

Is it a vegetable or an alien?

What on Earth is that vegetable? That pale green thing that has a 'space hopper' belly and Mr Tickle arms? Is it a vegetable or an alien?

This crazy-looking thing is kohlrabi, or what the Germans like to call a 'cabbage turnip'. Don't let that put you off, though. This unusual vegetable can be used to create culinary masterpieces. Kashmiri households will have kohlrabi on their dinner plate three to four times a week. They pair it with chilli, of course, while Germans cook it with cream. Germans adore it, but then they love David Hasselhoff as well!

Like potatoes, they have high water content, so chips are one way to go. Rather than deep-frying them, opt for the shallow fried option using olive oil; cook until golden, then add a touch of salt, pepper and a squeeze of fresh lemon.

Our Italian growers would probably approve of this recipe. Our kohlrabi is from the beautiful Marina di Ragusa on the south coast of Sicily. Alba Bio, who grow them for us, specialise in all types of tomatoes (Cherry, Vine, San Marzano, and some other fancy varieties), but they also plant aubergine, kohlrabi and courgette in order to rotate the soil.

It's not good to plant the same vegetables into the same soil year after year, because it would use only certain types of minerals. So, our growers have to rotate their fields. This is why this mystery veg works its way into your bag from time to time. We hope it tickles your taste buds!

Half-blood oranges

Another little gem we have shipped (never air freighted!) from Italy are blood oranges, of which most are the Tarocco variety.

This is said to be the sweetest and most flavorful of the three types. It's the most popular table orange in Italy and is referred to as "half-blood", because the flesh is not accentuated in red pigmentation as much as with the other two varieties of blood orange - Moro and Sanguinello.

The Tarocco is one of the world's most popular oranges because of its sweetness and juiciness. It has the highest Vitamin C content of any orange variety grown in the world due to the fertile soil surrounding Mount Etna.

The name 'Tarocco' is thought to be derived from an exclamation of wonder expressed by the farmer who was shown this fruit by its discoverer.

Feedback: thefarmerschoice@abelandcole.co.uk

This week's bags

Vegetable

Carrots
Celeriac
Small Cabbage
Green Tomatoes
Potatoes

Combi

Bananas (Fairtrade)
Carrots
Chard
Kohl Rabi
Pears

Fruit

Apples
Bananas (Fairtrade)
Blood Oranges
Pears

Please note that the planned bag contents shown may vary through the week due to unforeseen changes in weather and availability. If we do have to change the contents we will replace unavailable items with something of equal value.

Tips

Kohl Rabi is a member of the cabbage family, with a mild, sweet flavour – like a cross between broccoli and apple. Store in a bag in the fridge for up to two weeks. Peel off the skin and enjoy it raw in a salad or coleslaw, lightly steamed, or added to a stir-fry.

Peanut Noodle Salad

A tasty, quick, and healthy meal - which makes great leftovers to take to work. Makes 4 servings.

6 tablespoons **smooth peanut butter**
3 tablespoons **soy sauce** or tamari
2 tablespoons rice or cider **vinegar**
1 teaspoon minced **garlic**

400-450g **spaghetti**, soba, or egg noodles
1 tablespoon **toasted sesame oil**

4 big handfuls of **vegetables** of your choice (thinly shredded kohlrabi, carrot or cabbage; sliced red pepper or onion; chopped broccoli or cauliflower)
Optional additions: tofu, cooked chicken, toasted peanuts or cashews, Spring onions, coriander

In a medium bowl combine the peanut butter, soy sauce, vinegar, garlic, and 120ml **water**. Whisk to make a thick sauce. Cook the spaghetti in boiling water until just tender. Drain, and toss in a large bowl with the sesame oil. Add the vegetable mixture of your choice and enough of the sauce to coat, tossing gently to combine. Serve at room temperature or cold.

Warm Lentil Salad with Sausage & Fennel

Use any sausages you like – pork, lamb, venison, smoked, German, vegetarian, chicken, etc. Or, if you're not into sausages, top with grilled or smoked fish. Serves 4 as a main course, with crusty bread and butter.

200g **dried lentils**, (called Puy, green, or speckled)
1 litre cold **water** (or chicken stock, or a mixture)
1/2 teaspoon **salt**

1 medium **fennel bulb**, stalks discarded, fronds reserved and chopped (fronds optional)
3 tablespoons **olive oil**
1 medium **onion**, finely chopped
1 large **carrot**, diced
500-600g **sausages**
1/2 teaspoon **ground black pepper**
1 tablespoon **red wine vinegar**

Bring lentils and water (or stock) to the boil in a saucepan, then reduce the heat to low and simmer, uncovered, until lentils are just tender but not falling apart, about 15-20 minutes. Meanwhile, cut the fennel into small dice. Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium-low heat until hot but not smoking, then add the onion, carrot, fennel, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover the pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes. In a separate pan, cook the sausages until browned and cooked through (you can also bake or grill them). Transfer to a cutting board. Drain the cooked lentils in a sieve set over a bowl and reserve the cooking water. Stir the lentils into the vegetables with enough cooking water to just moisten everything, and cook until heated through. Stir in the pepper, vinegar, and 1 tablespoon of fennel fronds. Cut the sausages diagonally and serve atop the lentils. Sprinkle with optional extra fennel fronds, and drizzle with a little extra oil if you like.

Kids' Cookery

Carrot & Cheese Bake

A great side dish to make with help from an adult. Serve with chicken and salad. Serves 4-6

- 50g **butter**, left out of the fridge for an hour
- 75g **porridge oats**
- 175g **cheddar cheese**, grated
- 450g **carrots**, grated
- 25g **plain flour**
- 100ml **milk**
- 1 teaspoon **dried thyme**

Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/gas5. Combine all of the ingredients together in a big bowl and mix very well. With a bit of extra butter or oil, grease a baking dish. Spoon the mixture into the baking dish and smooth it out a bit. Carefully place it in the oven, and bake for 30 minutes or until the cheese is nicely browned on top.