

From Dr. Preston Maring's Farmers' Market Update & Recipe of the Week Newsletters Volume 4

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1/7/05

New at the Oakland Medical Center this week, the Food Mill store opened in the M/B Center through the work and vision of Dr. Tom McDonald, our Physician-in-Chief. The store carries a wide variety of healthy foods and basic supplies for home cooking and prepared foods that meet several criteria. The store is a trans-fat free zone. Products are low in saturated fats and are selected for being low in the glycemic index. Foods are labeled to make it easier to identify what to eat in various phases of a program to achieve ideal weight. Dr. McDonald will be expanding the availability of his weight management program which, initially, is for the benefit of our staff.

The store expands the choices available to our medical center's staff, members and neighbors. Pick up an organic chicken from the Food Mill to use with this week's recipe. Of course, organic fruits, vegetables and breads direct from the farmers continue to be available at the Friday Fresh Farmers' Market.

Locally available vegetables in this cold, rainy season grow underground. Use any combination of parsnips, rutabagas, potatoes, turnips and carrots. And, given the weather forecast, bring your raincoat to do your shopping at the farmers' market tomorrow. This may be the first Friday rain since our market opened in May, 2003.

Chicken & Root Vegetable Stew

- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 4 skinless chicken breast halves cut into thigh-sized piece
and 4 skinless thighs, boned or not
- 2 medium onions, chopped into 1/2" pieces
- 6 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 tsp dried tarragon
- 1/4 cup fresh tarragon, chopped
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
- 3 Tbsp flour
- 2 each of parsnips, rutabagas, carrots, potatoes
or turnips peeled and cut into 1" chunks
- 5 cups chicken stock
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a large stew pot and working in batches, heat the oil and brown the chicken on all sides. Transfer the chicken to a bowl. Pour off all but 2 Tbsp of any drippings. Sauté the onions until golden. Add the garlic and sauté one minute. Add the wine and dried tarragon. Simmer until the wine evaporates. Add the chunks of vegetables. Cook a few minutes stirring in the flour. Add the chicken stock (enough to barely cover the vegetables) and Dijon mustard. Add the chicken back to the pot. Cover and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 30 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Near the end of the cooking time, add the fresh tarragon and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve in warm bowls.

1/14/05

At the farmers' market this week, hopefully under bright blue skies, look for baby spinach from the Happy Boys Farm in Watsonville. It makes an excellent and very simple side dish I have tried several times. It took several times to learn how to toss the spinach in the skillet without throwing it all over the stove and kitchen counter.

Sautéed Spinach with Shallots & Garlic

For 2 people

6 to 8 oz baby spinach (looks like a lot, but cooks down to 2 servings)
1/2 shallot, finely minced
2 garlic cloves, finely minced
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 tsp Earth Balance butter substitute

Find a non-stick skillet no bigger than 12" in diameter. I used a bigger, heavier one the first time and had to use both hands to attempt to toss the spinach, resulting in faulty technique and lost spinach. Heat the olive oil over high heat. Add the minced shallots and garlic and stir for maybe 15 seconds. As soon as you can smell the garlic, add the spinach which will try to overflow out of the skillet. Stir the spinach until it starts to cook down to a manageable size. Tilt the edge of the skillet away from you so the spinach slides down. With flourish, toss it gently into the air so it flips over and mixes in the shallots and garlic. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Toss (or stir) a couple of times. Add the butter and toss again. Serve immediately. Not only does it taste really good, it's fun to learn how to do this.

I don't know what percent of the population has cooked using butternut squash, but until recently I was intimidated by this winter vegetable. They are big, odd shaped and hard to peel and cut. This week's recipe makes all the work worthwhile. A warm bowl of this wonderful soup can even serve as the main course along with a salad of choice. The ingredients cost less than \$10 and can serve a family of four. I modified it a little by roasting the squash first. The squash and apples are organically grown in Watsonville and from the Happy Boys Farm stand and from Zach, our apple vendor.

Curried Butternut Squash Soup with Apples

- 5 Tbsp olive oil
- 5 tsp curry powder
- 2 medium yellow onions, coarsely chopped
- 1 big butternut squash, about 3 lbs, peeled and cut into 1" cubes
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and chopped
- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup apple juice
- Salt and pepper
- 1 Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored and grated for garnish

Preheat oven to 425°. In a large bowl, toss the squash cubes with 1 Tbsp of olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Spread them out in a single layer in a large baking dish. Peel and coarsely chop the onions. Put the squash in the oven. At the same time, heat the remaining olive oil in a large soup pot and add the onions. Stir in the curry powder. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally until the onions are beginning to brown, 20 to 25 mins. By then the squash will be browning at the edges. Add the squash and chopped apples to the soup pot with the chicken stock. Bring to a boil then simmer covered for about 30 mins. Purée the soup with a handheld blender or in batches in a food processor. Return soup to the pot and mix in apple juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve in warm bowls with grated apple for garnish.

This is a basic algorithm for making soup that I hope to use with other ingredients. Stay tuned.

On February 18th, Kaiser Permanente's 13th farmers' market will open at the relatively new Baldwin Park facility in East L.A. They are partnering with nearby Cal Poly at Pomona. College students will be staffing the market which will feature the organic fruits and vegetables grown at the college as well as products from alumni who are certified growers. The profits will go to the college and charity.

As our markets grow in number, different models are created reflecting the unique conditions and spirit at each facility. Now we are partnering with a college. Previously, Dr. Jeff Ritterman, cardiologist, and Nora Norback, MPH dietitian at Richmond working with community groups, made it possible for Richmond KP to take its mobile market out into the community providing fresh fruits and vegetables where no grocery stores are available. It just keeps getting better.

January and February are peak season for Meyer lemons which, no surprise, are named after someone named Frank Meyer who introduced them to California 97 years ago. They are thin skinned, fragrant, juicy and a bit orangey sweet. Along with organic fennel from the market and oregano, they impart a spectacular flavor to slowly braised chicken thighs. Per serving, there are 12 gm of fat (only 2 gm saturated) so this main course can be part of a healthy diet. Either way, roast fingerling potato chunks tossed with a little olive oil, salt and pepper at 450° in a heavy baking dish while the chicken is simmering. You will need something on your dinner plate to help soak up the juices.

