

23rd January 2012

Kentish cues claim the race victory...again!



Once again, the state-of-the-art greenhouse, the expert growers and the excellent light levels of Thanet Earth have ensured that cucumbers grown at Thanet Earth are the first to appear on supermarket shelves.

Each year since Thanet Earth began harvesting in 2009, its cucumbers have appeared consistently early. Tradition now is for the first fruits to be delivered directly by growers Addy Breugem and Arjan de Gier to their local Tesco Extra store in Broadstairs.

A&A Growers, who own and operate the cucumber greenhouse at Thanet Earth, picked their first fruits on 17th January. These cucumbers will be on sale exclusively in some Tesco stores served by Snodland depot for the next two weeks whilst production steadily increases to serve more widely.

How are Thanet Earth able to produce cucumbers so early?

The young plants started growing just before Christmas once the greenhouse had been thoroughly cleaned from last season. They grow quickly and effectively thanks to natural light levels (the cucumber greenhouse is not equipped with artificial lighting), the high greenhouses, the unusual 'high wire' growing technique and plenty of warmth provided by Combined Heat & Power units. All of this, and of course the brilliant growers, Addy and Arjan, with their commitment and experience to this greenhouse venture is what sets Thanet Earth apart from its UK rivals.

New cucumber plants will be planted twice more through this year to maintain a constant supply and quality fruit.

Did you know...?

Every year, the Thanet Earth cucumber greenhouse produces so many cucumbers that if you laid them end to end, they'd stretch from Thanet across to Colombia, California, Botswana or Japan, depending which direction you take! In fact, we're pleased to report that in a mere 42 years' time, we'll have grown enough cucumbers to reach the moon!

What about the bendy ones?



Cucumber grower Arjan de Gier (left) showing Steve Deeble, Tesco technical manager, around the greenhouse.

Thanet Earth does, of course, get some bendy cucumbers that can't be sold to retailers. They get far fewer than other producers because they use a high wire growing technique that makes good use of gravity to even out stubborn fruits and to encourage straighter growth. The bend tends to come from an obstruction met by the growing fruit such as it pushing against a plant stem, or sometimes an area of skin damage will mean the cells on that side of the fruit grow less quickly than on the other side – resulting in a bendy cucumber. No waste goes to landfill from Thanet Earth. Unsaleable fruit goes to places like Wildwood Trust to feed the animals, or is taken by a farmer to use as a soil improver.

There was something of a surprise for shoppers at Tesco Extra in Westwood Cross last week when they reached the fresh produce aisles.

Thanet Earth cucumber grower, Addy Breugem, had delivered the first fruits of his 2012 crop to his local Tesco store. Cllr Mrs Iris Johnston, the Mayor of Margate, came along to welcome in the very first of the new British crop and to help Thanet Earth and Tesco give shoppers a taste of their locally-grown cucumbers.

Lesedi Vine and Kirsty Huntlea from Thanet Earth Marketing handed out delicious canapé snacks of stuffed cucumber, supported by Jo Scott from the Broadstairs Food Festival and by Sheila Williams, the Community Champion at the Tesco Extra store.



(L to R) Jo Scott, Cllr Mrs Iris Johnston, Kirsty Huntlea, Sheila Williams and Addy Breugem

To mark this special occasion, Addy had grown some beautiful heart-shaped cucumbers using a special plastic casing.

They proved a big hit with customers – particularly with the young children in the store.

Tesco have been working hard on increasing the volume and profile of their local sourcing, and this initiative from Thanet Earth is a great example of how suppliers can work in partnership with stores and local people.

Chris Minter, Tesco Local Marketing Manager, says: “Thanks to our dedicated local sourcing office based in the South of England, we are delighted to work closely with Kent-based expert cucumber growers, Thanet Earth, to offer local Tesco customers the opportunity to sample the first locally-grown cucumbers of the year.”

The Thanet Earth cucumbers will be on sale in some Tesco stores served by Snodland depot for the next two weeks whilst harvests increase enough to allow wider supply.



Information for editors:



Thanet Earth is a state-of-the-art greenhouse development in Kent. When completed the site will feature seven enormous greenhouses, producing tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. So far, three of the greenhouses have been constructed and are fully operational alongside an on-site packhouse. The crops are sold to the UK’s supermarkets.

Thanet Earth is a joint venture, owned jointly by the Fresca Group of companies and three specialist grower companies.

For information about the business, its background and operations, see www.thanetearth.com

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