

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Time to get back in the kitchen

We sure do enjoy food around here, whether just the two of us at home or with family and friends, many of whom are also foodies. Since we don't eat meat, and only occasionally seafood, we don't have high protein bills. And that is the justification we use for spending the money for artisanal foods. We can't or don't make them ourselves, so we show how much we appreciate someone else's efforts by spending our hard-earned dollars for their creations.

We get about 70% of what we eat from the farmers market, buying a few prepared foods, including cheeses and, occasionally, baked goods. Right now our fridge is stuffed with 4 kinds of squash, 2 kinds of peas, 4 colors of carrots, plus fennel, leeks, shiitakes, scallions, lettuce mix, and I am sure I am forgetting something. The point is, as Michael Pollan famously repeats, Eat food, mostly plants, not too much! That's what we do, with most of our meals centered around two or three dishes made from fresh produce. We use the artisanal foods for flavor, not as the main ingredient.

So we've learned to eat local, but we need to learn how to extend the seasons by putting food by and to create food at home. Sure, I used to make a lot of jam, until I quit eating sugar. I also made a lot of bread through the years, but that has gone by the wayside too. While I won't start making my own cheese, I do love foods like yogurt, sauerkraut and sun-dried tomatoes. Since they are getting expensive, and I just lost my day job, it is time to get back in the kitchen to learn a new skill or two to save us a little money.

What a glorious time to be stuck with such a problem! It's May and our farmers markets are overflowing, so I am going to try my hand at preserving—no, not Illegal Jam, but veggies. Canning, freezing, dehydrating, and maybe even fermenting. Time to get some yogurt started too! Since I do like a variety of probiotic critters, I should learn how to grow them. Now that's eating local!

How can you participate in the Challenge?

Eat locally grown and produced food either at home or in locally-owned restaurants every day for the entire month of May.

EAT LOCAL CHALLENGE

Hogtown HomeGrown

What's Fresh Right Now?

Bananas

Beans—fillet, green, pole/rattlesnake bush

Beets—golden, red, white, striped

Blueberries

Broccoli—green, romanesco, broccolini

Brussels sprouts

Cabbage—green, napa, red

Carrots—orange/yellow/purple, red

Citrus—orange, grapefruit, sour orange

Cucumbers—slicers, kirby

Eggplant—small purple italian, purple/white/green asian, thai

Greens—mustards, arugula, collard, bok choy, rainbow chard, sorrel, tuscan/white russian/curly kale

Herbs—garlic chives, turmeric, flat leaf parsley, cilantro, dill, italian/thai basil

Kohlrabi

Leeks and Gar-leeks

Lettuce—green romaine, head, mix

Moringa

Mushroom—fresh/dried shiitakes

Onion—yellow, sweet, red, green/red scallions

Papaya

Peas—sugarsnap, snow, shoots

Peppers—red/green/yellow/orange sweet bell, poblano, jalapeño, shishito, italian frying, red cherry, anaheim

Pineapple

Potato—yellow-flesh, red, purple

Squash—yellow/white/green pattypan, yellow crookneck, green/gold/bi-colored/italian zucchini, acorn, delicata

Strawberries

Tomatoes—plum, sun gold, cherry, grape, heirloom

Turnips

FLOWERS, FLOWERS, FLOWERS

Beautiful locally-grown bouquets of in-season flowers!

Local and Fresh— Carrots

Florida carrots are a tasty rainbow of root vegetable goodness. From the concentrated flavor of red carrots, to the ancient purples, carrots look great and provide essential nutrients.

Roasting brings out the sweetness in an easy way of cooking. Oven temps vary, as do carrot sizes, so until you know how long they take to cook, check your roasting carrots often.

Roasted Carrots

INGREDIENTS

1 carrot per person

1 teaspoon olive oil per carrot

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste (optional)

SAVORY OPTION

julienned green onion, sesame seeds, sesame oil

SWEET OPTION

cane syrup, fresh orange zest, chopped pecans

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

Chop carrot into 2 inch chunks. Slice each chunk lengthwise into quarters.

Toss with oil and place in roasting pan.

Place pan in oven and immediately reduce heat to 375 degrees.

