

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Inside this issue:

Christmas Eggnog for Adults	1
Farmer's Market Update	2
It's Citrus Time	2
Orange Calendar	2
Hot Apple Cider	3
Hot Mulled Red Wine Punch	3
Lemonade with Honey or Sugar	3
Coffee Cooler	5

Memories and Traditions

This time of year brings to mind childhood memories and, in my family, most of those memories involve food. Childhood favorites were Granny's Standing Rib Roast, which she studded with garlic, and Mom's Kentucky Bourbon Cake, a poundcake batter with a few fruits and nuts, that she wrapped like a fruitcake with bourbon-soaked cheesecloth and left to mellow for 6 weeks .

Our children's memories include our Winter Solstice Party—a Hot Apple Cider and Potluck Dessert gathering we held on the Sunday nearest the Solstice for 26 years. In our tiny little house, lit by candlelight, the party was an hours-long affair with crowds of adults, children and desserts.

Our Hanukkah celebration features a dinner of latkes (potato pancakes) served with sour cream and applesauce. After years of sweating over the frying pan making latkes from scratch, I now just heat the frozen ones—that way everyone can eat together and enjoy an extended dreidel game.

Christmas Eve is a two part potluck affair. Before Service at the Fellowship, we always stop at a friend's party for the "real food" portion of the evening—little sandwiches, veggies, fruit and dips, plus her wonderful Frosty Cranberry Punch. After Service, in addition to coffee and Hot Mulled Red Wine Punch, there is always a magnificent dessert buffet —part two of the potluck!

Christmas morning continues a tradition from my childhood—a loaf of Honey Banana Walnut Bread. My mom put a candle in it and we'd sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. Every year, we open stockings, eat banana bread with cider or coffee, and then spend hours taking turns opening gifts.

A tradition I began in 1984 is homemade eggnog served to everyone in the early afternoon, when family and friends come to exchange presents before heading home to their own dinners. I make two versions, one with rum and brandy, and another without. I always heat up some apple cider for our non-nog friends, but this year I'm going to have some Coffee Cooler ready to serve too.

Christmas Eggnog for Adults

INGREDIENTS

12 very fresh eggs
3/4 cup honey
2 teaspoons vanilla
2/3 cup dark rum
2/3 cup brandy
5 cups milk
2 cups whipping cream
nutmeg (Have you tried fresh nutmeg?)

The night before, mix eggs, 1/2 cup honey, vanilla, rum, brandy and milk. Strain, cover and refrigerate. Just before serving, beat cream until stiff, add 1/4 cup honey. Beat 1/2 cream into eggnog until well blended. Lightly stir in remaining cream and top with nutmeg. *Please be careful—use only very clean hands and utensils. Refrigerate eggnog between servings.*

It's Local, It's Fresh, It's Florida Citrus

Tricks and Tips

Cutting up oranges always drove me crazy, until I found an easier way—peel the fruit with your fingers, remove the white membranes if you like, then slice into rounds. The rounds can be broken into sections, the seeds pop right out and soon you've got a bowlful of oranges ready to eat or add to a fruit salad..

Last week at the Farmer's Market I found yet another special treasure—Key Limes! It is the beginning of what can only be called “the Citrus Season” with an abundance of oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons and limes.

When I was little girl growing up in South Florida, my parents always sent the relatives in New England bushels of citrus for Christmas and there was always an orange in the toe of my Christmas stocking! We ate lots of citrus at home—sometimes by sticking a straw in an orange and sucking it dry before tearing it open to eat the flesh, sometimes taking tangerine wedges in my lunch box, sometimes dressing up half a grapefruit with a cherry, and sometimes reveling in that Southern Specialty “Ambrosia”. My mom would spend what seemed like hours preparing the oranges and grapefruit for Ambrosia, first using her knife to remove every speck of peel, then carefully cutting out the sections of fruit, her knife making three cuts to loosen every wedge perfectly.

Here's my non-recipe recipe, but I've never had the patience to duplicate my mother's cutting technique— Mix sections of 6 oranges, 2 pink or red grapefruit*, 1 chopped pineapple, and as much coconut as you like. Chill completely. Serve in chilled dishes, with chilled silver spoons, if you feel really decadent.

* I included the grapefruit, even though I realize that there are some who feel that it is just a crass addition to a perfect, delicate balance of flavors. Hey, I make it the way I like it!

What's fresh right now at the Farmer's Market?

Citrus, including sour oranges for marmalade
Spinach
Salad Baskets with several kinds of lettuce
Broccoli (cauliflower and brussel sprouts soon)
Greens—mustard, turnips, rutabagas, collards
Swiss chard and Chinese cabbage
Daikon Radish
Red and White Scallions
Tomatoes
Cucumbers (large, hydroponically grown and seedless)
Lima Beans and Green Beans
Radishes
Sweet Potatoes
Persimmons
Pecans
Trees, plants, bedding plants and sprouting bulbs

A Year of Oranges

We now send citrus packages to relatives in Tennessee and Canada. Cross Creek Groves has been great; since they remember what I ordered last year, I'm done in the time it takes to read my check card number.

NAVEL ORANGES (NOV—JAN)

Large, sweet, juicy and seedless.

RED NAVEL ORANGES (DEC)

Ruby red color with all the sweet-juicy goodness of the golden navel.

