

Hogtown HomeGrown

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A cottage food law made my jam legal!

When I wrote and published last month's issue, I had no idea that portions of the front page article about my jam obsession, aka, "The Illegal Jam Company" would be out of date before the newsletter was distributed. As of July 1, Florida has joined more than twenty states nationwide with a law allowing "cottage foods." Florida House Bill 7209 permits home bakers and cooks to produce certain foods in their home kitchens and sell directly to consumers. By following specific labeling requirements and local licensing mandates, the small entrepreneur can easily start their own business.

Of course, if you want to strike it rich, the cap of \$15,000 in yearly sales and the prohibition on wholesale, internet or restaurant sales might slow down your race toward independent wealth. This bill provides the small producer a way to capitalize on a hobby or, in my case, obsession. It is important to note the law does not allow for anything other than direct sales, because it is through the accountability of direct producer-to-consumer transactions that the public's food safety is ensured.

If I ever want to allow my hobby/obsession to reach a wider market, I can still take the more traditional route—a food handling course, production in a commercial kitchen and wholesale distribution through stores and restaurants. Blue Oven Kitchens continues to work toward a commercial kitchen for North Central Florida, so that anyone with a dream bigger than the cottage food rules allow will have a place to start their business. As for The Illegal Jam Company (yes, the name remains the same), since all I make right now are lovingly-tended small batches of jams, jellies and preserves, I am happy with the new cottage food rules.

Now for the shameless plug—email me at hogtownhomegrown@gmail.com for the current inventory list so that you too can have some of The Illegal Jam Company's tasty (and legal) jam!

Brown Sugar Peach Jam

INGREDIENTS

18-20 ripe fresh peaches
8-12 cups boiling water
1 Tablespoon fresh lemon juice
2 cups light brown sugar, packed

DIRECTIONS

Cover peaches with boiling water, then dunk them in ice water (a colander helps). Rub with your hands and the peels will slip right off.

Cut peaches into chunks. Mash in the bottom of a large pot over medium heat. Add lemon juice and sugar. Stir until sugar is melted. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to simmer and cook uncovered, stirring occasionally, for 3-4 hours, until thickened.

Ladle into prepared jars and process 12-15 minutes. Store in a cool place.



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What's Fresh Right Now?

Beans—yardlong
Cabbage—green
Citrus—juices, oranges, grapefruit
Corn—yellow, bi-colored
Cucumbers—mini seedless, slicers
Eggplant—small/large italian, thai, small/large oriental
Garlic—chives
Greens—malabar spinach
Herbs—cilantro, basil
Honey—orange blossom, wildflower, gallberry, tupelo
Melon—cantaloupe, watermelon
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Mushrooms—shiitake, oyster, chanterelle
Okra
Onions—green scallions, dry yellow
Peas—white acre/creamer
Peppers—green/red sweet bell, hot varieties
Potatoes—red
Radish—microgreens
Shoots—pea, sunflower, corn
Sprouts—alfalfa, clover, quinoa, wheat, sunflower, garbanzo, mung bean, french lentil, green lentil, radish
Squash—zucchini, delicata, acorn, butternut, spaghetti
Tomatoes—red beefsteak, grape

Did you know the number of farmers markets has quadrupled since 2006?

Yet another farmers market has opened for business—at Thornebrook Village, near the intersection of NW 43rd Street and NW 16th Boulevard, behind the Marketplace where Fresh Market is located.

This Friday evening market has already seen success with nearby residents who walk in to shop. Vendors have produce, baked goods and prepared food. There are even crafts and antiques.

Local and Fresh— Zucchini

Featured in cuisines all over the world, zucchini is that ever present summer squash that becomes the butt of jokes during an over abundant harvest season. While the majority of varieties are green with a cylindrical shape, some zucchini can be a golden yellow and some green types are the size and shape of a softball. Large zucchini that can grow to the size of a baseball bat are known as marrows. They can be eaten, but the flavor of a small zucchini is far superior.

Served steamed, sautéed, roasted or grilled, zucchini has a tender texture that will keep its shape. Grated zucchini can be used in salads, cole slaws, spaghetti sauce, quick breads and even pancakes.

