



THIS MONTH

- ▶ My shift with Liv
- ▶ Vitamin A
- ▶ DIY: Preserving lemons

PRODUCT OF THE MOMENT Pumpkins



Their deep orange flesh makes them a great multi-purpose pumpkin but their tough rind means they can be a bit tricky to cut.

Pumpkins are versatile. Cut into chunks, they're delicious oven-roasted with their skins on or steamed and stirred through a risotto but don't be restricted to the flesh. Pumpkin seeds can be oven-dried for a delicious and healthy snack or sown directly into an untouched corner of the garden to grow into your very own pumpkin vine. The great thing about growing pumpkins is that they produce a heap of edible flowers (great stuffed with cheese) – resist picking them all as you need both male and female flowers for pollination. You can expect to yield about two pumpkins per vine. However, be sure to cut off the secondary vines or runners otherwise the vine could easily ▶ 2

tasty orange flesh. They are more suited to baking than boiling.

Butternuts (Belinda's favourite) are in fact a type of squash and have a light yellow-brown skin and sweet nutty flesh. They have few seeds and are ideal for soups.

Triambles are easily recognisable by their three lobes and their greyish skin.

Winter's a great time of the year to be a pumpkin-eater with all those big glowing pumpkins arriving at the co-op each week. Most of our pumpkins are grown by Belinda Atkins in Rolland Plains about five hours' drive north of Sydney. After all those years of drought, last summer's rain has been a boon for Belinda's crop and she now has plenty of butternuts, Triambles and Jarrahdales to ship down to Sydney.

Belinda began her working life as a bookkeeper before making a tree change 12 years ago. She and her husband grew organic produce for themselves before branching out into growing certified organic produce four years ago. She loves her new life almost as much as she loves her produce!

Jarrahdales are the classic pumpkin with an easy-to-peel blueish skin and a



what's good in fruit+veg with Renata Field

NEW ARRIVALS

- ▶ Lots of citrus. NAVEL ORANGES, MANDARINS, PINK and YELLOW GRAPEFRUIT, TANGELLOS, CUMQUATS, LEMONS; TAHITIAN and MAKRUT LIMES.
- ▶ KOHLRABI or German turnip can be eaten raw or cooked. It has a crisp juicy quality much like an apple, and is moist like a cucumber. Great sliced on sandwiches.
- ▶ ROOT VEGETABLES

ON THEIR WAY OUT

- So eat them while you can!
- ▶ CAPSICUM

- ▶ BANANAS: NSW Cavendish and Bonanza
- ▶ PASSIONFRUIT
- ▶ EGGPLANT
- ▶ CUCUMBERS
- ▶ TOMATOES are still available sometimes, but don't expect to have them for the whole winter.
- ▶ ZUCCHINI

WHAT'S GOOD RIGHT NOW

- ▶ PEARS: Packham, Bergamont and Beurre Bosc
- ▶ Farmer Direct SQUASH
- ▶ BROCCOLI, CAULIFLOWER and BRUSSEL SPROUTS
- ▶ CITRUS, citrus and more citrus
- ▶ PUMPKIN. Again many varieties, which are so right for these cold days and nights. These are direct from the farmer. Use them in bakes, stews, scones and cakes, or use a whole pumpkin as a cute

winter decoration. And remember, if a pumpkin, or any other vegetable is too big, shop staff can always cut you a piece. The same goes for celery; if you just want a few stalks, that's okay because it's sold by the kilo!

- ▶ ROOT VEGETABLES. We have PURPLE and GOLD KUMERA, SUNROOT (or Jerusalem Artichoke), TURNIPS, PARSNIPS, six varieties of POTATOES, BEETROOT, DIAKON, SWEDES and YAKON. These are great baked or in soups and stews. Experiment and try a new root vegetable today.

- If you'd like to ask about a product or would like to bulk order for preserving or juicing, please email me (produce@alfalahouse.org).
- For week-to-week fruit+veg availability: go to www.alfalahouse.org/html/PRODUCTS/fruit+veg.htm

Preserving Lemons

Right now citrus is at its very best. And while of course we can enjoy them fresh, there's a simple way to have citrus all year round. In fact, using this method of preservation they can be around for years without refrigeration!