Chicken Braised with Meyer Lemon & Fennel

- 1 large fennel bulb
- 3 large Meyer lemons
- 1 tsp coarse salt
- 6 chicken thighs, boned and skinned
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground pepper
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1/4 cup green olives (optional)
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 Tbsp grated Meyer lemon zest

Trim the stalks from the fennel, reserving the lacy greens. Slice the fennel lengthwise in 1/4" thick slices then slice these lengthwise into 1/2" pieces. Cut the lemons in half then cut each half into 3 to 4 pieces. Discard the seeds. Put the lemons in a bowl and sprinkle with salt. Add the chicken, pepper, garlic and oregano and turn to coat. Set aside for about 30 minutes.

Heat 1 Tbsp olive oil in a deep sauté pan over medium heat. Lightly brown the chicken, turning several times. Remove the chicken and set aside. Add the remaining olive oil and the fennel. Cook for 6 to 8 minutes. Stir in the lemons, optional olives, wine and water, scraping up the brown bits. Return the chicken to the pan. Cover and simmer for about 45 minutes, exactly the time needed to roast the potatoes. Mince the fennel fronds, mix with the lemon zest and sprinkle over your dinner in a serving bowl. This is another one of those recipes that is so good I could hardly wait to send it out.

A note about wine used in cooking. One of our psychologists pointed out the potential conflict of the use of cooking wine for those individuals in recovery from alcohol abuse. A Google search turned up wine vinegar as a substitute. After some experimentation, I settled on a 6:1 ratio of water to wine vinegar to approximate an inexpensive cooking wine. I tried it in a previous recipe and any differences were imperceptible.

Our markets are moving north.

Farmers market ripens in Overlook

Kaiser Permanente will sponsor weekly North Portland event

By JENNIFER ANDERSON

The Portland Tribune

Issue date: Fri, Jan 21, 2005

After a short-lived attempt to host a community-based farmers market several years ago, North Portland is about to try again.

This time, organizers and residents think, it will be ripe for the taking.

Kaiser Permanente will sponsor the Overlook farmers market beginning in May at its Interstate campus, 3500 N. Interstate Ave.

The 30- to 35-stall market will be held on a weekday, so it won't compete with Saturday markets in the city. And it will focus on locally grown produce with an emphasis on community wellness — the benefits of walking around the neighborhood and cooking nutritious meals, for example.

Residents are brimming with delight, calling the much-needed amenity — right off the new Interstate MAX line — a perfect fit for the area.

“My wife and I are big fans of the farmers market at PSU,” said Tom Kilbane, an Overlook resident with two young children. “We go every week to have breakfast. And at the Thursday evening market at the Ecotrust parking lot (Northwest 10th Avenue between Irving and Johnson streets), we mostly get vegetables.”

Both are within a couple of miles of his home, Kilbane said, “but having one here in the neighborhood will be great. We'll be able to walk. And it'll be nice to be able to get together with neighbors in that setting.”

Kaiser sponsors farmers markets in California and Hawaii, but this will be the first in Oregon. The idea is to assist its startup financially and administratively and have the market support itself with its revenue over time.

Kaiser's community benefits manager, Nancy Stevens, got the idea rolling last summer after a company conference call about farmers markets in the region.

“I thought, ‘Wow, what a fantastic idea,’ ” she said. “It's just so aligned with a lot we're doing now with (disease) prevention and childhood obesity. It's a real positive way to walk our talk.”

Meanwhile, at our Friday Fresh Farmers' Market this week, pick up some leeks and baby gem lettuces from Happy Boys Farm of Watsonville. This locally grown, fresh, organic produce makes a wonderful light and sweet salad.

Leek Salad with Sherry Dijon Vinaigrette

6 medium leeks

1/2 tsp salt

Vinaigrette:

1 Tbsp sherry wine vinegar

1/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper

2 tsp Dijon mustard

4 Tbsp olive oil

2 Tbsp fresh parsley, minced

2 Tbsp fresh tarragon, minced

Baby gem, butter or Bibb lettuces

(Cherry tomatoes, halved, would be great for a garnish

but I suggest waiting until they are available locally grown.

Those shipped here from a long distance just won't taste as good.)

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Trim the leek leaves, leaving the white and light green parts. Trim off the root end. Cut in half lengthwise and rinse until clean. Sometimes annoying pieces of grit stick in between the layers. Tie the leeks into two bundles with kitchen string so they won't fall apart and mess up your presentation. I made a substitute for kitchen string by rolling up a piece of aluminum foil into a long string-like piece. Cook the leek bundles in the boiling water until they are tender when pierced with the tip of a knife, about 7 to 9 minutes. Drain, cool and undo the bundles.

Dissolve the salt and pepper in the vinegar. Whisk in the Dijon, then the olive oil. Whisk in half the tarragon and parsley. On salad plates, arrange the leeks on the lettuce leaves. Dress the salads lightly. Sprinkle with the remaining herbs. Garnish with cherry tomatoes in season.

I think asparagus is only 4 weeks away. The ground temperature has to reach 65° in Fresno for it to sprout.

2/11/05

One of the farmers told me that spring officially starts at the market when asparagus arrives, hopefully in about two weeks. Don't preheat your oven to 500° just yet for Roasted Asparagus with Feta (Recipe of the Week for 4/30/04, Vol. 2, p. 14 in the link below).

Meanwhile, there are many good choices at the winter market. This week's recipe makes a robust and distinctive soup that's perfect on a cold evening. Pick up about 3/4 lb of mixed winter greens such as kale, chard, turnip, dandelion or collard greens and some carrots from Happy Boys Farm. According to Janet Fletcher, the flavor of mustard greens aren't a good choice for this soup. I used dandelion greens, kale and chard with excellent results. Little did I know, weeding dandelions in the early 50's in Detroit, I would be eating them later in life. Check the Food Mill or your local grocery store for canned white cannellini beans and chicken stock. Dried white beans can work, but they require forethought as they have to be soaked overnight and cooked longer. Using canned beans, making the soup still takes over an hour to rinse, chop, sauté, boil, simmer and purée.

