

# Farmers' Market

## OF THE MONTH

With Benjamin Dent, chairman  
Kent Farmers' Market Association



### Shipbourne



In 1285, Edward I granted the village of Shipbourne permission to hold a weekly market. In 2003, the Parochial Church Council revived this ancient market and, as in medieval times, the only covered building large enough to house the market was the church. So, every Thursday morning, St Giles' Church next to the village green is transformed into a bustling Farmers' Market. There are often some 14 stalls inside, together with a further half-a-dozen stalls in the approach to the church. The market is run entirely by volunteers, and all profits made are given to both local and African agricultural charities.

The market regularly attracts more than 200 customers and has an extremely loyal following, some shoppers even travelling regularly from south east London. The market's success has been recognised by its customers, who voted it Best Farmers' Market in Kent in 2005, and it was a finalist again in 2007. In November 2007, the market was runner-up in BBC Radio 4's Food and Farming Awards for Best Farmers' Market in the UK.

Products on sale include the basics such as bread, cheese, meat, fish, seasonal vegetables and fruit, and also more usual items like organic salads, mushrooms, comb honey and chocolates, plus ready-made puddings and Italian food (made with local produce).

### Food file

Shipbourne is a few miles north east of Tonbridge on the A227. The market is held every Thursday from 9am to 11am in St Giles Church, next door to The Chaser Inn.

**Next month:** Christmas Farmers' Markets in the spotlight.

To contact the Kent Farmers' Market Association, tel: 01892 870666 or email: [info@kfma.org.uk](mailto:info@kfma.org.uk). To find your nearest Farmers' Market, please visit our website: [www.kent-life.co.uk](http://www.kent-life.co.uk)



## Recipe of the month

### Venison casserole

This month, a classic casserole using game and seasonal vegetables. Venison should be hung for at least 10 to 14 days. The Jerusalem artichokes are optional, depending on preference and availability, but I relish their earthy flavour, and indeed am growing my own for the first time this year. This casserole is not as heavy as some, and since it takes a while to cook – and can even be cooked the day before and reheated – it is ideal for autumnal dinner parties.



### NOVEMBER

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| <i>Serves 4</i>                               | <i>1 wine glass of port</i>                    |
| <i>900g/2 lb diced venison fillet</i>         | <i>300g shallots</i>                           |
| <i>Cooking oil, eg Kentish oil</i>            | <i>An onion, a carrot, a parsnip</i>           |
| <i>seed rape oil or olive oil</i>             | <i>3-4 Jerusalem artichoke</i>                 |
| <i>6 rashers of free-range bacon, chopped</i> | <i>Sprig of fresh thyme, sage and rosemary</i> |
| <i>3 sticks of celery</i>                     | <i>Pre-heat oven to</i>                        |
| <i>½ bottle of red wine</i>                   | <i>190C/375f/Gas Mark 5.</i>                   |

### Method

Heat two tablespoons of oil, and brown the venison, a little at a time. Place in a casserole dish.

Soften the onion and bacon in the same pan for a few minutes, then add the carrot, parsnip and celery. Cook until softened, then tip into the casserole. Add a splash of wine to the pan and deglaze the pan to extract the brown bits, which are full of flavour, and add them to the casserole. Place the casserole dish on the heat; add the wine, herbs and seasoning; bring to the simmer, and then cover and put in the oven for 1.5 hours. If you need to add more liquid now or later, use stock not more wine. Wine's acidity actually draws juice out of meat, and so adding too much risks leading to a fibrous texture.

After 90 minutes, peel the Jerusalem artichokes, and cut into roughly 2cm/1inch chunks. Brown the shallots in a little oil in a pan, before adding both vegetables and the port to the casserole.

Turn the oven down to 160C/325F/Gas mark 3. Cook for a further 30 minutes. Then either serve, or allow to cool, place in the refrigerator and gently reheat the following evening – when it will taste even better.

You can serve with mashed potato or, my preference, with roast potatoes and parsnips.

## Pick of the month's produce

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|----------|----------------------|
| Beetroot | Sea bass             |
| Kale     | Lobster              |
| Leeks    | Mussels              |
| Parsnips | Partridge            |
| Pumpkins | Pheasant             |
| Apples   | Mallard              |
| Pears    | Jerusalem artichokes |
| Quince   |                      |
| Mackerel |                      |