Use sliced preserved lemons in salads, couscous or cracked wheat dishes, in marinades for chicken or fish. Or baked with potatoes and plenty of olive oil. Preserved lemons go well with foods such as chickpeas, lentils, parsley and rice and of course the classic Moroccan tagine requires preserved lemon as do many other Middle Eastern recipes.

The following recipe is from Stephanie Alexander's *The Cooks Companion*.



INGREDIENTS

- 250g coarse salt
- 10 thick-skinned lemons, scrubbed and quartered
- 1 bay leaf, torn into pieces
- 2-3 cloves
- 1 stick cinnamon, broken into pieces

METHOD

- Sterilise a large 1 litre jar (or a series of smaller ones) by boiling in a pot of water for 10 minutes and by drying in a 150°C oven. Don't touch the interior until you fill with the lemons etc.
- Scatter a spoonful of salt into your sterilised jar(s). Tip lemons into a big tub with remaining salt and mix well. Massage fruit vigorously, then pack into jar, curved side out, inserting pieces of bay leaf, cloves and splinters of cinnamon stick at intervals. Press down hard on fruit to release as much juice as possible. (It's good for the lemon wedges to be covered in juice to prevent the formation of white mould – though keep in mind that white mould is harmless.)
- Spoon left over salt mixture over fruit.
- With a clean cloth dipped in boiling water, wipe neck of jar free of salt and cap tightly. Let the lemons mature for at least a month in a cool spot (not the fridge) before using.

ALFALFA'S FOOD GRANTS

Helping our friends

The co-op's Food Grant Scheme is about a year old now and has so far helped a small number of community and activist groups with similar objectives to ours by offering grants of \$100 on store items to help with food costs for special events such as conferences, workshops, forums and fundraisers.

The three most recent food grants were given to the Australian Student Environment Activist Network (ASEAN) for its Winter Fundraising Feast; to Friends of the Earth for its national strategy meeting, and to help feed more than 500 people who attended the Camp for Climate Action in Newcastle from July 10-15.

future. The grant supported activists to meet to campaign on such issues as climate justice, nuclear energy, indigenous land rights, trade justice and food sovereignty. MORE www.foe.org.au

■ The Camp for Climate Action was six days of workshops and grassroots direct action aimed at stopping the expansion of the world's biggest coal port in Newcastle. The camp is one of seven being held around the world in July and early August. More than 500 people attended



the Newcastle camp, which culminated in a day of direct action against coal exports on Sunday July 13. More than

■ ASEAN is a network of Australian students committed to sustainability and the environment. The grant helped them raise more than \$5000 at their Winter Fundraising Feast, which will help resource and pay the network's conveners. MORE www.asean.net.au

1000 people attended the protest, 57 of whom blocked the train line, stopping the movement of coal for the day and halting the release of more than 1.5 million tonnes of CO₂. The camp drew attention to the role Australian coal plays in climate change. MORE www.climatecamp.org.au

■ Friends of the Earth (FOE) is a federation of local grassroots groups working towards a socially equitable and environmentally sustainable

MORE INFO on the Food Grants Scheme www.alfalياهوse.org/assets/downloads/general/food_grant_scheme.pdf

– Renata Field

PUMPKINS

FROM PAGE 1

take over your backyard.

Whole pumpkins will last for months in a cool, dark cupboard. Cut pieces should be refrigerated but even then will go mouldy within a week. You can sprinkle black pepper on the cut bits to preserve them a bit longer.

RECIPES

Slow-roasted pumpkin seeds

VEGAN

- Rinse seeds and remove all the pulp. Dry seeds on a tea towel overnight.

- Preheat oven to 120°C, line a baking tray with foil or baking paper.
 - Toss seeds in olive oil and sprinkle with sea salt, cayenne pepper or any seasonings of your choice until well coated.
 - Bake for 1 hour until golden brown, tossing every 15 mins.
 - Allow to cool.
- The cooked seeds can be stored in an airtight container for up to 3 months.*

Pumpkin, orange, ginger soup

VEGAN. SERVES 4.

