

News For July

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Good food; great cooking; healthy eating

Debbie Pryer

What an extraordinary month June turned out to be. I've just read my last newsletter and I'm talking about eating in the garden and picking strawberries. Well I did pick some but a lot rotted of because of the rain. It's strange how this weather is affecting what I want to eat. My thoughts are that I should be enjoying summer salads and light and lovely summer food, yet my body is saying let's have something nice and warm like soup or a roast dinner! I'm finding it hard to eat 'naturally' for the time of year and I'm surprised at how much the weather or rather the lack of warm sunshine is affecting me. Never mind, let's hope and keep our fingers crossed that July turns into the summer of our dreams. Long hot days, cooling rain at night and gentle breezes when we need to cool down. And then we can cook the food that we want to eat.

Take care *Debbie*

The Top New Superfruit

Wouldn't you know it? After searching the world for super fruits and berries it turns out the good old

British blackcurrant

has now been hailed as the ultimate super fruit. According to research, the berries have more vitamins, minerals and antioxidants than 20 other fruits that have been tested including the trendy goji berry and even blueberries. Plus compounds in blackcurrants called anthocyanins can help to prevent loads of stuff including MRSA infections and diabetes.

Luckily for us it's **blackcurrant** season.



A Quick recipe for Pizza (easy enough for kids to make)

Make a scone base. 6oz self raising flour, 1 oz of butter rubbed into the flour. Mix in some milk until you have a soft, but not sticky dough. Roll out on a floured surface and place on an oiled baking tray.

Make the sauce by cooking one tin tomatoes with some crushed garlic, oregano, salt, pepper and a teaspoon of sugar for about 20 mins, until thick.

Once the sauce has cooled, spread onto the pizza base then add mozzarella cheese and other bits and pieces, peppers, mushroom, olives, ham, whatever you love. Cook in a hot oven for about 20 mins.

EXCITING NEWS

In the future, all the food that I take into schools for the 'Fun with Food' workshops will be supplied by the Old Dairy Farm Shop, in Langley. This means it will be seasonal food, sourced from local suppliers, which for me is such an important part of the message that I want to give.



The Old Dairy is run by Steve Oram. There is a whole range of foods in the shop from pies to yoghurts, fruit and veg to meat and fish. Or you can see what's available online, www.theolddairy-online.co.uk and order what you want. They deliver to many areas which makes it really easy for you to have seasonal food from local suppliers, delivered to your door.

While I was at the Old Dairy I bought some smoked mackerel fillets, smoked by local suppliers in Griggs of Hythe. We had them for our dinner the same evening. The fish was succulent, and full of smoky, gutsy flavours. With so much flavour you hardly need anything to go with it, so we just had a simple green salad with a lemony dressing and some homemade bread.

Over the past few weeks I have been running a cookery course at **Cedars School in Maidstone.**

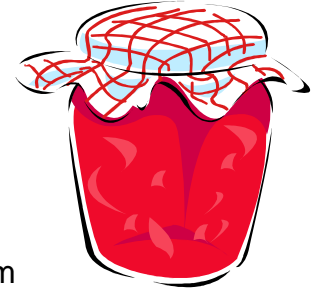
It's been great fun and the teenagers who took part seemed to have loved the experience. Here I am with a couple of them and the results of our last session together, when they choose what dishes to cook. It was a hectic session but the results were pretty amazing as you can see. If this is something you could do with at your school please give me call.



It's summer time, and soft fruits are plentiful,

so why not make **Jam.**

I promise there is no secret, it can easily be made in a morning and you will never be able to buy anything that tastes this good.



Make sure you have some really fab **soft fruit, try raspberries, redcurrants, blackcurrants, or strawberries.** Buy from your local farm shop or farmer. You will also need to buy jam sugar. 1 bag for every 800 grams of fruit.

You will also need about **4 empty jars with lids.** Wash with hot soapy water and then place in the oven on a low heat while you make the jam. This will sterilize them. Put a couple of saucers in the freezer for testing the jam later on.

Begin by finding a **nice big saucepan.** Place the fruit in the pan and empty the bag of sugar on top. **Give it a stir and place on a very low heat.** Leave while you have coffee.