White Bean Soup & Winter Greens

Serves 6

- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- 2 large carrots or equivalent small funny shaped ones, chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 Tbsp freshly chopped parsley
- 4 cups chicken stock or broth
- 1 15 oz can of organic cannellini beans
- 3/4 lb mixed winter greens
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

In a large soup pot, heat the olive oil and sauté the onions, carrots, garlic and bay leaves until the vegetables begin to soften, about 10 minutes. Add the chicken stock and 2 cups of water. Bring to a boil, then simmer gently for 30 to 45 minutes. If you start with dried beans, the soup may need to be simmered for 1-1/2 hours. Remove the bay leaves. Stir in the chopped parsley. Purée some or all of the soup using a regular or handheld blender. Leave some recognizable vegetable pieces.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add some salt. Chop the tough stems off the greens. Roll up a few leaves at a time and slice crosswise into 1/4" strips. Rinse and drain the greens. Add them to the boiling water for a few minutes. Drain then stir into the soup. Simmer another 5 minutes, adjust seasoning and serve.

It's still winter and hot soup tastes good. My family's early life version of this week's recipe came, of course, from the American icon of canned soups and from a 2-lb brick of "cheese" in neat square slices. We had pimentos in the "cheese" if we had company. This updated recipe comes from an excellent home cook living in Michigan.

Learning to eat fresh, seasonally and locally more often has been a major benefit of having the farmers' market at the hospital. However, I sometimes really miss vegetables that aren't in season. It is going to be quite a while before luscious tomatoes grace the market. The tomato bisque featured this week uses canned tomatoes with excellent flavor. Recent taste tests reported in the media give very high ratings to Muir Glen® Organic Tomatoes that come whole, diced or crushed. Evidently, their packaging is better as the cans are lined preventing any metallic taste. Some of the other ingredients are available at the market. Dried thyme also works well, but fresh is better. This is so good that I recommend you double the recipe for serving at a second meal.

Tomato Bisque & Cheese Toasts

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium cipollini onion, diced, from Happy Boys Farm
(a sweet Italian. Maui or regular yellow onion would work also)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 large sprigs fresh thyme or 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 large (28-oz) can crushed Muir Glen tomatoes
- 1-1/2 cups chicken stock or broth
- 1-1/2 Tbsp honey
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup milk (even skim works well)
- 2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped

Warm the olive oil in a soup pot and cook the onions until they begin to soften, about 7 minutes. Add the thyme sprigs and the garlic. Stir until fragrant. Add the tomatoes, broth, honey, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then simmer for about thirty minutes. Remove the thyme sprigs. Purée some of the soup in a blender, food processor or with a handheld blender. Stir in the milk and adjust the seasonings.

For toasts, pick up one of the wonderful varieties of organic whole grain breads from Daniel at the Vital Vittles stand. You will see why their bread sales are increasing by double digits each month at their various outlets. Brown the slices on both sides under the broiler. Brush one side with a little Dijon mustard. Top with a layer of a low-fat (real) cheese of your choice and broil until melted. Dip these into this incredibly rich and flavorful soup.

Cooking is a lot like practicing medicine. There are general clinical guidelines widely available, but patients benefit from the attention paid to their individual needs. There is no one right way to do anything. So it is with vinaigrettes. Mixed baby greens need a dressing very different from endive, pears, Gorgonzola and walnuts. Arugula is best served with a simple dressing, different from a salad of spinach, Fuyu persimmons and glazed pecans.

The main variables are the acidity of the vinegar or citrus used, the quality or type of oil, and your taste. What I have learned so far is that a good starting point for the vinegar to oil ratio is about 1:4. Imported vinegars may be stronger than domestic ones requiring a ratio of 1:5 or 1:6. Lemon juice or orange juice is less acidic perhaps requiring a 1:2 or 1:3 ratio. I have read that French chefs prefer more acidic vinaigrettes. All winter long, there are ample choices available for salads at the Friday Fresh Farmers' Market. This week's recipes are the clinical guidelines to use as a starting point for making vinaigrettes in your own kitchen.

Did you know that every farmer who started with us at the Oakland Medical Center in May 2003 is still with us? We are good for them and they are good for us.

Asparagus is coming soon and, before you know it, local sweet organic strawberries from VB Farms in Watsonville will be back.

Vinaigrette for Spinach & Persimmon Salad

1/4 cup rice vinegar
 2 Tbsp orange marmalade
 (I have also used hot pepper jelly from the Johnston Family Farm)
 1 tsp toasted sesame oil
 Salt and pepper

Champagne Vinaigrette

(Great with endive, pears and walnuts)
 6 Tbsp Champagne vinegar
 8 Tbsp walnut oil (deviates from all the guidelines above)
 Salt and pepper

Meyer Lemon Vinaigrette

(Works very well with arugula and takes about 2 minutes to make)

1 Tbsp Meyer lemon juice

(I used to get fussy about how I squeezed lemons until I saw real chefs squeeze the lemons in their hands, letting the juice strain through their fingers and capturing the seeds)

3 Tbsp olive oil

Salt

(Arugula is peppery in its own right, so regular black pepper may not be needed.)

Classic Vinaigrette

(Great with any mix of baby greens, with or without additional ingredients)

1 shallot, finely diced

1-1/2 Tbsp red wine vinegar, sherry vinegar or Champagne vinegar

1/4 tsp salt

6 Tbsp olive oil (the 1:4 ratio)

Fresh herbs: parsley, chervil, marjoram, thyme leaves or basil,
finely chopped

Pepper

Mix the shallots, salt and vinegar and let sit for about 20 minutes. Whisk in the olive oil then the herbs.

3/4/05

Spring is coming. I have been told there are twenty-nine more Kaiser Permanente facilities in various stages of planning markets. Each faces its unique challenges. In Denver, for example, the market season runs from June to September and there are far fewer small family farms. However, their downtown facility is next to a hospital that is bigger than ours. There should be no problem keeping the farmers busy. The Denver farmers would like to hear testimonials from the farmers at existing KP markets. Dale and Jo Simmons from the Lone Oak Ranch and Daniel of Vital Vittles Breads would give great recommendations.

