



MARKET REPORT

Autumn's changing the menu

OCTOBER 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 the exceptional temperatures experienced in parts of the UK and Europe throughout the summer and the prolonged lack of rainfall, there is no real way to sugar-coat the challenges facing the fresh produce market as we head into autumn.

Potato growers are reporting significantly reduced yields and smaller sizing, while roots and brassicas have also fallen victim to the difficult growing conditions.

Across a number of key lines, reduced availability is already putting upward pressure on pricing. The transition into winter salads is likely to prove particularly challenging. Dutch production is already beginning to reduce as their season draws towards a close, while Spanish crops are not expected to reach meaningful volumes until later in the month.

Higher fuel and input costs are adding another layer of pressure to an already finely balanced market. It is certainly not all doom and gloom, though.

Autumn has plenty of seasonal tricks up its sleeve, with some properly flavoursome produce arriving over the coming weeks alongside the orchard fruit that signals the changing season.

This month, we take a closer look at the challenges facing the market, what they could mean for the months ahead and, importantly, where the seasonal silver linings can still be found.

VEGETABLES



Potato prices have risen sharply and are expected to remain elevated for the foreseeable future. The difficult growing conditions have resulted in reduced yields and, perhaps more importantly for chefs, a lack of the larger sizing arriving from farms.

Availability remains tight and the market is likely to stay under pressure. Prices have increased across the board as we've moved onto new season with Bakers especially 40 & 50's will see the largest increase.

There is, thankfully, plenty to get excited about as autumnal cooking gets into full swing. Our supply chain is producing some excellent roots, with carrots and swede all looking exceptional, while prices remain relatively stable.



UK celeriac and beetroot are also terrific seasonal options and, for something a little different, parsley root is well worth a look. Think of it as the slightly quirky cousin of the parsnip — full of flavour and surprisingly versatile.

We are expecting to start collecting colourful mixed squashes from our growers this month, adding a little autumn colour to the mix.



It is also a great time to make the most of the surprisingly versatile butternut squash, which sits comfortably in soups and risottos, or simply roasted until caramelised and served as a dish in its own right. And with Halloween fast approaching, pumpkin season is just around the corner.

Traditional orange pumpkins, along with the slightly more premium English Crown Prince variety, are expected to arrive by mid-month.

The arrival of the autumn squash is a guarantee hit to add a splash of colour and flavour with a huge punch of cosiness to your autumnal menus.



Broccoli continues to feature through the first half of October, but the local season is expected to come to an end towards the latter part of the month, with supply then transitioning to Spanish product.

FRUIT

We are now in the final throws of the soft fruit season, and it is time to start bidding a fond farewell to our homegrown strawberries and raspberries. The blueberries should stretch a little further into the month, although, as ever, it will be very much weather dependent.

Once the colder temperatures arrive, that will likely be the curtain call for another year. As we move towards imported soft fruit, there is a little more distance for the fruit to travel, which can have an impact on both shelf life and pricing. It is another good reason to make the most of our local supply while it is still around.



SALAD

The exceptional temperatures experienced through August had a devastating effect on tomato, cucumber and pepper crops, resulting in some eye-watering prices across the category.

As we move into the winter season, however, although growers are cautiously optimistic, we are expecting imported salads to be more expensive than last year. It is still early days, but we will keep you up to date as we move into the new season.

IN SEASON

Mixed squash
Butternut Squash
Pumpkins
UK apples
Leeks
Piccolo Parsnip
Mixed Chanteney Carrot



Whole-head lettuces — iceberg, lollo and oakleaf — are now beginning their journey from Spain, bringing a welcome touch of southern sunshine to the plate as our UK fields take a well-earned winter rest.

The winter salad season is always a careful balancing act, but with growers closely monitoring crops and weather conditions, we will continue to work with our suppliers to keep quality and availability as consistent as possible.

PLAN AHEAD

Sprouts
Fresh cranberries
Blood Oranges



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