Every 15 mins or so, **stir.** Make sure you get right into the corners. After a while, lift the spoon out of the jam and run your finger across the back of the spoon. If you can **feel grains** it's not ready. Once all the grains have all dissolved and you can't feel any in the bottom of the pan its **ready to boil.**

Now turn the heat right up, and **stand back.** Once it starts boiling like mad, **start timing.** You need to leave it for **4 mins.** Don't stir. Then turn out the heat and drop a small drop onto a cold saucer. Leave for a few seconds then push the drop with your finger. **If it wrinkles,** it's at setting point. If not put it back on the heat and cook for another couple of mins.

Once it's reached **setting point,** leave to settle while you have another cup of coffee. If you have a scum on top of the jam, try adding a few knobs of butter and then stir them in. Using a ladle or a jug, spoon into warm **jars.** Put lids on and do up tight. **Job done.** Be smug and satisfied as you put them in the cupboard.

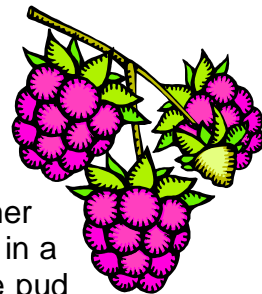
The Farmer Giles Award

This month it goes to **The Bull Hotel in Bridport.** We stayed at this 'boutique hotel' last month. It boasts the restaurant uses organic, locally sourced food from local suppliers. The fact is that Barramundi, on the menu, is not caught off the Dorset coast and the waiter was eager to tell me that it is the most popular fish in Australia. Well good for Australia, but I was in Dorset, not 2 miles from the coast, where they catch shiny, fat mackerel every day. But none of them made it to the menu. Add to that the chef was unable to produce a dessert for my husband who has a milk/cream/dairy allergy; it made for a very disappointing dinner.



Our best meal while we were away, was ham egg and chips with a hot mug of tea, served by very nice ladies in the beachside café on the West Beach. Great value, great food, freshly cooked. No claims about being local or organic but it hit the spot just right.

What to eat in July



July and the delicious fruits that come with our summer months are now plentiful. In season are fragrant **raspberries**. Late strawberries will still be around as well as **redcurrants** and **blackcurrants**. Why not make a summer pudding of mixed soft fruits. Just line a buttered dish with white bread and spoon in a mix of summer fruits that has been warmed through with a little sugar. Finish the pud with a layer of bread and then place a saucer on the top and weight down with a can of beans. Leave overnight in the fridge, turn out the next day and wait for it to be admired by all.

Tomatoes also have a season although nowadays we are able to buy them all year round. In the summer they should be sweeter and are fabulous for cooking or eating raw. There are so many different types there must be a tomato for every occasion, from tiny sweet cherry toms to large beefy boys. Why not see how many different types you can try this summer and grow your own next year. As always try to buy local as the taste will be far superior from anything in the supermarkets, however much you pay. Tomatoes taste good made into fresh pasta sauces, or roasted with other veg, stuffed into red peppers with garlic, or sliced and drizzled with olive oil and seasoned with black pepper and sea salt. Tomatoes contain lycopene which actually protects our skin against the sun's harmful rays, one more reason to fill up on these lovely red fruits.

Something you might like to try is **Fennel**. In season now, it's a large bulb with a feather top. It works well with fish or chicken. You can use it raw in salad; try mixing it with oranges in a salad as the citrus cuts nicely through the aniseed taste or braise it with white wine and serve with grated parmesan cheese.



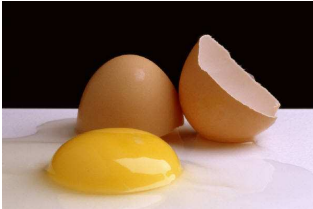
Beans means loads of them. If you have planted runner beans then chances are they will start cropping this month. And once they start there is no stopping them. Enjoy raw and cooked, pickled, stir fried, steamed, etc

Also around will be **beetroot**, **cherries**, **courgettes** and **cucumbers**, **gooseberries** and all sorts of **lettuce**. Pak choi, **peas**, **peppers**, **new potatoes**, **outdoor rhubarb**, salad onions, **spinach** and **watercress**.

An absolute feast.

WORKING LUNCH

Cook some extra pasta at dinner time and rinse it in cold water. To make your lunch, add 1 teaspoon of red pesto to 1 tablespoon of mayo. (To make a lighter mix you could add half yoghurt to half mayo). Chop cherry toms, cucumber, pepper, radish, spring onions etc, as much as you want. Place pasta, veggies and sauce in a dish and mix well. Have a perfectly ripe peach for dessert. Lunch done.



