

Red Bananas

The red banana or Red Dacca is a relatively unknown banana variety for Melbourne shoppers. I was lucky enough to be introduced to red bananas by Julian, owner of [Senserrick Green Grocer](#) and I must say it has been hard to go back to the Cavendish and Lady Finger after tasting these. Red bananas are much sweeter, have a very creamy texture and a slight flavour of mango. At around \$8 a kilogram they are not the cheapest bananas but if you are a Queenslander or lover of tropical fruits and miss that taste of ripe fruit one only seems to get *in situ* then you will love these. They are a cooler climate variety, so the slow growing seems to increase their sugar production. Red bananas also have a higher beta-carotene and vitamin C content than other varieties. Wait until the skin turns a dull brick red then the flesh will be fully ripe. If your local green grocer doesn't have red bananas ask them and I am sure they will be happy to oblige and get some in for you.

Kensington Pride

Yippee, my favorite mango, Kensington Pride, has come South again. Originally hailing from the Queensland town of Bowen and sometimes called Pride of Bowen they are grown in the Northern Territory as well as Queensland and supplies are plentiful this year. Small KPs from the NT are now selling for around \$3 and as we enter the summer season the Queensland ones will come on board and then we should be right for mangoes until the end of February. These mangoes have a real mango flavour rather than just being honey sweet; you can guess I am not a huge fan of recent cultivars aimed at longer

shelf life and higher flesh to stone ratios. The others are still nice mangoes but as the name suggests KP producers have every right to be proud. I guess that is why despite their erratic seasonal growth they are still the most popular, forming the largest segment of the local mango market. Check out the recipe for mango chia pudding and enjoy mangoes for breakfast or dessert.

Grand Final With Pure Pie

Footy purists who love to watch the game with a traditional pie can make a real occasion of the grand final with a [Pure Pie](#). These locally made pies are full of meaty pieces of beef in a nice gravy and pastry case and are really worth getting in for the day. You can order and pick from their shop in 383 Bay Street, Port Melbourne or Collins Square, Docklands or [order online](#). Their Port Melbourne shop will be open the whole grand final weekend. While you are there why not try Pure Pie's sweet pear and raspberry pie or their classic apple pie. Pure Pie also frequent selected farmer's markets around Melbourne and will be at [Coburg North Primary School](#) this Saturday morning.



Bridge Farm Rhubarb

One of my favorite stalls at the farmers markets I frequent is [Bridge Farm](#). They are specialist in growing two things I really love to eat; asparagus and rhubarb. Happily they keep me supplied through the colder months with ruby red rhubarb and once spring hits I'm ready to pounce on their wonderfully fresh green spears of asparagus. There is something special about the soil down at Koo Wee Rup that consistently produces flavoursome rhubarb and exemplary asparagus. I cut the rhubarb into 4 cm segments and bake them, with a couple of dessert spoons of honey and either the juice of a lemon or orange, in a ceramic or pyrex dish covered in foil. The aim is to cook them until soft but not until they disintegrate which means you need to check on them without stirring or prodding

them (a prick with a fine skewer will do) after about 20 minutes at 180°C and then maybe leave them for a further 5-10 minutes with the oven off. Baked rhubarb is wonderful served cold on muesli with natural yoghurt, made into a crumble and even partnered with some apple or put into pies, tarts or cakes. The colour is very appealing to the eye in the gloomy winter months and fortunately it will still be around with the wild spring weather while we transition to the green of asparagus. Expect their first crop of asparagus at Saturday's market at the [Collingwood Children's Farm](#).



Seedless Mandarins

At the [Collingwood Children's Farm farmers market](#) this Saturday look for Doran Tolmi Citrus from Mildura. They will have baskets of seedless mandarins that are really juicy and with great flavour. Unlike supermarket mandas you don't need to take two to work as insurance against a dried out dud; with

these I can guarantee that each one will be great. Each mandarin comes with a leaf and stem still attached to show you just how freshly picked they are. These guys love their citrus and have plenty on offer for tasting. Look for their blood oranges and “yellows” (great big, easy peel, low acid oranges) in the next couple of weeks too.



Tolmi Citrus set-up outside Abbotsford Convent