

# Hogtown HomeGrown

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## Who have you taught to cook?

I spent a lot of time on a stool in Granny's kitchen—watching, talking, helping as requested. When I close my eyes, I can see her still, in her cover-all apron with a tissue in the pocket and a damp paper towel in her hand. She pats the biscuits, leaving impressions of her fingers. She lightly chews on her lower lip as she counts the casseroles and platters to be sure she hasn't forgotten anything. Thinking, she stands stock still with one hand crossed over the other at her waist, paper towel still in hand.

Kitchen knowledge can't be completely learned from books and television cooks. You must spend some time in the kitchen. See the everyday rhythm of meals—planning, shopping, cooking, serving, cleaning up. Learn how to deal with leftovers, substitutions, shortages, special food requests and holidays. Savor the time spent watching with wonder as a holiday meal emerges from the hands and kitchens of friends and family.

I've been interviewing people lately—a lot of people. Before we left for Italy, I wondered how to meet people and start a conversation, even with people who spoke limited English. I knew I would be in long lines and have access to thousands of people from over 160 countries. Asking them who taught them to cook would be a great way to break the ice, but why not record it? Of course it involved buying a little video camera, but the investment has definitely been worth it.

I ask just four questions—What is your name? Where are you from? Who taught you to cook? Who have you taught to cook? So far, I have interviewed approximately 200 people, from all over the world. I was excited when I had a chance to interview Carlo Petrini, the president of Slow Food International (his interpreter translated—sort of), Alice Waters, owner of Chez Panisse and a school garden activist, and Vandana Shiva, a scientist from India who fights industrial agriculture to protect small farms and seeds. What have I learned? Most people say their mother or grandmother taught them to cook, but the next largest group claims they taught themselves. A few people claimed to not cook, but some of those turned out to be grill wizards. What was striking was that of all the people that were taught to cook or taught themselves, most have taught someone else. It seems that the theory of "each one teach one" works in kitchens too!

So, who have you taught to cook? Maybe it is time for those of us who know how to cook, especially those who cook from scratch, to pass on our knowledge. We can't lose the knowledge we gained from our mothers and grandmothers—and yes, there are wonderful male cooks, but it seems that women hold a vast body of kitchen lore.

Get your friends into your kitchen. Make a space in your kitchen for a step stool, so there can always be a place for a child to safely watch as you cook. Don't worry that you aren't a professional—if you can boil water without burning the pot, pass your knowledge on to someone who can't!



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## What's Fresh Right Now?

Arugula  
Beets  
Bok Choy—baby, full size  
Broccoli  
Cabbage  
Carrots  
Citrus—juices, oranges, grapefruit, tangelos, tangerines, calamondin, kumquat  
Collards  
Cucumbers—mini seedless  
Eggplant—purple italian/small  
Fennel  
Garlic—elephant  
Greens—collards, mustards, kale, dandelion, mizuna, turnip  
Herbs—rosemary, chives, mint, thyme  
Honey  
Kale—russian, tuscan, other varieties  
Lettuce—leafy green, spring mix  
Microgreens—basil, arugula, radish, cress  
Mushrooms—shitake, oyster  
Onions—red/green scallions, dry yellow  
Peppers—green/red/yellow sweet bell, poblano  
Potatoes—white, red, sweet  
Pumpkins—calabasa, seminole  
Radish—microgreens, red globe, white (daikon)  
Rutabaga  
Shoots—pea, corn, sunflower  
Spinach—malabar (asian)  
Squash—butternut, calabasa, seminole  
Sprouts—alfalfa, clover, quinoa, wheat, adzuki, garbanzo, mung bean, french lentil, green lentil, radish  
Sweet Potatoes  
Tomatoes—red beefsteak, grape, green  
The freeze hit some crops harder than others. Look for broccoli, beets, brussel sprouts, cabbages, carrots, lettuces and greens over the next few weeks.

## Local and Fresh—

### Rutabaga

Often mistaken for a turnip, rutabaga is a relative of wild turnips and cabbage. A creamy yellow color with a peppery taste, this root veggie, lower in carbohydrates and higher in vitamin C than potatoes, may be served raw or cooked.

I admit that until recently, the only way I ever served rutabaga was mashed with potatoes. What a wonderful discovery—the younger, smaller roots taste good raw (think mild radish), and their thin skins are easy to peel.

Be sure to try the fresh greens attached to these smaller roots. While you can serve them raw, most people prefer them as an extra flavor in a stir-fry or a hearty soup—stir in the chopped greens at the last minute for maximum crunch.

While I prefer to cook the larger roots, I don't just mash them with potatoes any more. Fry them up as hash browns or pop them in the oven. Roasted rutabaga is easy—toss lightly cooked cubes with just a little oil, salt, pepper and tuck in a sprig or two of rosemary.

