

# Farmers' Market OF THE MONTH



With Benjamin Dent, chairman Kent Farmers' Market Association

Yalding was granted a weekly market in 1339, and this tradition is maintained by the monthly Farmers' Market which still occupies the High Street. Now in its tenth year, it offers all the usual range of products, plus its distinctive Yalding Hopper – a pork and hop sausage.

The largest stall belongs to Gary Curd, who has attended the market since it began. His family has been local market gardeners for three generations. Gary's grandfather started with a stall then, with his brother, began home delivery using a horse and cart.

Gary became involved at a young age. "I started by growing strawberries and different vegetables," he says. "Every night after school, I would weigh up the veg and pick the strawberries ready for sale."

Later, the Curds moved to a 12-acre plot and opened the Oakapple Farm shop. "Dad then started growing dahlias and other flowers suitable for drying, and mum created the most amazing decorations which filled the shop."

They now farm 20 acres. "Our soil is heavy clay, which doesn't make it easy to grow certain root vegetables, and produces some very interesting shaped carrots! But it gives our produce that special flavour missing from the sanitised, overwashed veg available in supermarkets," he says.

Another popular stall at this and many other markets in west Kent

belongs to the Rusbridge Family Bakery, run by husband and wife Mike and Chrissie and their two sons, Robert and Richard.

They opened their original bakery and shop in Southborough in 1973. Mike, who has spent the last year as Mayor of Tunbridge Wells, explains why their bread tastes so good. "Our whole baking concept is maintaining the traditional methods. So we use no dough conditioners, improvers or accelerators."

The bakery's success also reflects its range of breads, including spelt bread, made from unmodified flour. Another favourite is the Southborough Seedy, which combines rye, oatflakes, sunflower, pumpkin and linseed, and Rusty's Special, with tomato, raisins, pecan nuts and ground almonds.

## Food file

Yalding Farmers' Market is held in the High Street on the third Saturday of the month, from 10am to 1pm. There is ample free parking in the adjoining streets.

Gary Curd also sells at Shipbourne, and the family's flowers are sold in the summer at Penshurst.

Rusbridge Bakery can also be found at Hildenborough, Horsmonden, Penshurst and Shipbourne Farmers' Markets.



## RECIPE Summer pudding



- 350g redcurrants
- 125g blackcurrants
- 150g caster sugar
- 350g raspberries
- 8 slices of (Rusbridge's) white bread

Remove the stalks from the currants, rinse and add them to a non-aluminium pan with the sugar, then bring slowly to the boil. Add the raspberries and cook until the currants start to burst.

Line the base and sides of 850ml pudding basin with the bread. Keep the slices mostly whole (keep a few for the top), patch where necessary to avoid any gaps. Tip the fruit and juices into the lined basin, place the remaining slices on top, and spoon over any remaining juice.

Put the basin on a wide plate, with a plate on top and a heavy weight. Refrigerate overnight. Decant with care and serve in slices.



## Seasonal tip Strawberries

Avoid strawberries with white tips or dried hulls; they should be glossy, with no matt spots. Strawberries are best fresh from a Farmers' Market, farm shop or pick-your-own, and eaten that day. If you have to store, transfer the berries to a plastic bag lined with a paper towel, then refrigerate.

Rinse strawberries at the last moment, remove hulls and blot dry. Serve at room temperature.

To contact the Kent Farmers' Market Association:  
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To find your nearest Farmers' Market,  
please visit [www.kent-life.co.uk](http://www.kent-life.co.uk)

NEXT MONTH:  
Meopham