

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Inside this issue:

**The Illegal
Jam Company** 1

Mango Butter 1

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

**Local and Fresh—
Yardlong Beans** 2

**Sesame
Long Beans** 2

**Braised Butternut
Squash with Sage** 3

**Garlicky Beans
with Tomatoes** 3

Mango Crisp 4

The Illegal Jam Company

The questions were subtle at first. “Got enough empty jars there?” “You want 5 baskets of peaches? What are you making?” “Where are you going to store all that jam?”

Now, everyone who comes in the house is forced to comment on the 12 flats of filled jars on the front hall table—they just won’t fit in the jam pantry anymore. That could be because the jam pantry has over 100 jars already.

Putting up preserves and jellies year-round is fun and takes advantage of the successive seasons of strawberries, then blueberries, followed by peaches, plums, mangoes, pears, figs, grapes and persimmons and on and on.

This wouldn’t be a problem if the jams were made in a commercial kitchen because I would be able to sell them. And as part of Blue Oven Kitchens, I am working with some talented locals to create a commercial kitchen in North Central Florida. A commercial kitchen is an inspected facility that can be used to create safe and legal food.

Not only would my jam be legal, but there are people all over this area who could create a food business. Farmers could increase their income by creating value-added products. Caterers and specialty cooks could have a legal kitchen to use by the hour or day. A commercial kitchen is the answer to many economic needs and dreams.

But until then, I am the proud owner of a fictional company—the Illegal Jam Company—producing jams, jellies, preserves and butters to give as gifts to friends and family. Maybe I have gone a little overboard, but as hobbies go, this one is fairly useful and can be extremely tasty.

Mango Butter

INGREDIENTS

6 cups chopped mango (6-8 mangoes, depending on size)
1/3 cup mixed fresh citrus juices (lemon, lime, orange)
1 cup or more raw sugar (the amount of sugar depends on the sweetness of the mangoes)

DIRECTIONS

In two batches, puree the mango pulp in a blender. Pour into a large, deep heavy-bottomed pot.

Bring pulp to a boil, stirring occasionally. Mix in citrus juices and sugar. Stir until sugar is completely melted. Taste and adjust sugar as needed. Cook over low heat until thick, stirring every 10-15 minutes. Mixture will foam.

When thickened to desired consistency, pour mixture into hot prepared canning jars, seal, and process in a boiling water bath for 10-12 minutes. Refrigerate any unsealed jars.



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What's Fresh Right Now?

Beans—green, yardlong
Blueberries
Bok Choy—baby
Cabbage—green
Citrus—juices, oranges, grapefruit
Corn—white, bi-colored
Cucumbers—mini seedless, slicers
Eggplant—small/large italian, thai,
small/large oriental
Garlic—chives
Greens—chard
Herbs—rosemary, thyme, cilantro, basil,
parsley, oregano, sage, lime leaf
Honey—orange blossom, wildflower,
gallberry, tupelo
Kohlrabi
Lettuce—mixed
Melon—cantaloupe, watermelon, sprite
Microgreens—arugula, fenugreek, radish
Mushrooms—shiitake, oyster
Onions—green scallions, dry yellow
Peas—black-eye/white acre/creamer
Peppers—green/red/orange/purple/
yellow sweet bell, numerous
hot varieties
Potatoes—red, white
Radish—microgreens
Shoots—pea, sunflower, corn
Sprouts—alfalfa, clover, quinoa, wheat,
sunflower, garbanzo, mung bean,
french lentil, green lentil, radish
Squash—zucchini, delicata, acorn,
butternut, spaghetti
Tomatoes—red beefsteak, grape, red/
yellow cherry, sungold, plum

*Have you noticed all the beef, chicken and sea-
food vendors at the farmers market? If you want
more than veggies for dinner, take a look around
your favorite market—I've seen meats, milk,
yogurt, cheeses, tempeh, baked goods and des-
serts. Our farmers markets are growing and they
are great for one-stop shopping!*

Local and Fresh— Yardlong Beans

Chinese long beans, also known as snake or asparagus beans, are commonly called yard-long beans in our area. Seen in small bundles of 10-12, these dark red or green beans are about a foot long with a leathery type skin.

