

• CAMBRIDGE organic core values • committed to local • control what you get • connect with local farms •

Winter 2023 ISSUE 163

CAMBRIDGE ORGANIC GAZETTE

COurgette



Say hello to 2023

FREE VEG BOX for
new members
let's kick your year off right!

Can we afford **not** to
buy organic?
The truth about 'cheap' food

Local Veg Heroes
A chat with Home Farm Nacton -
a local organic grower

A Soup-er Soup
to battle the winter chills

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Comment from Duncan:

Founder and owner of Cambridge Organic

Recently I heard that a new word had entered into the English dictionary: permacrisis. It seems that for a few years now it has just been one thing after another, with no sign that things are going to get better anytime soon. It certainly has been a challenging time to be running a small business, putting it mildly.

Well, perhaps we should be starting 2023 with some positivity. What could be more positive than a new years' resolution to begin helping the planet through our food buying habits? Were you aware that the food industry is one of the biggest contributors to climate change? And that choosing to eat organically grown food that is sourced directly from a local farm is a great way to lessen your personal impact on the environment?

And now for the best part... there's now no reason not to try out what life would be like as a member of your local organic veg box scheme, as we are starting the year with an unmissable introductory offer of a completely free veg box.

Much of the reason why we are experiencing a 'permacrisis' is down to the economic model that underpins our society. We are living beyond our planet's means and things are starting to fall apart at the seams. Here at Cambridge Organic we're constantly striving to find better ways of doing things. Ways in which food can be distributed throughout our community with the smallest ecological footprint, and an approach to business in general which conforms to an alternative, more 'circular', economic model.

As a member of our veg box scheme you are not only getting a supply of tasty, nutritious fruit and veg each week, you are also supporting a community of local small scale food enterprises. You are helping us demonstrate that it is indeed possible to structure our food system in a way that is fit for the future. So if you don't already belong to a local box scheme, and are looking for ways to make small, positive changes, then please do sign up for our free trial offer. If you are an existing member of our scheme, and believe in the things we are trying to achieve, then please hand this newsletter to a friend and suggest they give it a go.



June's Winter Veg Soup

A recipe to warm the heart and the soul. Mixed vegetables, herbs and a little bit of butter creates a soup that is nutritious, tasty and creamy without the cream. Created following the handwritten note of June; beloved mum of a Cambridge Organic team member. This soup has soothed many a family and friend battling the winters' chills and ills. It's the perfect recipe to use up whatever veg you may have lurking in the cupboard, but June's wisdom tells us you should always include leek in your mixed vegetables (and you can't beat a Marigold stock!).



Ingredients

- 12 oz Mixed Veg (we used sweet potato, carrots and leek)
- 2 oz butter
- 1 oz flour
- 2 pints stock
- 4 oz potatoes
- Bouquet garni – thyme, bay leaves & sage
- Salt and Pepper

Method

1. Peel, wash and slice all vegetables
2. Cook gently in the butter with the lid on
3. Mix in flour. Cook slowly.
4. Mix in hot stock. Stir to the boil.
5. Add in sliced potatoes, bouquet garni and season to taste. Simmer 30 – 45 mins
6. Remove the bouquet garni
7. Liquidise



The **bouquet garni** (meaning 'garnished bouquet') is the basis of French Provençal cooking. While its exact origins are unknown, French and English cooks began using aromatic herb bundles in the 1600s to add subtle flavours to their dishes. Gather your herbs into a bundle and secure with un-waxed and un-dyed string. You can then encase it in a piece of muslin cloth for extra security if you like.

Can we afford not to buy organic?

Who doesn't enjoy a good deal? As inflation accelerates and energy prices skyrocket, it's not surprising that UK consumers are becoming increasingly price-sensitive, including when it comes to purchasing food. But the truth is that there are hidden costs within our food systems that are not reflected in the prices we see at the checkout.

"There is no such thing as cheap food, you push the cost onto future generations or you push the costs into different parts of the planet"

What Pete Myers, founder and chief scientist of Environmental Health Sciences is talking about here is the 'True Cost Accounting' of the food and agricultural industry. This means the assessment of the invisible costs and invisible benefits of farming and food production. Large-scale, heavily subsidised farming methods have damaging impacts on the environment, animal welfare, and public health. We, the public, end up paying for these damages in other ways. For example our taxes are used to clean up environmental impacts like flooding and air pollution, they also pay the costs associated with diet- and environmental-related ill health. We also face higher water rates to pay for the

“ There is no such thing as cheap food... ”

removal of pesticides in our drinking water. In fact, research from the Sustainable Food Trust shows us that the real cost of food is often twice as much as the retail price we pay. The report shows that UK consumers spent £120 billion on food each year but a further £116 billion was spent on the environmental and health-related costs.

In contrast, there are positive benefits from good food and farming systems that often go unaccounted for and are financially unrewarded. Let's think about our local

growers and their environmentally friendly practices: the open-pollinated seed system used by Audley End Kitchen Gardens, the cover crops and wild margins at Waterland Organics, and the continued

woodland creation at Prospects Trust. All these approaches contribute to biodiversity and the protection and regeneration of pollinators which are critical to our ability to grow food. They help protect the soil and minimise CO2 being released into the air. They do not use polluting chemical fertilisers and



Seed saving at Audley End Gardens



The Prospect Trust at Snakehall Farm



“ We do not have a high income but we care about local produce and local economy, so are very glad to have a Cambridge Organic veg box. It is brilliant. ”

Cambridge Organic veg-box member



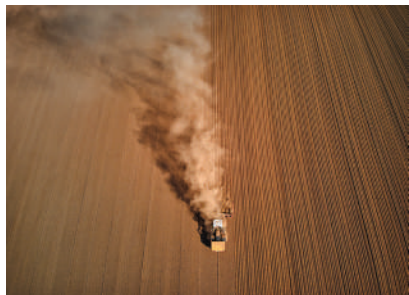
Helen from Waterland Organics, Lode

pesticides which find their way into our waterways or heavy machinery which causes the degradation of land and increases flood risks. Combine these producers' protective practices with our core values - to pay both our growers and workforce a fair price, our championing of local produce, and our use of electric vehicles with their zero emissions - and we believe that the price you pay for a Cambridge Organic product is much closer to that item's 'true' cost.

