

# Hogtown HomeGrown

Volume 12 Issue 9

September 2017

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## Memories of cornbread and buttermilk

When we were visiting Granny and Granddaddy in Georgia, lunch was a formal affair with linen, china and silver. Supper, on the other hand, was often catch-as-catch-can, made up of lunch leftovers and whatever the eater could concoct from the fridge and pantry. Granddaddy would eat very early, but the rest of us generally waited for nightfall and cooler temperatures.

While most of us filled a plate and sat down at the kitchen table, Granny could often be found standing next to the kitchen sink using a long-handled silver iced tea spoon to scoop up cold buttermilk and leftover cornbread out of a cut glass tumbler. This simple and tasty treat was cooling and filling all at the same time. Mom and I also developed a taste for this treat, and we often got teased for it by other family members.

As our family grew, despite the teasing and the frequent “yucks” hurled in my direction, I continued to treat myself whenever possible. Since our boys grew up and moved out, there is always extra cornbread when I bake a pan, so I have taken to having a mug of buttermilk with cornbread instead of second helpings. Sometime, if I have used all our buttermilk to make the cornbread, I will drizzle honey or cane syrup over warmed cornbread to eat as dessert. Simple comfort food filled with memories.

Imagine my surprise to find this offering on the dessert menu at Nopa in San Francisco— **Warm Cornmeal Crepes, Honey Roasted Peaches, Cultured Butter, Black Pepper Buttermilk Ice Cream and Salted Almonds**—my childhood memories reimagined. This was my birthday dessert and it nearly brought me to tears thinking about how a simple family tradition could be transformed into something familiar yet totally new. I haven't figured out the cornmeal crepes, but here's my version of the roasted peaches. This recipe works with any stone fruit, but is especially good with peaches, plums or mangoes.

## Oven Roasted Peaches

### INGREDIENTS

4 peaches, washed, halved and pitted  
2-3 Tablespoons maple syrup  
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.  
Place peach halves skin-side down in a covered baking dish. Drizzle with maple syrup and sprinkle with cinnamon.  
Cover and bake 30 minutes. Uncover and bake additional 10-15 minutes.  
Serve hot or warm with unsweetened whipped cream.  
Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

# What's Fresh Right Now?

- Bananas
- Bitter melon
- Cucumbers—slicers
- Eggplants—purple italian, purple asian, thai
- Elderberries
- Grapes—purple/bronze muscadines
- Greens—collards, okinawa spinach, amaranth, lamb's quarters
- Herbs—garlic chives, turmeric, parsley, cilantro, rosemary
- Moringa
- Mushrooms—chanterelles, dried shiitakes
- Okra—green
- Onions—yellow
- Papaya
- Peas—white acre
- Pears—sand, asian
- Peppers—red/green/yellow/orange sweet bell, poblano, jalapeño, shishito, italian frying, red cherry, cubanelle
- Persimmon
- Pineapple
- Potatoes—red, small purple
- Radishes
- Squash—green zucchini, acorn, butternut
- Sweet Potato—potatoes, leaves
- Tomatoes—plum, beefsteak, cherry, grape

## Persimmon Pecan Quick Bread

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a loaf pan.

Beat together 1 stick melted butter, 1/2 cup honey, 1 cup persimmon puree, 1/2 teaspoon vanilla and 2 eggs.

Stir together 2 1/2 cups whole wheat flour, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon cinnamon and 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg.

Add dry ingredients to wet and stir well. Mix in 1 cup chopped pecans. Pour into buttered loaf pan.

Bake 45-55 minutes at 350 degrees. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan and cool on wire rack.

# Local and Fresh— Okra

Every year, there comes a time when we can recite the items available at our local farmers markets by heart—eggplant, tomatoes, peppers and okra. A member of the hibiscus family, okra is prolific during our hot summers and found at the farmers markets every week.

Traditional okra is green, but the red or burgundy varieties are beautiful as well as tasty. Fresh okra has a clean stem end and blemish-free skin. Their name in other countries—ladies' fingers—refers to their long slender shape.

Best when they are young, no more than three inches, okra can be boiled, steamed, fried, stewed, or, our new favorite, roasted. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings always served it with hollandaise, but it also pairs well with pesto or teriyaki.

## Roasted Okra Splits

### INGREDIENTS

Okra

Olive oil

Topping ideas: coarse salt, cayenne pepper, chili powder, lime juice, malt vinegar, hot sauce

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Wash and dry okra pods. Do not trim off stem end. Cut each pod in half lengthwise, turn and cut lengthwise a second time. Each pod will now be 4 pieces connected by the stem.

