

From Dr. Preston Maring's Farmers' Market Update & Recipe of the Week Newsletters Volume 6

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It's wintertime at the market. Many of the available vegetables make good soups. It helps to clean the soup bowl if you have good bread. Soft, warm and fragrant focaccia fresh from your oven is great company for your vegetables. I find that it's one of the easiest breads to make. If you have never experienced the miracle of yeast, try this. You can make it plain or add a tablespoon of chopped fresh herbs, some sautéed onions, chopped olives or all of the above.

Focaccia

- 1 package dry yeast (2-1/4 tsp)
- 1 cup very warm water, about 110 °
(Use a meat thermometer to check until you get used to what this temperature feels like on the inside of your wrist. Over about 125 °, the yeast dies.)
- 1-1/2 tsp sugar
- 4 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil plus extra
for the bowls, baking dish and brushing
- 2-3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp chopped rosemary (optional)

In a large bowl, mix 1/2 cup water, yeast and sugar. The bottom of your bowl will come alive and the yeast will foam. After about 5 minutes, add the rest of the water, 4 Tbsp olive oil and rosemary. Combine the flour and salt, then mix into the yeast mixture one cup at a time. Some of you may do this in the bowl, others with a KitchenAid® and a dough hook. (I have never used a bread machine.) If you are mixing it by hand, the last cup of flour will have to be kneaded into the dough. Knead it for 5-10 minutes. Ask for help if your arms get tired. It will go from sticky to silky soft.

Oil a medium bowl. Add dough, turning to coat with oil. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let it rise in a warm place (85 °) for about 1-1/2 hour. It's rarely that warm in Berkeley so I heat the oven at 150 ° while I knead the dough — about 2 minutes only. That seems to make a good place for the dough to rise as long as you don't forget to take it out when you preheat the oven to 450 ° (been there and done that.) The dough will have at least doubled in size. Even after 20 years of baking bread, I am always amazed and thankful to see this.

Lightly oil a 9" by 13" baking dish. Press the dough into the dish. Cover and let rise for about 30 minutes. Lightly brush the dough with more olive oil. Sprinkle it with coarse sea salt. Make finger marks in the dough so it resembles what you see at Italian delis. Put it in the middle of the oven and turn the heat down to 375 °.

Check it in about 20 minutes. It should be a light gold color and still soft. Take it out to cool a bit on a rack. Enjoy what you've created. Happy New Year!

1/12/06

Not only are the days getting longer, it's also a better time to get your vitamin C in its original package. Marlene Gonzales of the Lone Oak Ranch says that all of their farm's citrus is sweeter after the solstice, particularly Fisher navel oranges. As these oranges are only available about one month per year, visit your local farmers' market on your lunch hour.

This week's recipe is your basic and classic walnut, pear, lettuce and good cheese recipe found everywhere. This version, however, is my favorite as it uses puréed, toasted walnuts in the vinaigrette. It's a great way to get your omega-3s.

Walnut, Pear & Gorgonzola Salad

Serves 4

- 2 heads of butter lettuce or lettuces of your choice
- 3/4 cup walnut halves
- 1/2 clove garlic
- 2 Tbsp vinegar (1 each of raspberry and red wine or 2 of balsamic)
- 3 Tbsp walnut oil
- 3 Tbsp canola oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup crumbled gorgonzola or blue (bleu?) cheese
- 2 pears (red D'Anjou if possible), cored and cut lengthwise in eighths
- Watercress for garnish

Separate the lettuce leaves. Toast the walnuts in a preheated 325° oven for 5 minutes. Purée 1/4 cup of the toasted walnuts and garlic. Add the vinegar(s), salt and pepper. While whisking or pulsing in a kitchen device, add the oils.

Toss the leaves with the remaining 1/2 cup walnuts, vinaigrette and gorgonzola. Arrange on four plates and top neatly with pear slices, watercress and any remaining salvageable bits of gorgonzola from the bowl. This is good.

