

Farmers' Market

OF THE MONTH

With Benjamin Dent, chairman
Kent Farmers' Market Association



Cranbrook Farmers' Market comes with ancient pedigree. Edward I awarded its market charter in the 13th century, and later, in Richard Kilburne's *A Topographie or Survey of the County of Kent*, published in 1659, its weekly Saturday market was described as "the greatest in these parts."



COURTESY OF CRANBROOK MUSEUM

The new market house after the old one was demolished in 1809

Although the lineage was broken around the time of the First World War, the emergence of Farmers' Markets encouraged the parish council to revitalise the tradition. The Market now takes place once again on a Saturday, between 9am and 1pm on the fourth Saturday of the month.

Two generations of the Gurr family run the market, and both have their own stalls, too. John and Ann have been organising the market since it began. John has always been involved with agriculture, while his wife Ann taught in the area for many years.

John sells flowers, concentrating on sweet peas and chrysanthemums, while Ann sells a variety of vegetables, and other edible and companion plants. They are always willing to offer advice, and if they do not know the answer, they enjoying researching the answers themselves.

The HomeGURRown stall is the partnership between their son Julian

and his wife Nicci. They are passionate about the quality of food they offer and minimising its environmental impact, and are well qualified to guarantee both.

Julian has a degree in Environmental Studies and has written extensively about sustainable food production, and has been developing the business for the last eight years. Nicci has been a chef for 15 years, and was trained by the Roux brothers in London.

All their produce, including quiches, soups, salads and ready-meals are made from Julian's home grown vegetables, lamb and fruit. As Nicci says, "Our motto is He grows it; I cook it." And what they do not produce, they source locally, drawing on fresh fish from Hastings, Cranbrook Windmill flour and Hinxden dairy cream.

Julian also grows beautiful flowers which have featured in local magazines, and can be bought seasonally from Taywell Farm Shop, just outside Goudhurst, and other local Farmers' Markets.

The market has many other stalls of course, and they are all Gurr-eat, too.

Food file

Cranbrook Farmers' Market is held in the Vestry Hall, High Street, Cranbrook from 9am-1pm on 4th Saturday of every month.

Next month: Rolvenden.

To contact the Kent Farmers' Market Association, tel: 01892 870666 or email: info@kfma.org.uk. To find your nearest Farmers' Market, please visit our website: www.kent-life.co.uk

SEASONAL RECIPE

Purple sprouting broccoli

First cultivated in Italy, broccoli has been grown in this country since the 17th century. The purple sprouting variety only has a short season, from February to April, making it as elusive as the seasonal joy of asparagus which it precedes. Indeed, it can be steamed upright like asparagus, for between three to six minutes, depending on how fresh it is, and served with hollandaise sauce. Alternatively, this simple dish serves two as a starter, or four as a side dish.



- 450g/1lb purple sprouting broccoli, washed
- 1 medium onion
- 2 rashers of free-range, dry cured streaky bacon, chopped
- Pinch of nutmeg
- 50g/2oz butter

Trim off the woody stems, and any damaged or torn leaves – no need to remove them all, however. Leave stems about three to four inches long. Heat the butter in a large saucepan, and then gently fry the onions and bacon for four to five minutes. Add the broccoli and nutmeg, then cover and cook gently, shaking frequently, until the broccoli is tender, about three to five minutes.

Shopping tip

Choose small, dark greeny-purple spears of purple sprouting broccoli, no more than ½ inch/1cm in diameter. Reject any that are floppy, have yellowing on the leaves or the flowerheads or whose cut stems are shrivelled or slimy. Use as soon as possible.