



MARKET REPORT



Freshen up in the New Year

JANUARY 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

A very happy and prosperous 2026 to our growers, suppliers, colleagues and customers — here's to another year of great produce and even greater plates.

If you're tempted to think January is the culinary lull between the festivities and spring, think again. The month ahead brings some serious citrus heavyweights from Spain, a fresh wave of Spanish soft fruit and the return of an iconic Yorkshire crop guaranteed to make menu writers tremble with excitement (in a good way).

We'll be shining a light on the best of the winter roots, along with a few quirky alternatives for chefs looking to shake up their cold-weather dishes. And, as always, we'll cast an eye down the road to see which seasonal stars will be shaping menus in the weeks and months to come.



VEGETABLES

At around late January, we will start to see the most exciting arrivals of the winter calendar: forced Yorkshire rhubarb.

Grown in candlelit sheds and harvested by hand, it's a truly unique ingredient with a remarkable range of sweet and savoury uses.

Its vibrant colour and delicate acidity have the power to bring an early spring-like lift to even the heartiest of winter dishes.

Closer to home, carrots and swede continue to deliver dependable quality and that comforting depth chefs rely on at this time of year. And let's not forget — sprouts are absolutely not just for Christmas.

For something a little more refined, banana shallots are worth spotlighting. Their mild, sweet flavour brings elegance to the plate, and when slowly cooked, they develop a rich, caramel-like softness that practically melts on the tongue.

If you're considering a smart swap, salsify is a brilliant alternative root — boil, steam, roast, purée or slip it into a winter soup for a subtle, earthy note. Also shining this month are savoy cabbage, Cyprus potatoes, and butternut squash — all reliable winter workhorses with plenty of menu potential.



FRUIT

Blood oranges began arriving last month and they've come out swinging. Their striking ruby flesh carries a delicate floral note with a whisper of raspberry, offering sweetness with gentler acidity than your standard orange — perfect for bright winter desserts or a punchy salad dressing.



SALAD

Cucumber, pepper and aubergine prices stayed firm right through November & December, driven by a perfect storm of cooler temperatures, an early-season two-week gap in crops and a pair of bank holidays that did no favours for logistics.

In short: demand outpaced supply, and the market felt the squeeze. The good news is that cucumbers and aubergines should settle back into more stable pricing as we move into the new year, while peppers look set to remain on the firmer side.



Our buyers are closely tracking grower reports and remain in regular contact with our partners across Spain to keep the supply picture as clear as possible.

January is an ideal moment to lean into winter salads and rustic slaws, letting colder-weather leaves do the heavy lifting.

Chicory, radicchio and endive all thrive at this time of year — their firm, hardy structure can stand up to bolder dressings and richer winter flavours.



AT ITS BEST

Blood oranges
Forced rhubarb
Marmalade oranges
Brambley apples
Spanish strawberries
Shallots

For chefs looking to bring a little drama (and colour) to the plate, fennel, beetroot and celery make excellent supporting acts, adding crunch, freshness and a welcome contrast to the season's heavier dishes.

Because if summer salads are about sunshine... winter salads are all about character.

WHAT'S IN STORE

Spanish peas
Valencia oranges
Spanish artichokes

And speaking of citrus royalty, it's time: marmalade oranges are landing. This late-season heavyweight has a short window and a fiercely loyal following, so get the pans simmering while you can.

As the Spanish citrus season tails off, we welcome nadorcotts, the easy-peeler that chefs rave about. Intensely sweet yet clean and refreshing, they're widely regarded as one of the finest small citrus varieties available.



For the bakers, Bramley apples remain the undisputed champion of crumbles and pies. Though available year-round, January is considered peak time for capturing their bright acidity and soft, fluffy texture.

We may also see Spanish strawberries sneaking in toward the end of the month — not quite summer in a punnet, but a reliable and worthwhile option for colour and freshness.



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