A number of parents wrote back about the Tomato Bisque (Recipe of the Week 2/18/05) to say that their kids loved it. Variations included the addition of basil, the use of jalapeño jack cheese, and adding crumbled feta for leftovers the next day.

This week's offering is too healthy to pass up. While it has a component of carbs, it has other really good ingredients. A family member with a discerning palate ate it for dinner, dessert and breakfast. There are a couple potential barriers to making this dish — it uses green lentils, which you may not buy very often, and lots of pots and pans on 3 burners at once.

Orecchiette with Spinach, Onions & Lentils

Serves 4

- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 large cipolini or yellow onions, sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 cup French green lentils
- 8 oz orecchiette (little ears), fusilli (spirals), or penne (tubes)
- 1/2 lb baby spinach leaves
- 1/2 oz Parmigiano-Reggiano, about 1/2 cup, finely grated

Heat the oil in a large skillet until hot, but not smoking. Stir in onions, garlic, salt, pepper and bay leaf. Reduce heat to low and cook covered, stirring occasionally, until onions are tender and caramelized. This takes 20 to 25 minutes. Discard the bay leaf.

Meanwhile, cover the lentils with water by 1" in a small saucepan. Simmer them covered until they are tender and the water is absorbed. This step takes about 25 minutes also. Salt and pepper them, leaving them covered until used.

Bring about 6 qts of salted water to a boil in a pasta pot. Cook the pasta until al dente. Orecchiete takes 16 to 20 minutes. Reserve 1 cup of cooking water and drain the pasta. All the little ears collect water so you have to shake the colander more so than with linguini.

Return the pasta to the pot. Add the onions, lentils and spinach to the pasta with just enough cooking water to wilt the spinach and moisten the pasta. Stir in the cheese and adjust seasonings.

There is very little saturated fat in olive oil. It doesn't take much parmesan to get a half cup of grated cheese. Again, this adds only a small amount of saturated fat per serving. The flavors in this dish are subtle but have depth. It is a definite "make again" meal.

A few thoughts:

Next time, I will start the pasta water first. This always seems to take longer than expected. "Watched pots don't boil."

4/11/05

This is a quote from Reyna Del Haro, Area Director of Public Affairs, at the Baldwin Park Kaiser Permanente facility in East L.A.

"Well, we did it! The Farmer's Market today was an incredible hit. As a matter of fact, Cal Poly sold out so fast that they had to run back to the campus (twice) to bring in more items. Everyone here loved it, so I think the future of the market looks prosperous." It sounds like KP's relationship with Cal Poly at Pomona will be fruitful.

This week's recipe is simple, tasty and goes well with French bread and a salad. Blood oranges are in season and available from the Lone Oak Ranch. Pick up the fennel at the Happy Boys Farm. Valencia oranges or tangerines would also work well.

Mussels with Fennel, Blood Oranges & Pernod

- 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 large shallot, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 large fennel bulb, cored and thinly sliced
- 1-1/2 tsp fennel seeds, toasted and ground
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup fresh blood orange juice
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 lbs mussels, scrubbed and de-bearded
- 2 Tbsp Pernod
- 1 tsp blood orange zest
- Freshly ground pepper

Toast the fennel seeds in a heavy skillet until slightly browned. When cool, crush or grind them. Using 1 Tbsp olive oil, cook the onion, shallot, garlic and fennel until the vegetables are softened. Add the fennel seeds, red pepper flakes, salt, orange juice and wine. Bring to a boil and reduce by half. Add the mussels. Cover and simmer until the mussels open, about 4 minutes. Discard uncooperative mussels that don't open. Stir in the Pernod, orange zest and the remaining 2 Tbsp olive oil. Season with a little freshly ground pepper. This fresh and seasonal dish is a treat.

You may have noticed that asparagus is not available at our market at present. Evidently much of the asparagus in California is grown using fertilizers to promote more output in the relatively short growing season. The Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association is working hard to find a farmer who grows pesticide-free asparagus and can come to our Oakland market. If you find an interested vendor selling organic asparagus at any other markets, let me know.

This week's recipe comes courtesy of Dr. Tom Munyer, Oakland Radiology Department, who loves to cook. He introduced me to "Fine Cooking" magazine which is one of those great publications full of "how to do it" advice. The magazine highlights generic cooking methods that can be adapted to quick weeknight meals or fancy meals when you have more time. From the feedback I have received from readers, "quick" is good.

Tired of limp, soggy, steamed vegetables? Try this.

Braised Vegetables

- Asparagus, carrots or beans, about 1 lb
(Medium to thick versions work best. Save the baby veggies for another dish.)
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp butter or Smart Balance
- Kosher salt
- 1/3 cup chicken broth
- 1 to 2 tsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard

Prepare the vegetables by snapping off the tough part of the asparagus stalk, cutting the carrot in half crosswise and then the big end in half lengthwise to get pieces of similar size and cut the ends off the beans.)

Using a sauté pan with a lid, heat the olive oil and 1 tsp butter over medium-high heat until the mixture just starts to brown. Add the vegetables and a little salt and toss well with tongs. Arrange the vegetables in a single layer. Cook without stirring for 3 to 4 minutes until the bottoms are nicely browned. Toss and turn over, cooking for an additional 2 minutes.

Add the chicken broth, cover immediately and simmer until the liquid has almost evaporated, about 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the lemon juice, Dijon and the remaining teaspoon of butter. Toss well, scraping up any brown bits. Season with freshly ground pepper and serve.

3/24/05

Vanessa Bogenholm of VB Farms re-opened the strawberry season at last Friday's market. She tries to personally attend markets early in the season. As she is the President of the California Certified Organic Farmers Association, she has much experience and expertise to share about agricultural practices. She also provided beautiful heads of organic green cabbage.

