

Hogtown HomeGrown

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What's in your circle?

I've been working on my hundred mile diet lately and I'm not trying to lose weight. We are trying as a family to use more of our money on local foods, in season, direct from the farmer and the field. In other words, we are trying to be locavores.

Did you know that "locavore" is a new word in the New Oxford American Dictionary? Locavore was coined by 4 women in San Francisco to describe people who try to eat from within a one hundred mile radius of their home, supporting local growers and producers. It is easy to be a locavore in Gainesville, due to the variety of produce we have in this area. But produce isn't the only thing we eat....

Imagine a one hundred mile circle drawn around your town. My circle includes rivers and oceans, but no wheat fields—pasture lands and small farms, but no apple orchards or cranberry bogs. Local bakeries and shops stock wonderful items, but are they made or purchased from out of town vendors? How can you reasonably draw your circle?

I try to draw my circle tight for produce and items available locally and complete our menu with purchases made as thoughtfully as possible. I purchase bread from a local bakery, fish from a local seafood shop and, for my non-food needs, I always stop to ask myself—can I purchase this locally?

So how do we stay true locavores when we want to eat out? We look for local restaurants that use local products—after all, my hundred mile circle wouldn't be complete without a locally owned place to go for breakfast or pizza! What's in your circle?

Zen Pumpkin Soup

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 medium onion, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, finely minced
4 cups Seminole Pumpkin, roasted and pureed
1 can (15 ounces) light coconut milk
1 tablespoon (or more) red thai curry paste
8 leaves fresh basil, sliced in chiffonade
2 limes, 1 juiced and 1 cut into wedges for garnish

DIRECTIONS

Saute onion in olive oil until translucent and limp, then add garlic and continue cooking until soft. Add pumpkin puree, coconut milk, 1 can of water and the curry paste, stirring well. Let simmer for at least thirty minutes, then stir in basil and lime juice. Simmer for five minutes and serve hot with lime wedges. Stores well in the refrigerator and can be reheated in the microwave or on the stove.

Local and Fresh—Seminole Pumpkins

Tricks and Tips

Scooping the seeds from a Seminole Pumpkin or any other winter squash can be fast and easy—use an ice cream scoop!

Roasted Seeds

Place clean, dry seeds on a cookie sheet in a 350 degree oven for 10-15 minutes, until golden. You can toss with oil, salt or seasonings if desired.

Tricks and Tips

Chestnut season is over, but pecans are ready right now—pick some up at your farmers' market—in the shell or out! Look in your local paper for pecan groves or farms where you can choose your own nuts from the local varieties. Think of all the possibilities—Pecans toasted with butter and salt, Pralines, Pecan Pie, Pecan Trout, Wild Rice Pilaf with Pecans and Cranberries, Green Beans with Pecans. What's your favorite pecan recipe?

New discoveries are wonderful. I was fortunate enough to share a Farmers' Market tent with a farmer who grows Seminole Pumpkins from heirloom seeds and discovered a wonderful new taste with a long history. Sweeter than other winter squash, with a flavor reminiscent of butternut squash, this pumpkin can be in your kitchen year-round since it will keep a long time.

Cultivated as far back as the 1500's, these squash grow well in humid conditions and produce huge numbers of pumpkins from one plant. Tan in color, they can be oval or a round, traditional pumpkin shape. If the skin is not solid tan, but has green tints, it is probably a calabasa (calabaza) pumpkin, which is interchangeable in everything but the prominent sweetness of the Seminole Pumpkin.

Buy a few winter squash—don't forget about butternut and acorn—leave them at room temperature and you'll be enjoying these recipes next summer. By the way, all the recipes that call for Seminole pumpkin can be made with other winter squash, just test for sweetness!

What's Fresh Right Now?

Beans—green
Cabbage—green, bok choi, chinese
Citrus—red navel, red grapefruit, Hamlin, tangelo, navel, white grapefruit, Persian limes
Cucumbers—slicers, hydroponic
Eggplant—Italian, Brazilian
Garlic Chives
Greens—kale, collards, mustard, turnip
Honey—Gallberry, Orange Blossom, Tupelo, Wildflower
Lettuce—green leaf, salad mix, Arugula, asian mix, spicy mix
Onions—large yellow, green
Pecans
Peppers—jalapeno, banana, poblano, green and red sweet Bell
Persimmons—Fuyu (non-astringent) and a few astringent
Potatoes—sweet potatoes, large red skin
Radishes
Squash—yellow, zucchini, butternut, calabasa, Seminole Pumpkin
Tomatoes—beefsteak, green

Roasted Seminole Pumpkin

INGREDIENTS

1 Seminole pumpkin or any winter squash

DIRECTIONS

Cut the pumpkin in half and remove the seeds and stringy pulp. Place the cleaned halves cut side down in a large roasting pan. Add enough water to cover the bottom of the pan. Place in a 350 degree oven. Test with a fork after 45 minutes—the fork should easily pierce the flesh all the way to the center. When the pumpkin is cooked, it is ready to eat with a spoon, without adding anything else!

