



Jerusalem Artichoke



It is already 25 years since Lifestyle by VZUG chef Stefan Meier got to know Mr Boog, his market gardener. And one of his first requests was Jerusalem artichoke, a tuber with a sweet but nutty flavour. Meier has to laugh: "My market gardener looked quizzically at me with a furrowed brow. 'What's that then?' he asked. We didn't have Jerusalem artichoke in our neck of the woods back then. Or rather we no longer had it!" Jerusalem artichoke is an old vegetable – the first sources dating back to the 17th century. But it was not until around the 19th century that it was cultivated locally.

Meier managed to persuade the vegetable grower and since then has received the tuber fresh from the field. Jerusalem artichoke is a winter vegetable that can be pulled fresh from the earth until well into March. Some are red, some white, but the different colours have no influence on flavour. And how can you tell if a Jerusalem artichoke is fresh and healthy? "The tuber must be hand-sized and really squirt when you cut into it!" says Meier. Otherwise it is floury and can't do the business, not even in the kitchen.

And yet again it is the many different ways you can use the vegetable that Meier treasures most. "For me, there's almost nothing better in winter than Jerusalem artichoke crisps!" They are quick to make: slice finely, brush with olive oil, lay on a baking tray and (depending on how juicy the slices are) dry in the oven for 3 to 4 hours. Or does he prefer a warming Jerusalem-artichoke soup? It's almost impossible for Meier to decide and he offers up this simple recipe in no time at all. "Slice the artichoke, add just enough bouillon to cover them and cook in the steam oven for one hour at 100°C, the puree." On Sundays, he enhances the



soup with cream and garnishes it with some black truffle. During the week, you can use all sorts of mushrooms to complement the basic dish. And if you find yourself already longing for spring in winter, try making your first spring salad of the year with chopped, raw Jerusalem artichoke, the first fresh herbs such as flat-leaf parsley and chives and a light vinaigrette.

Incidentally: say the words "Jerusalem artichoke" to vegetable grower Boog today and you'll get a happy smile instead of a questioning frown in return.