

Market Menu – February

January has been a bad month for pricing and availability, with many items reaching record levels. We are hoping for February to buck that trend, but only time and weather will tell.

As Valentines inevitably fills your restaurants this month there are lots of nice things about to make your romancing couples forget the cheesiness of the day! **Pomegranates** are always good quality this time of year and are always a nice garnish or feature for your plates. Another fruit that is also in its prime and are worth considering for your menus are **Passion Fruits** as well.



Spanish Onions may begin to develop problems with brown rot inside the onion. This is not easy to spot. The bulb may feel firm on the outside but be rotten and unusable a few layers down. Smaller **English Onions** resist the rot rather better and, in my opinion, keep their flavour better in storage.

Shallots will remain sound, although some will inevitably start sprouting.

Purple Sprouting Broccoli can be in short supply due to the hard frosts, but being a winter crop it should last for a good few months yet and prices should drop if the weather plays ball. The dark leaves are delicious and tender enough to eat on their own, which is just as well, as there are often few sprouts (flower buds) to be found at the beginning of the season. Don't forget about **Curly Kale** which is at its best and supplies are improving each year.



In fruit, **Spanish Strawberries** are one of the few highlights. They trickle in at first, but by mid-month are likely to flood the market. The fruit has a pleasant taste and can be surprisingly sweet for the time of year, although the tops can be quite pale.

Courgette prices are unstable and commanding big money at the market.

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Savoy Cabbages are almost guaranteed to be good and **Spring Greens** will look fresher and tender.

A product that is becoming more and more popular on menus are **Baby Violet Artichokes**. Not only are they versatile, they can give you something a little different for a side dish. **Jerusalem Artichokes** are also a good choice as is **Salsify** which is actually quite versatile as well.

The Rolls Royce of Rhubarb **Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb** is replaced by the outdoor unblanched crop at some point during the month.



Bramley Apples remain a good choice in February. **English Cox's** can become soft.

All Lettuces are still at the mercy of the weather and so far, high prices do reflect that. **Lettuces** such as **Iceberg, Cos, Gem, Lollo Rosso, Lolla Bionda, and Frisee** can be in very short supply and therefore very expensive. **Radicchio** can be a little variable and the price may shoot up if the Italian crop doesn't hold up well in storage. While the fairly underused **Yellow Chicory** remain great value for money. **Red Chicory** is also great quality but commands a slightly higher price than the yellow.

If you are looking for a nice Valentines Day garnish why not try **Edible Orchids** or **Violas** for your plates, **Violas** are my personal favourites. If you want a nice mix of edible flowers order the premium mixed edible flowers. Other varieties of edible flowers available include **Tagets** and **Tiny Tagets** (Have a nice orange flavour), **Roses, Nasturtiums, Fennel, Apple Blossoms,** and **Bellis Daisies** to name a few. Please note that we don't stock these lines so they will need to be pre-ordered.



Clementine's and **Satsuma's** have started to be turn a bit scruffy. We will be replaced by a variety call **Nardicots** which are a sweet easy peeling orange that is part of the mandarin family. **Blood Oranges** will continue to be very good and will become bloodier inside.

The Cape Grape (South Africa) season started early this year. Supplies of **Red and Black Seedless** may be short.

Cape Peaches, Nectarines, and **Plums** are likely to remain in good supply.

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Figs will also be a decent choice for you Valentines Menu's as they are in the top 10 in the aphrodisiac foods list.

If you are looking for something a bit different as a side dish why not try **Eryngii Mushrooms** (AKA King Oyster Mushrooms). They are good value for money and have a resemblance to more expensive Cepe Mushrooms.



Mange tout, Sugar snaps and **Extra Fine Beans** are likely to be plentiful too.

If you are looking for colour, flavour and good value for money try roasting some of the larger **beetroots** together. They are all available by the and come in **purple, golden, and candy** varieties.



Another good option this time of year that brings more colour and flavour to your plates are **Carrots**. We stock them in all shapes, sizes, and colours. From **Jumbo** to **Chantenay**, and all the **Heritage Carrots** in **Purple, Yellow** and **White** varieties.



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