

UNICORN

manchester's co-operative grocery

Foodzine, Spring 2010

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Well it's been an odd start, a proper white Christmas, and a snow bound first week followed by a proper white Easter - for some at least. Unpredictable weather isn't great for our farmers, we'll keep you updated in the shop and on the website telling you how it effects their crops.

The land project is up and running (see below) and we must thank those of you who have helped to plant hedges at Glazebury, we look forward to crops later in the year. We have seen loads of new products gracing

the shelves from bird boxes & kitchen ware to local ales and Chorlton-made soups but the most fawned over has to be the bread from Handmade Bakery (see overleaf) simply divine and extremely popular.

As ever we strive to make decent food affordable, we do regular price checks which we display in the shop, there is a recent sample overleaf. Here's to all the bounty brought by spring after the traditional 'hungry gap'.

Unicorn's 1% & 4% fund (see Principles of Purpose in the shop)

Unicorn donates a sum of around £20,000 each year to a variety of organisations in the Global South, most of which are food and agriculture related. Until now, our giving has been fairly ad hoc - organisations came to us with a funding need each year and we responded. But we've recently made a more long-term commitment to the 4 organisations (overleaf), committing to fund their projects for upto 3 years at a time, so that they're better able to plan their work and budgets. P.T.O.

Unicorn Land Project Update, reducing the gap between field & fork

An exciting year at Glazebury is about to begin. Two members of Unicorn - Rob and Stuart (often seen working in the Veg area) - have formed a new co-operative business to take on the tenancy at Glazebury. The new co-op is called Moss Brook Growers, named after the local brook.

Rob and Stuart have been gaining experience on other organic farms and Stuart has nearly completed an Organic Horticulture course at the Welsh College of Horticulture. But they're both very aware that they have a lot of skills to learn, so they're not being too ambitious with their crop plans.

This year will see small trials of spinach, celery, cabbages, radish, spring onions and garlic, as well as more leeks. Many of the seedlings will be raised at Glebelands, before planting at Glazebury. Help and experience is at hand from Chris Hewitt at Dunham Massey... Between them all, there's a growing network of supportive local organic growers.

So, good luck to them! Let's hope it's a good summer. There will be open days at Glazebury later in the year, to give you the opportunity to see what's happening.



Rob and Stuart with their Massey Ferguson tractor



Seasonal Update

After a long cold winter, the first whiff of Spring in the air is a great relief. For growers, preparations for the year ahead are well underway. Our local growers, particularly, are looking to increase their supply:

- More soft fruit, rhubarb, cabbages and roots from Dunham Massey Organics
- More salad leaves, lettuce, herbs and pot plants from Glebelands City Growers
- Former Unicorners Alan and Beth, now running DIG box scheme, will be growing strawberries at Dunham Massey
- A range of leafy greens from Moss Brook Growers on Unicorn's land (see above)

It's an exciting time of year to be looking forward: the first seasonal treats from the UK will be asparagus and rhubarb, followed by broad beans, strawberries, sorrel, spinach beet and, by June, courgettes and new potatoes.

However, the legacy of the cold winter will stay with us for a few weeks yet. The 'hungry gap' - after winter crops have gone and before early summer crops have come - is likely to be much more noticeable this year. Roots will dominate the UK range, but hopefully a late surge of purple sprouting broccoli and cauliflowers will brighten up our Spring cooking!

Unicorn Grocery, 89 Albany Road, Chorlton, Manchester, M21 0BN.
www.unicorn-grocery.co.uk

Bread Matters

Bread from the Handmade Bakery in Slaithwaite (just this side of Huddersfield) has been flying off the shelves since it arrived early this year. Unwrapped, it's on sale behind the deli, arriving on Tuesday and Friday by early afternoon. We're majoring in sourdough and speciality varieties (like Yorkshire Leaven, Hearth Loaf & Sisu rye) in order to broaden our range and offer lines with some



keeping properties. The slow rising times used are important in developing flavour in the dough and we think you'll be impressed with the results.



UK bread production is highly industrialised, with rapid rising, lots of yeast, undeclared enzymes and implausible shelf-lives. No surprise that a return to better bread is required. Have a look at the Real Bread Campaign – we joined it this year and they're doing excellent work fighting for bread that's better! A community supported bakery, The Handmade Bakery are campaigners as well as talented bakers, and part of the re-emergence of craft or non-industrial bread. They've also been Radio 4 stars a few times of late. We hope they complement the excellent work done by Pauls, Saker and others.

More info at: www.handmadebakery.coop & www.breadmatters.com

1% & 4% funds continued..

It's also given us a chance to think about what we want to prioritise with the 4% fund, and reflect on its value to the communities we support.