Roast 12-15 minutes, until a fork will easily pierce partway into carrot.

For plain carrots, season if desired. Roast additional 10-15 minutes to desired doneness.

SAVORY OPTION, toss carrots with green onion and sesame seeds. Roast until done. Drizzle with sesame oil before serving.

SWEET OPTION, toss carrots with pecans. Roast until done. Drizzle with cane syrup and top with zest before serving.

Serve hot or at room temperature.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.



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Kale and Cornbread Salad

INGREDIENTS

4 cups kale, washed, dried and torn into bite-size pieces

1 Tablespoon olive oil

Salt and pepper

SALAD

1 cup finely chopped onion, green, red or Vidalia

2 large carrots, shredded

1 cup corn kernels, boiled, grilled or roasted and sliced from the cob

1 yellow, red or orange sweet bell pepper, diced

1 cup cucumber, peeled, seeded and diced

1 cup halved or quartered grape or cherry tomatoes

1 cup shredded sharp cheddar

1 Tablespoon minced jalapeno pepper (optional)

1 cup crumbled bacon (optional)

4 cups crumbled cornbread (preferably toasted)

DRESSING

1 cup sour cream

1 cup buttermilk

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

2-4 Tablespoons honey

Salt and pepper to taste

1/2 cup finely chopped fresh herbs OR 2 Tablespoons finely crumbled dried herbs

2-8 drops hot sauce (optional)

1/4 cup ice water (as needed to thin dressing)

DIRECTIONS

In a bowl, massage oil into kale until pieces are thoroughly coated. Season and set aside.

In a large serving bowl, mix together all remaining salad ingredients except cornbread.

In a bowl or quart jar, combine dressing ingredients, except ice water. Mix well and thin to desired consistency with ice water.

Pour half the dressing onto the salad ingredients and stir until completely coated. Gently stir in kale and cornbread crumbs.

Top with a drizzle of dressing and serve the remaining dressing on the side.

Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate. For best results, eat within 2-3 hours.

Tricks and Tips Kale

Buy a small bunch of a couple of different types until you find the ones you like best raw or cooked.

Combine types for variety in texture and flavor. For salads, be sure to massage the oil in well (about 3-5 minutes) and do not season until afterwards.

Cucumbers

If the skin seems tender enough to eat, taste a piece first to determine if it is bitter. Be sure to store cucumbers wrapped in towels or paper towels in an unsealed plastic bag. Store on a shelf in the warmest area of the refrigerator, the top or middle, not in the crisper!

Cornbread

Use your favorite recipe to make a firm cornbread using just cornmeal, preferably stone ground—no flour and no sugar! The best cornbread for the salad is a couple of stale or leftover pieces. Cut cornbread in half to create thinner pieces and toast until the edges begin to brown. Cool completely and gently crumble into pea-sized chunks.



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Hogtown HomeGrown

Local and Seasonal Recipes, Menus and More

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Tricks and Tips

This new technique for creaming butter with maple syrup was a happy accident in our kitchen last month.

I have had really good results making cookies with partially melted butter since the melted and creamy parts add their own characteristics to the batter.

We keep maple syrup in the refrigerator, so when I added it to the partially melted butter, the mixture solidified just enough to be able to beat air into it.

There was just as much volume as the traditional butter and sugar creamed mixture.

This technique makes the texture of these maple syrup sweetened baked goods much lighter than usual.

Blueberry Pecan Bars

INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup cold maple syrup
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/4 cups whole wheat flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups fresh blueberries (completely dry)
- 1/2 cup finely chopped pecans
- 1 Tablespoon raw or granulated sugar

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter an 8x11 baking pan.

Partially melt one stick of butter and beat maple syrup into it until creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in vanilla.

Stir together flour, baking soda and salt. Stir dry mixture into wet ingredients.

Pour batter into prepared pan and lightly smooth into corners. Scatter blueberries and pecans over the top and lightly press into the batter. Sprinkle sugar evenly across top.

Bake 30 minutes or until center is firm to the touch. Cool 15 minutes before cutting.

VARIATIONS

Replace vanilla extract with almond extract and substitute sliced almonds for pecans.

Use blackberries in place of blueberries.