1/19/06

Farmers' markets encourage us to eat seasonally and locally. For some ingredients, like powdered sumac, local means Southern Italy and the Middle East. Unlike others who, centuries ago, sailed half way around the world and back returning with a few bags of black pepper or nutmeg three years later, I found powdered sumac at a Middle Eastern deli in Berkeley in about 10 minutes. It brings a lemony or slight vinegar taste to the soup when sprinkled on top just before serving. Swiss chard, onions, carrots, and maybe celery can be found at your farmers' market. I made this twice in the last week to make sure the incredible flavor was real and not just imagined.

Being a selective omnivore, I used this soup as an opportunity to sample grass fed Oregon Country ground beef recommended to me by a colleague at the hospital. The meatballs were delicious. While the soup can stand alone without the meatballs, they sure were tasty. Doctors often describe things compared to the size and shape of food: "goose egg" lump on the head or "pea-sized" nodule in the skin. Make the meatballs small apricot- or kiwi-sized.

Lentil Soup with Swiss Chard & Lemon

Serves 6

Soup:

- 8 cups stock (I used 4 cups vegetable and 4 cups chicken stock)
- 2 cups (1 lb) lentils
- 1 onion, diced (try wearing swim goggles when dicing onions to avoid tearing — it looks funny but works really well)
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 lb chard, chopped
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground allspice
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- Optional meatballs
- Powdered sumac — also optional

Meatballs:

1 lb lean ground beef
1 onion, diced
1/2 cup finely chopped parsley
1 cup soft bread crumbs
1 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper
1/4 tsp ground allspice

In a large soup pot, heat some of the olive oil and sauté the onion, carrot and celery for about five minutes. Stir in the cumin and allspice. Add the stock. Bring to a boil. Add the lentils. Simmer, covered, for about 45 minutes or until the lentils are almost soft. Meanwhile, sauté the chard in a little olive oil until just wilted. Add to the soup and simmer a few minutes. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Adjust the seasoning to taste. If you are using the meatballs, add them in the last 10 minutes of cooking time. Serve in warmed bowls and sprinkle liberally with sumac powder. Pita toasts make a good accompaniment.

To make the meatballs, preheat the oven to 400°. In a large bowl, mix the ground beef with the other ingredients. By hand is easiest and actually kind of fun. Form kiwi sized meatballs. Bake them for ten minutes on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or the reusable Silpat® if you have one. Let the meatballs rest on a paper towel after cooking. The paper towel absorbs excess fat.

Researching sumac led to a whole new world of flavors to try. We'll see where it leads.

Every week it seems that the variety of fruits and vegetables available at the farmers' market is expanding. Asparagus is probably six weeks away. When the ground temperature reaches 65° in Fresno, we all get lucky. When it warms up a little more, the asparagus may grow as much as four inches overnight. Talk about amazing life force.

For now, hot soup is still perfect for dinner. Having grown up on soups from red cans, I made this updated version of an old classic with some of the ingredients from our farmers' market. Cipollini onions are great in this soup. Look for carrots at the market with the green tops still attached. The fresh green leaves assure you that the carrots weren't picked a month ago, then peeled and made into small uniform-sized pieces and packaged. Do your own double-blind controlled study at home and taste the difference.

Use leftovers from an earlier chicken dinner, chicken bought pre-roasted or cooked fresh for the soup. I pan-roasted bone-in, skin-on chicken breasts using my current favorite method of cooking chicken or fish. Preheat the oven to 425°. Rub the chicken with a little olive oil, salt and pepper. Using a sauté pan that can fit into your oven, sear the chicken breasts skin-side down over medium heat for about four minutes. Turn and sear another two minutes. Turn the breasts back over skin-side down and finish in the oven for 8 to 15 minutes depending on the size. Be sure to be very careful with the hot handle. I leave oven mitts on the handle as a reminder. Remove the skin and the chicken from the bone when cooled a bit.

Chicken Noodle Soup

Serves 6

8 cups chicken stock
 3/4 cup diced onion of choice
 2 carrots, diced
 2 celery stalks, diced
 2 Tbsp olive oil
 2 large handfuls cremini mushrooms, sliced
 1 Tbsp Smart Balance or real butter
 Bite-sized chicken chunks from 2 to 3 breasts
 4 oz fettucine
 1 Tbsp lemon juice

1/2 cup chopped parsley
Salt and pepper

In a soup pot, sauté the onion, carrot, and celery in the olive oil to soften a bit. Add the chicken stock. Bring to a boil, then simmer for about five minutes. Meanwhile, sauté the mushrooms in butter over medium-high heat using a separate skillet. Add the chicken, sautéed mushrooms, lemon juice, noodles and parsley to the soup pot. Bring back to a boil, then simmer for about five minutes until the noodles are al dente. Season with salt and pepper. So simple and so good. I think you will enjoy this.

