

We got sent this poster for an interesting bee talk at the Botanical Gardens and pass it on to you. Dave the bee man, who keeps hives here at Phantassie, brought us another jar of honey the other day which is upping the staff toast quota. It does still seem to be predominantly rape despite our screen of lime trees, but then no East Lothian rape no lovely nutty rapeseed oil.. an agricultural conundrum. So far our guest bees have had an easier Winter than last year, though they narrowly missed getting cowed by the digger the other day.

We still have some of Mr Hedderwick's very good value East Lothian honey (£4.50 1lb jar).

As many of you ask for them every week, we've also added to the Extras list:

Chestnut Mushrooms 350g, £2.50
Vine Tomatoes 450g, £2.50
or **Cherry Vine Tomatoes** 350g £2.50

just let us know anytime you'd like them added to your box.

For next week we proffer **lemons** for pancakes:

Unwaxed Lemons 5 for £2.00
Bergamot Lemons 4 for £2.00 - more intense and sweeter in flavour, maybe not one for pancakes but if you make a little pot of marmalade you'll smell and taste the difference, use for something that includes the peel and zest as the bergamot oil is in the skin.
Interesting blog information here: <http://www.davidlebovitz.com/2011/03/what-is-a-bergamot/>

This week you have lovely **baby spinach** just to eat as is , **crunchy celery** and warming **caulis** or **flower sprouts** (they are popular but do need thorough washing). Larger boxes have **Scorzonera** as the very seasonal root.

Next week will be blood red **beetroot**, though just too late for Valentine's. Both an aphrodisiac according to the Romans (its the boron apparently) and good for the heart... (www.lovebeetroot.co.uk – long list of health benefits and some yummy recipes too). Also some of the chestnuttiest **pumpkin**, the green **Kabocha**. It has the toughest skin so for once you might have to peel, and the lowest water content so good for making puree and sweet things.



Next week's apple will be **Kidds Orange Red**, which yet again we do grow at Phantassie (though we've sourced these for you from Hereford) and consider it a far better bet than Cox to plant as a tree.

www.orangepippin.com/apples/kidds-orange-red.

Out in the field Moss is moving the henhouses onto the overwintered rye so the hens get fresh green and do some very necessary debugging before we add rich compost full of their last years litter and plough up to plant tatties... So off the cycle goes again.

Some of our free-range hens, are VERY free range, and despite Tinker-the-dog's best efforts, its not always clear who's rounding up whom.



As usual we will be at Edinburgh Farmer's Market on Saturday, sampling marmalade, spiced bramble jelly, chutney etc and talking vegetables.

Salsify Info

An unusual root vegetable, salsify is also known as the oyster plant because it tastes slightly of oysters when cooked. It looks a bit like a long carrot or parsnips and its skin can range from beige-white to black (the black variety being called scorzonera) with creamy white flesh inside.

Available from November to April, salsify is highly nutritious, a good source of fibre and is low in sodium.

As with other root vegetables, it can be steamed, boiled, roasted, mashed or used in soups and stews. When peeled, the roots discolour rapidly so should be placed in water with lemon juice.

Salsify is delicious in fritters or in tempura batter, and combines well with cheese and kale to produce a tasty gratin dish.

Salsify with parmesan

400 salsify, scrubbed and trimmed

½ Tbsp butter

1 Tbsp olive oil

¼ cup parmesan cheese

salt and a pinch of cayenne pepper

Place the whole, unpeeled salsify roots in a steamer basket over 5 cm of boiling water. Cover and steam for about 10-12 minutes, until barely tender. Drain and rinse under cold running water, and then peel or just scrub and slice in 10-cm lengths.

Heat the butter and olive oil in a frying pan, and sauté the salsify for 3-4 minutes, until golden brown. Transfer to a plate, sprinkle with the parmesan cheese, and season with salt and cayenne pepper, or serve atop bruschetta.

Serve this on thick slices of toasted Italian bread that have been garlic rubbed and drizzled with olive oil

Phantassie notes.

We try to avoid peeling as it's a chore. Parboil first and rub off as you would with Jerusalem artichokes.

Salsify (includes scorzonera) is happy roasted, either by itself or as part of mixed roots. You can make a sushi parody with the black variety cut in chunks and skin left on.

Both are delicate and like partner flavours though dipping in a mustardy or horseradish based sauce is good. The clue is in the names Winter Asparagus or Vegetable Oyster. The flavour is not as robust as parsnip for example.

Like parsnips or carrots they keep best cool and dark and not in the fridge

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