

May

Wild mushrooms

New Forest specialist Mrs Tee's has already picked the first few kilos of **St George's** and, taking into account current conditions, says **chicken of the woods** will be guaranteed by 10 May and probably earlier. **Wild garlic leaf** is plentiful, too, and will be in flower at the start of May.

Mrs Tee's Wild Mushrooms, 01590 673354

Game

The short but eagerly awaited **gull's egg** season is finally upon us - they're **£3.65 each** and will run until the middle of June - and **brown trout** are now on stream too. **Pheasants' eggs** are also available (**70p each**). Otherwise, game produce is slightly thin on the ground at the moment; **crayfish** still hadn't appeared as we went to press, and **venison**, while still very good, is almost over - so make the most of it until the end of May and then there's the usual gap in wild supplies until August.

David Hammerson at Everleigh Farm Shop, 01264 850344

Pork, lamb and beef

Prices tend to be pretty skewed by Easter, and this year was no exception. *In season* went to press just before Good Friday, making forecasts particularly tricky. **Old season leg of lamb** - always popular at Easter - was making a heady **£5.60/kg**, with **best end** also markedly up at **£6.60-£6.80/kg**, but by contrast **shoulder** was down a touch at **£4.40-£4.60/kg** and **chines** a bargain at **£3/kg** - although these could shoot up if the weather gets warmer. **New season** is very thin on the ground, with the **carcass price** of **£6.40/kg** (about **£2/kg** dearer than **old season**) but you should see more coming through from mid-May.

Essentials: Seasonal produce that deserves first-billing on your menu this month

Edible flowers ■ gulls' eggs ■ wild brown trout ■ English asparagus ■ St George's and chicken of the woods mushrooms ■ home-grown tomatoes ■ Cornish caulis ■ Spanish stone fruit



Blooming lovely: edible flowers

English **pork** prices have also been pushed up, says Ricky Kennard on Smithfield, with **legs** at **£1.75/kg** but probably due to fall after Easter unless the temperature rockets. **Belly** was **£2.50-£2.80/kg** and could increase again in the next couple of weeks, as could **ribs** (currently making **£2.50-£3/kg**). Meanwhile, versatile

shoulder was a good buy at **£2.20/kg** and will probably stay there in the short-term, and **loin** was slightly cheaper than of late, at just **£2.30/kg** - and likely to stay that way too.

As forecast last issue, **beef rump** has gone up - **English** is anything from **£6-£7/kg** on the bone, while **Scotch** was making **£7.20-£7.30/kg** as we went to press - and could get higher with decent weather. Expect the same story for **loin** (currently **£12/kg** for **Scotch** and **£9.80/kg** **English**). **Ribs** are a good buy and quite stable at **£8.60/kg** for **Scotch** and **£7/kg** for **English**, while **Scotch fillet** is down a tad at **£21/kg** (**English** **£19/kg**). As for **topside**, currently making **£6-£6.60/kg**, this could easily drop 50p a kilo over the next couple of weeks if it follows its usual spring trend.

Pork and old-season lamb and pork: David Andrade Ltd, 020 7236 1173

Beef and new-season lamb: Peter Tocher Ltd, 020 7236 9561

Fruit & veg

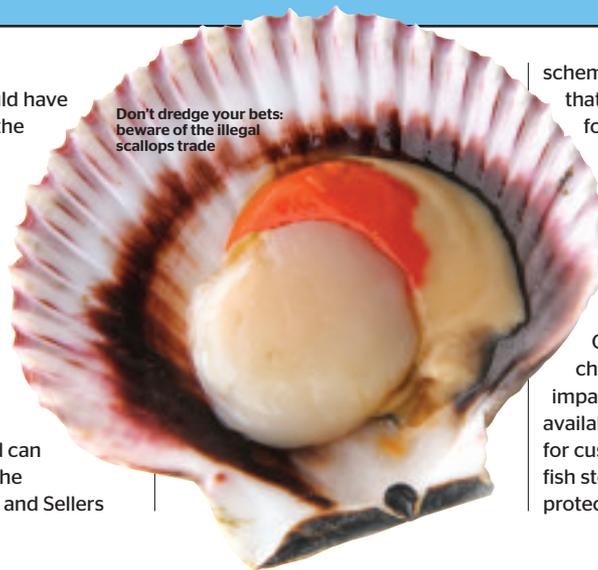
English asparagus is in full flow now, alongside **Jersey Royals**, and there are lots of good **English tomatoes** about too, from **baby plum** and **vine**, to **Coeur de boeuf** and **Coeur de pigeon**, **Tiger** and many heritage varieties, says Rob Davies at First Choice Produce. As we head through May, watch out for **Cornish cauliflowers**, **Swiss chard**, **spinach** and **cavolo nero**, along with **golden sprouting broccoli** as well as **purple**. **English peas** and **broad beans** are also recommended, as well as **courgettes** (including flowers), the first **corn on the cob**, and **white and purple Chantenay carrots**, and there's still some **Jerusalem artichoke** too. **Salad leaves** and **micro-cresses** will be good, and there are some "phenomenal" **edible flowers** coming through from Pembrokeshire and Gloucestershire. **English strawberries** are establishing themselves nicely,