2/2/06

Thanks to over-exuberant farmers' market shopping habits, I ended up with a lot of cilantro and parsley. Having an abundance of leafy herbs like this led to a fresh and spicy pesto. Perhaps it was a little wild and crazy, but I used it on pan-roasted halibut, crostini, chicken, pesto and mozzarella pizza, and as a pasta sauce (not all at once.) Without cheese and a minimum of oil, the pesto itself is very low-calorie and low fat.

Cilantro, Parsley & Jalapeño Pesto

About 2 cups cilantro leaves with a bit of stems

About 1 cup parsley leaves with a bit of stems

About 3 inches fresh ginger,

peeled with the edge of a teaspoon and coarsely chopped

1 large jalapeño, seeded and coarsely diced

3 cloves of garlic, peeled and coarsely chopped

3 to 4 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Salt to taste

Using a food processor, pulse the ginger, garlic and jalapeño a few times. Add the cilantro and parsley, pulsing until finely chopped. Drizzle in the olive oil while the processor is running until the desired consistency is reached. I prefer pestos that are a little less oily than many recipes. You can always thin it. For example, add a little pasta cooking water. Season with salt to taste. The pesto lasts 4 days in the refrigerator, which is good because I couldn't have tried it on everything in one day. This is simple and tasty.

2/9/06

One of the joys of shopping at a farmers' market is seeing the beautiful array of vegetables, some of which you may never have eaten before. Except for a few slices at a restaurant in the past, daikon radishes were new to me. They are as long as carrots, but much fatter with the same crispy texture as smaller radishes. The Happy Boys Farm sign said they could be sautéed as a side dish.

I used the daikon radishes with a mixture of other winter vegetables to make golden brown chunks of tasty food tossed with gremolata, also new to me. Gremolata is simply lemon peel minced finely with parsley and garlic. Make this recipe as a side dish and serve it hot. I think you will like it. It really helps to have a good friend with a Meyer lemon tree in their yard.

Pan-Caramelized Vegetable Chunks with Gremolata

Use any combination of:

daikon radishes	carrots	fingerling potatoes	
parsnips	turnips	onions	fennel

2 large shallots, peeled and sliced

2 Tbsp olive oil

1 Tbsp Smart Balance butter substitute or butter

Salt and pepper

1 lemon peel, save the lemon for another use

1/2 cup parsley, loosely packed and coarsely chopped

3 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped

Cut the vegetables into chunks about 1/2" in the various dimensions. I don't peel turnips, potatoes or fennel. Cut up enough to cover the bottom of your largest sauté pan in a single layer.

Over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Sauté the vegetable chunks for about ten minutes. Add the butter and sauté another five minutes. Add the shallots and sauté an additional five minutes. Season with salt and pepper. By then, all the chunks will be tender and caramelized.

Mince the lemon peel on a cutting board. Cover it with the parsley and garlic, which you have already chopped coarsely. Mince the lemon peel, parsley and garlic all together for the gremolata.

Toss the warm vegetables with the gremolata and serve.

2/16/06

A local, fresh vegetable calendar from the Community Alliance for Family Farmers confirmed what we all know too well. It's too long before tomatoes become available at our farmers' market. The peak season for all the different varieties is months away. Fortunately, Happy Boy Farms has an alternative. I used their sun-dried organic heirloom tomatoes with pasta to tide me over. It takes about one pound of tomatoes to make one ounce of dried tomatoes so the flavor is wonderfully intense.