Currently, large-scale farming and agricultural industries are heavily subsidised worldwide, including for things such as the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, which over the long term will equate to a decrease in yield through soil degradation. By using true accounting, you reveal the real financial and environmental costs of

these giant industries' unsustainable approaches. It would be great if governments redirected their policies and the way subsidies are allocated, in order to discourage environmentally damaging techniques and instead reward and encourage those food systems that are beneficial to both our health and the health of our planet - now and in the future. Such changes in policies would bring down the cost of sustainably grown and produced food, making it more accessible to all.

Until governments make these changes, it is up to us as consumers to support farmers whose produce is good for both our health and the planet.



Nacton Home Farm

Our local growers are our local heroes.



Home Farm Nacton is located on the historic Orwell Park Estate near Ipswich, on the north bank of Suffolk's Orwell estuary. The farm consists of nearly 2,000 hectares of agricultural land, making it a mid to large sized operation and a great example of a farm who balances high yields with sustainability. 10% of the land is certified organic by the Soil Association. The farm as a whole is certified by LEAF Marque: an environmental assurance system that recognises sustainable farmed products.

Nacton's core ethos of operating in an environmentally friendly way was greatly established and driven by Gillian Bence-Jones. In the 1960s, as a young lady, Gillian partnered with her father to run the farm. She was inspired by forward thinking sustainable approaches to farming learnt at agricultural college, and this ethos has continued throughout the years.

We were delighted when Nacton's sales-coordinator Kevin Hack agreed to talk to us about the farm's current day operations. Kevin has been working at Nacton for over six years. It's clear that Nacton doesn't need to grow organic, it's a large operation that could easily be profitable by focusing on conventional crops, but that's not the point. It's also clear that the organic portion of the farm isn't just to please the supermarkets. It's because they truly care about the land and the way they farm it - "it's a no brainer" states Kevin "we are only custodians of the land and we have to look after the land as it is."

The farm itself is stunning - a patchwork of woodland, heath, grass and arable land that encourages and sustains much biodiversity. The soil is light and sandy making it easy to work with all year round, allowing them to double crop (the growing of two crops on the same land in the same season) which produces high yields. The flip side is that sandy soils do not hold on well to water nor nutrients, so at Nacton they pay a lot of

attention to re-feeding the soils. They use a large range of organic composts which have to be applied little and often.

There has also been decades of high level investment in water management and



irrigation. This, Kevin explains, includes ten large reservoirs that can hold around three million cubic metres of water. The ability to save rain water in the wetter months is paramount to Nacton's ability to grow high yields of produce. However the drought experienced in 2022 was still a big challenge for them, with some hard decisions being made about limiting water supply to some crops.

Nacton grows 20 to 30 different vegetables and crops at any one time. You will often receive their organic produce in your veg-boxes: broccoli, Cavolo Nero, cauliflower, leeks and Savoy cabbage, just to name a few. They sell to nearly every large supermarket, to veg-box companies, farm shops and even direct-to-customer through their own pop-ups. I asked why this is, as financially they do not need to sell to the smaller markets. Kevin explains that it's part of their business ethics: "it's about being part of the community - shortening supply chains is often seen as the answer to a lot of the world's food problems, if we grow and supply food locally, organically and

“...we are only custodians of the land and we have to look after the land as it is.”

seasonally – which is three key issues here – we would solve quite a few of the world's problems in terms of availability of food and distribution of food. Often there's by far and away too much food grown in the world at any one time - it's the distribution and access to it that's the problem.”

Nacton also works with charities and community groups by allowing 'gleaning' on their fields. On the day of this interview an international charity organisation called 'The Lion Club' had already been to the farm. The volunteers had walked the fields to 'glean' the remaining Savoy cabbages that had been missed from the harvest. What they collect is then dispersed to various community kitchens, pop-ups and hubs in the area.

Nacton Home Farm is a great example of how farms can work to protect the environment and be part of the local community while simultaneously producing high yields of quality produce for us to enjoy. For more information on their fascinating history and approaches to farming go to www.homefarmnacton.co.uk.

Kick-start 2023 with a **FREE VEG-BOX!***



Since 1998 Cambridge Organic has been delivering organic veg boxes to the Cambridge area with produce sourced from local farms.

You can choose our best value 'Original' range of mixed fruit and veg boxes, customise your box with our 'PLUS' option or create your own 'Choice' box from our list of seasonal top quality organic

produce. You can also add organic eggs and other groceries.

There is no fixed subscription so you can cancel at any time. Boxes are delivered weekly or fortnightly in one of our fully electric vans by our friendly delivery team.

Visit www.cambridgeorganic.co.uk and click 'get started'.

*Our new year offer is for new customers only. You can choose **any medium or small box** from our website and by using the code **OFFER2023** at checkout your first box will be completely free. Subsequent boxes will be charged at the normal price. You can change the box type and size at anytime.

This offer is valid until the end of January 2023. Any additional groceries are not included in the offer.

We are here to help! We can help you set up your account or answer any of your questions. Email our friendly team at hello@cambridgeorganic.co.uk or call 01223 873300

Examples of our boxes:



Medium Veg Box
£13.75



Small Fruit & Veg Box
£13.75



Medium Fruit & Veg Box
£17.50



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