

This week we are looking at two seasonal stars that hold the potential to benefit our gut. Apples and chicory are gracing the shelves of our greengrocers right now, and it would be almost rude not to take advantage of them.

Apples are an excellent source of vitamin C and potassium, with most of the nutrients present in the skin including the phytochemicals ellagic acid and quercetin, shown to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Jam makers will know apples are high in pectin, a soluble, gel-forming, fibre which is not only good for thickening jams, but helps improve the intestinal muscle's ability to push waste through the gastrointestinal tract.

Chicory is an excellent source of vitamin A, lutein and Zeaxanthin, and a good source of vitamin C. It also contains inulin, a prebiotic fibre that helps our beneficial gut bacteria thrive. Chicory is available in red or white varieties and of course, as I always go on about, if you have different colours, you consume different polyphenols, so go for the rainbow!

This pairing makes a lovely light appetiser or low effort finger food for entertaining.

Chicory boats with apple, walnut, and blue cheese

(Serves 4-8)

1 head of chicory (red or white)

1 apple (variety of your choice)

juice of half a lemon

handful of walnuts (halved)

50g blue cheese

In a small, dry frying pan on a medium heat, gently toast the walnuts until they just start to colour. Then remove from the heat and allow to cool.



Gently pull each leaf whole from the head of chicory, rinse and gently dab dry with a paper towel or cloth.

Core and thinly slice the apple and toss the apple slices in a bowl with the lemon juice to prevent them turning brown.

Standing the chicory leaves like boats pop a couple of slices of apple and a couple of walnuts into each leaf. Then crumble a little blue cheese into each boat and add a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil if you like.

Simple but delicious!

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