



Cambridge
organic

courgette

The Cambridge Organic Gazette

We deliver veg boxes to homes in and around Cambridge

February - March 2020 - Issue 150

The best veggie option

Base your diet on a weekly veg box



Big Stack

We try to build the ultimate veggie burger

Website refresh

A glimpse of our new site and a change in how to pay

Love celeriac(tually)

Learn to love the ugly root

Plastic problem

Our policy on limiting plastic use

If you want to base your diet on more plants, then start with the best plants: a weekly or fortnightly veg box from Cambridge Organic provides the perfect starting point for a healthy and sustainable diet. Fresh organic vegetables, many sourced directly from local farms, delivered to your door in an electric van: it's the best veggie option.

Lots of new members have joined us over the past few weeks: a big welcome to all of you. We hope you enjoy our little magazine!





Duncan writes ...

I hope it's not getting tiresome to start another editorial with news of new record veg-box numbers, but we've only gone and done it again! In the second week of January, we hit the milestone of 800 boxes in a week for the first time ever. Two weeks later, as I'm writing this article, it looks like that record will be beaten again. It's just bonkers! Whatever it is that's triggered this surge in interest is most welcome. Clearly, it's good for business (especially during this time when we are putting resources into the Food Hub project), but more importantly, it's a great indicator that more and more people are changing their lifestyles to be more sustainable.

Keeping on the theme of records: we were completely knocked for six when we totted up the contributions for this year's Jimmy's collection. Over £900. Unbelievable! This is nearly three times the record of £335 which preceded it – and we thought that was pretty amazing. This year we made it possible for people to donate via the automated payment process and this seems to have made a huge difference, so we'll definitely do that again. On behalf of Jimmy's Nightshelter, Wintercomfort and ourselves, can I say thank you to everyone who contributed.

Not long before Christmas, we heard from GoCardless – the company that provides our direct debit service – that they would be putting their fees up in February. When we looked into it, we discovered that the fee increase would amount to around three times what we are currently paying them. It's a real shame, because the GoCardless system was so ideally suited to our needs, but the new fees are just too high to make it economically viable. We have decided to switch to a new payment provider, Sage Pay, as we feel this is a well-known and reliable service that can be trusted. The change in payment provider will happen alongside an update to our management system and website.

Those of you who have been following the progress of the Cambridge Food Hub project will be pleased to hear that we are getting ever closer to our goal of building this amazing facility at Northstowe. If you are keen to support what we are trying to achieve with this project, you are already doing a great thing by being a member of our veg-box scheme (basically, having completely failed to raise any funding for the project, everything we've done so far has been paid for out of Cambridge Organic's rather meagre profits). You may also have spotted a selection of 'Food Hub' products on the Cambridge Organic website. Buying these helps us to support other local food businesses and move towards our goal of creating the Food Hub.

Improvements in site:

A new website is coming...
...GoCardless is going

MOBILE VERSION →

We're working on a new website, which we hope will be up and running before the next issue of the Courgette magazine is produced. The necessity of updating our website has been thrust upon us by the need to change the way we collect your payments (see below), but we're hoping that the new website will also have significant advantages for our members who use it regularly – as well as making it a little easier for new members to find their way around.

The key advantage of the new website is that it will be designed to resize for mobile phone use. When I first saw the prototype of our current website, back in 2013, I remember saying to Michael Calwell, the man behind Boxmaster – the operating system that handles our admin – that I thought the website looked great on the computer, but I was a bit worried about how small and therefore fiddly it was to use on a phone. Michael reassured me that it was very unlikely that anyone would try to create or update their order using their phone. Now, just a few years later, most of us expect to be able to do everything online on our phones.

I hope that anyone who's tried to make their Choice selection on their phone on a train or sitting at a bus stop will appreciate the improvement of the new design.

A new way to pay

At the moment, 90% of our members pay by GoCardless. It's been a great system for us: eliminating the admin of processing up to 730 payments each week, while maintain our cashflow by ensuring that the vast majority of our members pay the correct amount every week. It's also provided a great service for our members: simple to set up and everything paid automatically without another thought.

However, GoCardless have announced a huge increase in their fees for administering the service. Currently, a weekly payment of £11 (the cost of our most popular veg box) costs about 10p. Under the new payment regime, that will rise to 31p. That's an enormous increase and one which we'd have to pass on to you by raising the price of our boxes. We've therefore decided to switch to a different payment provider. To allow for the new payment system, we need to move our admin over to a newer version of 'Boxmaster', which in turn will mean a new website.

