

## WELCOME

We're often asked why we run out of things – whether it's fresh fruit and vegetables or dried goods, there are a couple of reasons for temporary shortages or stopped supplies of organic goods in our shops.

### 1. Supply and demand

Unfortunately the supply of organic fruit and vegetables is shrinking at the moment, rather than growing. Partly it's because the demand for organic products is constantly growing – that's the reason for the shortage of eggs at the moment. But many organic market gardeners find it difficult to make a living and either decide to specialise in one or two export crops, which all get harvested at the same time - or move out of growing organic fruit and vegetables and into something more lucrative, like an office job. The fact that growing organic food is not considered of particular value by our economic system is an unfortunate fact and also a reality.

### 2. The weather

The other more prosaic reason is that the month of July was much warmer than usual so crops that were planted to ripen in August were ready in July! As practically all of our fresh produce is seasonal, this created a temporary shortage in

some fruit and vegetables. The good news is that the new small growers' scheme is seeing an upsurge in organic small-holdings; we've recently had meetings with groups of suppliers in the Wairarapa and are currently organizing another meeting to bring together growers in the Horowhenua to see how we can support them to supply us.

But why do we run out of dried food and groceries? Again this is a matter of demand. If supermarkets suddenly decide to stock an item imported by one of our organic wholesalers, they tend to run out more quickly than they planned. Then the wholesalers face the problem of whether to import more of that one item – or to wait until more of the products imported from that supplier run out too, so there are less food miles and freight charges.

But we try to counter the problem of changing supply/demand by constantly sourcing new products. Recently Anna (Wellington Shop Manager), Chrissy (Grocery Manager) and Marion, visited various Auckland suppliers and also checked out the Food show. All in all we sourced about 50 new products, which will be appearing on the shelves quite soon. And it's always worthwhile asking if your favourite product is back in stock. If we have had a sudden demand for it, there may be stocks sitting in the warehouse.

## INSIDE INFO

Jim and Marion also visited producers in the South Island in July including Ormond Aquaculture, the salmon farm that supplies us with organic salmon. Their walls are covered with environmental awards they've won! Then on to Milmore Downs – they supply us with grains and flours including spelt. They also grow the cattle that come up to us from Jane's Organics. We found a source of Christmas peas from Tim Chamberlain at Hart's Creek farm. He also grows



New Kapiti shop

carrots and onions and we're trying to persuade him to grow broccoli seed.

We were really humbled by the dedication of the growers we met, both in the Wairarapa and in the South Island. They work so hard and at times face real difficulties. We met one man who'd been sacked by his father because

he wanted to grow organically – and he was then disinherited. But he still works in the industry and has no bitterness – some people are truly inspiring.

*Live it, think it, eat it, breathe it*

### Commonsense Organics

260 Wakefield St, Wellington Ph: 384-3314 Fax: 385-3383  
37 Waterloo Road, Lower Hutt Ph: 566 4783 Fax: 566 4784  
Shop 7A, Coastlands Ph: 298 7205 Fax: 298 7215

## WHAT'S NEW?

- **Horseradish root** – make a salad by mixing 2 ½ cups grated carrots, 2 grated apples (Granny Smiths are best), ½ cup sour cream, 2 Tbsp horseradish root, peeled and finely grated, 2 Tbsp parsley, 1 tsp lemon juice and 1 tsp sugar. Cover and cool
- Try something different – gluten-free (but non-organic) **corn fritter mix**.
- **Yacon** is a root vegetable which originated in Peru (along with potatoes and many of the root vegetables). It is used in South America to lower blood sugar and improve digestion. It's a good choice for diabetics. Try it chopped in salads, or cook for 30 minutes – it stays crunchy.
- We have a new composting system – it's really effective, especially if you have a small garden and not much space to build a big compost heap. It's the **Bokashi compost-zing system** – it works using quite a small bucket, but makes compost in 4 weeks.
- Venerdi have a new **gluten-free pizza base** – and we've also started selling slices of their delectable **orange cake** which makes it more affordable – but beware – it's addictive.
- Next time you're going out to dinner at a friend's place, take along a packet of our **Waterthins** and some of **Naked Organics' smoked salmon and lemon dip**. A fabulous combination!
- And if you're dining with a pregnant friend who's off alcohol, take along some of our **elderberry cordial** – serve with soda for a tasty alternative to champagne.
- We have found a new company – **Wanaka chocolates** – that make organic chocolate bars in mint, dark and orange flavours.
- We have a new meat supplier. **Harringtons** in Island Bay are now the butchers for Waimarino Pork, which is no longer certified organic, because they use non-organic feed for the pigs – but it's organic in every other aspect.
- Try our new **Scheese** – they're dairy-free, soy cheeses in 3 flavours – not cheap but worth it.
- Our **fair trade** range is increasing with **sugar** and **herbs** and **spices**
- **Miessence** is a new range of certified organic skin care products from Australia. We also have deodorants and toothpaste in the same range, all certified organic.
- We have a new range of **Babynat baby foods in jars** – they include quinoa, pasta and vegetables. We also have 2 new **herbal infusions** for your baby – one for sleeping and one for digestion.
- And we haven't forgotten your pets – have you checked out our new range of **Organix** – organically certified pet food for your dogs and cats?.

