

# Hogtown HomeGrown

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**Inside this issue:**

**Cold beds and warm biscuits** 1

**What's Fresh Right Now?** 2

**Local and Fresh—Tangerines** 2

**Tangerine Syrup** 2

**Tangerine Cloud** 2

**Quinoa Salad with Edamame** 3

**Cooking Quinoa** 3

**Coconut Shiitake Soup** 3

**Almond Pumpkin Custard** 4

## Cold beds and warm biscuits

In 1978, I left our family Christmas celebration in Albany, Georgia, to head north for a visit with my college roommate's family in East Ellijay. I was driving by myself into the hills of North Georgia with hand-written directions, but no phone, no GPS and no map (they weren't on a map). I did have their home phone number and some quarters. In the dark, four hours after my expected arrival, a few wrong turns and a couple of phone calls later, I drove up a hill so steep that I could only see stars out of my front windshield. At the top was the house my roommate's grandfather had built. The house was dark except for the glow of the Christmas tree, but the sky was an explosion of light, a blaze of thousands of stars seemingly so close they could rain down.

The whole family was still up to meet me—five older brothers and sisters, one younger brother, plus my roommate's mom and aunt. The large living room was warm from their woodstove blazing to counter the freezing winds. The tree I had seen from outside was lit with red bulbs and the glow made the room feel even cozier. We curled our hands around mugs of hot chocolate, settled in close to the stove and talked and laughed for hours before it was time for bed.

I was staying with all the sisters in a huge room with lots of high windows, 4 beds, a couple of dressers, and a long metal clothes rack used for both hanging clothes and as a privacy divider. But when I walked into the room, it wasn't the décor I noticed first. It was the temperature. It was cold! Very cold!!! I realized I had gotten extra warm from being in front of the woodstove for so long, but that warmth was almost gone and I was trying to catch my breath.

The house did not have central heat, so the four bedrooms were not heated—they called it "sleeping cold." It was pointed out to me that some people consider it healthier than sleeping in warmed dry air. A hot water bottle and blankets on top of the hand-stitched quilt got me through the night, but this South Florida girl was not used to cold temperatures.

The next morning was sunny and, yes, you guessed it, cold. The aroma of coffee was steaming from a tall white enamelware percolator set on the stoked woodstove. Everyone was pitching in by doing chores or making breakfast. I was put on biscuit duty, but to only watch and learn.

In the far corner of the kitchen, wedged between the back door and the hand pump for the kitchen sink, was their baking cabinet. Styled after the all-in-one Hoosier models, there were two large lower cabinets topped with an enamelware work surface. Small cabinets on top had shelves on the left, but the right side had a built-in dispenser bin that held 10 pounds of flour. Below the dispenser sat a long watermelon-shaped wooden bowl, roughly carved and somewhat shallow.

My roommate's aunt slid a lever at the bottom of the dispenser and self-rising flour streamed into one end of the bowl. From the can sitting next to the bowl, she plopped a scoop of shortening into the flour. With smooth, practiced motions, her right hand worked the shortening into the flour. When the shortening was worked in, the left hand poured in thick buttermilk, just a little at a time, while the right mixed it in. Once the dough formed, both hands worked more flour in a little at a time. As it took shape, the dough was moved from the flour pile to the other end of the bowl, since too much flour can make tough biscuits. Those practiced hands pinched off dough and patted it into four inch ovals. Three dozen biscuits, ready for the oven, in less than 15 minutes.

Practiced hands indeed. Every breakfast, dinner and supper was supplemented by two pans of biscuits. I had my chance to make a batch when I made the biscuits for supper on New Year's Eve. They weren't perfect, but I learned my lessons well. The biscuits tasted great and the texture was good, but my hands did not have the experience to evenly portion the dough.

These days I use a biscuit cutter, but my technique has not changed a bit. I didn't leave that hill with just biscuit skills though. When I got older, I found that sleeping in cold air is just fine, as long as the bed is warm. "Sleeping cold" inspired an ongoing love affair with our heated waterbed!



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## IDEAS FOR LOCAL HOLIDAY GIFTS

Make gifts of collections of your favorite things from the many farmers markets—while food makes a good gift, most markets have more than food to choose from!

Don't have time to do the shopping yourself?

Order ready made gifts baskets from local non-profits like Blue Oven Kitchens or Forage Farm.

Seek out local craft shows—with the right vendors you could fill everyone's stocking! Blue Oven Kitchen's Winter Gift Fair is on Sunday December 15 from 2-5pm at The Jones B-side. The monthly Cool Market Spot will be Saturday December 21st.

## What's Fresh Right Now?

- Beans**—green, yellow, pole
- Bitter Melon**
- Bok Choy**
- Broccoli**
- Cabbage**—head, napa
- Cauliflower**—white, romanesco
- Citrus**—juices, lemons, limes, mandarin/satsumas
- Cucumbers**—mini seedless
- Eggplant**—large purple italian, small purple asian, fairytale
- Garlic**—chives, elephant
- Greens**—wild/regular arugula, kale, collards, mustards, broccoli leaf, turnip, tsai tai, bok choy, komatsuma
- Herbs**—parsley, italian basil, tulsi basil, cilantro, lemongrass, lime leaf, dill
- Honey**
- Kale**—red/white russian, curly
- Kohlrabi**—green, purple
- Lettuce**—bibb, oak leaf, romaine, mix
- Microgreens**—assorted
- Mushrooms**—shiitake, dried varieties
- Onions**—green scallions, yellow
- Papaya**—green
- Peas**—black eye, white acre
- Peppers**—red/green bell, poblano, cubanelle, jalapeno, ghost
- Persimmons**—astringent, dried
- Potatoes**—small red, white/purple/orange sweet
- Radish**—red globe, french breakfast, daikon, black
- Shoots**—pea, sunflower, mix
- Sprouts**
- Squash**—yellow, zucchini, butternut, calabasa, seminole pumpkin
- Tomatoes**—grape, green
- Turnips**

## Local and Fresh— Tangerines

Tangerines, satsumas, mandarins, chinese honey—no matter what you call them, these members of the citrus family are delicious and in season!

