

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. 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.

FEBRUARY/MARCH

Fruits and vegetables in season in winter in the UK.



apple, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, leek, onion, parsnip, pear,
potato, pumpkin, purple sprouting broccoli, rhubarb (forced),
swede, turnip, kale

January/ February

The winter months are the time to enjoy British root vegetables and stores of local fruit. Being harvested this month are leeks, green cabbages, parsnips, turnips, sprouts, celeriac, jerusalem artichokes, shallots, mushrooms and forced rhubarb. From store, you can buy British apples and pears, beetroot and potatoes. Main crop carrots are either stored in the ground or kept in cold store to be available from September till the end of May. Onions are available most of the year.

February/March

Winter root crops are still going strong. This is the month for early winter cauliflower, leeks, turnips, protected spinach, swede, celeriac, chard, kale, forced rhubarb, and carrots. Potatoes, apples and pears are available from store. The sprout season comes to an end. Mushrooms are available most of the year.

Just because some of your favourites are out of season, it doesn't mean you have to stop using local producers to get your healthy food. There are plenty of delicious fruits and vegetables being grown in the UK in the colder months.

From pears to turnips, as the weather gets chillier the fruit and veg get heartier.

Here are some of the season's tastiest foods for a healthy, balanced diet, plus a recipe for a sensational soup and stew that will keep you warm through those long, dark nights. So long, winter blues!

Pears

Pears are a splendid autumn treat, and come in many different varieties and flavours. Try them in desserts, salads or with after dinner cheese.

Beetroot

Don't be put off if you've only ever tried it soaked in vinegar – beetroot has a delicious, sweet flavour of its own, and goes great in salads.

Turnips

Turnips are rich in fibre, phosphorus and vitamin C. They're great in the winter, when they're normally more mature and tastier, with a sweet, slightly peppery taste.

Swedes

Mashed, roasted or stewed, swedes make a delicious side dish, and go brilliantly with mashed potato.

Butternut squash

The smooth exterior of a butternut squash hides a deliciously sweet flesh. It's used in a range of dishes, from curries to stews. It even makes a delicious side dish for a Sunday Roast.

Parsnips

Cheap and simple to prepare, their soft, slightly sweet flesh is the perfect accompaniment to any winter dish.

Celeriac

Celeriac may look ugly – but don't be fooled! Its flesh has a delicate taste, similar to celery or parsley, with a slight nuttiness. It goes great with potatoes and garlic.

Kale

Unlike most green vegetables, kale is more abundant and flavourful during the coldest months of the year. It makes a great side dish and is delicious in soups.

Leeks

Leeks are a tasty ingredient for soups and stews. Go for medium sized ones, as larger leeks are more likely to be tough and woody.

KICKSTART HEALTHY EATING HABITS

How many of us will make a New Year's resolution to lose some weight, or try to eat more fruit and veg? While we may set out with good intentions, nearly 80 per cent of us fail to maintain our resolutions.

The trouble is we can often set ourselves unrealistic goals – "I'm going to lose a stone by February" – or we believe we can do it by willpower alone. But small simple lifestyle changes are much easier to stick to, and they can make a real, long-term difference to your health and wellbeing. Getting support from family and friends, keeping a record of your progress and rewarding yourself for meeting small targets can all help in achieving your goals. 'I resolve to eat more fruit and veg' Sounds simple, doesn't it? But recent figures show about 60–70 per cent of us aren't getting our five a day. Fruits and veggies are packed with important vitamins, minerals and fibre, so failing to eat your recommended daily intake could lead to serious gaps in your diet.

Keep a food diary to check how much fruit and veg you are currently eating and try to increase your intake gradually until you hit your target – minimum of five a day! Remember fruit and veg have a different mix of nutrients so you get more goodness by eating a different range of them – try a new fruit or veg whenever you get an opportunity. For example; celeriac.

CELERIAC



The unsung hero of the vegetable world, knobbly, odd-shaped celeriac has a subtle, celery-like flavour, with nutty overtones. Try it as mash, in big-flavoured, slow-cook dishes, or in its classic form, and as they do in France, as a remoulade. Celeriac is available year round but is at its best from September to April. Choose a firm root that feels heavy for its size. Avoid those that are discoloured. Using a sharp knife, top and tail the celeriac, then use a potato peeler to remove the rhino-tough skin. Expect to discard about a quarter of the celeriac by the time you've done this. Store it in the salad drawer of your fridge before use. Celeriac discolours quickly, immerse in a bowl of water, after chopping to size, with a squeeze of lemon juice or a splash of white wine vinegar.

Celeriac soup

1 tbsp olive oil.
½ onion, finely sliced
1 garlic clove, crushed
½ large potato, peeled,
chopped
½ celeriac, peeled, chopped
salt and freshly ground black
pepper
300ml/½ pint hot vegetable
stock
1 tbsp fresh chopped basil
Chunky croutons



Heat the olive oil in a saucepan, add the onion and fry over a gentle heat until softened.
Add the garlic and cook for one minute.
Add the potato and celeriac and season, to taste, with salt and freshly ground black pepper.
Add the stock and cook for ten minutes, or until the potato and celeriac have softened. Remove the vegetables and stock from the heat and leave to cool for a few minutes, before blending with a stick blender.
To serve, pour into a bowl and garnish with chopped basil and croutons.

Kale



Kale is king for seasonal eaters! It is descended from the same ancestor as cabbage. It was originally known as 'cole' or 'colewort' in England but now most people call it by its Scottish name, kale. It tastes and grows best during the coldest of months, particularly February. Perfect for hotting up the goodness in hearty stews and soups like scotch broth. It's hardy, surviving harsh winters and growing where cabbage often can't.

Our quick and tasty tips:

Try it sautéed with chilli and garlic and use it to dress pasta with a good lug of olive oil, salt and pepper and a sprinkling of Parmesan cheese.

Kale & chorizo broth

3 tbsp olive oil.
2 onions, finely chopped
4 garlic cloves, crushed
2-3 cooking chorizo
sausages, sliced
4 large potatoes
1½ l chicken stock
200g curly kale
finely shredded



Method

Heat 2 tbsp of the oil in a large saucepan. Add the onions, garlic and chorizo, then cook for 5 mins until soft. Throw in the potatoes and cook for a few mins more. Pour in the stock, season and bring to the boil. Cook everything for 10 mins until the potatoes are on the brink of collapse.

Use a masher to squash the potatoes into the soup, then bring back to the boil. Add the kale and cook for 5 mins until tender. Ladle the soup into bowls, then serve drizzled with the remaining olive oil.

WHY EAT THE SEASONS?



There are a number of good reasons to eat more local, seasonal food:

to reduce the energy (and associated CO2 emissions) needed to grow and transport the food we eat.

to avoid paying a premium for food that is scarcer or has travelled a long way.

to support the local economy.

to reconnect with nature's cycles and the passing of time.

but, most importantly, because:

seasonal food is fresher and so tends to be tastier and more nutritious