Babies love the texture and taste—little cubes make wonderful finger food.

The following optional toppings will add a variety of flavors—

Warm Persimmon Sauce (Nov. 2007)

Maple syrup and walnuts

Orange juice and zest

Honey, lime juice and a dash of cayenne

Warm applesauce and cinnamon

Spinach Salad with Egg and Bacon Dressing

INGREDIENTS

1 large bag spinach or salad mix
1 avocado diced
8 slices veggie bacon, cooked and crumbled
4 tablespoons lemon juice
8 ounces button mushrooms, sliced
4 eggs, boiled, peeled and chopped
4 tablespoons olive oil
1 clove garlic, smashed and chopped

DIRECTIONS

In the bottom of a large bowl, mix olive oil, garlic and lemon juice, using a fork to crush the garlic into the liquid. Add eggs and bacon and mix thoroughly until dressing becomes creamy. Add spinach and mushrooms and toss to coat with dressing. Lightly mix in avocado and serve immediately with a crusty piece of bread to mop up the dressing. Optional toppings include croutons, nuts and cheeses, but if you are serving this before Pumpkin Cheesecake, a simple salad would be best!

Pumpkin Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS

25 gingersnaps
1 tablespoon butter, melted
32 ounces room temperature regular or low fat cream cheese—do not use fat free
2 cups roasted Seminole Pumpkin pulp (Using canned pumpkin? Check mixture for sweetness!)
1 cup sugar
4 room temperature eggs
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1/3 cup half and half or milk
2 tablespoons honey
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Grind gingersnaps in food processor, add butter and mix until all crumbs are moist. Pat into bottom of 10 inch springform pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 8 minutes. Remove pan from oven and brush a little butter on the inside of pan to prevent cake from sticking to sides

Beat softened cream cheese until fluffy, add pumpkin pulp (to get lump-free pulp, puree it in food processor until smooth) and mix. Add sugar and beat until completely incorporated. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in remaining ingredients, stir well and scrape bottom of bowl. Pour into prepared pan, place on cookie sheet and put in preheated oven. Lower heat to 325 degrees and bake for 60-75 minutes.

Check cake—when just the center 2-3 inches are jiggley, turn off the oven, prop open the oven door slightly with a wooden spoon and leave for one hour. Then remove cake from oven, place pan on rack in a draft-free area and let sit another hour. Cover top of pan with foil, sealing well. Refrigerate at least 4 hours before serving. Slices best when knife is wiped between slices. Serves 12-16 happily!

Tricks and Tips

The inspiration for this recipe came from one of Linda McCartney's wonderful vegetarian cookbooks. Look for them used or in the library and enjoy another take on vegetarian cooking.

Tricks and Tips

Cheesecakes are definitely my husband's most-requested birthday cake—some years he wants coconut, some years it's marble, but most often it is pumpkin. After years of making cheesecakes, I still get cracks in the tops of the cakes—sometimes I cool it too fast (that was a large circular crack) and sometimes I haven't allowed enough baking time (that was a huge 5 armed spider crack). Don't worry, even the ugliest crack won't stop anyone from enjoying a homemade cheesecake.

Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More
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Hearty Blueberry Muffins

INGREDIENTS

6 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 eggs

1/3 cup honey

1/2 cup oat bran

2 teaspoons baking powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 cup frozen local blueberries that you stuck in the freezer last summer and forgot about

DIRECTIONS

Prepare a 12 cup muffin tin. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix dry ingredients together—flour, bran, flax seed meal, baking powder, soda, salt and nutmeg—set aside. Melt butter in a large heavy saucepan. Take pan off the heat and add blueberry preserves, applesauce and honey, mixing well. Beat in eggs, then add dry ingredients and stir gently, incorporating all the flour. Lightly mix in the berries and scoop into muffin tins. Bake at 350 degrees for 20–25 minutes. Tip on their sides in muffin pan to cool. Store in refrigerator if you don't eat them right away.

Tricks and Tips

I am in a muffin phase right now—it happened when the weather turned cool. So far we have had Banana Two-Nut (walnuts and pecans), Apricot (pecans and pieces of dried apricots), and two batches of Cranberry-Orange.

These Blueberry Muffins are a great breakfast on-the-go!