Defined by their flattened shape and distinctive taste, tangerines can be found in all sizes, from tiny and seedless to the large seedy varieties. Peel and eat tangerines or squeeze for juice.

## Tangerine Syrup

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups tangerine juice  
1 cup raw sugar

### DIRECTIONS

In a nonreactive saucepan, heat tangerine juice. Add sugar, stirring until completely melted.

Cook over medium-low heat until thickened and reduced by half. Stir often.

Remove from heat and cool.

Cover and refrigerate until completely chilled. It will thicken more when it is cold.

## Tangerine Cloud

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups whipping cream  
2 Tablespoons powdered sugar (optional)  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)  
1/2 cup chilled tangerine syrup  
2 Tablespoons tangerine zest for garnish

### DIRECTIONS

Whip cream to stiff peaks, adding sugar and vanilla, if desired. Gently fold tangerine syrup into whipped cream, leaving a few visible streaks of orange and white.

Serve in chilled dessert dishes or as a topping. Garnish with a sprinkle of zest.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

LEFTOVER RECIPE: Freeze in paper cups with a stick in the center. Peel off cup to serve.

# Quinoa Salad with Edamame

## INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup olive oil  
1/4 cup lemon juice  
2 Tablespoons apple cider vinegar  
1 Tablespoon lemon peel, zested or minced  
1 small garlic clove, chopped very finely  
1 Tablespoon honey  
1/2 teaspoon prepared mustard  
pinch of salt and pepper  
4 cups cooked quinoa, chilled  
2 cups shelled edamame  
1 cup toasted pecans, chopped  
1 cup dried cranberries  
1/2 cup parsley, chopped finely  
1/4 cup mild radish, diced

## DIRECTIONS

In a small jar combine oil, juice, vinegar, lemon peel, garlic, honey, mustard, salt and pepper. Shake to combine and set aside.

In a large serving bowl, combine quinoa, edamame, pecans, cranberries, parsley and radish. Stir to combine, add dressing and toss lightly to coat salad thoroughly.

Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate.

# Coconut Shiitake Soup

## INGREDIENTS

2 Tablespoons olive oil, divided  
1 small onion, chopped finely  
2 cups chopped shiitake mushrooms  
1 Tablespoon Bragg's Liquid Aminos OR 1 teaspoon soy sauce or tamari  
3 Tablespoons mirin (sweetened sake)  
2 cups no-chicken broth  
1 can coconut milk  
1 Tablespoon tamari

## DIRECTIONS

Heat 1 Tablespoon olive oil in a 2 quart heavy saucepan on medium heat. Add onion and sauté until translucent. Add mushrooms and remaining oil. Sauté, stirring often, for 10 minutes or until mushrooms are softened. Stir in Bragg's and mirin. Cook an additional 5 minutes.

Pour in broth and bring to boil, allowing it to reduce just a little. Stir in coconut milk and tamari. Simmer 5 minutes covered.

Serve hot. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

## Cooking Quinoa

Quinoa is gluten-free, full of protein and cooks fast!

It is a seed, not a grain, and to protect it from insects, the outside has naturally-occurring saponins, which can be bitter. Rinsing quinoa before cooking removes the bitter taste. Use a fine mesh strainer and cool water.

## Simmer and Steam Method

Bring 2 cups water to a boil, add 1 cup rinsed quinoa, stir, cover and lower heat to simmer. After 15 minutes, remove from heat, cover top of pot with a thin dish towel and put the lid back on.

Allow to steam for 5-10 minutes.

Fluff with a fork and serve. Double the recipe and use leftovers in soups or warm to eat like rice or oatmeal. To save it for a salad, rinse cooked quinoa and drain well before refrigerating in an airtight container.

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## Tricks and Tips

Creating menus for guests with dietary issues can be a challenge. I recently cooked for someone who could not eat gluten, soy or lactose. It was hard to imagine what kind of dessert I could make until I realized that almond milk would be perfect in a pumpkin custard. Want pies instead of custard? Try crumb crusts made from gluten-free gingersnaps.

## Almond Pumpkin Custard

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups seminole pumpkin, roasted and pureed
- 2 cups unsweetened almond milk
- 1/2 cup honey (plus 2-3 Tablespoons as an optional topping)
- 6 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/4 teaspoon each cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg
- 1 cup sliced almonds, lightly toasted

### DIRECTIONS

Lightly butter or oil a two-quart flat casserole dish. Prepare a hot water bath for the dish. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl, whisk together pumpkin and almond milk. Add honey a little at a time, whisking until completely combined. Taste and adjust for sweetness.

Whisk eggs into pumpkin mixture. Stir in vanilla and spices.

Pour into the prepared casserole dish, place dish in water bath and place in oven.

Bake until custard is still jiggly in the center 3 inches—about 30 minutes. Scatter almonds over the top and drizzle with honey. Return to oven for 10 minutes.

Serve warm or chilled. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.