

Hogtown HomeGrown

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Eleven years of local food passion

When I sat down to write a story and some recipes in October of 2006, I had no idea that I had just gotten on the ultimate E-ticket ride. Volume 1 Issue 1, that first newsletter published in November 2006, was a limited run of only 500 copies that “sold out” all over Northwest Gainesville and steered the course of my life for the past eleven years.

You are holding the 133rd issue and even after all this time, I spent the past two weeks discovering yet another tasty local tidbit—roselle. It is such a pleasure to spend time in the kitchen experimenting and creating new recipes that I can share with all of you. And I love meeting you at public cooking demonstrations where I can let everyone taste the results of my experiments!

All that experimentation has resulted in 654 recipes on the Hogtown HomeGrown website, plus 5 more in this issue. As I look through the recipes, I can see our eating patterns over the years. More veggies and less sugar seems to be the prevailing trend right now. One thing that has not changed is a devotion to local food.

As Hogtown HomeGrown got started and we planned the first Eat Local Challenge, I mourned the lack of local cheese. That sure has changed with local cheeses, both fresh and aged, available every week at every market. What started as just a way to get local produce, our market shopping now provides us with more than seventy percent of what we eat.

I am not the first person in this town to discover or promote local food and I know I won't be the last, but there is something to be said for longevity. Writing Hogtown HomeGrown has opened doors I never imagined, from a trip to Italy as a Slow Food delegate in 2010 to a monthly two-minute cooking spot on WCJB TV20's What's Growing On.

The best part, besides all the great food, is the people. I love walking through the farmers markets, seeing people I have known for years and chatting with all the farmers and producers I have met since I started Hogtown HomeGrown. Working with talented local women to start the non-profit kitchen incubator Blue Oven Kitchens was an incredible experience. It was a proud moment when we recently merged with Forage to create Working Food.

There is so much happening in this town from farm to table, whether that table is in your kitchen or a local restaurant. My goal has always been to get you involved—cook at home, know your food and your farmer, and spend your money locally—so we can all “Save the World—One Dinner at a Time.”

What's Fresh Right Now?

Bananas

Beans—green, green/yellow pole, green/purple long

Bitter melon

Chestnuts

Citrus—calamondins, limequats

Cucumbers—slicers, Kirby, suyu

Eggplants—purple italian, purple asian, fairy tale

Greens—collards, tatsoi, curly/tuscan/white/red russian kale, mizuna, mustards, stir-fry mix, arugula, bok choy

Herbs—garlic chives, turmeric, parsley, cilantro, rosemary, italian/lemon/red basil, peppermint, spearmint, tulsi

Lettuce—bibb, romaine

Malanga

Moringa

Mushrooms—shiitakes, oyster, dried shiitakes/chanterelles

Okra—green

Onions—yellow, green

Papaya—ripe, green

Peas—white acre, zipper/creamer, black-eye, pink-eye (purple hull)

Peppers—red/green/yellow/orange sweet bell, green/red jalapeño, caribbean, assorted hot

Persimmon—astringent, non-astringent

Pineapple

Potatoes—red, white

Radishes—french breakfast, black, purple/white daikon

Roselle

Squash—green/yellow zucchini, acorn, butternut, yellow summer, seminole pumpkin

Sweet Potato

Taro

Tomatoes—plum, beefsteak, cherry

Turnips

Yuca

Local and Fresh— Roselle

Whether you call it roselle, rosella, Florida cranberry, Jamaican sorrel or cranberry hibiscus, the distinctive taste of these tart calyxes can liven up your recipes or create something new.

Roselle is often dried to make teas and infusions, but fresh petals may also be tossed into fruit or veggie salads for a burst of flavor. Fresh roselle may also be cooked to make tea, jam, jelly or relish.

A relative of hibiscus and okra, roselle grows as a bush and the calyxes alternate on long stalks. Look for firm dry roselle and store covered in the refrigerator.

Roselle Jelly with Apple and Maple

INGREDIENTS

8 cups roselle
4 cups apple juice
1/4 cup maple syrup
2 teaspoons lemon juice
1/2 cup maple sugar
1 package low-sugar pectin

DIRECTIONS

In a deep pot, boil whole roselle with apple juice and maple syrup for 15 minutes. Strain and discard roselle. Stir in lemon juice.

Return infused liquid to a boil.

In a small bowl, combine maple sugar and pectin. Slowly whisk into boiling liquid.

