

Hogtown HomeGrown™

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Change, Change, Change

One of my favorite sayings is “change is the only constant” and these days the rate of change is as breathtaking as the change itself. Our worlds, large and small, have been altered at a pace so rapid that any time to mourn is postponed in favor of even more change. Our feet have been knocked from under us, but we seem to be standing back up.

In the six months since I made the decision to retire, my life has altered. Join me on the rollercoaster ride of those changes—

Change #1—Sometime in January, worried about my health and determined not to take another drug for Type II diabetes, I started eating in a new way. To bring my body’s reactions to food into balance, I eliminated sugar and flour completely from my diet, eating only three homemade, weighed and measured meals each day. The result has been physically dramatic to date, but it has also completely changed the way I look at food, my day-to-day cooking routine and the way I write recipes.

Change #2—Sometime in early March, the COVID-19 pandemic entered our world. The fact that asymptomatic people can infect others is my major concern.

Change #3—Due to Change #2, Hogtown HomeGrown ceased publication of hard copies, switching to online-only distribution. Collectors may request hard copies of the March, April or May 2020 newsletters with an email to hogtownhomegrown@gmail.com.

Change #4—Due to Change #2, all scheduled public and private cooking demonstrations, parties and lessons have stopped. A too-quick retirement for that part of my work-life. I really relish the words of those who have reached out to me with phone calls and emails expressing support and continued appreciation for my work. Thank you.

Change #5—Due to Change #2, we began our complete contact-free quarantine at home on March 17th, when we returned from our son’s wedding in California. Jeff works from home and we rely on delivery, drive-through farmers markets and curbside pickup for all purchases in an effort to protect my 88 1/2 year old Mom.

Change #6—Mom, known to many as Intrepid Traveler, has short-term memory issues and requires more of my time lately. Because of Change #2, she was also quarantined after our travel to California. Her quarantine at The Village, across from Santa Fe College, resulted in complete isolation in her apartment—meals delivered to the door and no visitors at all. After several weeks of this, she took a fall in her apartment and spent nine days in the hospital. She now has help in her apartment and I am her only allowed “essential” caregiver and visitor as The Village continues to limit access to protect the residents.

So this is it, the final issue of Hogtown HomeGrown. We’ve all changed since I wrote the first newsletters in 2006, when the word “locavore” was newly minted, but local food has continued to flourish through it all. It is up to us to make sure that never changes.

“And in the end / The love you take / Is equal to the love you make.” It has been heartening to know so many of you have taken this rollercoaster ride with me, not only this month, but for all these years. I am grateful for our amazing friends who read every issue, purchased tshirts and coffee in the early days and consistently nudge me to write a cookbook.

Finally, there are no words equal to the continued support and technical expertise from my husband, Jeff, so my last words are for you honey—Thank you! Love you too!

What's Fresh Right Now?

Beans
Beets
Blueberries
Bok choy
Cabbage
Carrots
Celery
Corn
Cucumber
Fennel
Garlic
Ginger
Greens
Herbs
Honey
Jicama
Kohlrabi
Lettuces
Moringa
Mushrooms
Onions
Papaya
Peas
Peppers
Pineapple
Radish
Rutabaga
Shoots and Sprouts
Squash
Strawberries
Sweet Potatoes
Tomatoes
Turmeric
Turnips

To find out what's fresh in the future,
check the Union Street Farmers Market weekly listing
and go to the individual farm's websites.

Harvest charts produced by State or Federal entities
often lump North Central Florida in with South Florida
or the entire Southeast, but we have our own seasons.

Local and Fresh— Red Onions

Red onions have always been my go-to allium for topping a bagel or livening up a salad. While I often find red spring or green onions at the farmers markets, the full grown onions were elusive. This year, they have been showing up at farm stands and in CSA boxes, so red onions are our final featured produce.

Look for firm onions, with dry roots. Store in the refrigerator or air dry and store separated from each other in a cool spot.

A cut onion will last a week if refrigerated in a sealed container. I try to keep one in the refrigerator ready to cut a slice or two.

The skins are perfect for dyeing eggs!