Coat cut pods with just a bit of olive oil—use as little as possible for best results.

Roast in hot oven, shaking occasionally, until browned and crispy—at least 45 minutes.

Serve hot and pass the optional toppings.

Leftovers lose their crunch and are only worth saving to add to soup or stew.



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*Our season has ended, but we will see you out in the community and at the Alachua County Farmers' Market soon. Take good care of yourselves, and continue to be kind to one another.*

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# Pasta a la Irma

## INGREDIENTS

8 ounces whole wheat penne pasta, cooked  
12 ounces sliced mushrooms, sautéed  
3-4 medium onions, caramelized  
1 14-15 ounce can diced tomatoes with juice  
2 cups marinara  
4 ounces parmesan, shredded  
Drizzle of olive oil

## DIRECTIONS

Combine pasta, mushrooms, onions, tomatoes and marinara in an ovenproof casserole. Stir well. Top with shredded parmesan and drizzle with olive oil.  
Bake 30 minutes until everything is hot and bubbly. Serve hot.

## STOVETOP VARIATION

Combine pasta, mushrooms, onions, tomatoes and marinara in a heavy pot. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until hot. Serve with shredded parmesan and olive oil.

# Blond Roux Gumbo

## INGREDIENTS

1/4 cup each olive oil and flour  
1 medium onion, 1 green pepper and 3 stalks celery, diced  
2 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped  
1 cup each sliced okra, corn kernels, chopped tomato  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire (optional)  
Water to almost cover  
Salt, freshly ground pepper or cayenne pepper or hot sauce, to taste

## DIRECTIONS

Heat a heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add oil and flour. Stir to combine and cook roux until bubbly, but not browned.  
Add onion, green pepper, celery and garlic to roux and stir well to combine. Lower heat, cover pot and let cook 10 minutes, stirring once or twice.  
Add okra, corn, tomato, salt and Worcestershire sauce. Raise heat, add water to almost cover, stir well and bring to a boil. Stir again, cover and lower heat. Simmer for 30-45 minutes.  
Uncover, stir and taste for seasoning. Add seasoning and hot sauce, if desired.  
Serve hot over rice or with cornbread.  
Cover and refrigerate leftovers.

**Tricks and Tips**  
Preparing for a hurricane is never fun. Add in hours of listening to wind, rain and branches batter our home and we tend to be tense and tired. After more than 50 years in Florida, my hurricane prep is less about tarps and more about creating meals to simply make everyone feel better. Even though we do have a propane grill with a side burner, I still prepare for three days without power. To conserve on propane, I make ahead a few long-cooking items to create and enhance tasty meals. Before Irma took out our lights, I cooked up a whole wheat penne pasta, sautéed mushrooms, caramelized onions and baked a Persimmon Pecan Quick Bread. The pasta could be turned into a cold salad but we used pantry items to create a hot dish. The mushrooms and onions were great in the pasta and perked up our breakfast too. The quick bread is the perfect snack with coffee. Hot coffee? Yes, it's absolutely necessary! We make sure to grind our coffee beans before the storm hits!



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### Tricks and Tips

Why do we make our own ice cream?

While we like some brands and love Sweet Dreams, we prefer to control the amount and type of sweeteners that we eat. I have made a basic honey vanilla for years, whipping up a batch for every birthday. We had a four quart electric churn that we chilled with ice and rock salt. The boys are grown, so we don't need a gallon of ice cream. Our little electric churn makes four cups or less without ice or salt. I have experimented with different sweeteners, trying honey, cane syrup and sorghum, but prefer maple syrup with most flavors, including chocolate, but especially sweet potato.

## Sweet Potato Ice Cream

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup sweet potato, roasted, peeled and pureed
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon cloves
- pinch of salt

### DIRECTIONS

In a blender, mix sweet potato, maple syrup, cream and milk. To create a very smooth ice cream, strain mixture to remove all the sweet potato fibers.

Add cinnamon, vanilla, cloves and salt. Stir until salt is dissolved and the spices are completely incorporated.

Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or until mixture is very cold. If sweet potato and all liquid ingredients are chilled before mixing, this step is not necessary.

Place mixture in ice cream churn and process according to manufacturer's instructions.

Serve soft ice cream out of the ice cream churn immediately, if desired.

For best results, scoop churned ice cream into freezer-proof container, cover, wrap container in a paper bag and place in freezer to cure for 1-2 hours. Remove from freezer and serve.

Cover and refrigerate leftover ice cream as described above.

Leftovers will probably need 5-10 minutes at room temperature before serving.