
400g can lentils, drained and rinsed 2 tbs toasted seed mix

1/3 cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped 75g feta cheese, crumbled

*Rice & barley is pre-mixed and available in the rice section in supermarkets

Fun ideas for children this Spring

1. Paint a seasonal vegetable garden



2. Create a real Mr Potato Head.



3. Idea for Easter Egg decoration.



CARRUTHERS NEWS

Carruthers has recently been awarded the bronze Resource Efficiency Pledge and are working towards the Silver award. This means that we have implemented systems that ensure we use resources like energy, water, raw materials more efficiently. Carruthers is committed to show leadership in driving sustainable growth through the supply chain and to encourage others to actively contribute to achieving a low carbon economy for Scotland.



**RESOURCE
EFFICIENCY
PLEDGE**

As part of our committed to delivering a first class service, we are proud to announce that we have become a member of the Fresh Produce Consortium. The FPC offers advice and guidance on legislation and regulations on packaging waste, pesticides, importing and exporting. It provides networking forums, field trips, group meetings, conferences and events with the aim of promoting responsible and sustainable trading.



Can we extend our best wishes to all our Customers and Suppliers this Easter.