Pasta with Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Olives & Pine Nuts

Serves 4

- 1-1/2 oz sun-dried tomatoes, julienned
(kitchen scissors work well to cut the tomatoes into thin strips)
- 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 3 Tbsp pine nuts
- 1/4 tsp crushed red chili flakes
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 12 Kalamata olives, pitted and halved
- 1 Tbsp capers, rinsed and drained (optional)
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 2 oz feta cheese, crumbled (optional)
- Linguine (or another pasta shape of your choice) for four

Barely cover the julienned tomatoes with boiling water for five minutes in a small bowl to soften them. Save the "tomato" water. In another small bowl, toss the tomatoes with a little olive oil. In a medium skillet, heat the remaining olive oil and sauté the garlic, pine nuts and red chili flakes until fragrant and the nuts are slightly browned. Add the sun-dried tomatoes and sauté a few more minutes. Add some of the tomato water or a little white wine. Add the olives, optional capers and most of the parsley. Toss until warmed through. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile, cook the pasta. Then drain and toss it into the skillet with the sauce. Serve garnished with the remaining parsley. A little crumbled feta tastes great on this dish. Stay tuned for another tomato alternative next week.

I never developed much of a relationship with artichokes growing up in Detroit. For the past 35 years in California, the artichokes I've had were usually steamed, served with a dip, and were confusing to eat. How far into the artichoke do you go before you can eat the whole leaf and not just chew off the edible portion? At your local farmers' market, there are fresh artichokes of all sizes. Most are grown near Watsonville, CA which is near Gilroy, the Garlic Capital. This week's recipe utilizes another option for cooking the artichokes which infuses them with local flavor and makes them easy to eat. At first they are a little daunting to prepare, but it's easy once you get the hang of it.

Braised Artichokes with Garlic, Thyme & Parsley

Serves 4

2 large or 4 medium artichokes
 5 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
 12 garlic cloves, unpeeled
 Small handful fresh thyme sprigs
 Small handful fresh parsley sprigs
 1 cup water or mixture of water and dry white wine
 Salt and pepper

Cut 1" off the top of the leaves of the artichoke and trim about 1/4" off the bottom of the stem. (I use kitchen scissors to trim the leaves on the sides of large artichokes.) Peel the stems with a vegetable peeler. Cut the large artichokes into quarters lengthwise or the medium artichokes in half. Using a paring knife, cut out the fuzzy stuff on the top of the artichoke heart and the purple leaves just above the fuzz. Keep the artichokes submerged in water or rub them all over with lemon juice so they don't discolor.

In a deep skillet that can be covered, heat 4 Tbsp olive oil until shimmering. Add the artichokes and garlic cloves. Sauté briefly. Stir in the thyme and parsley. Season with salt and pepper. Carefully add 1/4 cup water or wine. Cover and braise for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the artichokes are browned in places and the stems and heart are tender.

Scoop all the vegetables onto a serving platter. Add 3/4 cup water or wine to the pan, deglazing all the brown bits, and reducing the liquid by about half. The liquid will be a dark brown. Pour it into a small bowl. Add two peeled garlic cloves into the

bowl. Add 1 Tbsp olive oil and a little more seasoning. Mash the garlic with a fork and whisk the sauce a little. Drizzle this over the soft and browned artichokes.

Serve with a crusty bread covered with more squeezed garlic. You can actually eat the soft artichoke pulp off of a number of leaves at once. I love this dish. It has transformed the way I think about artichokes.

3/2/06

The Farmers' Market Update used to go to 5,200 people, mostly in California. Two weeks ago, the Northern California Kaiser Permanente members' e-newsletter mentioned the Farmers' Market Update and Recipe of the Week and since then, about 2,000 additional members have signed up. I welcome all of you newcomers! Hundreds of you sent messages with your subscription requests. I read them all. Just like me, many of you are looking for easy, fun, tasty and healthy ways to eat. There were many requests for information about diets and recipes for specific needs, e.g. diabetes and salt restriction. Many of you wanted to know when the farmers' markets take place at your Kaiser Permanente facility. Others wanted ethnic recipes, vegetables-only recipes or recipes for 1 to 2 people to eliminate the need to eat leftovers. I loved the offers to send favorite recipes for me to taste test in my home kitchen and possibly publish in this newsletter in the future. The original purpose of this weekly newsletter was to celebrate the establishment of the farmers' market at the Oakland Medical Center in May, 2003 and to advertise what was fresh at the market any given week. It has grown to include news about the spread of farmers' markets throughout Kaiser Permanente nationally, the support of small family farms and sustainable agriculture, cooking tips and some nutrition information. As Kaiser Permanente Online has a wealth of resources to help keep you healthy, rather than trying to answer all of your questions in this humble newsletter, I will be providing links to the answers to some of your frequently asked questions (FAQs) and "not-so-FAQs".