RUBY RED GRAPEFRUIT (NOV—APR)

Mouth watering flavor and loaded with juice.

HONEYBELL TANGELOS (JAN)

Tangerine-grapefruit hybrid with a sweet unique flavor all its own.

TEMPLE ORANGES (FEB)

Tangerine-orange hybrid. Very juicy with sweet and tangy flavor.

HONEY TANGERINES (JAN—MAR)

Bursting with flavor and as sweet as their name.

VALENCIAS (FEB—MAY)

The perfect orange for delicious juice or slicing for snacks.

Did you notice all the leafy greens on the Farmer's Market list? Greens thrive at this time of year. One farmer said she keeps crops covered with blankets. Another farmer stated that he'd have greens for months “as long as the cows don't get into the field.”

Can you guess the featured food in next month's Hogtown HomeGrown?

Hot Apple Cider

INGREDIENTS

2 sliced oranges, scrubbed well
1 sliced lemon, scrubbed well
3 cinnamon sticks, broken in half
12 whole cloves
1 gallon (128 ounces) apple cider (not fresh cider)

Place oranges, lemon and spices in the bottom of a hot saucepan—there should be a sizzling sound—then pour in apple cider. Turn to low and heat covered for 30 minutes or until hot. Keep warm in a crockpot or urn.

Kids like it iced, so make a batch and chill it. The oranges taste great, so drop one in your cup, but grab a napkin, ‘cause they’re messy!

Tricks and Tips

We always offer the adults a few libations that mix well with cider—Calvados (apple brandy), dark rum or brandy. Guaranteed to keep you warm!

Hot Mulled Red Wine Punch

INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup white sugar
1/4 cup light brown sugar
1 stick of cinnamon
6 whole cloves
6 whole allspice
1 lemon, sliced thinly
1 cup water
1 bottle red wine (750 ml)

Mix together sugars, spices and lemon in large saucepan with the water. Simmer uncovered for 15 minutes. Add one bottle of red wine and heat to drinking temperature. Taste and add more lemon juice if it's too sweet. Keep warm in a crockpot or urn.

Mixing up a large batch? Just multiply ingredient amounts by bottles of wine.

Honey Lemonade

INGREDIENTS

1 cup lemon juice (try Meyer lemons)
1/2 cup honey (Tupelo is our favorite)
8 cups (64 ounces) cold water

Mix juice and honey with a wire whisk until well blended. Add cold water gradually, mixing well. Taste for sweetness. Serve over ice or refrigerate. Garnish with a sprig of mint, a slice of lemon or a splash of cranberry juice.

Tricks and Tips

Either of these recipes can be made with limes. Persian Limes have lighter tasting juice and are the size of lemons, while Key Limes are the size of a large walnut and have loads of strong juice. Taste for sweetness and adjust to your taste.

Pounded Lemonade

INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup lemon juice (try Meyer lemons)
1/2 c sugar
1 thinly sliced lemon
8 cups (64 ounces) cold water

In a large drink container mix together juice, sugar and slices. Using a wooden spoon, pound mixture together until sugar is dissolved. Mix in cold water and taste for sweetness. Serve over ice or refrigerate. Tastes terrific mixed with tea!

Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More

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4048 NW 30 Place
Gainesville FL
32606-6633-48

E-mail
HogtownHomeGrown@gmail.com

Email or write
for a free recipe

Editor's Notes

I am happy to say that the first issue was such a hit, I had to print more. Thank you for such a great kickoff for my labor of love. You can find new issues around the first of every month, so please support the local places that make Hogtown HomeGrown available for you:

*Upper Crust, Northwest Seafood, Alternatives, Bageland at Thornebrook, Corner Cup and More, Gainesville Health and Fitness Women's Center, Humane Society Thrift Shop, 2nd Street Bakery, Maude's, The Bagel Bakery, Downtown and Millhopper Libraries, Sweetwater Organic Coffee Roasters
More to come this month!*

Hogtown HomeGrown is now a part of the downtown experience every Wednesday from 4-7pm at the Union Street Farmer's Market, next to the Hippodrome. I'd love to meet you and chat about recipes and cooking. T-shirts with the Hogtown HomeGrown logo are now available in 100% heavyweight cotton for \$20.00.

Stefanie Samara Hamblen

Coffee Cooler

During the late 80's I worked at Bernie's Coffee and Tea Company in the Oaks Mall, where I acquired a coffee obsession. This has happily led to drinking freshly roasted coffees from Sweetwater Organic Coffee Roasters.

Coffee is one of my favorite flavors, especially as coffee ice cream, but the fat and calories are something I just don't need. Coffee Coolers give you all the taste in a healthier form. I almost exclusively use decaffeinated coffee to make coolers. Try Sweetwater's decaf JavaJava, blended from beans grown in Sumatra and East Timor—it's full-bodied and fills your mouth with flavor.

2 cups (16 ounces) freshly brewed coffee

3-4 Tablespoons sugar (Sugar in the Raw tastes great)

2 cups (16 ounces) lowfat milk or plain soymilk

Mix sugar into hot coffee until completely dissolved.

Stir in milk, taste for sweetening and refrigerate until well-chilled.

Serve over ice or for a special treat serve over ice cubes made from plain coffee.

Coffee Slushie—In a blender, mix coffee cooler with coffee ice cubes until no chunks remain. Flavorings like vanilla, cinnamon or chocolate syrup can be added for more flavor.