While the resemblance to a green bean is obvious, the yardlong bean is actually closely related to the cowpea family—known to us as field peas, such as black-eye, crowder or creamer peas. If left to mature, yardlong beans can dry in their pods and be cooked just like any Southern field pea.

When fresh, yardlong beans can be cooked like green beans, although they taste best when cooked with a little oil, rather than being boiled or steamed. The texture never gets mushy and the taste is meatier than a green bean.

Common in many Asian cuisines, yard-long beans are often cooked with strong spices, garlic, chiles and even coconut milk.

Sesame Long Beans

INGREDIENTS

20 yardlong beans (12-14 inches long)
3 green onions
1 teaspoon olive oil
1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
2 teaspoons sesame seeds
salt and freshly ground pepper

DIRECTIONS

Cut beans and green onions on the diagonal into 2 inch pieces. Place in a skillet over medium heat. Cook until beans begin to get tender, stirring often.

Stir in olive oil and continue to cook until beans reach desired doneness. Remove from heat before adding sesame oil and sesame seeds. Taste for seasoning.

Serve hot, warm or at room temperature. Refrigerate covered leftovers.

Braised Butternut Squash with Sage

INGREDIENTS

1 teaspoon olive oil
1 Tablespoon unsalted butter
4 cups peeled, seeded and diced butternut squash
1/2 cup finely chopped shallot OR leek OR onion
1/2 cup water
2 Tablespoons brown sugar (spooned, not packed)
1 Tablespoon finely chopped fresh sage, divided
2 Tablespoons finely sliced green onion
1/4 teaspoon salt
1-2 Tablespoons white balsamic vinegar

DIRECTIONS

In a lidded skillet over medium heat, sauté squash and shallot in oil and butter until shallot is softened. Add water, brown sugar, 1/2 the sage, green onion and salt. Stir and cover.

Simmer 20-30 minutes, stirring occasionally. When squash is tender, but not mushy, remove from heat and stir in vinegar to taste. Serve hot. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Tricks and Tips
Peeling hard squash is easier with the right tools. In addition to a sturdy cutting board, you need a sharp knife to cut off the top and bottom, creating a level surface. Peeling works best with a “Y” shaped peeler with a horizontal blade. Slide the peeler from the top to bottom to easily remove the hard skin from the squash.

Garlicky Beans with Tomatoes

INGREDIENTS

3 cups green beans or yardlong beans, snipped and snapped into 1-2 inch pieces
1 Tablespoon olive oil
3 large cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
3 large tomatoes, seeded and chopped into 1/4 inch x 1-2 inch pieces
1 splash wine vinegar
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Steam green beans 3 –5 minutes, until bright green, but not yet tender.

Combine beans, oil and garlic in a lidded saucepan over medium heat. Cook until garlic is fragrant. Stir in tomatoes. Cover pot, simmer 10 minutes, stir, replace cover and simmer another 10 minutes. Uncover, stir in vinegar and desired seasonings. Cook uncovered 3-5 minutes.

Remove from heat. Serve hot or warm. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Tricks and Tips
Seeding a round cluster tomato is a very easy task. Cut the tomato in half across its equator. Turn half upside down and lightly squeeze until the seeds drop out. To seed a plum tomato, cut it in half lengthwise and squeeze. You may need to finish seeding plum tomatoes with a spoon.

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Tricks and Tips

A ripe mango will peel very easily.

First, cut off a circle at the top of the fruit. Next, grab a piece of the peel and pull downward, removing the coarse fiber and the peel. Simply cut chunks or slices by drawing your knife down the sides of the large, flat seed.

Mango Crisp

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups sliced mangoes
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 lime, zest and juice
- 4 Tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup dry oatmeal (rolled oats)
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease an 8 inch square baking dish.

Mix mangoes with 1/4 cup brown sugar, lime zest and juice. Place in baking dish.

Stir 1/2 cup brown sugar into melted butter until completely mixed. Add remaining ingredients and stir until a crumbly mixture forms. Sprinkle topping evenly over mangoes.

Bake 30-45 minutes, until juices are bubbly and topping is crispy. Cover leftovers.