## WHAT'S BACK IN?

- On the shelves again is the Phoenix range of pasta sauces, chutneys and jams – but they've all been relabeled under the **Mrs Rogers** brand
- Yay – **pure cranberry juice** is back in – it's not organic, but at least it's not blended. When we don't have any pure cranberry juice, you may like to try an infusion of our dried cranberries.
- **Peanuts** are now available too so we're able to make our **peanut butter** again
- We are now buying barrels of olive oil, so we've been able to bring the price of **bulk Italian extra virgin olive oil** down by \$5 a litre.
- We also have **green broccoli seeds** back in stock. We are, however, having real problems with our sprouting seeds. Due to new biosecurity regulations imported seeds are being heat-treated and this means they often fail to sprout. If you have any problems, please let us know.

## WHAT'S OUT?

- Pine nuts will be available within a month, but pistachios are still nowhere to be found
- Puy lentils seem to have disappeared from everywhere on earth
- Fig paste will be back by the end of the year – it always disappears about this time, so it's quite a good idea to stockpile some and freeze it
- Mountain Valley have run out of manuka honey – it will be back in after the manuka blooms – about the end of January.
- We've also run out of pohutukawa honey – also due back in at the end of January
- Umeboshi vinegar and plums have been unavailable for a while now – we hope to have them back within a month.

## LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

### Alternative menstrual resources

Organic food is becoming increasingly popular with the growing awareness of the potential dangers of toxic residues on our health, and the detrimental effects of conventional agriculture on our environment. If we are this concerned about what we are ingesting perhaps it is worth considering what else goes into our bodies...

The subject of 'natural' or 'reusable' menstrual products is a little daunting for many women. We tend to get used to certain products that are convenient or affordable, but we rarely make the connection between the cyclical pain or discomfort we may experience and these products. With the average woman using around 11,000 tampons in her lifetime, it is important to be aware of what these products could contain and the potential harm these ingredients may be causing.

The average tampon is made from cotton (one of the most intensively sprayed crops in the world), rayon and other synthetic materials. It is chlorine-bleached which leaves residues of dioxin in the finished product, and this can leach into the body accumulating in fat cells. Dioxins have been linked with heavy bleeding, endometriosis, toxic shock syndrome (TSS), immune system dysfunction, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and cancer. Japanese studies have revealed particularly high levels of dioxins in all women with endometriosis who were tested. Some tests indicate that tampons containing synthetic materials can contribute to toxic shock syndrome.

With menstrual pads, there is the environmental issue of the plastics used and their inability to break down over time, as well as the fact that they are a frequent cause of cyclical itching and discomfort for many women.

This information is relatively new, and it is unlikely that your GP would suggest this as a cause of frequent 'yeast

infections' or heavy periods. What is interesting is the profound and rapid changes women experience when switching from their old brand to organic or 'reusable' products. The cycle may become more regular, with shorter, lighter and less painful periods. Itching and discomfort often improve with the switch to pads free from synthetic materials.

We stock Natracare and Eco Yarn Company certified organic, non-chlorine bleached tampons. Natracare also produce pads and panty-liners, and these products are cost effective (with lighter and shorter periods we use less) and user friendly. These are a good alternative for women prepared to make a change but not necessarily to something completely new.

Reusable menstrual products have a devoted following and those who use them swear by them. They initially cost more but rarely need replacing and so save the user significant dollars in the long-term. Probably the most famous reusable menstrual product is the 'keeper' or 'mooncup'. This is a small silicone cup which is inserted like a tampon and removed each time it needs to be emptied and washed. They last for about 10 years and are usually available in two sizes – before child and after child.

Cloth menstrual pads are favoured by some women for their comfort, and financial and environmental benefits. They do require a bit more commitment but they are another safe and eco-friendly alternative. We sell Moontime pads and Comfort Pads.

If you are one of the many women who struggle with menstruation each month or if you are worried about your monthly impact on the environment, it is worth considering the alternatives to your regular sanitary products.

*Anya Nidd ND*

(NATUROPATH AND MEDICAL HERBALIST)

## SHOP TALK

**Kapiti shop** We moved the Kapiti shop to a larger retail site by Coastlands, Paraparaumu and it looks great – it's about half as big again as the previous shop. It's so good to have space to display our goods properly. Remember to ask if there are specific goods you would like us to stock, because now we have room to do just that. We can now reveal a closely-guarded trade secret about the office in the old shop – it was so small we couldn't even fit a filing cabinet into it! The move to the new shop took place on the coldest day this year – there was snow on the near hills in Kapiti and it's only the second time in my life that I've seen it so low. But we had a fantastic team from the Steiner school and the actual move was done in no time.