- 2 tspns olive oil
- 1 onion, roughly chopped
- 3 cm piece ginger, grated

- zest of half an orange
- juice 1 orange
- 1 kg pumpkin chunks
- 3 cups vegetable stock
- handful chopped coriander and a dollop of yoghurt (optional)
- Heat oil in a large saucepan
- Add onion and ginger and cook until soft and nicely fragrant
- Add orange zest and pumpkin, cook for 3 mins
- Add stock and juice and cook for 15 mins or until pumpkin is soft
- Puree soup and reheat until warm
- Serve with chopped coriander, yoghurt and fresh bread

– Jo Rose

Making the move to solids

WHAT IS VITAMIN A AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

Vitamin A is a nutrient that is given less attention than other vitamins. It helps us maintain good vision (the old 'eat carrots and see in the dark' saying) and to allow us to see in colour and at night. It's also promotes healthy hair and skin, and offers good protection against infections. It helps look after the mucous membranes of the respiratory, digestive and urinary tracts. While getting too much vitamin A is harmful (as it collects in the liver and can do damage to it and to other parts of the body), cases of overdose generally come from too much taken in the form of supplements. Overdosing is extremely unlikely when taken in from plant foods. The notable exception is overconsumption from fat-soluble sources found in animal products, especially liver.

HOW DO YOU GET IT?

You'll get plenty if your diet is full of a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Orange and yellow fruits and vegies have an abundance as do all leafy greens.

In winter fill up on juicy oranges, grapefruit, carrots and pumpkins and in summer enjoy tomatoes and mangoes. With a diet containing a colourful array of plant foods, it's almost guaranteed you'll be getting enough vitamin A to meet your needs. However, if you're a bit under the weather or you're pregnant, it's a good idea to check with your health practitioner if you need more.

AND A RECIPE? It wouldn't be the eNews without a recipe. Try this salad, which has plenty of colour and flavour and an abundance of Vitamin A.

Carrot-Orange-Baby Spinach Salad

It's very easy to make and you can use it as a starter, side dish or even as a light meal. Start with a bed of dark green baby spinach, arrange segments of oranges (you could even try tangelo or mandarin) and grated carrots and top with an orange-avocado dressing. For the dressing, blend half an avocado with a stick of celery, and some freshly squeezed orange juice – adding more or less to get the consistency and flavour you prefer. Adding celery provides a form of elemental salt that adds flavour in a very natural and healthy way.

My mouth is watering just thinking about it.

– Lucy Marinelli

NEXT ISSUE: THE B GROUP VITAMINS

■ Please note that the content of the eNews is not intended as a substitute for professional advice.

In a world of convenience where everything is about fitting more into less and less time, health can often take a back seat. While we're all too often willing to make compromises with our own health, our children's is another matter.

Health-conscious parents will spend years looking after their own health before conception in order that their children get the best start in life. And breast-feeding mothers will watch what they eat to ensure their youngsters continue to get the best. So what do you do when it comes time to begin introducing that first mouthful of solid food?

Many time-pressured parents turn to tinned and bottled baby foods and while they are a much better choice than most of the adult versions of the same, they're simply not the freshest nor healthiest option there is. As members of an organic co-op we know only too well the benefits of organic foods in their freshest and least processed state. Of course bananas and avocados are a godsend for the quick and easy feed-on-the-go, but what about all those other vitamin-rich, tasty

fruits out there, pre-packaged and ready to go in their own skins?

A favourite of mine is the humble pear, with its subtle delicate flavour and juiciness that reminds me of those gorgeous summertime stone fruits. Pears are the kind of fruit that ripen best in the fruit bowl. A fully ripe pear is one that is slightly firm, but gives a little when you squeeze the area near the stem. To speed the

ripening process, place the pear in a brown paper bag in the fruit bowl and use the pressure test to check for readiness. To turn a pear into a tasty baby food, peel and core the pear and then add a small kiwi fruit and blend. Your thirty-second vitamin-rich meal is ready. Make sure to make extra for yourself. It's a great puree that makes a healthy snack or dessert for all the family.

Remember that sometimes you need to be patient when introducing new flavours to children. So add each new taste to their diet gradually, and serve each a few times so their young tastebuds get accustomed to the new sensations and come to enjoy them. While the tang of kiwifruit is a taste generally loved by children, it can take a little getting used to. The gentle sweetness of breast milk, bananas, avocados, and the basic rice cereal

have been more familiar to their palates. The richer flavours of those luscious fruits will sometimes take them a little longer to get used to. Once a comfortable

flavour addition to their palate, it will be something they'll enjoy for many years to come. And it's good for them. Kiwis and pears are packed with vitamin C, most of the B group of vitamins, as well as iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, manganese and calcium for growing bones.