In keeping with the theme of learning to cook new foods, I bought two bunches of broccoli rabe from Happy Boys Farm at Kaiser Permanente Oakland's Friday Fresh Farmers' Market. Perhaps someone will write me and explain why "broccoli" is in its name when it is more closely related to a turnip. Anyway, I made a stir fry with it and it was fantastic. These greens are full of vitamins and distinctive flavor. Cooked with garlic, optional anchovies, and crushed red chilis, it makes a great side dish for a milder flavored main course.

Broccoli Rabe with Garlic, Anchovies & Crushed Red Chilis

Serves 4 to 6

2 bunches broccoli rabe, about 1-1/2 lbs
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
6 cloves garlic, minced

4"-long squiggle of anchovy paste or 4 anchovies, minced
3/4 tsp crushed red chili flakes
Salt and pepper

Bring a pot of lightly-salted water to a boil. While the water is heating up, chop off the toughest and thickest stems from the broccoli rabe. Using a large knife, cut the bunches crosswise in 2 or 3 places. There will still be many medium and small size stems along with the leaves. Cook the greens in the boiling water for 4 minutes, then drain in a colander. When there are about 5 minutes left until dinner time and your other dishes are perfectly organized, heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan. Sauté the garlic, optional anchovies, and crushed red chilis for about one minute. Toss this with the drained broccoli rabe for a few minutes until heated through. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve while it's hot. Dark green vegetables are very nutritious and this one tastes really good too.

For farmers' markets to thrive at any location, it's important that it work well for the farmers financially. It takes a significant amount of family farm resources to prepare for and staff every farmers' market. On April 28th or close to that date, we plan to start a program making "ProducePaks" available to Kaiser Permanente employees in the 1800 Harrison building in downtown Oakland. Currently, the 2,200 employees in that building do not have an onsite market and rarely get over to the Oakland Medical Center to visit its market. Those employees will be able to subscribe online for a weekly delivery of seasonal, local, organic fruits and vegetables to their office site. Farmers from the Oakland Medical Center's market will provide the food. It should work to the benefit of everyone involved. The farmers will be able to sell more of their produce without having to staff another market. Kaiser Permanente employees will get fresh food delivered to their office building lobby for pick-up. People will be able to trade vegetables in the elevators. More people may be encouraged to eat 5 servings per day of fruits and vegetables.

This week's recipe started out as a version of "Stone Soup". Many of you may remember that children's story — the soup started out with a stone and water and everyone in the village contributed vegetables. Soon a delicious vegetable soup was ready for all. The soup of the week started out with chicken broth. I found spinach, leeks and fennel at the market. The soup turned out to be very green, low fat, fluffy and tasty.

Spinach, Leek & Fennel Soup

Serves 4 as an appetizer

One large fennel bulb, diced
 3 to 4 medium leeks, diced
 One large bunch of spinach, washed and drained
 or about 6 cups spinach leaves, loosely packed
 2 Tbsp olive oil
 4 cups chicken broth
 Salt and pepper
 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

Heat the olive oil in a soup pot. Sauté about 4 cups of diced fennel and leeks over low heat until softened, about 15 minutes. Add the chicken broth and bring to a

boil. Simmer another 10 minutes until the fennel is tender, and then add the spinach leaves. They will wilt down to a much smaller volume. Simmer a few more minutes. Purée the soup in batches using a blender or use an immersion blender right in the soup pot. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If you want the soup to be thicker and richer, add more spinach, then simmer and purée again. Stir in the parsley just before serving. This is a great way to get a little calcium and other vitamins into your diet.

A number of readers contacted me about their experience with artichokes after receiving the February 23rd recipe for braised artichokes with parsley and thyme. Like me, another person said her childhood in Michigan was "bereft of artichokes." She discovered them at her 26th birthday party in San Diego. Dr. Joe Young of Internal Medicine at Oakland, on the other hand, has a one-and-a-half year old son who already uses all available teeth to eat the pulp off one artichoke leaf at a time and says "chokes" after each one.

