

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Family reunion in New Hampshire

I am a proud second generation American! At the turn of the twentieth century, my father's parents emigrated separately as teenagers from Syria and Lebanon, settled in New Hampshire, met and married. My dad was the youngest of eight Samara children, six of whom survived childhood—Fred, Weeza, Chick, Alice, Lil and Tom.

We visited his family every few years—sometimes driving from South Florida and sometimes flying. Sitto (Arabic for grandmother) lived with Auntie Weeza and Uncle Chick in the same ground floor apartment of the three story walkup where my Dad was raised. Uncle Fred lived upstairs with his wife, Auntie Jo, and their sons. It was fun sleeping downstairs in the front room, listening to Uncle Chick's baseball game on the radio.

While visits to Georgia always featured Granny's delicious meals and treats like Mr. Dunn's barbecue or Aunt Mae's pound cake, they paled in comparison to the Syrian and Lebanese food made in Sitto's New Hampshire kitchen. Just like Granny, Sitto cooked from-scratch meals three times a day, often for ten or more people. When the family gathered for Catholic or Orthodox holidays, especially Easter, that number would grow to at least forty when all the cousins and in-laws were counted. We couldn't all fit around the rectangular kitchen table, so if the weather was good, tables were set up in the back and side yards, around the garden and under the grapevine arbor.

When Sitto turned eighty, we attended a family reunion at her married daughter's home only a few blocks away. For days before the reunion, every available woman would gather in Sitto's kitchen around the oilcloth-covered table to roll grape leaves stuffed with meat and rice, scoop out squash for koosa or fill wooden maamoul molds with cookie dough and ground dates. On the day of the reunion, relatives who lived nearby brought their tables and placed them with an eclectic assortment of chairs around Aunt Alice's backyard.

After days of cooking, platters were filled with dozens of grape leaves and koosa, plus stacks of triangle-shaped meat and spinach pies. Wash pans filled with tabouleh and fat-toush were placed beside big bowls of hummus, laban, baba ghanoush, feta and olives. Syrian bread (we call it pita now) hand-shaped into thin rounds the size of dinner plates, were piled high. And no picnic was complete without three kinds of kibbeh, made from meat ground with soaked cracked wheat and onions—fried, baked or (my childhood favorite) raw.

Our relatives are hearty eaters, so in addition to the maamoul, we ate delicate sweets made with butter, nuts and phyllo dough or shredded wheat, topped with sugar or honey syrups flavored with rose, orange blossom or lemon. Trays of these intricate pastries were made by aunts and cousins who needlessly apologized for non-existent flaws in their baking before pressing leftovers into the hands of departing family members.

The food that took days to make was enjoyed in the most wonderful way possible—a leisurely feast from afternoon into the evening—eat, talk, play games, maybe a nap for the very young or a Red Sox game on the radio, and then eat more. So my cousins and I made Sitto laugh, played baseball and ran around in the summer sun, before being urged to sit in the shade and eat another plate of food.

All that I have left of that day are a mind full of tastes and a three-by-three black and white photo, but that is enough for this second generation child to keep their memory alive.

What's Fresh Right Now?

- Beans**—purple/green long
- Berries**—elderberries
- Cabbage**—napa
- Cucumbers**—slicers
- Eggplant**—purple italian, white/purple/green japanese, fairy tale baby
- Fennel**
- Garlic**—chives
- Herbs**—mint, garlic chives, sage, oregano, rosemary, italian/purple/lemon/thai/tulsi basil, parsley
- Leeks**
- Lettuce**—green butterhead, romaine
- Moringa**
- Okra**
- Onions**—large green
- Pears**—Florida sand
- Peas**—black eye, white acre, creamer
- Peppers**—red/green/yellow/orange/mini sweet bell, poblano, cayenne, datil, banana, jalapeno, variety hot
- Potatoes**—red, sweet
- Shoots, Sprouts and Microgreens**
- Squash**—butternut, seminole pumpkin
- Tomatoes**—grape, beefsteak, cherry, large plum, green

Not Quite Local—Mangoes

Every summer Mango Mike brings up 8-12 varieties of mangoes to Gainesville from his family's farm in South Florida. Since they are not available year-round, I buy dozens to eat, freeze or preserve as slices or jams. Smaller varieties are still being picked during August, but the larger ones, like Kents or Haydens, are harvested earlier in the year. When buying mangoes, look for firm fruit with no bruises or cuts. Ripen at room temperature. Cover and refrigerate after cutting.

Local and Fresh— Tomatoes

We are so lucky to have tomatoes available year-round. During late summer, a glut of overripe tomatoes can be a problem for farmers and gardeners. For years now, I've used bags of overripes to make tomato jam that we use in place of ketchup or on sandwiches. Recently, I have experimented with a smoky tomato jam, made with smoked sweet paprika, a spicy version with siracha and cayenne, plus this jam exploring the fruity-warmth of our local datil peppers.

Spicy Tomato Jam with Datil Peppers

INGREDIENTS

- 24 very ripe tomatoes, quartered
- Water to cover
- 2-4 datil peppers, slit in several places
- 1/4 cup demerara or raw sugar
- 1/4 cup vinegar, apple cider or red wine
- Pinch salt

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- Place tomatoes in a single layer, skin side down, on pans and roast in oven until skins are blackened and edges are browned.
- Place roasted tomatoes in large saucepan, just cover with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to simmer and stir in datil peppers. Cook until thickened, stirring occasionally.
- Cool, puree and push through sieve to remove skins and seeds. Return to saucepan over low heat and bring to simmer. Stir in sugar, vinegar and salt. Cook uncovered 5-10 minutes.
- Eat within two weeks or fill small jars and process if storing for longer.

