



LINSCOMBE FARM NEWSLETTER

Thursday 29 September 2011

Its your choice!

Apparently, for the first time ever, the total national spend on groceries (now, of course, almost entirely through the biggest supermarkets) has actually declined - and this despite the widely reported "food inflation" ("quotes" added ironically as we are still selling most of our veg at similar prices to what we were some 10 years ago. Our costs have certainly gone up though!). Whether this drop in sales changes the supermarkets plans to expand selling space remains to be seen. Despite widely publicised "constraints to growth", supposedly imposed by a planning system overly focused on conservation of our irreplaceable natural resources and thus overdue for liberalisation, there sits waiting in the construction pipeline a new selling area in excess



of the TOTAL existing floor area of Tesco and Sainsbury combined. This floor area already has planning permission. So we should await with some trepidation the proposed "removal of constraints".

The basis of the success of the supermarkets is, rather ironically, that they are cheaper than any of the alternatives. But how true is this? They may well sell a pint of milk or loaf of bread at a cheap price but how many times can you go in to one of these places and buy just what you NEED. As opposed to what they convince you that you want? Their profits come from the long shelf life highly processed "foods" that their customers "treat" themselves to. Not from the fresh veg. Is it a coincidence that nearly all the big supermarkets have the fresh fruit and veg right by the door as you go in? Creates a feel-good factor. And then space for fatty (but still healthyish)

stuffs like dairy and meat. And then the "little treats" such as the sweets, fizzy pops and crisps. It may be generalizing, but they do all seem to fit a pattern. And they do so because they have employed some of the best psychologists to understand shoppers' psyches and thus behaviours - to get you to drop caution, reserve and sense in order to buy. Even when you know that you should not.



Back on the farm, we are still plugging on with the potato harvest - it is becoming clear that, as suspected, we are on for a bumper yield. Combined with the the drop in customer number that we have been seeing over the last few years it appears that we are going to be experiencing another year of surplus (and not



Sam says:
"Eat a Spud a Day and you won't feel hungry. Trust me - I Know!"

only of spuds but more of this later). Previously, we have not attempted to sell our surplus fearing a destabilisation of our local markets and a no win-price war with other producers (ie we all go out of business and local consumers end up with no genuinely local suppliers). However, as the recent merger with Rod and Ben's demonstrates, it doesn't take a price war to reduce the diversity of local producers - a market collapse is quite good enough, thank you. What we have done instead is, perhaps perversely, invested in some additional



machinery that should allow us to bag up the potatoes faster (and therefore cheaper) and to offer them to people at a lower price than before. Whether this is a sustainable strategy only time will tell.

What this does mean however, is that for our customers - both existing and especially prospective - is that there is now a new and very realistic opportunity to have a genuinely organic, fresh and local diet based on our produce

but now at a price that really is very realistic and competitive. What better way to feed a family - large or small - but on a basis of the hunger satisfying, versatile, tasty and nutritious potato.



Boiled, baked, roasted, chipped, used as the base for soups and stews. What else can you buy for your money that supplies so much goodness? Get a 25kg sack of spuds from us - grown to the highest natural standards in compost rich soil teeming with life and goodness - no added chemicals - in a range of varieties to suit all tastes - for only £8.00 (thats 32p/kg!!). Kept cool (but frost free), and dark, these will last for weeks (if you really need them too!) and you then only need to cook (in any of many different ways), add a dollop of butter and serve. You won't get hungry.

Then spoil yourself and get some great value fresh greens delivered from our website and you will not only have spent massively less than you would have done on a visit to the supermarket but you will also be a lot healthier. Even better - get out and visit us at Exeter, Crediton or Taunton Farmers' Markets. See our website for more details.

see <http://www.manyfacesofpotatoes.co.uk/> for loads of ideas about cooking potatoes.

And, of course, see www.linscombe.co.uk for direct access to the very best local vegetables you can buy.

