



MARKET REPORT

Mar 2026



From Winter Roots To Spring Shoots

MARCH 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

After what has felt like a never-ending winter — complete with rain seemingly set to auto-renew — the welcome arrival of lighter evenings and gentler temperatures signals a long-awaited shift. Spring is beginning to creak open, and with it comes a fresh wave of seasonal gems ready to brighten plates and properly refresh menus in the weeks ahead.

Expect a trio of cracking homegrown products to take centre stage — subtle in flavour, earthy in tone and carrying that understated elegance chefs love at this time of year.

From a little further south, Italy and Spain will also begin to deliver ingredients with a lighter, fresher character — the kind that hint at al fresco dining and more vibrant plates. Menu writers, it's time to limber up.

VEGETABLES

The big news this month is the long-awaited arrival of homegrown asparagus from our growers.

UK asparagus in particular is one chefs genuinely get excited about — these vibrant, tender and unmistakably fresh vegetables taste like nothing else on the menu and the season is about to begin.



Wild garlic is also beginning to stir, though as ever it relies on rising temperatures before volumes properly build.

When it does, expect that unmistakable punchy aroma and fresh green lift to start weaving its way through spring menus.

Completing a trio of homegrown highlights are the much-anticipated Jersey Royals, due towards the end of the month.



These earthy gems are true showstoppers, bringing delicate sweetness and that unmistakable seasonal character to the plate.

Early Spring variety cauliflowers will begin arriving from all around our growers around the country such as Thorolds Produce and RJ & CA Drakard near Spalding. While further south, Italian broad beans promise to inject early spring vibes as the weeks progress.

Spanish artichokes are now at their very best — March being peak time for tenderness and flavour.

Meanwhile, UK rhubarb continues to perform strongly, UK leeks remain a reliable staple, and we may even see delicately sweet Italian peas edging in towards month's end — a subtle but welcome nod to the season ahead.

UK Carrots supply is shortening with pricing firming up.



FRUIT

Challenging weather conditions in Spain continue to influence the berry market, with strawberries arriving in smaller quantities and quality control firmly on high alert.

There's a strong possibility we'll see Dutch berries entering the mix by mid-month, helping steady supply, though we'll need to hold out until April for the first UK varieties to make their much-anticipated return.

Further afield, South African plums have been exceptional this year. March is an ideal time to showcase these sweet, juicy stone fruits in crumbles, baking or gently spiced compotes – a simple way to bring warmth and depth to the dessert section.



For something a little more exotic, papaya is a standout option this month. Its soft sweetness works beautifully in breakfast salads, alongside spicy curries, or paired with lime and coconut for a fresher twist.

Grapes continue to arrive from the Southern Hemisphere.

The curtain has now fallen on blood oranges for another season – but looking ahead, it's worth pencilling in UK strawberries for April into early May. A date well worth saving.

SALAD

Salad lines arriving from Spain continue to face pressure, with storms and prolonged periods of excessive rainfall disrupting supply across key growing regions.

As a result, tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers remain in relatively short supply, and pricing has continued to firm as demand outpaces availability.

Quality remains a top priority.



Our QC team is monitoring arrivals closely, checking consistency and condition at every stage to ensure standards remain high despite the challenging conditions.

AT ITS BEST

- Wild garlic
- New Potatoes
- UK Asparagus
- Spanish Artichokes
- Cauliflower
- UK Rhubarb

It's a testing period for the sector, but vigilance and close communication with growers remain central to navigating it effectively.

Encouragingly, the transition to the Dutch season is now on the horizon. Early volumes are expected to begin filtering through towards the very end of March into early April, though the season doesn't officially gather momentum until mid-April.

This shift should gradually bring improved stability to supply and pricing as we move further into spring.

Until then, flexibility on menus and a watchful eye on the market will remain key.

COMING SOON

- Italian broad beans
- Dutch strawberries
- Italian peas



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