

# Hogtown HomeGrown

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## Foodie Book Club

Imagine a group of friends and acquaintances reading the same food-related book and then gathering for a potluck and discussion. While we know that Foodie Book Club isn't the best name in the world, we'll use it until we come up with something better. This intrepid little group, founded at the intersection of food and books, meets and eats every 6-8 weeks!

A few months ago, I realized that life had gotten busy and I was behind in my reading about all things food. I love to pore over cookbooks and food magazines. Every visit to the library yields a new stack of cookbooks. Out of town trips involve locating and patronizing used bookstores so that the treasure hunt can continue.

What makes a cookbook a treasure? I love a good community cookbook, so I always look through the spiral bound selections. I look for age—not always a calendar year, but an indicator of the de-evolution of scratch cooking in that state or city. The age test is usually cream of mushroom soup, but sometimes it is Bisquick, Tang, or a tube of garlic cheese. If I find those ingredients, I don't want the book because it means the area's food habits have been altered by the availability of processed foods. There is one exception—Jello. Remember, there's always room for Jello!

My cookbook collection is huge. In addition to the ones I have gathered, I inherited Granny's cookbooks as well. Jeff has always chosen wonderful cookbooks as gifts for me and a friend recently gave me three boxes of her treasures! Over the years, I've added books about food culture, like Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma* and *Food Rules*, biographies of Julia Child and tales of restaurant madness by Anthony Bourdain.

As the years passed, the food movement has grown. Michael Pollan has a new book out, and there are other foodie authors waiting to be read. But reading alone wasn't enough. I wanted someone to talk with about these books. So I put a post on Facebook and the Foodie Book Club was born.

So far we have read *Cooked* by Pollan and *Dearie*, a biography of Julia Child. Our latest is *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*—Barbara Kingsolver's account of her family's year-long experiment of eating almost exclusively what they can grow and barter within a one hundred mile radius of their farm. It's a fascinating read with wonderful menu ideas and recipes too.

So, if you would like to join our informal band of bookish foodies or foodish bookies, find me on Facebook, send me an email or give me a call. We meet about every two months at someone's home, usually ours. Everyone contributes to the potluck, so we eat, we discuss, we laugh and we pick out another book before we go home. And there are a lot of foodie books to choose from! What's your favorite?

### Sweet Memories

When I was a kid, Jello was always in our refrigerator and pantry. Mom made it with fruit cocktail or sliced bananas and it was dessert. Sometimes we ate it with a little ice milk, but once Cool Whip was invented, Jello was never the same. Making Jello was one of the first cooking jobs I was allowed to do as a child. I remember experimenting—layering and whipping Jello took skill! My favorite Jello memory? Aunt Nita's Watergate Salad, served at every Christmas Eve dinner. Mom's sister made this molded salad with lime jello, crushed pineapple, cottage cheese and chopped pecans, among other things. Yes, it was yummy!



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### Putting Food By

As the summer doldrums wind down, there is still plenty of produce that can be preserved so you can eat locally grown food all year long.

Tomatoes can be dried, canned whole or cooked down into sauces to be canned or frozen.

Persimmons may also be dried or made into jams and fruit butters.

Peas do quite well in the freezer—just place a bag of shelled peas in a second freezer bag and freeze for up to a year.

Pumpkins and other hard squashes may be cooked, pureed and frozen in recipe size portions ready for holiday baking.

## What's Fresh Right Now?

**Bitter Melon**

**Citrus**—juices

**Cucumbers**—mini seedless, kirby

**Eggplant**—large purple italian, large/small purple asian

**Garlic**—chives, heads

**Grapes**—purple, bronze

**Greens**—malabar spinach, callaloo, arugula, baby collards and mustards

**Herbs**—parsley, italian/purple basil, tulsi basil

**Honey**—gallberry, orange blossom, wild flower, tupelo, other varieties

**Microgreens**—assorted

**Mushrooms**—shiitake, dried reishi, dried piopino, chanterelles, oyster, pink oyster

**Okra**

**Onions**—green scallions, yellow, red

**Peanuts**

**Pears**

**Peas**—crowder, creamer, black eye, white acre

**Peppers**—red/green/yellow/orange bell, anaheim, poblano, habanero, jalapeno

**Persimmons**

**Potatoes**—red, sweet

**Radish**

**Roselles**

**Shoots**—pea, sunflower, mix

**Sprouts**

**Squash**—yellow, zucchini, butternut, acorn, spaghetti, calabasa, seminole pumpkin, various hard squash, koosa

**Tomatoes**—red cluster, grape, sun gold, green

*While you are at the market, look for all the food artisans selling their wares—everything from Belgian truffles to hand-ground mustards to spice mixes. And with so many ethnic foods to choose from, you can take home a full meal!*

## Local and Fresh— Seminole Pumpkin

Our indigenous large thick-skinned squashes are a family with many first cousins. Calabaza, calabasa, Seminole pumpkin—a pumpkin by any other name would not taste as sweet.

