

What's in Your Box - February

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

brussels sprouts—we had a relatively small crop of these this year, but they should continue a bit longer. We may also buy-in UK sprouts from time to time, always organically certified by the Soil Association. Just top and tail, cut in half if they are large and steam until tender (careful not to overcook!)

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—we should have a small crop of cauliflowers in mid-January if all goes well. 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—a delicious root vegetable with a distinctive flavour of a strong celery. Cut off the top and bottom bits and peel. Then use raw or cooked in salads, coleslaws, soups or as a mash

chillies—we had a great crop of these this year and they will be popping up in your box from time to time. Both green and red are from the same variety, called 'ring of fire', so be advised that they are hot! Deseeding and deveining them will lessen the heat.

kale—kales are a hardy green that goes well into the winter. It is a fantastically nutritious 'superfood' with lots of good vitamins. We grow three different types: cavolo nero or Italian kale which has a long thin slightly crinkly leaf; russian kale with a soft, ragged edge and purple tinge to some of the leaves; and the traditional curly kale, bright green with a firm leaf and frilled edge. Like cabbages, it works well in soups, stir fries and curries as well as a side on its own. The most important thing to do with it is to cook it until it is soft and not chewy or tough (just keep cooking it until it gets there). Like chard, it can be cooked as a side by braising in water, topped with olive oil and salt.

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 and come from Wales or the UK. For freshness, we don't buy in lettuces any further afield.

leeks—the national vegetable of Wales! We had a bumper crop this year, so you will be getting lots of leeks in your box. 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 carmelized) and a variety of other ways.

red and yellow onions—we are through our own onions at the moment and are buying in UK red and 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.

potatoes—we are rotating Arran Victory (red), Orla (white) and Cara (white) potatoes. Arrans are the best roasting potato of the three.

purple sprouting broccoli—yummy, less familiar version of the broccoli most people are familiar with (the big green one—it's really a calabrese and not true broccoli). This is lovely just steamed until tender, slathered in butter with a squeeze of lemon and sprinkle of salt. You can also use it in pastas, stir fries and curries.

parsnips—an essential component of Sunday roast, parsnips have a lovely sweetness that works well on their own as a side or in soups. Ours have a bit of canker (a rusty discolouration in places). This cuts away easily and does not go past the surface, leaving most of the parsnip edible so we didn't want to throw away the crop because of a little blemish.

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.

swedes—a great beast of a vegetable! Peel, chop and boil until tender, then mash with lots of butter, salt and pepper for a nice mash alternative to potatoes. Swedes sometimes have a slight discolouration inside which is normal and doesn't affect flavour. However, we've had a few problems with ones rotting from the inside, while looking fine on the outside, so please let us know if you get a bad one and we will replace it or give you something else.