

Hogtown HomeGrown

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The Hard-Wired Foodie

I come from a family of foodies, on both sides, so it is no surprise that I read cookbooks as if they were novels, write about food, visit three farmers markets a week and adore both unusual kitchen gadgets and odd cookbooks. Growing up, we discussed meals previously eaten while eating the food in front of us—compare, contrast, consume. I got an “A” for a high school American History project inspired by my love of the Foxfire books—I dried apples, simmered apple butter, fermented sourdough starter and used it to bake bread. I guess I was born a foodie—maybe it is hard-wired into my DNA.

My dad’s mom, Sitto, had 6 children to feed and came from a culture where the wife eats after the horse and the husband. We never saw her sit down to eat with the family—she would serve and, after everyone was done, sit down at the kitchen table. An immigrant, she cooked Syrian and Lebanese food from scratch. My grandfather’s garden provided fresh vegetables and fruit for her to both cook and preserve. One of her daughters, my Aunt Lil, took cooking to a new level by not only mastering traditional foods, but widening the reach of her family’s taste buds with dishes from other cultures, along with a knowledge and taste for wines. Lil served me my first pesto and fresh mozzarella. Dinners at her table are events to remember (and talk about over another meal!)

My Mom’s mom, Granny, was a self-taught Southern cook who started cooking for her family at the age of ten and branched out to incorporate ethnic foods she discovered along the way until she stopped cooking in her nineties. Living in the country, she not only had a garden, but friends from all over Middle Georgia would stop by to give “Miss Ethel” a basket of this or a bushel of that. Every summer, she would put up jars of pickles and preserves. I loved the figs, pears, and especially the sweet watermelon rind, but the pickles—oh those pickles—sweet and crispy with a zing of spice and black peppercorns.

Then there’s Mom—a Registered Dietician. (I told you food ran in our family!) Oh, can she cook—although she swears she has retired! My childhood food memories—incredible spaghetti sauce and lasagna—fried chicken (good hot, but great cold on a picnic)—vats of potato salad—lemon meringue pie (she always let me pick the “brownies” off the top). The real gift she gave me was letting me loose in the kitchen to experiment. She laughed at Easy-Bake ovens, saying there was no sense in having one of those when I could use the real thing. That led me to cook everything from my own breakfast to family dinners. Yes, I successfully served seven courses when I was 13, the same year I tackled paella!

The moral of *The Hard-Wired Foodie*? Find the food in your family history. Spend family time in the kitchen. Learn together where your food comes from. Teach the kids to cook. Let them loose at the farmers market. Let them loose in the kitchen. Create a family of foodies!



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www.441market.com

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- Broccoli—regular, romanesco
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- Brussel Sprouts
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- Carrots—various colors
- Citrus—hamlin, navel, red navel, sunburst tangerine, grapefruit, satsuma, blood oranges, tangelos
- Cucumbers—mini seedless, slicers
- Garlic—elephant
- Greens—curly endive, collards, mustard, baby mustard, sorrel, rutabaga, turnip
- Herbs—italian basil, cilantro, marjoram, dill, sage, lime leaf, parsley, chervil, peppermint, oregano, rosemary, lemongrass
- Honey—tupelo, gallberry, orange blossom
- Kale—curly
- Lettuce—bibb, green leaf, spring mix, romaine, red romaine, radicchio
- Mushrooms—shitake
- Onions—yellow, green scallions
- Parsley root
- Pecans
- Peppers—green/red sweet bell
- Persimmons—astrigent
- Potatoes—sweet
- Radish
- Rutabaga
- Spinach
- Squash—pumpkin
- Star Fruit
- Sunflower—sprouts
- Sweet Potatoes
- Tomatoes—beefsteak, grape, cluster, green
- Turnips

Missing your favorite produce at the farmers markets? The repeated hard freezes took a toll on crops—local and statewide. Expect shortages and higher prices!

Local and Fresh— Parsley root

I tried a new food recently—and that doesn't happen very often. I always thought that after over 50 years of eating, I couldn't have missed much—I was wrong!

Parsley root is related to parsley, but grown for its roots rather than its leaves. Imagine a short parsnip or carrot that is off-white—that's parsley root! The taste is similar to the starchiness of a parsnip, with just a hint of carrot's sweetness and parsley's flavor.

Cooked, they become creamy inside but the exterior remains firm. Served raw, they have all the crunch of a carrot. Sliced or grated, raw or cooked, pureed in soup or roasted whole, they are a flavorful "new" food that has been a part of European meals for years.

Parsley Root with Garlic and Lemon

INGREDIENTS

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 bunches of parsley root, sliced into coins
- 1 clove garlic, smashed and chopped finely
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoon parsley leaves, chopped finely

DIRECTIONS

Heat pan over medium-high heat, add oil and, when hot, stir in parsley root. Stirring occasionally, cook about 5 minutes, until slightly softened. Add garlic and stir to distribute. Cook an additional 3 minutes. Stir in lemon juice and parsley leaves, cover and turn off heat. Let sit covered at least 3 minutes before serving.