**Hutt shop** You may notice new carpet in the health section of our Hutt shop, so glass bottles don't automatically smash if they fall on the concrete – safer for our customers and safer for our bottom line!

Lynne Hurley is back from visiting her family in England and we're delighted that she is choosing to stay in New Zealand and give us the benefit of her skills as a medical herbalist and as Catherine's assistant in managing the shop.

## EAT TO LIVE/LIVE TO EAT

Check out the latest issue of *Cuisine* magazine – great recipes using quinoa, fennel and cavolo nero. Here's one of the quinoa recipes – I tried it and it's delicious – and easy.

### Quinoa risotto

2 leeks, chopped	2 Tbsp olive oil
1 cup quinoa	2 cups chicken stock
3 medium beetroot	fresh dill, mint and basil, chopped
salt and pepper	1 Tbsp mascarpone
parmesan	

Chunk beetroots and roast. Saute leeks in olive oil until soft. Add quinoa and chicken stock, cover and simmer until the stock is absorbed. Stir in herbs, chunks of beetroot and mascarpone and season to taste. Remove from heat and stand covered for 5 minutes. Serve topped with generous shavings of parmesan.

**Organic methods for chicken care**

We have so many customers who have chickens that I wanted to pass on some tips I have learnt over the years. It makes sense to have organic chickens, because they're easy to care for, fun for the kids and you don't have to worry about traces of chemicals or hormones in the eggs. In addition, the yolks are genuinely yellow, unlike non-organic eggs which are yellow because of the dye in their feed. It's the green feeds that give the eggs their dark yellow colour. Lots of weeds in the garden are most suitable for chickens to get a daily dose of greens: chickweed, fat hen or lambs quarter seeds, nasturtium, wandering dew, cleavers, plantains, shepherds purse, dandelion, fennel, thistle heads. If there's not a lot of green areas or weeds for them, you can grow wheat grass in a tray and leave it out for them to peck at their leisure, when it's about 4 or 5 inches high, yummy!

A healthy feed could consist of organic pellets, wheat (sprouted), various seeds such as flaxseed, quinoa, and/or sunflower seeds, some molasses, crushed up comfrey or nettle and a pinch of seaweed per bird, during the laying season. The seaweed, comfrey and/or nettle make for a mineral rich feed, giving you nutritious eggs. The seaweed also helps the thyroid gland stay healthy, which is needed for healthy egg production.

Chickens need lots of protein and the best form is worms, slaters and snails. Let the chickens into your compost area every now and then to scratch around and find worms.

Agapanthus and wallflowers attract snails in their hundreds so plant these in your chicken run or plant them anywhere and collect the snails and deliver to the chickens. You can make slater farms, which are basically logs of old wood that line any flower or veggie garden. The slaters gather underneath so just scrape them into a dish and deliver them to the chickens. Leave logs on the ground and turn them over every few days for a feed.

Extra protein is good at moulting time to help chickens cope with new feather development. Adding tofu or quinoa to a feed will boost their protein. Hang meat inside the coop, maggots will drop off (yuk) supplying a continuous supply of food but it must be protected

from rats or other animals that may be attracted to it. Hang bunches of comfrey, silverbeet and spinach in the run for them to peck at.

Sprouted seeds are a favourite, and stabbing corn-on-the-cob to a stick and planting upright in the coop gives them a nice feed and something to entertain them. Most smelly plants are pest repellents and therefore good to use in your bedding to repel lice and mites; wormwood, bracken, tansy and catnip are just a few; I have also used lavender and Vietnamese mint mixed in with hay.

Diatomaceous earth (available at our shops) is a product of the sea. Its particles are fine and sharp, and will kill any lice on the bird, if you put some into their dust bath. Lime sprinkled in the run and dust bath will sweeten the soil and help to repel pests.

I spray the hen house once a month with neem oil, when I clean out and replace all the bedding; I also spray the chickens just a bit under the wings. The trick to neem oil is to spray often during the breeding cycle of the pest you want to kill off, breaking the cycle. It's great for killing young insects, but it's not very effective on mature insects.

Another way to combat lice is to dust them with wormwood powder, it's very natural and a powerful pest repellent. I also include a pinch per bird in their feed once a week to help prevent worms and internal parasites.

Garlic and vinegar are also internal pest repellents and can be included in the chickens' drinking water once a month. Use garlic one fortnight and vinegar the next. Don't use too much garlic though, as in the past I have tasted garlic in the eggs.

I found that 4 chickens kept our household of 4 in a good supply of eggs over the laying season. If you're working in the garden chickens will scratch around with you, they don't usually stray as they like your company.

The best book I have found on organic chicken rearing is *The Complete Herbal Handbook* by Juliette de Bairacli Levy. It's full of practical information for rearing common farm animals organically and how to prepare your own medicines with herbs. Commonsense Organics sells most of the herbs needed by chickens in dried form so pop in and check out our collection in store.

Commonsense Organics newsletter is written by Marion Wood with help from staff

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