Rutabagas, like most root vegetables, will last a long time in the refrigerator, but be sure to use the greens while they are very fresh.

## Sweet Root Slaw

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup rutabaga, peeled and grated  
1 cup carrot, grated  
1/2 cup fennel, sliced thinly  
1/2 cup fresh citrus juice  
2 Tablespoons fennel tops, crumbled

### DIRECTIONS

Stir together rutabaga, carrot and fennel until completely mixed. Toss with citrus juice and fennel tops.

Refrigerate for 1-2 hours before serving. Cover and refrigerate leftovers. Slaw stays crunchy for several days.

NOTE: Try a combination of citrus juices to accentuate the flavors of the root veggies. Tangerine and lemon are great together!

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# Apple and Onion with Rutabaga

## INGREDIENTS

2 Tablespoons unsalted butter  
2 sweet onions, halved vertically and sliced thinly into crescents  
2 apples, cored and sliced thinly into crescents  
1 rutabaga, cooked, peeled and sliced thinly into crescents  
2 Tablespoons apple butter OR brown sugar

## DIRECTIONS

In a heavy lidded skillet, melt butter over medium heat, stir in onions and cook until softened and lightly colored. Add apple and rutabaga slices. Stir carefully to distribute onions evenly. Cook about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until apples have softened.

Add apple butter OR brown sugar, stir gently, cover and cook over low heat another 5 minutes. Serve hot or warm.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers. Heat leftovers before serving.

# Rutabaga Hash Browns

## INGREDIENTS

2-3 rutabaga roots, cooked until just tender  
3 Tablespoons olive oil  
1 onion, chopped  
kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

## DIRECTIONS

To precook the rutabaga, there are two choices—either boil the roots whole, then peel and cube OR peel and cube the rutabaga, then cook in boiling water. To cook whole, simply boil for 20-30 minutes until a knife will easily pierce the flesh, into the center of the root. Remove from water and cook slightly before peeling by scraping off skin with a knife.

While you may lose some nutrients, peeling the raw rutabaga is very simple with a knife or vegetable peeler and much easier than peeling the freshly boiled hot root. Leave the stems to use as a “handle” while peeling, then remove before cutting root into 1/2 inch cubes.

Heat a heavy skillet and add oil. Add rutabaga in one layer and cook over medium-high heat for 3 minutes without moving, to allow cubes to brown on one side. Stir and add onions. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally until all sides are browned and onions are caramelized. Remove from heat before seasoning to taste. Serve hot.

Allow leftovers to cool before storing in an air-tight container in the refrigerator. Heat leftovers in microwave or hot oven.



## Tricks and Tips

Traditionally made in Scandinavia with bacon, fried apples and onions were made famous in America by Laura Ingalls Wilder's book *Farmer Boy*. The addition of rutabaga enhances the taste, texture and nutrition of this simple dish.

## Leftover Recipe

If you ever ate at Skeeter's restaurant, you probably remember the infamous **Asher Special**. Skeeter's used potatoes, but you can make an even tastier dish. Place hot Rutabaga Hash Browns on a plate, top with grated cheese and fried eggs. The egg yolks should be just soft enough to flow over the hash browns and mix with the melting cheese. Add catsup at your own discretion. Variations include the addition of peppers, mushrooms or breakfast meats. Complete the meal with a mug of strong coffee, a big biscuit with honey, and some great banjo tunes by Tammy Murray.

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## Tricks and Tips

For years, I made apple butter by throwing peeled and cored apples in a pot, cooking them in water, then adding sugar and cinnamon to enhance the taste. Now I taste and combine different types of apples, then cook them, skin, seeds and all, in cider.

The result is complex—sweet and tart, full of body and texture—no sugar or cinnamon needed.

## Apple Butter

### INGREDIENTS

1/2 gallon good quality apple cider  
3 pounds apples, cut into quarters with skins and cores

### DIRECTIONS

Pour cider into a large, heavy-bottomed pot with a capacity of at least 8 quarts. Bring to a boil, add apples and stir well.

Cook about an hour, until apples are soft and fall apart when stirred. Turn off heat and allow apple mixture to cool at least 30 minutes.

Pour apple mixture into a fine or medium sieve and push pulp through. Dispose of skins, seeds and stems.

Return apples and cider to large pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat so that a steady simmer continues and cook to desired thickness, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching.

After about an hour, the mixture will be thick and all the liquid will be incorporated with the apple solids. Save some to can and process, if you want to preserve some applesauce.

Continue to cook over very low heat for another two to three hours, until apple butter reaches desired consistency. Spoon some onto a plate—if it holds its shape, it's ready!

Pour into clean, hot jars, seal and process 10-12 minutes in a boiling water bath. Store sealed jars in a cool, dark place. Refrigerate after opening.