

# Hogtown HomeGrown

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## You grow it. I'll cook it!

Since I've said it before, it's not really news to you—I kill plants. Oh, I have a few elderly “houseplants” that survive outdoors under a steady regimen of benign neglect. We do have two citrus trees and I am proud to announce our older Meyer lemon tree bore thirteen beautiful fruit this past season. That's up from three the year before! But in general...well, you get the idea.

Granny could grow anything. Her yard in Georgia had all the classic Southern gardening basics—a forty-foot blooming magnolia, a huge patch of bright yellow daylilies, a row of purple irises along the neighbor's wire fence and towering crepe myrtles bordering the back of the yard. In addition to the vegetable and rose gardens, there were a couple of huge fig trees and two small, but healthy, blueberry bushes.

Even though I watched her, I still don't know Granny's secrets. She whispered to the African violets which perched on the sunny ledge of her kitchen window. She frolicked with her tomato plants, wrestling them into tidy bushes and nurturing each new fruit. But it was the time she spent with the roses that was special. The nurture of roses is literally and figuratively a thorny situation, but Granny donned her pink rose-print gardening gloves, wielded her sharp pruning shears and dove right in.

I tried diving into gardening a couple of times. Early in our marriage, when anything was possible, a spell of beautiful spring weather inspired me to clear a patch of our overgrown back yard and plant some tomatoes, potatoes and a few other odds and ends. When the weather warmed and the mosquitoes swarmed, I ran into the house and stayed 'til fall. Needless to say, the grapevines and weeds won, except for one patch of potatoes. We harvested three plants with about a dozen potatoes ranging in size from marbles to baseballs. Although they were tasty, they were the most expensive potatoes ever!

Twelve years and two sons later, I was in graduate school, studying modern American literature and procrastinating homework whenever possible. This time, instead of tilling the ground, I put cinder blocks on the edge of our porch, filled them with soil, and planted several types of lettuce. This experiment was a bit more successful, but even though our boys were 6 and 2, there was never enough lettuce to make a salad big enough for the family.

Mom claims I got my brown thumb from her, so the gardening gene must have skipped two generations. She never had any luck growing plants and, except for the houseplants, I don't really try any more. My energy is better invested in the kitchen.

Occasionally I will go into a garden or a farm field, but I always bring my knife and portable stove. It's a lot of fun to create meals from food right off the vine or out of the ground and it makes me really appreciate the farmers that do all the work that I find impossible. So to all my gardening and farming friends...You grow it. I'll cook it!

# What's Fresh Right Now?

## Beets

**Bok choy**—tatsoi, red/green pac choi, baby

**Broccoli**—green, romanesco, spigarello

## Brussels Sprouts

**Cabbage**—green, napa/chinese

**Carrots**—orange/purple/yellow/red

## Cauliflower

**Citrus**—pink/red/white grapefruit, orange, tangerine, tangelo, sour orange, meyer lemon, calamondin, juices

**Cucumbers**—mini seedless

## Fennel

**Garlic**—chives, gar-leeks

**Greens**—kale, collards, mustards, arugula, chard, mizuna, asian stir-fry mix, escarole, dandelion, sorrel, spinach, radicchio

**Herbs**—cress, cilantro, curly/flat parsley, dill, mint, turmeric

**Kohlrabi**—green/purple

**Lettuce**—salad mix, red/green romaine and leaf lettuce, crispy frill, bibb, buttercrunch, frisee

**Mushrooms**—shiitake

**Onions**—white, white/red scallions

**Peas**—snow, sugar snap

**Peppers**—red/green/orange/yellow sweet, jalapeno, poblano

## Pineapple

**Potatoes**—white

## Rutabaga

**Radish**—globe, daikon, french breakfast, icicle

## Shoots, Sprouts and Microgreens

## Sweet Potatoes

**Tomatoes**—grape, beefsteak, heirloom, green

**Turnips**—white, purple-topped

# Local and Fresh— Tender Greens

While you may be tired of them, greens are still dominating the farmers markets. Look beyond mustards, collards and kale for young tender leaves of chard, fresh vibrant beet greens or even large leaves of spinach for a tasty, yet quickly cooked side dish. Use them soon, before their fresh-picked goodness is gone.

# Tender Greens with Lemon and Ginger

## INGREDIENTS

2 Tablespoons olive oil

1 large bunch of fresh tender greens

2-3 green onions, sliced into small rounds

2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped

2 tablespoons fresh ginger root, minced

½ - 1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon sugar or honey

1 Meyer lemon, zested and juiced

½ cup water

## DIRECTIONS

In a large pot with a lid, heat oil over medium heat and add greens. Stir until limp and add green onions, garlic and ginger. Sauté until garlic is soft, stirring occasionally.