A Healthy Start is a new regular column on children's nutrition.



My shift Olivia Lovell

How long have you worked at Alfalfa House?

Since October last year.

When can we see you in the shop?

Thursdays and Saturdays.

Why do you work at the co-op?

Because I like getting to have an input on how things are done. Not having a boss. Working with other fun people. And I'm obsessed about food. Really, it's even better than I imagined it would be – and I did think it would be good! Empowerment (cringe) is such an amazing thing. I'm learning things I would never otherwise have learned and the co-op is actually a really radical workplace. I just really appreciate being able to collectively change things and have some control over my food supply.

What does the Shop Coordinator do?

Facilitates the smooth running of the shop on the floor, entices people to volunteer and then persuades them to come back again, random jobs like making a mini-scoop container, contributes to consensus decision-making, goes to meetings, chats to customers and absorbs fashion advice.

What can shoppers do to help you in your work?

Chat to us about anything you want. I love it when customers initiate conversations, otherwise I talk about the same things I already know. Ask me for



help if you need it. It sucks that the co-op is intimidating at first, but sometimes I forget because I'm there all the time and I'm used to it. It's really good if people familiarise themselves with where things are in the shop. Even better is when members clean up their own spills or tell us if they can't. And if they remember to bring their own egg cartons! Volunteer. And all that smooth basket-to-scales-to-bag work is much appreciated.

What's the best part of your job?

Its 'co-opiness'. The whole disposing of the hierarchy thing is really, undoubtedly the best thing . . .

Is there anything you don't like about your job?

Sometimes it's really hard work to go to heaps of meetings, especially at dinnertime. Sometimes we (including me) waffle on about small things at

length . . . a lot of length. All of us are learning how to be a co-op as we go and there is a heap to learn. Plus we're all at different stages of this and there is always some new complication to get your head around. Each of us has slightly different ideals and priorities, so it's a matter of making that work in a cooperative environment.

Tell us something about the co-op that most people don't know?

The co-op is overseen by the Management Committee, which is liable for the co-op, and which is 'invisible' and thus often forgotten by most people. They are really important in steering the direction of the co-op in the larger picture . . . also there are rags under the sink for cleaning up little spills!

Do you have a favourite product and why?

The Sonoma Olive Bread. Wheaty, sourdoughy, olivey goodness. What can I say, bread and me, it's a daily love affair. Also passionfruit is very special to me at the moment because I love tart things.

What do you do when you aren't working at Alfalfa House?

Lately, I've been studying like a crazy person because I took on too many things this semester, but otherwise I like to cook. I like to booty dance. I enjoy the odd drink a lot. And once a week I try to wrangle an invitation to the fancy French restaurant my girlfriend chefs at.

– Jo Rose

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Recipe of the moment WITH GENEVIEVE DERWENT

Poached pears

What could be better in the cooler months than poached pears? Warm, sweet and spicy, they're the epitome of winter for me. And they're also a wonderful base for many desserts such as tarts, cakes and puddings.

SERVES 4

- 1 litre of water
- 500g sugar – the raw sugar in the co-op is perfect
- juice of a lemon

- 4 cloves
- 1/2 stick cinnamon or 1 vanilla bean
- 4 pears
- In a saucepan, bring water and sugar to simmer and stir until sugar is dissolved, continue simmering while adding lemon juice and spices
- Peel pears, leaving stems on
- Stand pears upright in saucepan, cover with a round of baking paper, nicked so the stems poke through
- Cover saucepan with lid. Return to

stove, bring to simmer, then lower heat so the fruit poaches rather than boils – very important. Cook until pears are tender; depending on the size of the pear, this can take up to two hours. The longer the pears take to poach, the more delicious they will be.

- Cool in syrup and serve warm or at room temperature.

OPTION: Poach pears in red wine – using half red wine/half water in your syrup.

FEED THE eNEWS

This newsletter is your voice and a great way to communicate with other members.

Please feel free to send in your hints, tips, ideas, suggestions and recipes to feedback@alfalfahouse.org

E-News is edited and designed by Stevie Bee for Alfalfa House Community Food Cooperative Ltd