 <p>HAILE FARMERS MARKET</p> <p>Saturdays 830am - 12pm</p> <p>Haile Village Center www.hailefarmersmarket.com</p>	<p>Glades Ridge Goat Dairy Raw Milk and Cheese Hormone/Antibiotic Free Available Fresh or Frozen ACFM/441 Farmers Market Saturdays 8:30am - 1:00pm Union Street Farmers Market Wednesdays 4:00pm - 7:00pm Wholesome Food—Animal Consumption Only Lake Butler 386 266 7041 gladesridge.com</p>	<p>Henderson & Daughter Plants and Produce Booth #4 - 441 Farmers Market Thank you for your support! <i>Our season has ended, but we will return to the 441 market on December 10th.</i> Take good care of yourselves, and continue to be kind to one another. Love is Love. Follow us - www.facebook.com/henderson.and.daughter</p>	<p>Alachua County FARMERS' MARKET</p> <p>Alachua County Farmers Market Saturdays 830am—1pm 5920 NW 13th Street www.441market.com SUMMER FESTIVAL JULY 2, 2016</p>
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Moussaka with Lentils

INGREDIENTS

1 large or 2 medium eggplant, cut into 1/2 inch slices (peeled or unpeeled, as desired)
2-3 zucchini or large pattypan squash, cut into 1/3 inch slices
4 –6 Tablespoons olive oil
1/4 cup each butter and flour
3 cups milk
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
Pinch ground cayenne pepper (optional)
1 egg, well beaten
1/2 cup grated parmesan (2 ounces)
4 cups Lentil Tomato Stew
4 ounces feta cheese

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Oil eggplant and squash slices and place in one layer on baking pans. Bake until tender.

In a medium sauce pan melt butter, add flour and simmer one minute. Whisk in milk and simmer until white sauce is thick. Remove from heat and season with nutmeg and cayenne. Temper egg with white sauce, then whisk egg into sauce. Stir in parmesan, cover and set aside.

In a large baking dish, alternate layers of eggplant, squash and Tomato Lentil Stew sprinkled with feta, ending with eggplant. Pour white sauce over all, making sure it fills in the sides of the baking dish.

Bake 45-55 minutes, until browned on top and bubbly. Cool 15 minutes before cutting.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Vegan Kibbeh

INGREDIENTS

1 cup shiitake stems
1 cup shiitake caps
1 cup cooked brown rice
1 cup cooked lentils
3 Tablespoons each tamari or soy sauce and nutritional yeast
A large pinch of dried thyme and a small pinch of cloves
1 small shallot or onion, finely chopped
1/2 cup olive oil

DIRECTIONS

Use a food processor to finely chop shiitake stems. Add mushroom caps, rice and lentils and pulse until it becomes a chunky paste. Mix in tamari, yeast, thyme, cloves and shallot.

Push into oiled baking dish, score into serving pieces and brush all the oil over the top.

Bake at 350 degrees for least 45 minutes, until browned on top and edges are crispy.

Serve hot or warm. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Lentil Tomato Stew

INGREDIENTS

1 cup dried lentils
2 cups water
1 T olive oil
1 onion, diced
1 jalapeno, minced
4-6 tomatoes, diced
1/4 cup raisins
1 T red wine vinegar
1/2 t cinnamon
1/2 t coriander
salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

Cook lentils in water until tender. Drain.

Sauté onion, jalapeno and tomato in oil.

Stir in lentils, raisins, vinegar and spices.
Season to taste.

Serve hot or warm.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

SUMMER MENU

Tomato Lentil Stew

Long beans sautéed with dried thyme

Mango with lime and a dash of cayenne



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Tricks and Tips

This cake would also look and taste great with peaches or plums. Just like the mangoes, both need to be peeled first. If they are too firm try using a potato masher or pulse to a chunky consistency in a food processor.

The mangoes I used were very sweet, so adjustments might be needed to create a sweeter tasting batter. To add an additional 1/4 cup of cane syrup, leave out 1/4 cup of the fruit puree. Continue as directed.

Mango Upside-Down Cake

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tablespoons each unsalted butter and cane syrup
- 8 large slices of mango
- 2 cups flour (I used 1 cup whole wheat and 1 cup all purpose)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon each salt and ground ginger
- 2 cups mashed mango
- 1/2 cup each vegetable oil and cane syrup
- 4 eggs

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Heat 10 inch cast iron skillet over medium heat and add 2 tablespoons butter and syrup. When bubbly and thick, decoratively place mango slices in pan, remove from heat and set aside.

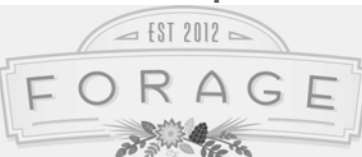
Mix flour, soda, salt and ginger in a large bowl. Add mashed mango, oil and cane syrup, stirring gently to combine. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Pour batter over the back of a spoon to cover mango slices without disturbing pattern.

Place in preheated oven and bake 25-35 minutes. Cake is done when it is firm to the touch and a toothpick comes out clean. Invert onto serving plate. Cool before cutting.

Store in an airtight container. Refrigerate leftovers if keeping more than 48 hours.

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Stephen Schachter, A.P.

Acupuncture Physician
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352.375.7557

www.stephenschachter.com

Dawn Brower LMT, ChT

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