Unfamiliar as I am with cabbage recipes, I made three different versions of cabbage slaw. There's also much more to learn about Napa, Savoy and multi-colored cabbages. The first recipe used jalapeño, lime and cilantro. Next, I made a slaw with a red wine and Dijon vinaigrette. The clear winner is presented below.

Asian Cabbage Salad

- 1 head green cabbage
- 1/2 cup seasoned rice vinegar (also known as sushi vinegar)
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 Tbsp sesame oil
- Salt and pepper

Slice the cabbage vertically into quarters. Cut out the firm core. Slice the quarters crosswise into 1/8" slices. In a large bowl, toss the cabbage with the other ingredients. Chill at least an hour up and to 3 hours. Toss often. This salad is incredibly light yet rich in flavor. I hope you enjoy it.

4/1/05

There is an unsubstantiated rumor that the first organic cherries of the season will be at the Friday Fresh Farmers' Market this week. It's always exciting when fruits with pits start arriving because peaches and nectarines aren't far behind.

I looked in many sources trying to find an onion soup that wasn't smothered in Gruyère or simmered with cognac or ruby port. You may think that there are only five different kinds of onions used in the recipe below, however, I was informed that garlic is also in the onion family. This recipe takes a little chopping time, but the results are worth it. If you buy one kitchen utensil for yourself, I recommend a 9-1/2" chef's knife that makes the job easier.

Six Onion Soup

Serves 4

1 Tbsp butter or Smart Balance
2 Tbsp olive oil
2 yellow or cipollini onions, diced
4 big leeks, white and pale green parts, thinly sliced
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp dried thyme
1 bay leaf
1/2 cup (about 3 large) minced shallots
4 cups chicken stock
1 cup skim milk (the original recipe uses heavy cream)
6 scallions, cut diagonally into 1/2" pieces
Snipped chives for garnish (snipping is better than mincing as
chives are so delicate)
Croutons
Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 400°. Cut the desired amount of French bread into 1/2" cubes. Bake them on a cookie sheet for 10 to 15 minutes or until browned. Heat the olive oil and butter in a soup pot. Add the onions, leeks, garlic and shallots, then cover and simmer for about 25 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken stock, thyme, bay leaf, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes. Remove the bay leaf. Add skim milk. Purée with a handheld blender. Alternatively, strain using a colander and retaining the liquid, then purée the solids with 1 cup of the liquid in a food processor or blender. Return to the pot with the other 3 cups of liquid and stir. Add the scallions and simmer for an additional 5 minutes. Serve topped with croutons and snipped chives.

If you eat one pizza this year, make it this one. It takes almost no time to make and is so good, it's hard to describe. The recommendation for the ready-made crust comes to you from Dr. Mary Patton, Internal Medicine, at Oakland. Vicolo crusts may be found in the refrigerated section of your supermarket. They're made with organic cornmeal, olive and canola oils. One crust serves two. To accompany the pizza and to help you eat seven servings of fruits and vegetables per day, try braised asparagus (Volume 4), a mixed green salad (vinaigrette in Volume 4), and a Cara Cara orange for dessert. Cara Cara's are a cross between navel oranges and grapefruits. They are spectacularly juicy and sweet. At \$1.50 per lb, they may be a better value than the more commonly sought after food group of non-Sharffenberger chocolates costing over \$10.00 per lb.

Smoked Salmon Pizza with Meyer Lemon & Capers

One Vicolo cornmeal, Boboli or homemade crust
Nonfat sour cream
Reggiano parmesan
1/4 lb smoked salmon
1 Meyer lemon
2 Tbsp capers, rinsed

Preheat oven to 425°. Top the crust with a layer of nonfat sour cream. Grate a thin layer of parmesan over the sour cream. Bake for about 10 minutes or until the edges start to brown. Remove from the oven. Top with a single layer of the thinly sliced smoked salmon. Zest and juice the lemon, sprinkling both over the salmon. Top with capers. That's all there is to it.

4/15/05

To accompany a big salad using greens from Happy Boys Farm, this bouillabaisse and a loaf of French bread makes a basic and wonderful dinner. You can vary the amounts and mix of seafood depending on the number and tastes of those dining with you. Most seafood stews and bouillabaisse recipes I have seen and tried use ingredients such as fennel, Pernod and other exotic vegetables. This is a back-to-basics recipe.

Your Basic Bouillabaisse

Serves 2 to 4

Any combination of halibut, salmon, shrimp, scallops, clams and mussels
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 yellow onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 tomatoes, seeded and chopped (I used a small can of organic diced tomatoes as local tomatoes aren't yet in season. The recipes usually say to peel the tomatoes. I usually don't and, frankly, can't tell the difference.)
1/2 tsp ground coriander seed
1 Tbsp chopped parsley
1 Tbsp chopped fresh herbs (marjoram, oregano, basil and chives alone or in combination)
Salt and white pepper to taste
2 cups fish stock
1 cup clam juice
1/2 cup dry white wine

Heat oil in a large saucepan or stock pot. Sauté the onions and garlic until soft. Add tomatoes, coriander, parsley and herbs. Season with salt and white pepper. Add fish stock, clam juice and white wine. Bring to a boil, then simmer for ten minutes. Add all the seafood. Bring to a boil, then simmer covered for about 10 minutes until the fish is flaky and the shells have opened.

4/22/05

Spring at the market is a beautiful time to shop. There are many shades of green on display. This week's salad is as light and refreshing as its color. The quality of the lettuce and celery make all the difference.

But first, here is some follow-up to last week's bouillabaisse recipe.

Maria Cobo, RN, a nurse consultant in KP's Program Offices, shared the following advice from her grandmother. The suggested changes took the recipe from good to great. She wrote, "My grandmother cooked the best 'Menestra de Mariscos,' the name Spaniards give to their Seafood Stew. She did not use coriander, instead she used saffron. She also added green peppers cut in small 1/2" pieces, sautéed the peppers, added the tomatoes and let them simmer together for 15 minutes before adding the fish stock (home made, of course.)"

I love 'Fish Stew' no matter what it is called. Just to give last week's recipe another twist, I added one green pepper, omitted the coriander and added 1 tsp saffron threads steeped in a little hot fish stock. These enhancements plus some mussels and sturgeon made for a wonderful seafood stew that accompanied this week's recipe.