Have you thought about improving your cooking skills, or maybe you would like to add to the range of foods that you are happy to cook? I am offering **new cookery lessons** at Tonbridge Adult Education Centre, on Saturday mornings, 10am – 12noon.

I will supply the ingredients and classes will be kept small. All you have to do is **book a place** and turn up. The first class is aimed at a parent with one child (can be a teenager, it's up to you), while the others are aimed at giving you some new skills and ideas on what to eat and cook. I promise you will have fun plus you get to eat your results

13 October **MONSTER MUNCHES**

a course for parent and child. *Have fun*, and **cook** some great food to make your Halloween or bonfire celebrations go with a whizz £30

10 November **Simply Seasonal Food**

Make the most of **seasonal produce**, **cook** simple and adaptable recipes that are *what you want to eat now*. £28

1 December **READY IN 30!**

Ready, steady, cook. *Fresh, fast meals* to get you from Monday to Friday. £28

19th Jan **Warming Food for Winter**

Cook stylish, impressive, **comfort food** that can be warmed through when *you are ready* to eat. £28

To book

call 01622 727543

e. debs@freshlands.me.uk

Honey, we sorted the hay fever.

Just in case you haven't heard the best cure for hay fever is to eat local honey. Apparently it contains just what's needed to stop the horrible sneezes and runny noses associated with hay fever. Many people are finding this simple cure works for them.

1 teaspoon a day will ease, or in lots of cases, completely stop the symptoms.

But it has to be local honey.

I recommend Blue Bell Hill Apiaries, run by my good friend Norman and his son Adrian, they supply many of the shops in the area and I use their honey in my Honey Fudge Sauce.

To find out where you can buy their honey, contact them through their website www.bbha.biz





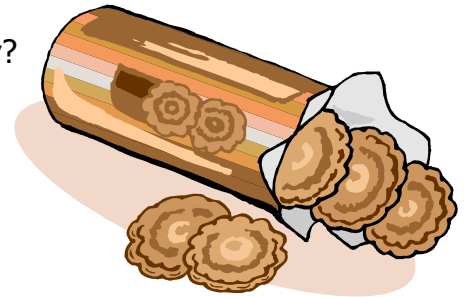
WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY WHY did the mum in the supermarket spend time trying to persuade her toddler that the food that she really wanted for her lunch was a Dairy Lea Lunchable? They are full of salt (processed foods) plus they are expensive (you are paying for the packaging etc). The toddler kept shaking her head. The mum kept on persuading and I kept walking, but I wanted to ask **why**. Why not have some nice crusty fresh bread and some soft English cheese.

I didn't ask but if you see someone being marched out of a supermarket it's probably me when I haven't been able to stop myself from asking. And don't even get me started on the guy who wrote to the KM to bemoan the fact that there is no drive through MacDonal'd's or KFC in his area.

Apparently this means he cannot feed his children while he is out in his car!

Still Serving Biscuits at Meetings?

Is your employer doing what they can to help keep you healthy? Research has shown that healthy eating relates directly to business performance. From 15,000 people surveyed, it was found that people who didn't eat well have more sickness absence and lower productivity than their healthier colleagues.



So what could an employer do? Here's five ideas.

1 Ditch the doughnuts.

I used to do this so I know it happens but why buy donuts when you have done well. How about asking them to buy a bowl of cherries instead.

2 Take the biscuits away from the meetings.

You don't need them and they cost money.

3 Ask for water coolers to be installed

so you can keep your self well hydrated throughout the day. This also helps to stop you feeling tired in the afternoon and reaching for a chocolate bar

4 Take away the vending machine.

They are just too easy and usually have nothing in them that is good for you.

5 Ask them to supply fruit for free.

With the money saved from biscuits at meetings they could use the cash to supply a piece of fruit for everyone. Even if it was once or twice a week it would be a great start.

I'm really pleased to send you my newsletter and I hope you find the news and info interesting and useful. If you are no longer interested in receiving this type of information or have received it in error, please let me know and I will remove you from my list. I would also like to spread the word, so please feel free to pass this newsletter on to anyone who you feel would be interested in food news.