The equinox is only days away so a wider array of spring vegetables is becoming available at your local farmers' market. While busy at work last week, I asked a friend, who was going to our market, to shop for me and pick up what looked good. In addition to leeks and arugula, he bought me some beets. While I had eaten beets in the past with some trepidation, I had never willingly cooked them myself. I am now a believer. Try some and you will see what I mean.

Roasted Beets with Lemon & Garlic

- 4 bunches of beets (choose different colors for fun)
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled and thinly sliced
- Juice of one large lemon (again, I was privileged to obtain one from my friend's backyard Meyer lemon tree)
- Zest of one lemon
- 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil
- Pinch of salt and white pepper

Preheat the oven to 400°. Peel the beets using the leaves as a handle. Slice them no thicker than 1/4". Toss them with the remaining ingredients in a shallow baking dish large enough to avoid crowding the slices. Cover tightly with aluminum foil. Bake for about 45 minutes, shaking the dish occasionally, or until the beets are fork tender. They make a great side dish.

The series of personal firsts continues. Prior to making a delicious side dish with dark, green, fresh, organic collard greens from Happy Boy Farms this weekend, I had never cooked this vegetable. Recipes I had seen on the internet usually took way too long to cook to qualify for a "recipe of the week." However, I did see a simple suggestion that made all the difference and made it possible to sauté the vegetable quickly just like any other leafy greens.

If you can, find a February issue of *Consumer's Report* and read the article entitled "When it pays to buy organic." Increasingly, you will hear health professionals use the term "evidence based medicine." We like to know what really works and the best way to take care of people. This article helps with evidence based shopping. It is a good resource to learn about organic food and when it matters most to buy organic. They recommend a website that reports on testing for pesticide levels in almost 50 favorite fruits and vegetables (www.foodnews.org.) While we don't know exactly what health effects result from the cumulative ingestion of pesticides in fruits and vegetables, the facts at least give you the option of making an informed choice. Some of the information was a surprise to me. I had been holding out for organic asparagus only to learn that it had almost non-detectable pesticides, even when grown conventionally. On the other hand, non-organically grown strawberries had the second highest level of pesticides behind peaches, even if washed first. I can hardly wait for VB Farms to come back to our hospital's market for their fourth season with their organically grown strawberries.

A number of you have told me that you forward these emails to friends, co-workers, and family. If anyone is interested, it is easy to subscribe to this weekly email at the shortcut kp.org/farmersmarketrecipes.

Sautéed Collard Greens

2 bunches collard greens
2 Tbsp olive oil
1/2 onion, diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp ground cumin
Juice from 1/2 lemon
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Break off the toughest parts of the stems. Wash and dry the greens. This is the cool part. Stack the leaves four or five high and roll them up to the size of a fat carrot. Slice the rolled leaves crosswise no wider than 1/8". This makes it possible to cook the greens quickly. Heat the olive oil over low heat. "Sweat" the diced onions until they begin to soften but not brown. Add the garlic and sauté just until fragrant. Stir in the cumin. Turn the heat to medium-high and sauté the collard greens. They will wilt down considerably but retain their rich green color and sturdiness. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste.

I served these greens with blue-cheese turkey burgers. (I am trying to figure out what excuse I can use to share the recipe for these burgers in a farmers' market column. Maybe the scallions in the recipe?)

Our staff, patients, and neighbors welcomed Wendy Small of Small Bees in Los Gatos to our Friday Fresh Farmers' Market at the Oakland Medical Center on March 17th. The Small's bees buzz around freely in wonderful countryside and make delicious honey. The Smalls now have a presence at a number of Kaiser Permanente farmers' markets. In honor of their first day at our market, try this tasty glaze for salmon. Their honey paired with navel orange juice and zest from the Lone Oak Ranch is really good.