Celery Salad with Pecorino Cheese

Serves 6 to 8

Dressing

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

5 Tbsp lemon juice

1 tsp grated lemon zest

1 shallot, finely diced

1/2 tsp sea salt

1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

Red leaf lettuce, torn into bite size pieces

12 celery stalks, thinly sliced

(If you want to get a little fancy, try slicing this way: place a few celery stalks at a time, flat edges down on the cutting board. Place knife on the stalks at a 45° angle. "Shave" off slices with a more elegant shape than the usual.)

1/4 lb wedge of pecorino cheese, shaved into thin slices

Chill salad plates. Whisk the dressing ingredients together. In a bowl, salt and pepper the lettuce lightly and toss with about half of the dressing. Arrange the lettuce on the plates. Toss the celery with the remaining dressing. Using a slotted spoon, mound the celery in the center of the lettuce. Add any remaining dressing. Top with pecorino. This salad is quick, simple and delicious.

Another market begins. Dr. Moses Elam, the new Physician-in-Chief, and other leaders at the Stockton Medical Center are excited about the grand opening of their farmers' market on Tuesday May 3rd. Located close to the growers, they will feature a wide variety of organic fruits and vegetables. Their market, more than many others, exemplifies the concept of buying locally grown food.

As our Oakland market expands its offerings, I am noticing an increase in the number of shoppers. Just as medicine's language describes conditions with terms such as psoriatic and non-psoriatic arthropathy, John Silveira and Allen Moy of the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association describe crops as sugar and non-sugar varieties. We are definitely moving into the sugar crop season. Cherries will arrive this week or next, the strawberries are big and sweet, nectarines are getting bigger on the trees and here I am ascribing the greater number of shoppers to the weather and wider variety of vegetables.

This week's recipe is a healthy blend of non-sugar and sugar crop items. Pick up different colors of chard at Happy Boys Farm and an onion. Buy some raisins from Lone Oak Ranch. Use either their sliced almonds or buy some pine nuts.

Swiss Chard with Raisins & Pine Nuts

- 2 bunches Swiss chard
- 1/2 cup pine nuts (almonds or sunflower seeds, etc)
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup raisins, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup water
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Tear or cut the chard leaves from the main stems after rinsing them. Coarsely chop the leaves and stems separately.

In a large, heavy pot and a bit of oil, toast the nuts for just a couple of minutes until golden brown. Remove the nuts with a slotted spoon. Cook the onion in the oil for a minute, then add the stems and cook for about 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add raisins and 2 Tbsp of water. Cover and cook until the stems start to become tender. Add the leaves and remaining 2 Tbsp water. Cover and cook until the leaves are tender, about 3 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with nuts.

This is the first chard recipe I have shared. It won't be the last.

5/5/05

An emailed slide show of Stockton Kaiser Permanente's farmers' market opening day on May 3rd showed many smiling faces with full bags. Fontana Kaiser Permanente's market is scheduled to open May 24th after nine months of planning. Redwood City's market will open on June 8th. Again, the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association continues their invaluable support for KP and the farmers.

This week's recipe can add some heat to your evening fare. Roasting jalapeños gives them a distinctive flavor that's great in this soup.

Chicken Soup with Roasted Jalapeños

Serves 4

2 large jalapeños
2 Tbsp sesame oil
1 yellow onion, diced
1 green bell pepper, diced
Cooked chicken leftovers, at least 2 cups, shredded
2 cloves garlic, minced
6 cups chicken stock
1/4 cup soy sauce
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1 Tbsp ginger, finely grated
Juice of 1 lime
1 cup bean sprouts
1/2 cup cilantro, chopped

Roast the jalapeños in a skillet over medium-high heat. After they are softened a bit, slice in half lengthwise and remove the seeds. Flatten the pieces and continue cooking skin side down in the skillet until they are blackened. Dice finely.

In a soup pot, sauté the onions in the sesame oil until the onions are browned and sweet to the taste. Add the chicken, green pepper, garlic and jalapeños. Sauté briefly. Add the stock, soy sauce, sea salt and pepper and bring to a boil. Press the grated ginger with your fingertips to extract about 1 tsp of ginger juice. Add the juice to the soup, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.

Stir in the lime juice, bean sprouts and cilantro. Adjust seasonings.

5/12/05

For our market's second birthday, a sweet dessert is in order. Pick up some vanilla frozen yogurt, even nonfat tastes good. Use this chilled strawberry sauce. Watch the smiles of friends and family members. Another sweet option may become available at our Oakland market in the future. While at a meeting at Santa Clara Kaiser Permanente, I had the privilege of visiting their farmers' market. The beekeeper from Small Bees said her family comes to 5 Kaiser Permanente markets and will also come to the Redwood City market when it opens June 8th. She is working with the California Certified Organic Farmers Association and changing her beekeeping methods to meet organic guidelines so she can come to our Oakland market.

Roasted Strawberries

1 qt strawberries from VB Farms (VB stands for Vanessa Bergholm, the President of the California Certified Organic Farmers Association.)
1/2 cup sugar

Preheat oven to 450°. Hull the strawberries and toss with the sugar in a large baking dish. Roast them for 15 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes. As they become soft and fragrant, an amazing amount of sweet red juice is released. Chill for at least two hours. Watch out, this is really good.

This is the time of year when you may be planting those innocuous little zucchini plants that take up a very small space. In a few months, you may have a zucchini overload. It's good to practice with many different recipes to get ready.

Basil Zucchini

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 medium or three small zucchinis, thinly sliced
- 3 Tbsps chopped fresh basil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper

Heat the oil in a medium non-stick skillet. Stir fry the zucchini until it is just tender. Add the basil and garlic near the end of the cooking time. Salt and pepper to taste. This recipe is in the category of light, easy, fast, tasty and very healthy.

5/27/05

Kaiser Permanente, in Portland, Oregon in partnership with a committee of community leaders, opened KP's 15th farmers' market on Wednesday 5/18. I hear 1,000 shoppers and 30 vendors braved the rain. The market is located on a major commute route and hopes to serve the broader community in addition to the staff, patients, and visitors to the KP facility.

