



MARKET REPORT AND UPDATE - MARCH 2024

Hello Chef,

As March unfolds, we reflect on last year's Spanish crisis, contrasting sharply with today's vibrant Spanish salads season. Thanks to a mild winter, availability has remained robust, a refreshing change indeed. The UK, too, has seen an early spring, with English asparagus and wild garlic making their premature appearances in mid-February. Despite their allure, high prices have delayed their sale until they become more affordable.

Potatoes continue to present a significant challenge, with prices soaring due to crop issues. The situation is critical, with at least six months until the new season's harvest, dependent on the forthcoming weather's impact on planting. Recent strikes in Spain and France have highlighted the rising costs of production, emphasising the pressures of maintaining quality and competitive pricing. Tractors blocking roads in major cities were a striking visual against European directives on environmental legislation, which threatened to further increase production costs. While Europe ultimately backed down, the protests shed light on the people behind our food and the cost implications of sustainable agriculture.

This month, we're also excited to introduce some popular Turkish peppers that are making waves among chefs and consumers alike. The Üçburun and sweet green Charleston peppers offer unique flavours and textures, a testament to our commitment to bringing diverse and high-quality produce to your kitchens. For more insights into these exciting additions, stay tuned to our updates.

Moreover, our selection of fruit this month is particularly vibrant, promising to add a burst of colour and flavour to your culinary creations.

In these dynamic times, our commitment to providing top-quality produce remains unwavering. We're adapting to challenges and embracing the season's opportunities, grateful for your continued trust and support.

Best,
Jack

VEGETABLES

Onions: Our selection of onions remains strong, with good availability of both English and Spanish **Brown Skin Onions**. However, **we are facing high prices for English red onions due to a smaller harvest**. Cipollini, Grelot, and **Spring Onions** are plentiful, with white onions gaining popularity among our customers. Notably, our **Roscoff** and **Tropea** onions continue to be favourites, the latter celebrated for its unique sweetness, attributed to a lack of acidity rather than increased sugar content.

Carrots: We have a full range of carrots available, including **orange** and **rainbow chantenay**, **sand carrots**, and **large rainbow varieties**. Despite the variety, we're monitoring the market closely as we transition from homegrown to imported carrots earlier than usual due to the cold weather impacts.

Parsnips: English and **piccolo parsnips** are still doing well in the market. Alongside these, parsley root remains in good condition, though it's worth noting that **chervil root has now finished for the season**.

Broccoli: We're supplied with Spanish broccoli, which will continue until May. Additionally, English **purple sprouting broccoli** is available, offering a domestic option that complements our imported selection.

Asparagus: While there were early sightings of **English asparagus**, the high prices have delayed their introduction to our offerings. Imported asparagus remains a solid choice, with **broad beans** and **fresh peas** also available to add variety to your menu.

Cauliflower: English cauliflower, alongside imported **orange**, **purple** varieties, and **Romanesco**, are in ample supply, offering a range of colours and flavours for your dishes.



Artichokes: We have a good supply of both Spanish and Italian **artichokes**, including globe and baby varieties. These are perfect for a range of dishes, from appetisers to mains.

Cabbage: Good availability continues for English cabbage, including the January King variety. These are excellent options for both traditional and innovative dishes.

Sweet Potatoes: Quality and price issues are currently affecting our sweet potato offerings. We're working to manage these challenges and will keep you updated on developments.

Potatoes Alert: The potato market remains our biggest challenge, with high prices and concerns over the stored product lasting until the new crop. Discussions around importing, particularly for bakers, are ongoing, reflecting the seriousness of the current situation.

SALAD

The landscape for salads has seen a significant shift from last year, with the Spanish season now over halfway through and showcasing good availability across most lines. This includes **aubergines, courgettes, cucumbers, peppers**, all varieties of **tomatoes**, and **celery**. Despite the mild winter sparking some nervousness about potential gluts due to accelerated growth periods, the overall picture is more optimistic than this time last year. This positive trend is supported by the arrival of very early Dutch glasshouse salads and a modest beginning for English produce, though not yet in significant volumes to replace Spanish imports.

Lettuce Varieties: We're well-stocked with **iceberg, gem, and cos** lettuces, alongside continental salads like **Lollo Rosso, Lollo Biondo, Oakleaf, and Frisee Endive**, primarily sourced from Italy, Spain, and France.

Our baby leaf offerings, including mixed baby leaf, baby spinach, rocket, and baby red chard, maintain a strong supply, predominantly from Italian imports.