Honey Citrus Broiled Salmon

- 4 salmon filets, about 6 oz each
- 3 Tbsp low salt soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp freshly squeezed navel orange juice
- 1 Tbsp orange zest
- 1 1/2 Tbsp Small Bees honey
- 1 Tbsp grated fresh ginger
 - (remember the trick of using a teaspoon held close to the spoon end to scrape the peel off the ginger)
- 1/4 tsp crushed red chili flakes

Combine the marinade ingredients in a small bowl. Reserve 1 Tbsp of the marinade and put the rest into a resealable plastic bag. Add the salmon to the bag, turn to coat, and let stand for at least ten minutes. Preheat the broiler. Coat the broiler rack with cooking spray. Remove the salmon and set aside the marinade in the bag. Broil the salmon about 4 minutes then brush with marinade from the bag. Broil another 4 to 5 minutes until the salmon is just cooked through. Serve the salmon drizzled with the tablespoon of the initially reserved marinade.

For more than 60 years, very clear fundamental principles have directed Kaiser Permanente health care. Dr. Sidney Garfield created the concept of prepaid medical care for workers. Under this model, it made much more sense to help people stay healthy rather than to treat them when they were sick. Prevention is the best medicine. At Kaiser Permanente, we focus on prevention in all we do. Here's an important safety tip to use when cooking this week's recipe that can prevent kitchen accidents.

Have you ever puréed a hot liquid in your blender and had the lid blow off? It can happen because the steam released can build up pressure inside your blender if the lid is on tightly. Most lids have a removable central portion. When puréeing this week's hot soup, remove the central portion of the lid and cover it with a folded kitchen towel. This allows the steam to escape and the soup to stay in the blender instead of spewing all over you and the counter. The handheld immersion blenders work well for many soups, but a regular blender is need to make this asparagus soup silky smooth.

The April 30, 2004 recipe of the week was for Roasted Asparagus with Feta (see link below to all archived recipes from this newsletter.) A co-worker told me it was so good she ate it ten days in a row. This week's asparagus soup was good enough to eat more than once, but it only lasted two days. I found a recipe from a 15-year old food magazine on the internet and "skinnied" it down. The original uses butter and sour cream. Nonfat sour cream and olive oil work just fine and greatly reduce the amount of fat in the soup. This recipe makes enough for six servings, each with a maximum of 7 gms fat and only 1 gm saturated fat. Remember that saturated fat levels in a 2000 calorie diet can be up to 10% of calories or about 20 gms saturated fat per day.

Asparagus Leek Soup

Serves 6

- 2 cups well washed, chopped white and pale green part
of leeks (about 2 big ones)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 lbs asparagus (about 2 bunches) with "woody" ends removed
and cut into 1" pieces
- 4 cups chicken stock

2/3 cup nonfat sour cream
Juice of 1 to 2 lemons
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat the olive oil in a soup pot. Sauté the leeks and garlic over low heat until the leeks begin to soften. Add the chicken stock and asparagus. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 12 to 15 minutes or until the asparagus is very tender. Purée the soup in batches using the technique described above and transfer to another saucepan. Whisk in the sour cream. Salt and pepper to taste. Mix in the lemon juice a squeeze at a time until the soup has a rich but bright flavor. (I squeeze the lemon juice into my cupped fingers and spread the fingers ever so slightly to let the juice drip into the soup while retaining the seeds in my hand.) Garnish with something green and finely chopped or even some crumbled feta or sliced avocado.

4/13/06

If you work at the Kaiser Permanente Oakland Medical Center, I hope you'll attend our Friday Fresh Farmers' Market's third birthday party on May 12. Jeanne O'Reilly, our much-loved concierge, and colleagues are hosting the party. Early intelligence says Jeanne (pronounced "genie") may be in a zucchini costume. By June, Kaiser Permanente markets will also have opened in Martinez, Walnut Creek, Roseville and Sacramento, bringing the number to almost thirty. The farmers appreciate your business. Without you, the markets wouldn't thrive.

The weather has been winter-like, with 20-foot swells from Point Pinos and 60 miles out, which may limit the availability of crab. To make matters worse, local tomatoes with great flavor won't be available for months. Being a pragmatic cook, I offer this excellent and simple recipe for cioppino that tastes great, even without crab (some say that's heresy) and that uses canned organic tomatoes. Salt content is significantly more if you use bottled clam juice rather than fish stock. The soup's saturated fat content is minimal per serving. This cioppino is excellent with any firm white fish of your choice, clams and mussels. Check seafoodwatch.org for the most up-to-date information on healthy fisheries and seafood choices. In response to the recent salmon recipe I sent out, I was reminded to encourage the purchase of wild caught salmon rather than farmed.