Summer Salad

INGREDIENTS

1 cup cucumber, chopped
1 cup tomato, chopped
1 cup corn, cooked and cut from cob
1/2 cup red onion, diced
1-2 avocados, diced
1/3 cup lime juice
Salt and cayenne pepper

DIRECTIONS

Mix together all vegetables.
Stir in lime juice and add salt and cayenne to taste.
Serve immediately for best results.
Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Mound on greens for a great salad.

Scoop it up with blue corn chips.

Use as a topping for tacos.

Mix with beans and fill a wrap or pita.

Spoon over grilled shrimp or fish.

Cabbage “Kung Pao”

INGREDIENTS

1 pound cabbage, sliced into short thin pieces
1 carrot, grated
1/2 cup radish, grated (Daikon is good for a spicy kick)
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 Tablespoon tomato paste
1-2 Tablespoons tamari
1-2 teaspoons smoked sesame oil
1-2 Tablespoons rice wine vinegar (unflavored)
1-2 teaspoons hot sauce of choice
1/4 cup water, if needed
1 bunch (6-8) scallions or thin spring onions, chopped into 1 inch pieces (reserve 1/4 cup)
1/2 cup peanuts, roasted and lightly chopped
Fresh lime and hot sauce to taste

DIRECTIONS

In a deep pot over medium heat, place cabbage, carrot and radish. Cook, stirring occasionally, until tender crisp.

Season with salt and pepper and stir well.

Cover and cook about 5 minutes, stirring once.

Move the veggies aside to make a space on the bottom of the pot. Add the tomato paste, stirring lightly as it cooks for a minute or two.

Stir tomato paste into cooked cabbage mixture and add tamari, sesame oil, vinegar and hot sauce.

Stir well and add water if the mixture seems too dry.

Add green onions and peanuts, stirring to distribute completely.

Cover, reduce heat to very low and cook 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Garnish with reserved scallions.

Serve hot or at room temperature with lime and hot sauce as desired.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

VARIATION

After the seasonings are mixed in, add 2-4 servings of cooked protein cut into bite-sized pieces. I like shrimp, but chicken, tofu or tempeh would work just as well.

Add water and stir to incorporate.

Cover and cook until protein is completely reheated.

Add scallions and peanuts. Continue with recipe as written.

Be sure to refrigerate leftovers immediately and eat within 3 days.

Eggplant with Red Onion, Poblanos and Basil

INGREDIENTS

4 cups peeled and cubed eggplant

1-2 red onions, halved and thickly sliced

1-2 poblano peppers, seeded, halved and cut into chunks

1 teaspoon olive oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1/2 cup basil cut into chiffonade

1/4 cup basil flowers

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Line a roasting pan with parchment paper.

Mix eggplant, onions and peppers in a bowl.

Toss with olive oil, salt and pepper. Put veggies in an even layer in lined pan.

Roast 30-60 minutes. Toss with basil and flowers while hot.

Serve hot or warm. Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

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Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More

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In June 2008, because she noticed Hogtown HomeGrown, Jacki Levine asked me to write about local food for the Gainesville Magazine. From my first issue in October 2008, she patiently taught me to write, first my column and then feature articles. I consider it a lovely bonus that I have been able to continue my column all these years. Interviewing and writing about local cooks and chefs for Gainesville Magazine has been a delight. The most delightful interviewee was Huguette Contessa, a French-born Gainesville resident who taught me crepes and fed me mousse back in 2014.

Huguette's Chocolate Mousse

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup dark chocolate chips
- 2-4 Tablespoons cognac, cointreau, gran marnier or cold coffee
- 1 Tablespoon unsalted butter (optional)
- 4 eggs, separated
- Pinch of salt

DIRECTIONS

Melt chocolate over double boiler. Stir in cognac and butter, if using.

Place egg whites into a very, very clean mixing bowl with a pinch of salt. Beat to stiff peaks.

Beat egg yolks one at a time into melted chocolate.

Mix a little beaten egg white into chocolate mixture to lighten it and then gently fold in remaining beaten egg whites until no whites streaks remain. Mousse should still be somewhat fluffy from egg whites when mixed.

Cover and refrigerate.

Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before serving. Makes 4-8 servings.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Serve in small bowls or demitasse cups.

A demitasse spoon makes the experience of eating the mousse last longer and even more delightful.

Garnish with fresh berries or whipped cream and serve with madeleines.