Add remaining ingredients, stir well, cover and simmer over low heat for at least 30 minutes, until sweet and tender.

Serve hot or at room temperature.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Note—Chard, beet greens or large spinach work well in this recipe. Young kale with small stems works too, but if it is a large-stemmed variety, strip the leaves off the stems before slicing and remember it may take longer to cook.



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**Acid:** sour orange, calamondin, meyer lemon

*\*weather permitting*

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**Farmers Market**

**Saturdays 830am—1pm**

5920 NW 13th Street

[www.441market.com](http://www.441market.com)

# Romanesco with Thyme and Feta

## INGREDIENTS

6-8 stems thyme  
1/2 onion, finely chopped  
3-4 shiitake mushrooms, minced  
1 garlic clove, smashed and chopped  
1 head romanesco, broken into small florets  
3 Tablespoons olive oil, divided  
2 ounces feta, crumbled

## DIRECTIONS

In a lidded saucepan over medium heat, place thyme, onion and mushrooms. Stirring frequently, sauté until onion begins to soften. Add garlic, romanesco and 2 Tablespoons olive oil. Stir well, cover and cook until romanesco is cooked to desired tenderness.

Stir well, remove thyme stems, top with crumbled feta and drizzle with remaining 1 Tablespoon of olive oil. Cover and turn off heat. Leave covered until cheese melts.

Serve hot. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

# Rutabaga Mash with Sage

## INGREDIENTS

1 large rutabaga, peeled and chopped (about 3 cups)  
1 floury/russet-type potato, peeled if desired and chopped (about 1 cup)  
8-10 fresh sage leaves, divided  
2 Tablespoons unsalted butter  
salt and freshly-ground pepper to taste

## DIRECTIONS

In a large lidded pot place rutabaga, potato and half the sage leaves. Cover with water, bring to a boil and cook until rutabaga is fork tender. Drain and remove sage leaves.

Finely chop remaining sage leaves. Add to cooked rutabaga and potato, along with butter. Mash to desired chunkiness. Taste and adjust seasoning.

Serve hot. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

# Kale Salad for Spring

## INGREDIENTS

1 bunch kale or other tender green, washed and torn into small pieces  
2 Tablespoons olive oil  
1 pint strawberries, sliced  
1/4 cup each crumbled feta and toasted, chopped pecans

## DIRECTIONS

Massage oil into kale. Top with strawberries, feta and pecans.

Serve as is or with a dressing of your choice.

## Leftover Recipe

Leftovers of **Romanesco with Thyme and Feta** can always be heated and used as a filling for a baked potato, wrap or omelet, but here's a recipe for something a little different.

## Leftover-filled Frittata

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Heat a large heavy, oven-proof skillet over medium heat. Add 1 Tablespoon olive oil and 1-2 cups of cold leftovers. Heat, stirring occasionally, until the larger veggie pieces are warmed through. Once warm, pour in 4-6 well-beaten eggs. Cook until eggs are set on the bottom. Place pan in hot oven until eggs are completely cooked. If desired, garnish with additional fresh thyme and crumbled feta. Serve hot or at room temperature. With some bread and a salad, it's a complete meal for 2-4 people.

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## Tricks and Tips

Creating baked goods with flavor extracts can be tricky. Because it is fairly mild, it's hard to overdo pure vanilla extract. Not so with maple or almond. A touch too much may create an overwhelming aroma and taste in the finished product.

So why bother?

To get a full maple flavor in these bars, the extract gives just a little boost to the subtle natural flavors of maple syrup and sugar. Almond and coconut also taste better with a touch of extract. As for citrus extracts, to avoid sharpness use a very small amount or substitute zest instead.

## Maple Walnut Bars

### INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted (1 stick)  
1/2 cup maple sugar  
1/2 cup maple syrup  
2 eggs  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/4 teaspoon maple extract (optional, I guess, but it really enhances the maple flavor)  
1 cup flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1 cup walnuts, chopped

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter just the bottom of an 8x8 baking pan.

In a large bowl, beat together butter, maple sugar and syrup.

Add eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. Stir in extracts.

In a separate bowl, mix together flour, soda and salt.

Add dry mixture to wet ingredients. Stir lightly to combine.

Add walnuts and stir lightly until evenly distributed. Pour into prepared pan, pushing gently into corners.

Bake 30-40 minutes until firm in the center. Edges will be golden brown.

Cool before cutting into 16 squares. Store in an airtight container.