

# Hogtown HomeGrown

Volume 7 Issue 3

March 2012

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## Cooking dinner every night

A long time ago, before our oldest son was born (he's now 30), I got some good advice from a La Leche League leader. She said to pick one thing everyday that you want to accomplish and once you've finished it, anything else that gets done is just icing on the cake. And if you have ever been home with a baby who wants to nurse all day or a deadline for your job, even one task can seem monumental!

So I asked my husband—what is the one thing that would make you the happiest, especially if nothing else gets done around the house? Surprisingly, it wasn't laundry or dishes or housecleaning! It was dinner. He could handle anything else thrown his way, if dinner was cooked every night.

So dinner it was, and has been, for most of these thirty years. There are days when there are leftovers or planned get-your-own meals. But for the most part, I cook dinner every night—from scratch and primarily based on what is in my kitchen, although now and then I do make a run to the store for a few extra ingredients.

While I will never be able to compete with Granny who cooked three meals a day for 80 plus years, I have quite a track record in the kitchen. Many nights, when the boys were younger, making dinner seemed overwhelming, but now it is a habit. Some weeks I make out menus based on our farmers market purchases, but most of the time I just shop from our refrigerator and pantry to come up with something delectable.

Now granted, our pantry has a number of not-so-normal ingredients. Just the other night I made a pasta dish topped with shaved black truffles still in our pantry from our trip to Italy. But most nights it is good, healthy food—lots of veggies and the occasional fish dish like the one below using local leeks and saffron we brought back from Italy. Hey, since the saffron was in our pantry, does that make it local?

## Stovetop Fish with Leeks and Saffron

### INGREDIENTS

1 Tablespoon each olive oil and butter  
1 large leek, thinly sliced, including some green  
1 pinch saffron (5-6 threads)  
1/2 cup water, divided  
1 pound flaky white fish (red fish, snapper, grouper) cut into portions

### DIRECTIONS

In a skillet over medium-high heat, sauté leeks in olive oil and butter until limp. Stir in saffron and 1/4 cup water. Simmer until water evaporates. Add fish and cook for three minutes. Turn fish, add remaining water and cover. Cook until fish is done, about 10-15 minutes. Serve hot topped with leeks and pan juices.



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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, chinese  
Carrots—orange, yellow, red  
Cauliflower—white  
Chard—rainbow  
Citrus—juices, tangerines, grapefruit, lemons, oranges  
Cucumbers—mini seedless  
Garlic—chives, garleeks  
Greens—rappini, summerfest, dandelion, arugula, collards, mustards, turnips, spinach, endive  
Herbs—oregano, rosemary, dill, parsley, lime leaf  
Honey—orange blossom, gallberry, tupelo, palmetto, wildflower  
Kale—red russian, tuscan  
Kohlrabi  
Leeks  
Lettuce—salad mix, arugula, green leaf  
Microgreens—arugula, radish, buckwheat  
Mushrooms—shiitake, oyster  
Onions—green scallions, dry yellow  
Peppers—green/red/yellow sweet bell, banana, jalapeno, poblano, hot banana  
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  
Strawberries  
Sugar snap peas  
Tomatoes—red beefsteak, grape, cherokee purple  
Turnips  
Wheatgrass

## Local and Fresh— Red Cabbage

You've seen them in the markets—big, reddish purple round heads of cabbage. I never really thought much of red cabbage until recently—it was either served raw as a colorful afterthought in a restaurant salad or cooked with apples and onions until limp.

A recent trip to the markets found me admiring some beautiful red cabbage, so I researched and experimented. It has at least 6 times the amount of Vitamin C as green cabbage and tons of fiber. Look for firm, heavy heads with shiny leaves and store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. It will last much longer than any other cabbage.

Right now, I have a container in our refrigerator filled with thin strips of shredded red cabbage. We stuff it into pitas and roll it into wraps. It's also good tossed onto soups and into salads as a crunchy, healthy addition.

