

What's in Your Box - April

We are entering the 'hungry gap' when winter crops are ending but new crops have yet to come on.

This is what you might find in your box through April:

beetroot - we are generally through our own beetroot by March, but we periodically buy in beetroot from other growers in the UK who store it better than we can.

cabbages - we have several different types of cabbages that you may find in your box: January King which has a purple color to it; Savoy Cabbages with crinkled leaves; and Red Cabbages (the color tells you everything!) Much maligned as a vegetable because people tend to boil them until they fall apart and lose their taste, they are a staple part of a winter diet. A versatile vegetable, they make great soup, can be added to stir fries or curries or eaten raw in a coleslaw. As an easy side to sausages and mash, sauté a large onion in butter until soft, add a cabbage cut into strips and continue cooking until cabbage wilts. Then add a good splash of water, cover and cook on medium high heat for 8 - 10 minutes, checking to make sure water hasn't evaporated completely. When water cooks off, you can add a splash of cream and continue cooking until cabbage is soft and cream has coated cabbage and onions.

carrots—another staple of seasonal eating, carrots are available through most of the year.

cauliflower—cauliflowers are a regular appearance in the boxes through the winter. Our favourite dish is cauliflower cheese with a mustardy, cheesy white sauce and a side of potatoes. Perfect comfort food! But cauliflower also makes a nice cold salad (steam until tender, add pine nuts, raisins, capers and parsley and toss with vinaigrette).

celeriac—one of our favorite root vegetables! We generally do a small crop of this on the farm but it is also widely available in the UK at this time of year from other growers. It can be cooked and made into a tasty mash or prepared raw in a remoulade or added to coleslaw. Parsnip and celeriac soup also makes a nice combo!

chard—probably the most popular green about, there are two types: swiss chard with a thick white stalk and rainbow chard, called so because of the fabulously coloured stalks—yellow, pink, and red. We tend to mix the two in our bunches. Easiest way to cook chard is to tear up leaves, taking the central stalk out, put a bit of water in a frying pan (about and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch), throw your chard in, drizzle with olive oil, sea salt and garlic (optional), cover and cook on high heat for about 5 -8 minutes stirring occasionally and making sure that water doesn't completely evaporate. A squeeze of lemon at the end will take away the chalky feel it sometimes get. Also, lots of people eat the stalks, chopping them up finely and sautéing before adding the leaves. If you are making risotto (which chard is lovely for) definitely use the stalks as you would celery cooking with onions at the start of the dish.

fennel—has a white bulb, long fronds and a distinctive anise flavour. We sometimes grow an early crop of fennel in our tunnels in the early spring, so you may get these lovely licorishy bulbs in your box. Lovely thinly sliced into salad or coleslaw like celery or you can bake in cream and top with cheese as a side (blanch them first before baking). The tops are nice used as an herb; chop finely.

fresh herbs—using fresh herbs in your cooking will give it a rich, boisterous flavours. We'll be growing parsley, sage, thyme and oregano. Sage is great with roast meats; thyme can be mixed into ground beef to make a tasty difference in burgers and it's also good with roast chicken; oregano is good in lasagne and pastas and really good with tomato; parsley, you can put into just about anything to lift the flavour.

kale— we grow a range of different kales throughout the year - Russian kale, Curly Kale, Cavolo Nero, and other special varieties as well. Key to liking kale is cooking it until it's tender which does take a bit longer but it shouldn't be tough and chewy. It works particularly well when cooked with lots of garlic and well seasoned.

lettuces—we occasionally buy in lettuces during this time of the year when our winter salad leaves need a little rest to regrow. These are always fully organically certified.

leeks—the national vegetable of Wales! Another remarkably versatile vegetable that you can do so much with. Take off the outer leaf or two and slice finely, periodically removing leaves as the stalk gets greener and tougher. Don't use the very end of the stalk where the green gets quite tough, but you can use quite a bit of the inner deeper green part up towards the end. Great in soups, quiche, pasta bakes (use with a mustard based béchamel), as a side to fish (cook slowly in butter until slightly caramelized) and a variety of other ways.

mushrooms - these are a staple in the box from autumn through spring. They are a specialist crop, so ours come from an organic producer on the borders.

yellow onions—by April, we are usually through our own onions and are buying in UK yellow onions. As always, anything we buy in will be fully organically certified by the Soil Association and as local as possible—Wales when available and otherwise UK; we may occasionally buy in European onions in the heart of the hungry gap (March - May), but we don't buy in beyond Europe.

parsnips—parsnips keep well through the winter, so you will continue to find them in your box periodically through April.

purple sprouting broccoli—it's easy-peasy to cook. Just steam or boil until just tender (don't overcook!) slather in butter with a bit of salt and a squeeze of lemon.

potatoes—we are usually through our potatoes by March or April, but there are still UK potatoes available that we will be buying in. Our new potatoes come on in July.

winter salad leaves—Nathan grows a lovely mix of salads through most of the winter which mixes up to ten different leaves including rocket, mizuna, claytonia, American land cress, various mustards, baby pak choi and others. As the weather gets better through April, however, we may see an end of these and a move to early lettuces.

rhubarb—we do a small crop of rhubarb every year and it sometime appears in the box if we have enough to go round. Rhubarb is very tart so needs a lot of sugar, but there is nothing like the flavour. Stew it up with a small splash of water and the sugar and eat with yoghurt or make a quick crumble. I also add a

bit of orange juice when I'm cooking with it, to take away the funny chalky feeling you sometimes get.

strawberries—we've put in strawberries in the last couple of years and they've been a real winner for us. We grow varieties known for their taste and they are delicious. However, unlike supermarket strawberries, they are not grown to keep for an extended period of time, so keep them in your fridge if you don't eat the whole punnet as soon as it arrives!

swede—learn to love this vegetable: cook it well and add lots of seasoning, especially pepper.

radishes—the first crop of the spring usually comes on in April! Slice into salad or eat as it comes.

spinach—spinach is one of the best things on the farm!

spring greens—another cabbage variant where the head doesn't form but remains as loose leaves. These have a lovely fresh flavour and can be used like cabbage or any of the leaf greens.