



MARKET REPORT

Winters Last Harrah !

FEBRUARY UPDATE

Each month Dole provides an update on what is happening in the marketplace.

We explain which new lines we expect to see in the following month, the produce causing us concern and which lines are at their very best.

OVERVIEW

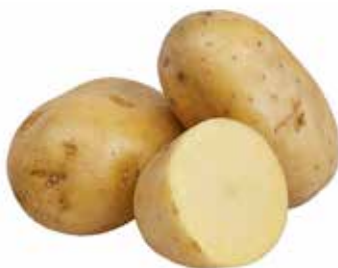
February sits in that interesting space between winter comfort and the first hints of spring, and the produce calendar reflects it perfectly. This month brings a varied line-up of warming roots alongside ingredients that offer a welcome lift — lighter, brighter flavours that hint at what's just around the corner.

It's also a great time to rediscover a few of the vegetable world's forgotten heroes, quietly waiting to shine again on modern menus.

We're expecting fresh arrivals of Spanish soft fruit, joined by increasing volumes of forced rhubarb — both ideal for adding colour, contrast and a touch of romance to Valentine's menus.

VEGETABLES

The salad season continues to present its challenges, with firmer pricing and supply pressures still in play, and we'll take a closer look at what chefs can expect as we move towards early spring.



Forced Yorkshire rhubarb made its first appearance last month, and with volumes increasing through February, pricing is beginning to ease on this much-loved classic.

Its vibrant colour and sharp-sweet character continue to bring a welcome lift to winter menus.

Maincrop potatoes are very much at their peak just now, Markies in particular is excellent. Washed Albert Bartlett Roosters remain a dependable all-rounder for busy kitchens, while local Maris Piper is excellent in equal measure.

The cold snap in early January has worked in the kitchen's favour, encouraging higher sugar levels in many roots and delivering extra depth of flavour.

Swede, in particular, is well worth a look this month — its earthy sweetness lending itself beautifully to purées, roasting and slow-cooked dishes.

For greens, purple sprouting broccoli is looking strong, joined by robust, UK-grown curly kale. White turnips, with their gentle peppery bite, make a smart alternative, while the ever-undererrated celeriac brings warmth and comfort to winter plates.

Rounding things off, sweet potatoes are in excellent condition — equally at home roasted, puréed or, quite simply, sublime in a soup.



FRUIT

The curtain has come down on what has been a terrific season for marmalade oranges, but they bow out gracefully as other citrus stars continue to shine. Blood oranges, with their striking colour and complex, berry-like flavour, remain in great form.

We are now seeing the first arrivals of Spanish strawberries. While they may not yet rival the flavour of our local summer fruit, they're a respectable contender.

Also worth watching out for are South African plums, arriving sweet, juicy and full of character. They work beautifully in desserts but are just as happy sliced into a comforting winter salad, where their sweetness can really sing.



Ready-to-eat mangoes are another great option for lifting dishes, offering a fresh, tropical twist at a time when menus welcome a bit of brightness. And with Pancake Day just around the corner, now's the time to make sure lemons are firmly on the order list.

Further afield, Peruvian blueberries have been exceptional — excellent size, packed with flavour and offering strong value. Raspberries will arrive from Morocco through February, with Spanish product expected to follow towards mid-March, rounding off a fruit line-up that's quietly full of promise.

SALAD

Spanish salad growers continue to face a challenging run of conditions, with excessive rainfall, colder weather and logistical pressures all combining to tighten supply.

The cooler evening temperatures in particular have slowed growth across key lines, leading to shortages in cucumbers, peppers, courgettes, aubergines and tomatoes. Demand, however, remains steady, and lower yields are keeping prices high.



Iceberg has been especially impacted, with heavy rainfall in key growing regions wiping out sections of crops and adding further pressure to availability and pricing.

It's a timely reminder that even the most reliable salad staples are at the mercy of the elements at this time of year.

AT ITS BEST

Blood oranges
Forced Rhubarb
Spanish Strawberries
Swede
White Turnip
Purple Sprouting Broccoli
Sweet Potatoes

For chefs looking to adapt, there are some solid alternatives worth considering. Little Gem and Cos offer good structure and versatility, while 500g bags of exotic leaves or crispy salad provide consistency, convenience and a welcome freshness on the plate.

This is a fluid situation, and one that our procurement team is monitoring closely.

Regular communication with growers remains key, and every effort is being made to balance supply, quality and value as we navigate the tail end of winter and look towards spring.

WHAT'S IN STORE

Wild Garlic
Homegrown Asparagus
New Potatoes
Spanish Peas



Be sure to check out our website & sign up to your local depots mailing list