## Red Cabbage Salad

### INGREDIENTS

4 cups cabbage, chopped into bite-sized pieces  
2 carrots, shredded  
1/2 cup dried raisins, cranberries or apricots  
1 Tablespoon crystallized ginger, slivered  
1 green onion, thinly sliced  
1/4 cup olive oil  
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice  
1 teaspoon lemon zest  
2 Tablespoons cane syrup or honey  
1/4 teaspoon salt

### DIRECTIONS

In a large non-staining bowl, mix together cabbage, carrots, dried fruit (if using apricots, chop first), ginger and green onion.

In a separate bowl, mix together olive oil, lemon juice and zest, cane syrup and salt. Whisk with a fork until completely combined and pour over cabbage salad. Toss to coat completely. Cover and refrigerate at least 30 minutes before serving.

# Sweet Potato Curry

## INGREDIENTS

4 medium sweet potatoes  
2 Tablespoons olive oil  
1 large onion, chopped  
2 Tablespoons curry powder  
1 teaspoon coriander  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
a pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)  
2 cups diced tomatoes, canned with juice or fresh without seeds  
1/4 - 1 cup water  
4 cups chopped arugula or spinach  
2 large green onions, sliced

## DIRECTIONS

Boil sweet potatoes in water to cover, until a fork can just pierce the potato, but the center is still firm. Set aside to cool. May be boiled in advance and refrigerated. Peel sweet potatoes. Cut into 1 inch cubes and set aside.

Heat a large lidded pot over medium-high heat. Heat oil and stir in onions. Cook until onions are limp, but not browned. Add curry powder, coriander, cinnamon and red pepper flakes. Cook one to two minutes, stirring constantly, until spices are fragrant.

Mix in potatoes, stirring until completely coated with spices and onions. Add tomatoes and stir gently until combined. Bring to a simmer, stir once more, reduce heat to low, cover and cook 15 minutes, stirring once or twice.

Remove cover and taste for salt. Add salt and pepper if necessary. Check the amount of liquid. If you want it saucy, add some water until it is your preferred consistency. Stir in the arugula and green onions. Cover and simmer 5 minutes.

Remove from heat, stir well and serve hot, warm or at room temperature. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

## SERVING SUGGESTIONS:

Serve as a main dish with a crunchy raw vegetable salad as a side dish.

Serve over rice as a complete meal with garnishes. Garnish ideas include chopped nuts, dried fruit, chutney, yogurt or green onions.

Serve as wraps in whole wheat flatbreads with any of the above garnishes.

Serve as hot wraps in whole wheat flatbreads with a mild melting cheese or paneer.

### Tricks and Tips

Be sure to use a fork to test the potatoes. It is a more reliable test than a knife since a knife can cut, rather than pierce, the potato.

### Spices and Herbs

Did you know that dried spices and herbs have a shelf-life of less than one year? Take a look in your pantry and weed out all the old, dried-out, flavorless spices and replace them with fresh ones. The jars in the grocery stores are very expensive and generally get stale before I use them up, so I buy my spices and herbs in bulk. Reuse glass jars from the store or buy small containers. No matter what you store them in, be sure herbs are in a dark cool location, not in a rack near your hot stovetop.

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# Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More

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## Tricks and Tips

Muscadine sauce is not just sweet like jam but spicy, sweet and savory. The recipe for my version was inspired by the sauce available at Callaway Gardens. By tasting and adjusting the balance of vinegar to sugar and the mix of spices, I recreated my sense memory of that wonderful taste! The recipe is available on the Hogtown HomeGrown website.

# Muscadine Spice Cake

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup each sugar and oil
- 3 eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon each baking soda and salt
- 1 cup Muscadine Sauce (substitute 1 cup applesauce spiced with cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg)
- 1 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped

## DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease and flour a bundt or tube pan.

In a large bowl, whisk together sugar and oil until light. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in vanilla and set aside.

Mix together flour, baking powder, soda and salt. Stir half the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients. Add half the muscadine sauce and blend well. Repeat with remaining flour and sauce. Mix until batter is completely combined. Stir in walnuts.

Pour into prepared pan and bake 40-50 minutes until top is firm and the cake pulls away from the sides of the pan. Cool before cutting. Store covered at room temperature.