This and next week's recipes come to you thanks to Dr. Jeanne Reisman, Oakland KP internist and Chief of Patient Education. Not only is she a great doctor, she's a great cook. I had been bemoaning the long wait for local heirloom tomatoes to use in a Greek salad. This is a Greek salad you can make now.

Greek Radish Salad

- 4 cups thinly sliced radishes from Happy Boys Farm
- 10 black olives, pitted and thinly sliced (rinsed Kalamata olives work well)
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 3/4 cup crumbled Greek or Bulgarian feta cheese
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard

Whisk the lemon juice, olive oil and Dijon together in a small bowl. Toss everything else in a salad bowl with the dressing. Season to taste with salt and pepper, keeping in mind the inherent saltiness of the feta and olives and the "heat" of the radishes. Chill before serving.

Spring at the market captures the essence of green. This week's recipe, the second from Dr. Jeanne Reisman, makes a light green sauce that is perfect over salmon. I pan-roasted the salmon after searing it on top of the stove. If you have the preparation time, this dish is especially good served on a bed of warmed fava beans and morels. When discussing this recipe with another busy person, she asked if this dish is available at Trader Joe's. I doubt it. However, you can make a double recipe of the sauce and freeze half in an ice cube tray for another night.

Salmon with Fresh Pea Purée

- 4 salmon fillets
- 1 lb fresh peas shelled, to make one cup
- 1-1/2 cup baby spinach leaves
- 2 Tbsp minced chives
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh mint
- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 Tbsp chicken broth
- 1/2 Tbsp Champagne vinegar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper

Fill a medium mixing bowl with water and ice cubes and set aside. Bring a saucepan of water to a boil. Add the peas. When they are almost tender, about 4 minutes, add the spinach and boil just until it wilts. Drain and plunge the peas and spinach into the ice water. This step is important as it preserves the vibrant green color. Place the drained peas and spinach in a food processor or blender. Add the mint and chives and pulse a few times. Then add the olive oil, chicken broth, Champagne vinegar, salt and pepper and purée until smooth. Set aside.

Grill, broil or pan-roast the salmon. (I like to rub the fillets with a little olive oil and sprinkle them with salt and pepper first.) Preheat the oven to 425°. Heat a sauté pan with an ovenproof handle over medium high heat until a drop of water evaporates in a second. Heat a little olive oil. Sear the salmon about 4 minutes on the first side. (Resist the temptation to fiddle with the fillet until the 4-minute mark. It's difficult not to peek at the underside, but it will stick and fall apart unless you wait. This tip also pertains to chicken breasts, scallops, etc.) Cook the fillet about 2 more minutes after turning. Finish the salmon in the oven for 4 to 6 minutes. (I leave a hot pad on the handle after removing it from the oven as a burn prevention reminder.)

Serve the salmon topped with the delicious purée and garnished with some chopped chives or sprigs of fresh chervil.

Fontana Kaiser Permanente is located near the site of Dr. Sidney Garfield's clinic where he provided medical care on a prepaid basis for those building the California aqueduct. It is also the site of another new Kaiser Permanente farmers' market. From a recent email sent by Jennifer Resch-Silvestri, Area Director for Public Affairs in Kaiser Permanente's Inland Empire Service Area, "The market we just launched was at our Fontana Medical Center and was quite successful. Not only did the growers enjoy the great participation from our staff, our staff enjoyed a few stress-free minutes with each other as they chatted about how they planned to prepare their purchases. We even had one physician from Sri Lanka discuss the cultivation of a vegetable from his native land with a grower — the grower has agreed to try to cultivate the seeds of this vegetable since the climate in which the grower's farm is located (the high desert of San Bernardino county) is so compatible to the climate of Sri Lanka. And yes, the potluck idea is one to love! All in all, a wonderful opportunity for staff and growers. We can't wait until the next market on June 10!"

Years ago, a children's nature book featured the Berenstain Bears who taught kids about carnivores and herbivores. I remember a 2-year old boy describing himself as a "both-avore." Now, I learn from a recent San Francisco Chronicle article that I am becoming a locavore. Locavores frequent farmers' markets mainly purchasing foods that are local, fresh and seasonal. Balthazar from Kashiwase Farms, a fourth generation organic stone fruit farm in Winton, confirms that high up on a farmer's priority list is the proximity of markets to their farm. Travel time and fuel costs are major issues in the economic life of small family farms. As the number of KP markets grows, there are markets closer to farmers.

Most of the ingredients for this week's recipe can be found at our Friday Fresh Farmers' Market. This salad is easy, very light and fresh. I used gold and red raspberries as they were available from VB Farm at our market.

Fruit Salad with Arugula & Almonds

Makes 8 servings

- 1 cup whole almonds
- 1 Tbsp plus 1/2 tsp almond or walnut oil (the 1/2 tsp optional)
- Kosher salt
- 4 large nectarines (2 lbs), one coarsely chopped and the others sliced 1/4" thick
- 1 small shallot, finely minced
- 3 Tbsp sherry vinegar
- 6 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 pint raspberries
- 1-1/4 lbs arugula

Preheat the oven to 375°. Toast the almonds in a small pie plate for 8 minutes. Toss with the optional 1/2 tsp of almond or walnut oil and a little kosher salt. Purée the chopped nectarines in a food processor. Transfer the purée to a small bowl and add the vinegar, shallot and 1/2 tsp salt. Let stand a few minutes. Whisk in the olive oil and remaining 1 tablespoon of almond or walnut oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Mix the sliced nectarines, berries and about 1/3 of the vinaigrette. Toss the arugula with the remaining dressing in a large shallow salad bowl. Add the fruit and toss gently. Garnish with the toasted almonds and eat it soon.

6/17/05

The grand opening of Redwood City Kaiser Permanente's farmers' market was Wednesday June 8. Despite the rain and wind, they had 1,300 shoppers. Thanks to the hard work of many, their market was a great success.

