



February

Seasonal & local

Ring the changes, says **Clare Hargreaves**, by trying a lean, full-flavoured meat – or escaping for a Valentine's break

Award-winning market

An enterprising student initiative set up less than 18 months ago has been named Best Food Market in BBC Radio 4's Food & Farming Awards. Four PhD students established Sutton Bonington Farmers' Market, at Nottingham University, with only seven stallholders.

'The campus is in the middle of nowhere, so it was impossible for students to buy good local produce,' says Adeel Khan, the market's president. 'We now have 30 stalls. Staff and students go there for lunch on market day – the first Wednesday in the month during term-time.'

Stalls sell takeaway lunches, meat, veg, fruit, bread and cakes. In May there are cookery demos, and the market is also popular with residents from local villages (su.nottingham.ac.uk).



Bistro helps young chefs



Students at the Young Chefs Academy at Bradford's Forster Community College don't just get classroom tuition to prepare them for working in the hospitality and food industries.

The College also runs a Bistro & Deli, which enables students to get practical experience. The Bistro offers affordable meals to students, staff and the public (www.forster.ac.uk), using veg from the College garden and ingredients from local producers.

Ben Davy, who runs the Academy, says: 'Many of our trainee chefs come from difficult backgrounds, with little or no education. It's incredible some of the talent we've discovered.'



Game for pigeon

The game season has ended but, unlike most other game birds, wood pigeon has no 'closed' season, which means it's available all year – and it's deliciously cheap.

Pigeon, like wild duck and grouse, is a darker-fleshed bird. Because of its wild diet and lifestyle, the meat is very lean, with a robust, gamey taste and texture. If you can't find it at your local butcher's, supermarket or farm shop, try a game dealer.

Most of the meat on pigeons is on the breast, but they can still be roasted

whole. Brown all over in a hot pan, then roast them for 10 minutes in a hot oven – allow one per person.

You can also buy the breast meat off the bone. Pan-fry it for 2-3 minutes each side and eat it hot as a winter supper, or sliced in a salad with a tangy vinaigrette. I also love pigeon breasts sandwiched together, wrapped in puff pastry and cooked in a hot oven for about 15 minutes, for Pigeon en croûte!

Gourmet getaways for a Valentine's treat

**3
of the
best**

**The Swan at Wedmore, Somerset,
theswanwedmore.com**

Tom Blake used to work at River Cottage, and his gutsy cooking has a similar style, using scrupulously sourced ingredients. On the menu you might find Potted pig or Roasted Jerusalem artichokes with walnuts & Ticklemore goat's cheese, and there are homemade cakes at teatime. This beautifully restored Georgian hotel-gastropub in the heart of the Somerset Levels also has six elegant rooms, all different, all quirky.



**The Three Chimneys, Colbost, Isle of Skye,
threechimneys.co.uk**

Such a romantic setting – a gloriously isolated spot on the rugged northern coast of Skye. The food, prepared by Michael Smith (of BBC Two's *Great British Menu*), is as classy as its rooms. Try the seven-course Skye tasting menu, based on local ingredients such as scallops and langoustines. Finish with the marmalade pudding. Stay in one of the six boutique-style rooms in the House Over-By, next door.



**The Wellington Arms, Baughurst, Hampshire,
thewellingtonarms.com**

There are just two rooms at this gourmet bolthole in the woods of Hampshire. But what rooms they are! Converted from an oak barn, they have designer furniture, top-notch bedding, and tea cosies knitted by co-owner Simon Page's mum.



The pub keeps pigs and hens, and grows much of its own veg – all of which chef Jason King uses to produce some superbly tasty dishes.