Once the new website is up and running, we'll be using Sage Pay to take our payments. This will mean that all our members will have to set up their payment details again, as Sage Pay uses your card details instead of your bank account details. Like the current system, once set up, payments will be taken automatically each week after your delivery.

Once the changeover has happened, we'll need everyone to re-enter their details as quickly as possible, so payments keep coming in and we can keep paying our staff and suppliers. Don't worry: we'll do our best to remind you when it's time!



The ultimate veggie burger

We're putting our magazine together in the middle of Veganuary. So far this month, I seem to have been swamped by adverts for highly processed meat alternatives. Whatever their pros and cons, they've led me to think nostalgically about the veggie burgers of my youth. There was one stall that was my favourite at Strawberry Fair and other festivals in the early 1990s, which made what I considered to be the best veggie burgers. I spent some time trying to recreate the recipe at home. I've dug out my old folder of hand-written recipes to reproduce it here.

A 'burger' is a word which originally applied to a meat patty, but the veggie burgers that I like aren't trying to mimic their meaty namesakes. They share the same shape and affinity for being squashed between buns, but these burgers are spicy combinations of pulses and fresh vegetables, that are a million miles away from something that bleeds from a lab in Silicon Valley.

Since the 1990s, burgers have grown up: not just in the sense of now featuring on restaurant menus, but also quite literally in height, with more and more layers being added to the most Instagram-worthy burger. We decided to try to build the ultimate veggie burger tower. Not sure how we're going to eat it though . . .

Ingredients

- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 leek, trimmed, cut in two lengthways and then finely sliced
- 1 carrot, peeled and grated
- 1 can of chickpeas
- 2 tsp cumin powder
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- Plain flour for dusting

Method

Start by sweating the onions over a low heat. After a few minutes, add the leeks and then a few minutes later the carrots. Finally, add the spices and fry for another few minutes to toast them a little. Meanwhile, drain the chickpeas (reserving some of the water), and blitz in a food processor. Add the chickpeas to the fried vegetables and stir to combine. Season with salt and pepper and taste: adjust the spices if necessary. If the mixture looks too dry, add some of the reserved chickpea water.

Shape the mixture into patties and dust both sides with flour. Fry in a little oil on a medium heat until nicely browned on both sides and hot in the middle.

Now it's time to construct your burgers. If you're not involved in the madcap world of producing an A5 leaflet for a vegetable box company, then you probably won't want to make a burger quite this tall – not unless you're blessed with flip-top jaws. But we hope that our teetering tower of a burger stack will provide some inspiration for two or three additions to add some pizzazz to a more manageable burger!



Cambridge Food Hub represents a number of local food producers, whose products you can now order with your veg box. Manfood produce a range of condiments to complement any burger. Their Janda range is vegan as well. All made locally in Huntingdon.

- Cobs white rolls
- Janda Egg-free Mayonnaise
- Manfood Chunky Beer and Smoke Pickles
- Shredded gem lettuce
- Home-made Celeriac Remoulade (see overleaf)
- Home-made onion rings
- Sliced tomatoes
- Manfood Beer Barbeque Sauce
- The BURGER ITSELF
- Another onion ring
- More lettuce and mayonnaise



Who you calling ugly?

celeriac: it's beautiful on the inside

At this time of year, some strange alien-looking objects appear in our veg boxes. Celeriac has the look of a knobby lump of space rock, save for the mass of tendril-like roots around its base. Yet, despite its appearance, it's a very versatile and tasty vegetable.

Celeriac is a close relative of celery: in fact, both have been selectively bred over the centuries from the same wild plant. Celery has been bred to gain thicker, longer stalks, while celeriac was bred to get a larger root. In fact, the bit of celeriac we eat is not technically a root, but the base of its stem, swollen to provide lots of edible white flesh. As a close relative of celery, celeriac does have a celery flavour, but its milder, sweeter and perhaps nuttier than the stalks, so if you don't like the stalks, don't be put off!

Although from the botanical point of view, celeriac might not be a root, from the cook's perspective, celeriac can be treated very much like other winter roots. It can be boiled and steamed and mashed to a purée. It can be added to soups and stews to add bulk and flavour. Like most other roots, my preferred way of cooking celeriac is to roast it. I actually like to roast a medley of roots together. I like to cut them to much the same size, so each mouthful is a little surprise! Unlike potatoes and parsnips, I've never found any advantage to parboiling celeriac (except for perhaps reducing the roasting time): its edges don't rough up like spuds and parsnips. It's worth mentioning that the flesh discolours quickly once cut, so if you're not using it immediately, put the cut celeriac into what recipe books call 'acidulated water' – that's water with a dash of lemon juice or white wine vinegar.