NOTE: To clean parsley root, cut off leaves, wash well and pull off root tendrils. They don't need to be peeled, but stubborn dirt can be removed with a vegetable brush.

Save the World—One Dinner at a Time!

Granny's Macaroni and Cheese

INGREDIENTS

1 pound elbow or ready cut macaroni
4 eggs
1 cup fresh milk

1 pound sharp yellow cheddar cheese, cubed
1 can evaporated milk
salt and freshly-ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter a large (3 quart) baking dish—preferably a rectangular pan at least 9 x 13 inches.

Cook macaroni according to package directions in salted water. Drain and rinse to cool.

Layer cooled macaroni with cubed cheese in prepared baking dish. (Granny added little bits of butter in each layer—a tasty but fattening, and ultimately unnecessary, addition.) Be sure the cheese is evenly distributed before continuing.

In a medium bowl, beat eggs well. Add both milks and season with just a bit of salt and pepper—the salt is optional, but the pepper is really important. Pour egg and milk mixture over the layered ingredients in baking dish. Use the back of a spoon to push macaroni into liquid.

Place in preheated oven and bake at least 45 minutes before checking. Use a fork to poke the center of the casserole to determine if liquid remains. If there is liquid in the center, continue to bake until completely set—depending on the oven, this could take 60 minutes.

Remove from oven and let cool 5 minutes before serving. Refrigerate leftovers.

Tricks and Tips

Why evaporated milk? It gives the finished dish a rich creamy texture without added fat or thickening agents. Often, Granny would use just evaporated milk and some water, but I prefer the combination of evaporated and regular milk. For best results, do not use low-fat cheese or fat-free milk.

Our "House" Salad

INGREDIENTS

1 head romaine lettuce
1 cucumber, sliced, but not peeled
6 green onions (scallions), chopped finely

2 carrots, shredded
2 ribs celery, sliced
1 cup grape tomatoes

DIRECTIONS

To wash lettuce, separate each individual leaf and rinse with running water or swish leaves in a large bowl of cool water. Wrap washed leaves in clean towels and allow to dry while preparing remaining ingredients.

Place all ingredients in a large salad bowl. Using two or three leaves at a time, tear lettuce into bite-sized pieces on top of other ingredients. (Using a knife to cut lettuce results in bruising and dark edges.) Be sure to include the white ribs for extra crunch in the salad.

If not serving immediately, cover the top of the torn lettuce with paper towels. Sprinkle water on paper towels and refrigerate entire bowl up to 4 hours. Toss salad before serving.

Serve dressings and any optional ingredients on the side.

Tricks or Tips

Many different items find their way into our "House" Salad—
Fresh herbs
Red cabbage
Radish
Broccoli
Peppers
Artichoke hearts
Hearts of palm
Olives
Frozen peas
Garbanzo beans
Avocado
Cheese
Nuts
Croutons
Cooked veggies
Grilled fish
Canned fish
Cooked pasta



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Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More
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Tricks and Tips

I love making cookie batter, but really don't like the baking.

Here are my cookie tricks—

Use a very small scoop, a mini ice cream scoop with a release lever, to quickly make evenly portioned cookies.

Bake cookies on two baking sheets side by side in the oven, just

be sure there is space between them.

Sometimes it is easier to make a deal with my husband—

if I make 'em, he bakes 'em!

Nutty Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies

INGREDIENTS

1 stick unsalted butter, melted	1/2 cup brown sugar, packed lightly
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/2 cup dark cocoa, divided
1 teaspoon vanilla	2 eggs
1 1/4 cups flour	1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt	2 cups rolled oats
1 cup macadamia or other nuts, chopped finely	

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Prepare cookie sheets by lining with parchment paper. Pour melted butter into a large bowl and add brown sugar, granulated sugar and 1/4 cup cocoa. Beat until completely combined. Stir in vanilla and eggs.

In a separate bowl, combine flour, remaining cocoa, soda and salt. Stir lightly before adding to liquid ingredients. Stir until flour is partially mixed with liquids. Add oats and nuts, then stir until dry ingredients are completely incorporated and nuts are well distributed.

Using a teaspoon or a 1 inch scoop, place batter on prepared cookie sheet in heaping teaspoonfuls. Allow an inch or more between cookies for spreading. Bake for 8 minutes in preheated oven, until cookies are slightly firm to touch and no longer shiny.

Carefully slide parchment from cookie sheet onto counter with cookies still on it. Let cookies cool for at least 5 minutes, then remove with a spatula and allow to cool completely.

Store covered at room temperature. Makes about 40 cookies.

NOTE: Macadamia nuts were on sale after the holidays, but walnuts work well. If using pecans, be sure to toast lightly and cool before adding to batter, so cookies will have that nutty crunch.