

Farmers' Market OF THE MONTH



With Benjamin Dent, chairman
Kent Farmers' Market Association



Penshurst Farmers' Market is held on the first Saturday of the month from 9.30 to noon in the beautiful surroundings of Penshurst Place, by invitation of Lord and Lady De L'Isle. This means that there is ample free parking adjacent to its 35 stalls, and shoppers can visit the gift shop for present ideas, too.

It offers all the usual local products, plus very popular fresh fish from Hastings and properly hung, South Devon-bred beef from Simon Frederick's farm in the village.

Keiron Toole has a game stall at the market. A local lad, he learnt how to stalk silently as a boy hunting for rabbits with a catapult and now provides a game control service to farmers all over west Kent, as well as selling the resultant game at many Farmers' Markets in the area. He sees badgers and barn owls frequently, and is occasionally called out by farmers on the Kent/Sussex borders who are suffering from incursions from wild boar, which can do damage "like a bulldozer".

Keiron says some people have been put off venison from previous experiences, but assures: "The flavour of Scottish red deer is much stronger because of their heather diet, which not everyone enjoys. Fallow deer round here live off crops like corn, rape and beans, and have a much milder flavour as a result."

He sells rabbit, pigeon and game birds in season and offers knowledge and traceability in that he has shot what he sells.

Food File

Keiron Toole can be found at Penshurst, Shipbourne, Edenbridge and Tunbridge Wells (Pantiles) Farmers' Markets.

Find your local Farmers' Market on our website: www.kent-life.co.uk

NEXT MONTH: Tunbridge Wells Farmers' Market in the spotlight

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www.kent-life.co.uk

Recipe of the month



Venison is generally best from mature animals of 18 to 24 months, and buck is considered preferable to doe. The flavour will also vary according to how long it has been hung – ask the stallholder/game dealer for at least two weeks. Venison can be roasted (haunch/leg or saddle) and casseroled, but the tender cuts can be grilled or stir-fried as sustainable and delicious fast food. Either buck (April to October) or doe (November to March) roe deer are in season all year round. Buck fallow deer are in season August to April; does from November to March.

SEPTEMBER

Venison steaks in creamy sauce

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| <i>Serves 4</i> | <i>2 tablespoons of mild French mustard</i> |
| <i>4 fillet steaks, about 175g/6oz each</i> | <i>4 tablespoons double cream</i> |
| <i>Sea salt</i> | <i>25g/1oz toasted flaked almonds - optional</i> |
| <i>8 juniper berries (crushed)</i> | <i>Watercress</i> |
| <i>2 tablespoons oil</i> | <i>(still in season in September)</i> |
| <i>25g/1oz butter</i> | <i>or parsley to garnish</i> |
| <i>1 tablespoon Kentish honey</i> | |

Method

Remove any traces of membrane or fat from each steak, then rub with sea salt and crushed juniper berries and brush with the oil. Heat the remaining oil in a heavy-bottomed frying pan then fry the steaks for one minute each side, pressing them against the pan. Remove, wrap in foil and place on a warmed dish to rest.

Turn the heat down under the pan, pause while it cools a little, then add the honey, mustard and cream to the pan, heating gently and stirring until the sauce becomes smooth.

I would then stir in any juices which have collected in the foil, but this is optional because it will make the sauce less thick. Place the steaks on the plates, pour over the sauce, sprinkle with almonds and serve.

Pick of the month's produce

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|---------------|--------------|
| Sweetcorn | Apples |
| Beetroot | Blackberries |
| Carrots | Greengages |
| Onion | Venison |
| Turnips | Partridge |
| Broccoli | Mallard |
| Savoy cabbage | Sea bass |
| Cauliflower | Turbot |
| Beans | Mackerel |
| Courgette | Crab |