Look for firm squash with smooth skin. Store in a bag in the refrigerator. To prepare, wash well and trim the ends. It is not necessary to peel zucchini.

Zucchini with Lemon and Thyme

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup water
4 medium zucchini, sliced into rounds
10-12 small sprigs of fresh thyme
1 lemon, zested and juiced
freshly ground pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Heat water in a covered pan. Add zucchini, thyme and lemon zest. Cover and cook until zucchini is just tender.

Stir in lemon juice and pepper. Cook uncovered until most of the water evaporates.

When ready to serve, remove thyme stems—you can strip leaves from stems and put leaves back into pot with zucchini.

Serve hot, warm or cold. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Eggplant Chickpea Falafel

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tablespoon each ground coriander and cumin
- 1 medium Italian eggplant, roasted whole, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 15 ounce can OR 2 cups cooked chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- 1/2 cup tahini
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley, torn from stems
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon dried mint
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/4 - 1/3 cup canola oil

DIRECTIONS

In a dry skillet, toast the coriander and cumin over medium heat, until fragrant. Remove from heat and set aside.

Chop eggplant and chickpeas in a food processor. Except for the oil, add all remaining ingredients, including toasted spices, and process until combined and smooth. Spoon into a bowl, cover and refrigerate for at least one hour.

Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers.

Scoop out 1/3 cup mixture and form 1/2 inch thick patties with wet hands. Place directly into hot oil. Do not move for at least 3 minutes, so a browned crust forms. Repeat with all remaining falafel mixture. Carefully turn each falafel with a large spatula and cook until browned. Remove from pan and drain on paper towels. Serve hot. Leftovers do not taste nearly as good, so cook only as many falafel as needed.

Spicy Zucchini Carrot Salad

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium zucchini, shredded
- 3 carrots, shredded
- 1 Tablespoon each lemon juice, olive oil and white wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon each toasted coriander and toasted cumin
- Salt and pepper to taste
- cayenne pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Mix together all ingredients. Cover and refrigerate before serving.

Tahini Sauce

Beat one cup of water into one cup of tahini. This seems to take forever, but eventually you will have a creamy sauce—try using a long-tined fork. Season to taste with grated garlic, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate. Variations of this sauce include plain yogurt—mix 1 part sauce as described above with 1 part yogurt—for a fabulous salad dressing. Other variations include fresh herbs, especially parsley.

Menu

- Eggplant Chickpea Falafel
- Spicy Zucchini Carrot Salad
- Tahini Sauce
- Tomato-Cucumber Salad
- Plain Yogurt
- Pita Bread

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Tricks and Tips

As a kid, I sat on the kitchen counter or the kitchen stool watching both Mom and Granny work in their kitchens. Now that I'm a Granny, I take every possible opportunity to pop a kid up on our kitchen counter. They learn to listen, follow rules, try new tastes, and, most importantly, help make their own food. And the bonus? It's fun for both of us!

Leah's Cookies

INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick butter, very soft
- 1 cup brown sugar, tightly packed
- 2 eggs, room temperature
- 1/2 teaspoon each vanilla extract and almond extract
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1/2 teaspoon each baking soda and baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups rolled oats (do not use quick or instant oats)
- 1 cup sliced almonds
- 1 cup dried cranberries

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Lightly butter a 9 x 12 baking dish.
- Cream butter and sugar until light, then beat in eggs one at a time. Stir in extracts.
- In a separate bowl, combine flour, salt, baking powder and baking soda. Stir into butter and egg mixture until completely incorporated. Add oats, almonds and cranberries and stir until evenly distributed.
- Press into prepared pan, using the back of a fork to even batter. Bake 20-25 minutes, until edges are golden and center is firm to the touch.
- Cool completely before cutting. Store in an air-tight container.

Leah is two and this was her first cooking venture. Although she has been up on the kitchen counter before, this time she got to snitch cranberries, touch the ingredients and stir the batter. And yes, she likes her cookies with a glass of milk!