

A close-up photograph of several stalks of rainbow chard, showing vibrant colors of red, yellow, and green. The leaves are dark green and slightly wilted. The stalks are arranged diagonally across the frame.

OLIVER KAY CROP REPORT

SUMMER 2021 **SOMEWHERE OVER THE RAINBOW - CHARD...**

What a difference a year can make! This April has been recorded as the 3rd coldest in 140 years, where spring 2020 was one of the warmest on record! Therefore, growing conditions have been hit hard resulting in many late UK crops.

Still, it's not all doom and gloom! There's some lovely UK produce in season now, such as fantastic strawberries, and beautiful rainbow chard from Lancashire – to add colour to your summer menus.

Over the next few pages you will see an overview from our buyer Lee, as to what has impacted on the produce world and what to expect over the next few months. All to assist you with your menu planning. You'll also find some seasonal recipe ideas.

For more information or to order any of the items mentioned in our Crop Report, please contact your Account Manager or call the office on 01204 385463. Ensure you receive your copy of the Crop Report each month by signing up to our mailing list - visit our website to register: oliverkay.co.uk

GROWING CONDITIONS

Most UK crops were late this year due to April being the third coldest in almost 140 years. According to the Met Office, April also saw the lowest average minimum temperature since 1922. Interestingly, last year (2020) was one of the warmest springs on record!

The major growing areas have seen reasonable conditions throughout May and into June, and some farms are irrigating depending on location.

Spanish hard salads and brassicas finished early due to poor weather conditions which put pressure on the Netherlands and the UK in May-June, but availability is now good. The Netherlands hard salad production is going well and there is full production in the UK on leafy salads and brassicas.

Most hard salads are now coming from Dutch supply, except celery & courgette which are coming from Spain. UK celery is just starting, although late, but courgette will be into July this year before the main crops are underway due to the effects of the cold temperatures.

Peppers will be short in the market place from the end of June to the start of July due to poor light levels back at the beginning of May. We have full availability as we were aware of this a few weeks back and so have planned stock. We may see some green flashing on the current stocks of yellow and red but the product is still well within specification.



CHALLENGES

Airfreight produce still a shuge challenge. Impacted products include: Legumes, Thai asparagus, corn and baby veg. Imported asparagus once the UK season finishes, and passion fruit. Quite simply there are not enough planes landing in the UK. We are having to have product delivered into the Netherlands and Madrid and then carried by road.

Huge Labour shortages means farms are really struggling for seasonal labour. With so few workers available, UK crops will get left in the ground this year and imports will be required due to government policies.

Driver shortages are causing similar issue. With very few tests having been taken in the past 12 months drivers are in limited supply. The UK is also the last resort for international drivers with the UK having changed the taxation rules for self-employed international drivers.

IN SEASON

- Spanish cherries are available, albeit expensive
- European peach and nectarine are doing well
- British asparagus is in stock and eats fantastically - get it quick as it's finishing soon!
- UK strawberries are really good at present
- Jersey Royals are always a welcome sight
- New season spring greens, kale and chard from Lancashire.



COMING TO AN END

- UK asparagus will finish at some point at the end of June. It has been a short season due to the cold weather, but crops must finish on time or it will affect next year's crop if it's not allowed to go to fern.
- All Spanish salad (except celery & courgette).
- UK Braeburn season has now ended. We now move on to European large red apples and South African.

LOOKING FORWARD

UK Celery is just bulking up and the first crops are now being seen.

Good growing conditions for UK courgette, and crops expected within the next few weeks.

MENU INSPIRATION:

Strawberry & Elderflower Jelly, Lemon Verbena & Elderflower Fritter

These little jellies are made using fresh strawberries. Set using Insta gel which is powdered gelatine means you don't need to heat any part of the product up - just blitz into the pre-made puree. The elderflower jelly is made from homemade cordial and the flower heads work well fried in tempura and then dusted with icing sugar. The lemon verbena adds a nice lemony summer flavour to finish the dish.



Elderflower Cordial:

Ingredients:

- 30 elderflower heads
- 1.7 litres boiling water
- 900g caster sugar
- 2oz SOSA citric acid
- 2 unwaxed oranges, sliced
- 3 unwaxed lemons, sliced
- Elderflower Jelly

Elderflower Fritter:

Ingredients:

- 6-8 heads of elderflower washed
- A bowl of tempura mixed using tempura flour
- Icing sugar

Method:

Elderflower cordial

1. Pour the boiling water over the sugar in a very large mixing bowl. Stir well and leave to cool.
2. Add the citric acid, the orange and lemon slices, and then the flowers.
3. Leave in a cool place for 24 hours, stirring occasionally.
4. Strain through some muslin and transfer to a sterilised bottle

Elderflower jelly

5. Using a hand blender blitz together the cordial, water and Gellan Gum
6. Bring to the boil & pour into a container and leave to set solid.
7. Once set, chop fine with a knife and store in a piping bag.

Elderflower Jelly:

Ingredients:

- 100ml Elderflower cordial
- 100ml water
- 5g SOSA gellan gum

Strawberry Jelly:

Ingredients:

- 500ml strawberry puree made from fresh strawberries, I use ½ sugar to fruit & cook, blitz, pass and cool quickly to keep as much freshness as possible.
- 14g SOSA Insta Gel (work on 7g per 1 leaf of gelatine as a ratio)
- Lemon verbena

Strawberry jelly

8. Using a hand blender, blitz the insta gel with the puree. Put into a vac-pac machine in a large container and allow to go on a full cycle to extract air bubbles, repeat a couple of times
9. Pour the jelly into moulds and leave to set.

To assemble

Dip the elderflowers into the tempura, (I like to add a little cordial to the batter to accentuate the flavour) then dust with icing sugar, arrange everything on the plate and garnish with the lemon verbena.

MENU INSPIRATION: Spicy Lemon, Almond & Chickpea Mousse

This mousse makes a really good side dish or as part of a summer menu, plenty of spice and zing make it very refreshing.

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4 people

Ingredients:

- 4 large lemons
- 2 cm piece of peeled ginger
- 1-2 de-seeded jalapenos
- 85g paneer
- 480g drained cooked chickpeas
- 3tbsp ground almond
- 6tbsp sour cream
- ½ tsp salt
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- ½ tsp asafoetida
- ¼ tsp freshly ground pepper
- Flavour Magic Harissa Spice
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh parsley

Method::

1. Cut the tops of the lemons and reserve to one side, scoop out the flesh (a grapefruit knife if you have one is best) Squeeze the pulp through a strainer, slice a small piece off the bottom of the lemon so it stands up also

2. Blitz the ginger, chickpeas, almond, cheese, sour cream, salt & spices in a robo or thermo mix until it is a spoon able consistency

3. Fill the lemons and chill ready for service



OUR BUYER...

Lee Callon – Lee is our Head of Buying. Lee has a wealth of experience as a fresh produce buyer, having spent almost 20 years in the industry. During this time Lee has developed strong relationships with both local, and overseas growers.

Back in 2003 when Lee began buying fresh produce, contract buying was quite unheard of. Through establishing contracts, Lee has put structure in place with growers to guarantee sales for them and the best availability for us. Buying as a contract ensures security, continuity, quality & sustainability, which have proven themselves during these uncertain times.

Lee supplies us with market information in order for us to produce a Crop Report to assist you with menu planning, to ensure the best quality, seasonal produce is on your menu.

