

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Food for thought - ripe for the picking

It's spring in North Central Florida and a foodie's thoughts turn to fresh food. While we walk through the markets ogling the greens and coveting the cheeses, several local groups have created opportunities—some fun and some serious—to learn more about the food we choose and its impact on our health, environment and economy.

Food for Thought is a three month campaign hosted by the University of Florida's Office of Sustainability to educate our entire community about the importance of food in creating a sustainable world. Activities will take place both on campus and in the community and range from film screenings to lectures to farm tours. More information and a calendar of events can be found online at <http://sustainable.ufl.edu/food>.

As part of Food for Thought, I will be leading **Can you do it? Canning Workshop and 40s Costume Party** on Wednesday, February 15th, 6:30-8:00pm, in the Yulee Hall basement on the University of Florida campus. Putting food by is one of the best ways to eat seasonal food all year long. The workshop is open to the public and if you dress in your 40s best, you could win a home canning kit! We will take advantage of the abundance of sweet local strawberries to make strawberry jam in a flash. Find the event on Facebook and see who else will be there!

In an effort to combat childhood obesity, a team of University of Florida students, working with United Way Worldwide, has put together **Giggle in Gear**—a month of activities designed to promote fun, fitness and healthy eating. The events include workshops on gardening and African dance and a mobile farmers market. Two cooking classes for middle and high school students and their families will be held in the Holly Heights and Majestic Oaks neighborhoods. I will teach the participants about local and seasonal food as I teach one class how to create healthy dinners and the other how to easily make healthy brown bag lunches and snacks. Not all of these events are open to the general public, but they are important to our community's overall health and the sustainability of our food systems.

So what can you do everyday, three times a day, to promote a sustainable way of life when it comes to the food you must eat? Think before you eat!

It is all too easy to choose something fast and cheap with the rationalization "Well, it's just one meal—how much difference can that make? ". If you have read many issues of Hogtown HomeGrown, you know how much difference your decisions can make to our planet, our community and to your own health. So fellow foodies, here are three helpful ideas ripe and ready for picking—

**Spend your food money primarily on locally grown seasonal food.
Reduce the processed and packaged foods in your diet.
Eat all your leftovers and compost your food waste.**



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What's Fresh Right Now?

- Beets
- Bok Choy—pak choy, toy choi
- Broccoli—green, romanesco
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage—head, savoy, red
- Carrots—orange, yellow, purple, red
- Cauliflower—white, orange
- Chard—swiss, rainbow
- Citrus—juices, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons, oranges, kumquats
- Cucumbers—mini seedless
- Eggplant—purple oriental
- Fennel
- Garlic—chives, garleeks
- Greens—rappini, summerfest, dandelion, arugula, collards, mustards, turnips, cress, sorrel, escarole, red/green spinach, endive
- Herbs—oregano, rosemary, chervil, parsley, spearmint, cilantro, dill
- Honey—orange blossom, gallberry, tupelo, palmetto
- Kale—red/white russian, tuscan, curly
- Kohlrabi
- Lettuce—salad mix, arugula, bibb, green/red leaf and romaine
- Microgreens—arugula, radish, buckwheat
- Mushrooms—shiitake, oyster
- Onions—green scallions, dry yellow
- Pecans—in-shell, shelled
- Peppers—green/red/orange/yellow sweet bell, banana, jalapeno
- Persimmons—seijo
- Potatoes—red, sweet
- Radish—globe, breakfast, daikon,
- Rutabaga
- Shoots—pea, sunflower, corn, spring mix
- Sprouts—alfalfa, clover, quinoa, wheat, sunflower, garbanzo, mung bean, french lentil, green lentil, radish
- Squash—pumpkin, calabasa
- Tomatoes—red beefsteak, grape
- Turnips
- Wheatgrass

Local and Fresh—

Escarole

Escarole, a member of the endive family, is a relative of frisee and radicchio. It has tender leaves with a mild bitter flavor.

Young, small escarole leaves are the perfect addition to salads, while fully mature heads of escarole are best served sautéed or simmered.

Choose escarole that is brightly colored without bruised or limp leaves. Clean individual leaves in a big bowl of water, changing the water as needed until no sand is visible.