Celeriac can also be eaten raw. I've always known that it features in the classic French salad *céleri rémoulade*, without knowing exactly what that is. Despite my ignorance, I've always thought it sounded very chic, so was very excited to try to make it while researching for this little article. My researches suggest that the key ingredients are celeriac, finely chopping into the smallest julienne pieces possible (many recipes coarsely grate as it's easier), mayonnaise, Dijon mustard and lemon juice. The recipes that have the greatest air of Gallic authenticity also add some *crème fraîche* or double cream, so that's what I've done.

Celeriac Remoulade

500g celeriac
Juice of ½ lemon
4tbsp mayonnaise
2tbsp *crème fraîche*
1tbsp Dijon mustard



With a sharp knife, cut the thick knobby skin off the celeriac (a potato peeler isn't really up to the job). If your knife skills are up to it, cut the celeriac into the thinnest possible sticks about 2.5cm long (or grate using the coarsest side of the grater). The flesh will discolour very quickly once cut, so immediately toss in the lemon juice. Combine the other ingredients and stir through the celeriac. Season with salt and pepper and then decide if you want to add more mustard or lemon juice (I made mine less mustardy than it's probably 'supposed to be'). Chill for an hour or two to let the flavours merge.



Plastic versus food waste

There are, we hope, many things that attract new members to our company. As well as the idea of getting fresh, local, organic produce delivered right to your door, another big draw is the idea of getting vegetables and fruit that are free from the plastic packaging in which nearly everything in a supermarket is encased. The great majority of the veg and fruit we put into your box is plastic-free, either put in loose or in a brown paper bag, but there are a few things which are in a plastic bag. Why is that?

The issue of plastic packaging is a very important one and we take it very seriously. We don't use plastic bags just for the sake of appearance or portion-sizing in the way supermarkets do. However, there are some vegetables for which we think that plastic is the best option to prevent food waste. We only use plastic to provide an impermeable layer to protect fragile – usually leafy – items from the evaporation and consequent wilting that would render them as food waste before they can be used by you. In our view, to throw food away, after all the work and resources that have gone into growing and transporting it, is a bigger environmental problem than the carefully thought-through use of plastic to prevent that happening.

Our local farmers have thought very seriously about the issue of plastic use, because like us, they do what they do through a deep commitment to the environment. They have come up with some different answers to this complex and difficult question. Waterland Organics, for example, have decided to switch to compostable plastic bags. Wildcountry Organics, on the other hand, following considerable experimentation with different options, have concluded

that their zip-lock high-grade polythene bags are the better option. With such a complex and nuanced issue, we respect each farm's own conclusion and don't want to impose our own view on them. Our 'Box liner' – that's the piece of paper we put in the bottom of each box – contains packaging information, keeping you up to date with which suppliers use compostable or recyclable plastic.

On the question of compostable plastic, my personal view is that it's not the best solution – at least not yet for this area. Along with most of our members, I live in the area covered by the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service (that's Cambridge City and South Cambs).

Compostable plastic can't be put into our green bins, as all plastic is filtered out before the green waste is composted. Nor should it be put into our blue bins, as it can't be recycled along with conventional plastic; it can't be distinguished from conventional plastic by the sorting process and if it gets in with

conventional plastic, it will contaminate that load for recycling. If a bag is certified as home-compostable, and you have a garden with your own compost heap, that's great, but if you don't, then the only option is to put the compostable bag into your black bin. Once buried in landfill, it will break down – that's true enough – but in anaerobic conditions that will lead to the production of methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Conventional plastic, on the other hand, can be put into our blue bins, as we are one of the few areas to have kerbside collection of plastic film. The type of clear polythene used by Wildcountry Organics, for example, is one of the more readily recyclable plastics and therefore sought after by recyclers.



Wildcountry Organics' experiment of putting their salad leaves in paper bags found that the paper absorbed moisture from the leaves, causing them to wilt.

Members in East Cambs and Uttlesford don't have kerbside plastic bag recycling, but can take them to a supermarket to be recycled.

Wildcountry and Dynamic Organics' zip-lock bags are really useful in the kitchen and around the house. Use as many times as you can before recycling.

If you're committed to a plastic-free lifestyle, please get in touch to see what we can do.



create
your
own
'mega
burger'



Draw and name your own 'mega burger'. Add as many layers as you can to make a giant burger stack. The best entry wins a goodie bag. Please return your entry back to your driver or post it on our Facebook page.



			Burger name	<input type="text"/>	
Name	<input type="text"/>	Age	<input type="text"/>	Veg-box member's name	<input type="text"/>

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 'VEGBURGER20' 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.