In a speech last week, in part about childhood obesity, former president Bill Clinton stated that 70% of the food dollar was spent at home 20 years ago. The number is now down to only 53% with most of the remaining 47% spent on fast food. This week's recipe is guaranteed to encourage the number at home to come back up. Emailed to me by a media celebrity/great cook in Toledo, Ohio, this recipe mixes protein with garden fresh items. She recommended salmon, but I tried it with chicken, having sent out a salmon recipe recently. Either way, this recipe is in the "I can't even begin to tell you how good this is" category.

Pan-Roasted Chicken with Herb Salad

Serves 4

4 chicken breast halves, boned and skinned
Olive oil, salt and pepper
1/4 cup fresh mint leaves
1/2 cup fresh basil leaves
1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves
3/4 cup fresh parsley leaves
1-1/2 cups baby arugula
1 Tbsp lemon juice
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper

Preheat oven to 425°.

Rather than measuring everything, I just made a bunch of piles using the mint leaves as a unit of one. (All big leaves should be torn into smaller pieces.) I doubled the pile size for basil and cilantro, tripled it for the parsley and just used big handfuls of arugula. Toss together in a bowl and refrigerate until ready to use to keep the leaves from wilting. Whisk the lemon juice, olive oil and garlic together. Add the salt and pepper and set aside.

Coat the chicken breasts with a little olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Heat a sauté pan until drops of water evaporate in about one second. Add a little olive oil to the pan. Sear the chicken breast for about 4 minutes on the first side, a little less if the pieces are on the small side. Resist the urge to move them around in the pan until the 4-minute mark; this prevents sticking. Flip them over and cook an additional 2 minutes. Finish them in the oven for about 8 minutes. I keep a hot pad on the handle of the pan as a burn prevention reminder. Roasting chicken, salmon or other fish this way is easy and keeps the food moist and tender.

Toss the greens with the dressing. Make a bed of the herb salad on a dinner plate. Slice the chicken breasts thinly and arrange on the salad. Serve with lemon wedges. This is really good.

6/24/05

Our 22 Kaiser Permanente farmers' markets in five states are providing some part of the diet for as many as a million people per year. There may be as many as thirty KP markets by year's end. The markets primarily provide food for home.

Many more millions of people come to our medical centers per year. Within our buildings, we provide food for hospitalized patients, in the cafeterias, for conferences and in vending machines. Our vending machines are currently providing foods that may not be part of a healthy diet. That is going to change soon.

KP just ratified a policy to provide at least 50% healthy choices in our vending machines. To qualify as "healthy," the products will have to meet guidelines more stringent than those elsewhere in the industry. KP's guidelines will include limits on calories, sugars, fats, the types of fat, etc. Now the work begins. To implement such a policy will take lots of work by our food services directors nationally but they will enjoy strong support to make the necessary vendor contract changes.

Before long, tomatoes will be in our markets. Tomatoes make me think of pizza. Pizza requires a crust. Homemade crust can be the foundation for many of our market's vegetables in the future. Try this — it's not all that hard to do. Yeast has magical properties. You can almost see a dense ball of dough transform in front of your eyes. It will encourage you to bake homemade bread in the future. This recipe makes enough dough for three 12" to 14" crusts. You can freeze one of the balls of dough wrapped in plastic wrap. Believe it or not, all you need to do is to put a ball of frozen dough in a medium mixing bowl coated with a little olive oil. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Eight hours later it will have thawed, risen, and will be ready to make into a crust for a quick evening meal.

Homemade Pizza Crust

- 2 cups water, 105° to 115°
- 1 tsp honey or sugar
- 1 package active dry yeast
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp Kosher salt
- 5 to 5-1/2 cups bread flour (bread flour contains more gluten and is therefore stretchier than all-purpose flour)
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour (because the food pyramid says to eat more whole grains)

Dough is most easily made in a stand mixer or a food processor with a dough blade, but hand mixing works well also. In a large mixing bowl, add the honey to water that feels very warm on the inside of your wrist. Mix in the yeast. Watch with gratitude as it foams up in a few minutes. Stir in the olive oil and salt. Add 2-1/2 cups of bread flour and 1/2 cup whole wheat flour. Stir for a few minutes with a wooden spoon. Add the remaining bread flour a 1/4 cup at a time until it's too difficult to stir. Begin kneading the dough on a floured work surface adding just enough flour so the dough is no longer sticky. Continue to knead it for about 10 minutes, occasionally incorporating a little flour now and then to prevent sticking to the work surface. Roll the ball of dough in a large mixing bowl with a little olive oil. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place for about one hour. When it's cold and foggy in Berkeley, I heat the oven at 150° for a couple minutes and then shut it off. That makes for about an 85° temperature which is perfect for pizza dough or yeast breads.

After one hour, cut the dough into three portions and gently mold into balls on your work surface. Sprinkle with a little flour, cover with a kitchen towel and let rise again for about 20 minutes. Wrap and freeze whatever you aren't going to use at this time.

Preheat the oven to 425°. If you use a pizza stone, put it near the heat source at the bottom of the oven for crispier crust. Here's the fun part. Remove your watch, rings and bracelets. Flour the backs of your hands. Press one of the dough rounds with your fingertips to flatten it making an enlarging circle. Drape it over the backs of your hands with the hands facing opposite directions. Begin spinning the dough into the air with reckless abandon until you decide there must be an easier way. Or, flatten the dough ball into a 12" to 14" thin crust with a floured rolling pin. Lift the dough onto a floured pizza pan, baking sheet or wooden *peel. Some like to use cornmeal on the pans to prevent sticking, but flour works too. Crimp the edges so it looks like a normal crust.

Top your pizza. If you top it excessively when using a peel, you will scatter ingredients all over your oven when shaking the peel to slide the pizza onto the stone. Pizzas may bake in as little as 8 minutes on a stone placed in the bottom of an oven or 12 to 14 minutes if baked on a pizza pan in the top of an oven. Enjoy the thin, light and crunchy crust.

[*A large, almost oval-shaped paddle made of wood or metal, which is used to hold a pizza when placing it into and removing it from an oven. This device enables pizzas and breads to easily slide off onto a baking or pizza stone.]