The **Permaculture Institute of El Salvador** (Central America) supports a growing movement of poor rural communities who are developing ecological methods of farming and living.

Self Help Africa provides the basic resources to turn people's ideas, motivation and abilities into projects that improve their lives. Focused on sustainable agriculture, income generation and water provision.

The **Mines Advisory Group** clears landmines and other unexploded weapons, lessening the threat of death and injury and helping countries rebuild and develop their social and economic potential.

Tree Aid supports rural communities to use trees to fight poverty and become self reliant in the dry lands of Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Ethiopia.

For more information on our donations see our website; www.unicorn-grocery.co.uk/projectsupport.php

Bread Machine

Have a bread machine but haven't used it in ages? Maybe you are still considering buying one? Why not get back into the bread making habit. A simple machine is never going to rival a hand crafted and slow rising dough. But it should produce a consistently good fresh loaf. Little fuss, no guesswork and no washing up. Here are some pointers;

1) Start off buying some Canadian Flour. It makes the best stretchy dough to trap the air bubbles. It's not organic but it is the strongest - that's what bread makers want not those soft wheats for cakes.

2) You might not want a 100% wholemeal bread or an all white loaf. So you could mix the Canadian flour with an organic strong white flour. Say 80-20, 70-30 or even 50-50 - that's wholewheat / white flour ratio - to give a lighter and flavoursome bread.

3) Add a cap of vinegar to the water. Malt vinegar will do fine. This is an old fashioned way of preserving the bread so it keeps longer, you won't be able to taste it.

4) Different flours will give different results. It is worth trying different brands and finding some you like. Avoid using a bag of some old wholewheat you found at the back of your cupboard, it might give a bitter taste. White flour keeps longer.

5) You could mix rye with wheat to make a light rye, or barley with wheat to give a moist tasty bread. Just use the wholewheat setting on your bread machine. Use strong white flour for the wheat part unless you want a dense bread. Mixing the flours together in a bowl before tipping into the machine appears to give better results.

6) The ideal would be freshly milled flour and we'd love to hear from customers who are in the know about obtaining or making their own flour. However our flour sells quickly, it is not on the shelves for months at a time and we're selling more than ever before. So why not join in.

7) Make use of the timer on the bread machine to wake up to a fresh loaf. Remember you'll need at least an hour after it has finished baking before you can make your sandwiches. It is still cooking and needs to cool down. Do the dishes, and before you wind down for the evening spend an extra five minutes filling up the bread machine.

8) Don't worry about the paddles in the machine and getting lodged in the bottom of the loaf. It happens to us all but nobody talks about it. A bit of open bread surgery with a small sharp knife will patch things up.

UNICORN PRICE CHECK

FRESH PRODUCE

| Produce | Tesco Organic | Tesco Non-organic | Sainsburys Organic | Sainsburys Non-organic | Unicorn All Organic |
|------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Leeks | £4.45 | £2.10 | £4.45 | £2.30 | £2.16 |
| Parsnips | £3.38 | £1.56 | £3.19 | £1.56 | £1.52 |
| Celeriac | N/A | £1.40 | N/A | £1.40 | £1.39 |
| Avocados | 94p each | 99p each | £1.09 each | 82p each | 69p each |
| Red Grapes | £6.23 | £4.34 | £7.48 | £3.00 | £3.94 |

Prices (per kg) taken 18th March 2010 comparing Unicorn organic produce with organic (where available) and non organic at Tesco and Sainsburys.

Time and time again we hear people say they think we are expensive, we understand that it's all part of the perception of the wholefood world and organic prices but the assumption is wrong.

We have always prided ourselves on providing decent, affordable food, everyone should be able to eat well. We know customers are keen to buy good value groceries so we have regular price checks showing we are good on price as well as product.

Buy seasonal produce and basic ingredients instead of ready made foods and you will always get the best value.

SOME COMMODITY PRICE COMPARISONS

| Commodity | Sainsburys | Unicorn |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Dried Organic Apricots | 250g @ £1.99 | 250g @ £1.49 |
| Dried Organic Raisons | 500g @ £2.19 | 500g @ £1.69 |
| Dried Organic Sultanas | 500g @ £1.99 | 500g @ £1.49 |
| Dried Organic Dates | 250g @ £1.89 | 250g @ £1.59 |
| Organic Brown Basmati Rice | 500g @ £1.79 | 500g @ £1.29 |
| Organic Couscous | 500g @ £1.19 | 500g @ £1.19 |
| Organic Brazil Nuts | 200g @ £2.79 | 250g @ £1.89 |
| Organic Brown Rice | 500g @ £1.29 | 500g @ 90p * |

* comes in 1kg bag @ £1.79