I prefer the tan-skinned squash with no green streaks. Whether they look like the familiar jack-o-lantern shape or more gourd-like, these pumpkins yield a sweet and tender flesh unlike any other.

Puree made from these roasted or steamed pumpkins is far superior to any canned pumpkin product and worth the time.

## Four Ways to Roast a Pumpkin

### INGREDIENTS

1 Seminole pumpkin  
Olive oil and seasonings (optional)

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

### METHOD 1

Cut pumpkin in half. Scoop out seeds. Lightly oil cut edges. Place cut side down on cookie sheet. Bake until your finger will dent the flesh, about 60 minutes.

### METHOD 2

Cut pumpkin in half. Scoop out seeds. Wrap cut pieces in foil. Bake on cookie sheet until soft, about 45-60 minutes.

### METHOD 3

Cut pumpkin in half. Scoop out seeds. Remove outer skin from pumpkin. Cut into 1/2—1 inch cubes.

Toss cubes with a small amount of olive oil and any desired seasonings. Roast in one layer on a cookie sheet until fork tender.

### METHOD 4

Place whole pumpkin on cookie sheet. Bake in preheated oven until your finger will dent the flesh. Cool before cutting open and removing seeds.

# Pumpkin Polenta with Corn

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup coconut milk (or use one can and adjust the amount of veggie broth)
- 2 cups veggie broth
- 1 cup stone-ground cornmeal
- 1 1/2 cups pumpkin puree (approximately half a small roasted pumpkin)
- 1 teaspoon red thai curry paste
- 1 cup cooked corn kernels
- 1/4 -1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1-2 green onions (optional)

## DIRECTIONS

Combine coconut milk and broth in a saucepan over medium high heat and bring to a boil. Gradually whisk in the cornmeal and continue stirring until thickened, about 5 minutes.

Whisk in pumpkin and curry paste. Cook about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in corn and taste for salt.

Serve immediately or cover and keep over very low heat for up to 30 minutes. Stir well before serving. If using green onions, either mix in now or garnish each serving.

Serve with a wedge of lime to squeeze over the top and your hot sauce of choice.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

# Black Bean Pumpkin Chipotle Chili

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 onion, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
- 1 Tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon each basil, oregano and coriander
- 1 canned chipotle pepper, minced, with 1 Tablespoon adobo sauce
- 1 Tablespoon unsweetened cocoa
- 1-2 cups pumpkin puree (roasted and pureed butternut or acorn squash may be substituted)
- 4 cups cooked black beans with their cooking liquid

## DIRECTIONS

In a large covered pot, heat oil and stir in onion. Sauté for 5 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for 3 minutes. Stir in in chili powder and herbs and cook for 1-2 minutes.

Reduce heat and stir in chipotle with sauce, cocoa and pumpkin. Sauté, stirring constantly for 2 minutes. Pour in cooked beans and their liquid and bring to a simmer. If more liquid is needed, add veggie broth or water. If it needs to be thickened, mash some of the beans.

Simmer 20 minutes or more. Serve hot with toppings such as onions, avocado or corn.

Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

## Baked Pumpkin Polenta

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place a large oiled cast-iron skillet in the oven to heat. Spoon hot polenta into the hot pan. Scatter green onions over the top. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 10-20 minutes, until firm to the touch. The green onions should be lightly cooked.

Cut into wedges, garnish with lime and serve atop a bed of spinach or argula.

## Tricks and Tips

Sure you can just eat this chili from a bowl with a corn muffin or brown rice to soak up all the juices, but try thinking outside the box. Chili stuffed baked potatoes are good, but how about a baked sweet potato split open with chili ladled over it? Try serving it on spaghetti and pass the toppings Cincinnati style— 3, 4, or 5 ways!

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**Tricks and Tips**  
 Savory muffins make a great accompaniment to soups and salads. At breakfast or brunch they are a welcome diversion from sweet pastries. Try replacing the sage with no-salt chili powder or curry powder for a different taste. Feel like something sweet? Increase the amount of sugar to 1/4 cup and replace the rubbed sage with cinnamon.

## Pumpkin Sage Corn Muffins

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups stone-ground corn meal
- 1/2 cup chestnut flour (corn meal or all-purpose flour may be substituted)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon each sugar and rubbed sage
- 1/2 teaspoon each baking soda and salt
- 2 cups pumpkin puree (about half of a medium-large roasted pumpkin)
- 1 Tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 cup unsweetened almond or soy milk (add additional 1/4 cup if using canned pumpkin)
- 1/4 cup oil, plus oil to grease muffin tin

### DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly oil a muffin tin.
- Mix together dry ingredients and set aside.
- Whisk together all the wet ingredients until smooth and combined.
- Mix wet and dry ingredients together. Use a light touch and be sure to scrape the bowl so that everything is combined thoroughly.
- Use 1/3 cup batter for each muffin. Bake 20-25 minutes, until firm. Allow to cool in pan for 15 minutes before removing. Serve warm. Cover and refrigerate cooled leftovers.