Chicory and Radicchio: Red and white chicory are plentiful, with both varieties arriving from the Netherlands. In addition, Castelfranco radicchio adds a unique option for those seeking variety, fitting well within this category.



Heirloom Tomatoes: A temporary switch to Spanish heirloom tomatoes has yielded both quality and availability.

Leafy celery offers a fuller option, arriving complete with leaves for added flavour and presentation.

Speciality Peppers: As well as our standard Red, Green & Yellow Peppers we're also stocking Padron Peppers, White Peppers and Romero Peppers but I particularly wanted to highlight our Turkish Peppers which have seen a massive increase in popularity, namely the **sweet green Charleston** and **Üçburun** peppers.



Üçburun Peppers (pictured left), distinguished by their triple-pointed end and vibrant color, offer a crisp texture and a perfect balance of earthy sweetness with moderate heat. Ideal for a variety of culinary uses, from raw salads to stuffed and cooked dishes, they enrich traditional Turkish and Mediterranean recipes with their robust flavor and nutritional benefits.

The **Sweet Green Charleston Pepper** is a large, mild pepper known for its sweet flavor and crisp texture. Perfect for stuffing, grilling, or adding to salads, this pepper variety enhances dishes with its subtle sweetness and vibrant green colour.

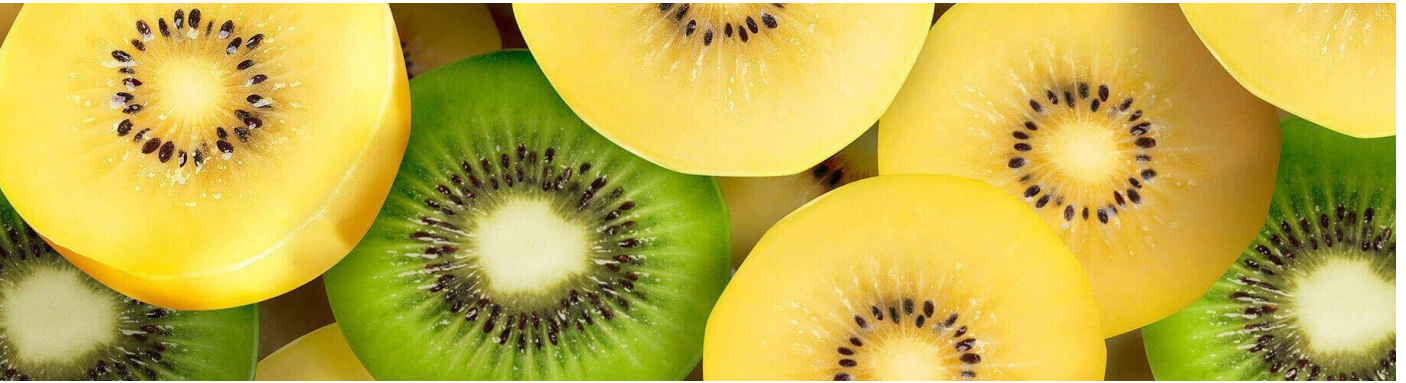
FRUIT

Oranges: The availability of oranges has seen a notable improvement with the arrival of Egyptian varieties, providing a much-needed relief. This addition has brightened the outlook significantly after previous challenges.

Grapes: After a testing February with shipping issues, the availability of grapes has now improved. This uptick in supply ensures a steady flow of these beloved fruits.

Pears continue to show good availability.

Kiwi: **Golden Kiwi's** and **Green Kiwi** are both offering a delightful choice for those seeking variety.



Pineapples: Costa Rican pineapples are in good supply, ensuring a steady availability.

Berries: all berries, are readily available, with no reported issues, presenting an excellent selection for fresh, vibrant dishes.

Citrus Fruits: **Lemons** and **limes** maintain a strong presence, with no problems in supply. **Blood oranges**, noted for their deep red colouration and incredible flavour, remain available, adding a splash of colour and taste to the fruit selection.

Forced Rhubarb: Still available, this delicacy continues to be a seasonal highlight, offering its unique sweet and tangy flavour.



Melons: The melon category faces challenges, particularly with **watermelons** and **galia melons**, due to a difficult growing season in Brazil. However, we anticipate an improvement in the coming month.

Apples: With the **Granny Smith's** availability becoming problematic and pricing soaring, our standard stock green apple will temporarily switch to **Golden Delicious**. This adjustment will last until we transition to Southern Hemisphere apples. Granny Smith apples will remain available upon specific request.