What's the catch?

Fisherman nets £50k fine

A fisherman has been handed a £50,000 fine after he was caught dredging for scallops in a designated conservation area. The value of the illegal catch was in the region of £400,000, making the prosecution one of the largest illegal fishing cases - in terms of value - in the UK. Mark Powell was spotted by a Royal Navy vessel fishing in a restricted area of Cardigan Bay that's a key habitat for bottlenose dolphins, grey seals and lampreys. Powell admitted 14 offences of fishing in an illegal area and 14 of failing to submit landing declarations.

A proportion of the confiscated catch would have certainly ended up in the kitchens of restaurant and pubs, who may or may not have known they were buying in illegal - or 'black catch' - seafood. Chefs are at risk of purchasing unsafe, poor-quality food if they don't check it has come from a reputable supplier and can be prosecuted under the Registration of Buyers and Sellers



Don't dredge your bets: beware of the illegal scallops trade

scheme for buying fish from a boat that is not licensed or registered for commercial fishing.

"Caterers should be conscious of the trade in illegal fish caught from unlicensed and unregistered boats," says Rod Henderson, head of coastal operations for the Marine Management Organisation. "Such supply chains can have a negative impact - both on the price and availability of a wider range of fish for customers. They can also affect fish stocks, a resource we want to protect for future generations."

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The inside track on produce prices

and outdoor **rhubarb** is good. From further afield, look out for **leafy lemons** and **oranges** from southern Italy, **Cantaloupe** and **Charentais melons**, and **Spanish stone fruit - black and yellow plums**, and **peaches**, including flat and white.

First Choice Produce, 020 7498 0550

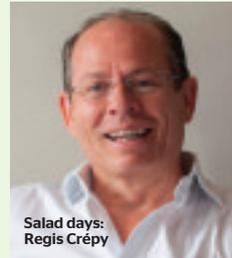


Spear factor: English asparagus is in full flow

Menu inspiration: Radicchio

Put some crunch in your lunch

Its crunchy texture and distinctive red and white salad leaves make radicchio a colourful addition to spring salads. An Italian relative of chicory, radicchio is bitter in taste and goes well with goats' cheese or blue cheese, says Regis Crépy, the chef-restaurateur behind The Great House, Maison Bleue and Mariners, all in Suffolk. "It's interesting because of its colour, taste and crunchiness," says Crépy. "You can't eat it on its own because it's too bitter but it works well when partnered with other ingredients, particularly those that are sweet."



Salad days: Regis Crépy

Cooking method

Cut off the stalks and wash the leaves, then prepare it with a mustard vinaigrette, says Crépy. For the dressing, use a grain mustard with an extremely good olive oil and a bit of lemon juice. Then serve it with walnuts and a good stilton or French blue. You can also mix it with spring onion, watercress or green salad.



The meaning of leaf: can be mixed with watercress

Essential news for the fish section



Trawl of fame: the top food combo

Fish and chips tops poll

The combination of fish and chips has beaten off stiff competition from other tasty double acts to be named Britain's top food pairing. Tea and biscuits took second place and other popular duos included bacon and eggs; roast beef and Yorkshire pudding; and sausages and mash. Commissioned by chocolate company Elizabeth Shaw, researchers questioned 1,000 people who were asked to name their top partnerships in various categories including music, sport and business.