Store loosely wrapped in a towel and sealed in a plastic bag for up to one week.

Escarole Soup with Sausage and Beans

INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1/2 cup onion, chopped
- 1 large mild pepper, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, sliced
- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seed
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 4 small soy sausage links, cooked and sliced
- 1 large can cannellini beans, drained
- 4 cups “no-chicken” or vegetable broth
- 8 cups escarole, torn into bite-sized pieces

DIRECTIONS

Heat a large pot over medium-high heat. Add olive oil, onion and pepper and cook until softened. Stir in garlic, fennel, red pepper flakes and sliced sausage. Cook until garlic is soft and fennel is fragrant.

Stir in beans and broth. Bring mixture to a boil, add escarole, cover pot and reduce heat. Simmer 10-15 minutes. Stir well before serving. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Creamy Cabbage and Potato Casserole

INGREDIENTS

4 medium red-skinned potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 1/2 inch cubes
1 large onion, chopped
1 Tablespoon olive oil
1/2 large green cabbage, chopped into small pieces (6-8 cups)
1-2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
1 teaspoon caraway seeds
8 slices soy bacon, cooked until crispy and crumbled, divided
6 Tablespoons flour
1 cup reserved potato water
2 cups milk
1 cup breadcrumbs, preferably rye or pumpernickel
1 Tablespoon olive oil

DIRECTIONS

Lightly oil a large rectangular casserole. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Boil potatoes in lightly salted water until just done. Use a fork to test doneness—it should meet some resistance, but be able to push through the cooked potato cubes. Scoop out one cup of potato water and set aside. Drain potatoes and set aside.

Heat a large lidded heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook until translucent, stirring occasionally. Stir in olive oil and cabbage. Cook until cabbage is softened, but not limp.

Add garlic, caraway seeds and half the crumbled bacon. Stir to distribute and cook about 5 minutes, until garlic is softened and caraway seeds are fragrant.

Sprinkle cabbage mixture with flour and stir continuously while cooking for 3 minutes. Add reserved potato water and cook until bubbly and thickened. Add milk and potatoes, then gently stir to combine completely. Reduce heat, cover and let simmer 5-10 minutes.

Remove pot from heat, stir mixture gently and pour into prepared baking dish, making sure to distribute the sauce evenly. Top with remaining crumbled bacon.

In a small bowl, mix breadcrumbs with olive oil and stir until all the crumbs are completely coated. Sprinkle crumbs evenly over the top of the casserole.

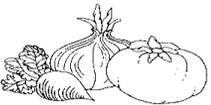
Bake 30 minutes, until edges are bubbly and crumbs are crisp. Allow to rest 5 minutes before serving.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Real vs. Fake
We choose not to eat meat, but sometimes a recipe needs that special flavor and texture, so we use a substitute meat product. Since many of these products are high in fat and sodium, use sparingly. Treat them as flavoring, not the main dish—a great way to think about using the real thing as well.

Tricks and Tips
Breadcrumbs can perk up a side dish, add crunch to a casserole and even top a pasta dish. Make them from a fresh loaf in the breadbox or from odds and ends stored in the freezer. After grinding bread in a food processor, use as is or toast until golden and crunchy in a skillet or 350 degree oven. Cool toasted breadcrumbs before storing in airtight containers.

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Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More

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Tricks and Tips

Baking powder or baking soda? Both work as leaveners to make dough rise, but they are not interchangeable. Baking powder reacts with heat, while baking soda reacts with acid. I generally use baking powder for a tender product and soda for a chewier result, but I always use a little soda if there is an acid ingredient, like orange juice or buttermilk.

Winter in Florida Cookie Bars

INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick unsalted butter, melted
- 3/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 orange, zested and juiced
- 1/2 teaspoon orange extract
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon each baking soda and salt
- 1/2 cup each white chocolate chips and chopped pecans

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees, Lightly butter an 8x8 baking pan.

Beat butter with honey and sugar. Stir in zest, juice and extract. Beat in egg.

In a separate bowl, mix together flour, baking powder and baking soda. Add to wet ingredients and combine completely. Stir in chips and pecans.

Pour into prepared pan. Bake 20-25 minutes until firm to the touch. Cool before cutting. Store in an airtight container.