Return to a boil, whisking constantly. Boil for one minute—no longer.

Ladle into hot sterilized jars. Wipe rims, seal and process in boiling water for 10 minutes.

Store sealed jars in pantry and unsealed jars in refrigerator.



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Roselle in Syrup

INGREDIENTS

1 cup organic cane sugar
1 cup water
2 cups roselle, center pods removed (see Tricks and Tips)

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a deep pot.
Bring to a simmer and cook until roselle are tender and somewhat translucent. Using tongs, remove roselle from syrup to a plate to drain.
If thicker syrup is desired, simmer uncovered over low heat.
Allow syrup to cool. Strain into clean jar.
If using within 24 hours, refrigerate cooled roselle in one layer in covered container.
For longer storage, place roselle in jar of syrup and refrigerate.

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Place one syrup-cooked roselle in the bottom of a tall fluted glass. Add a drizzle of syrup if desired. Fill flute with champagne or sparkling cider and serve immediately.

Sweet Tart Quinoa Salad

INGREDIENTS

1 cup dry quinoa, rinsed and cooked
1 apple, grated or finely diced
2 carrots, grated
12 roselle, trimmed and slivered
2 very ripe persimmons, squeeze to remove juice and pulp, discard skins
1 Tablespoon each apple cider vinegar and lemon juice
2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon honey, cane syrup or maple syrup
A pinch each of salt and freshly ground pepper

DIRECTIONS

Spread cooked quinoa on a cookie sheet or roasting pan to cool.
Combine apple, carrot and roselle in serving bowl. Stir in cooled quinoa. Set aside.
To make dressing, combine remaining ingredients in a small jar. Cover tightly and shake to combine.
Pour dressing over quinoa mixture. Stir until dressing is evenly distributed.
Serve immediately or cover and chill before serving.
Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

Tricks and Tips

Roselle have several firm dark red petals forming a calyx that surrounds a round central pod. This pod is a flower bud filled with lots of little white seeds very much like roselle's cousin okra. The flower buds may be boiled in water to extract the naturally-occurring pectin. For most recipes, the central pod must be removed to prepare roselle for cooking. For a beautiful presentation, the calyx and its petals should remain intact.
The fastest way to remove the flower bud is to use a knife to cut off the stem end, but this may cause the calyx to collapse. Alternatively, an apple corer may be used to cut out the pod. My favorite method is to push a plastic citrus sipper into the stem end of the roselle and twist the pod out, either by pulling it backwards or pushing it carefully through the calyx petals.
For safety and best results, hold the calyx securely in a circle made by your index finger and thumb, with the tops of the petals in your palm.



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Maple Walnut Shortbread Crust

(8" springform pan)

INGREDIENTS

5-6 ounce package
shortbread cookies

1/2 c walnuts,

toasted and chopped

2 T maple sugar

3 T unsalted butter,
melted and divided

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375
degrees. Butter the
pan's interior with 1 T
butter. In a food pro-
cessor, combine cook-
ies, walnuts and maple
sugar. Process until
finely chopped.

Add butter and pulse a
few times. Pour crust
into prepared pan and,
using first a fork then a
flat bottomed cup,
press crust from center
to the edge and up
the side as desired.

Bake 12 minutes.

Cool before filling.

Maple Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS

28 ounces full fat cream cheese (3 1/2 eight ounce packages)

2/3 cup maple syrup

2 Tablespoon cornstarch

4 eggs

1/4 teaspoon vanilla

1-2 drops maple extract (optional)

a pinch each of nutmeg and salt

DIRECTIONS

Prepare crust in 8 inch springform pan as directed. Set aside to cool.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place a pan of hot water under the shelf to be used for the cheesecake.

Use a mixer to beat cream cheese until light and fluffy. Add maple syrup, cornstarch and eggs all at once and beat on low until combined. Stir in remaining ingredients.

Pour cheesecake into prepared crust and smooth top.

Bake about one hour, until center is still jiggly, but edges are golden. Turn oven off. Run a sharp knife around edge of pan to release cake's edges. Return cheesecake to oven. Prop oven open slightly with a wooden spoon. Let cheesecake cool in oven for one hour.

Chill cheesecake in refrigerator for at least four hours. Do not cover until completely chilled to avoid condensation accumulating on the top.

Cut cheesecake with serrated knife, wiping blade between cuts.

Store covered in refrigerator.