Cioppino

Serves 4

- 2 cooked crabs, cleaned and cracked if you can find them
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 medium leeks, white and pale green parts chopped or one onion, diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/2 tsp dried basil
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1/4 tsp dried crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 1 can (28-oz) diced tomatoes with juice
- 2 cups fish stock or bottled clam juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

All these seafood amounts can be varied to suit you
and the other diners:

1/2 lb firm white fish cut into large chunks — more if no crab

1 dozen mussels

1 dozen clams

Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Sauté the leeks or onions until softened. Add the garlic and stir for about two minutes. Add 4 Tbsp parsley, the basil, oregano, pepper flakes and bay leaf. Stir one minute.

Add the wine and bring to a boil. Stir occasionally until almost all the wine (and alcohol) evaporates. Add the tomatoes with juice and fish stock or clam juice. Simmer for 15 minutes to blend the flavors. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Add the mussels and cook covered for about 2 minutes. Add the clams and cook covered for another 2 minutes. Add the fish and/or crab and simmer until the fish is done and the shellfish opens. Discard any that do not open.

Sprinkle with the remaining parsley. Sourdough bread is almost mandatory.

I've been known to go to extremes (for me) to find ideas for recipes. I actually watched the Martha Stewart cooking show, but only because my very favorite female vocalist of all time was the guest cook in Martha's kitchen. I didn't end up using Aretha Franklin's recipe, but she has her own wonderful way of telling you it's quick and easy to cook, "This is for women [and men] who have to work, and who are busy, and who just really don't have time, but just want to get down."

Probably the biggest barrier to cooking at home is the perceived or real lack of time. Home cooked food is tastier, cheaper and healthier than most prepared foods. A family of four could probably save a couple thousand dollars a year by cooking at home a few more nights per week rather than buying prepared foods or eating out.

Maybe you can try this. Roast enough chicken breasts for three meals. Freeze enough for two meals and eat one. Make enough dressing for three or four salads. Buy mixed lettuce greens at your farmers' market. At four dollars per lb it's cheaper and better than what you can find at a grocery store and a pound of lettuce leaves is enough for many salads.

One last note: we are working on a "printer friendly" button so those of you who get the HTML version of the recipe won't have to waste colored ink. Meanwhile, you can go to the link of the past recipes of the week that are regularly updated. These are all in black and white.

Roast Chicken, Mixed Greens & Fennel Salad

Serves 4

2 chicken breasts, bone in, skin on (about 3/4 lb each)

Mixed salad greens for four

1 small fennel bulb, halved, cored, then thinly sliced

Dressing

1 shallot, finely diced

2 Tbsp sherry vinegar

2 Tbsp red wine vinegar

2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar

2 tsp Dijon mustard

1 tsp salt

1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

- 1 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 6 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 6 Tbsp canola oil (I've been using half canola oil lately in dressings to make them a little lighter)

Preheat oven to 425°. Rinse the chicken breasts and pat dry. Rub them with a little olive oil. Salt and pepper them. Roast them for about 35 minutes or until the internal temperature is at least 165°. While they are cooking, mix the first 8 ingredients of the dressing in a jar. Let stand for about five minutes, and then add the olive and canola oils. Shake until blended. Taste by dipping a leaf of lettuce.

Using only just enough of the dressing to make however much lettuce you used glisten, toss the dressing with the lettuce and sliced fennel. Distribute it on serving plates. Remove the bones and skin from the chicken breasts. Cut the chicken breasts into thick slices and arrange them artistically on the greens. Serve and enjoy knowing that maybe you froze some chicken for another busy night, you already have the dressing made and that mixed lettuce greens are always waiting for you at farmers' market near you.

4/27/06

VB Organics' "strawberry fields forever" in Watsonville are currently mired in mud. However, Vanessa Bogenholm assures me that her berries will be here in time to help celebrate our market's third birthday on May 12th.

The persistent spring rains have made it very difficult for those intimately connected with California's agricultural community. For most of us, there are several ° of separation between us and the farmers who grow our food. It rains a lot here, but food from distant places still shows up in the grocery stores. Shopping at farmers' markets closes that gap because you would miss the farmers who were unable to harvest their crops.

Readers provided excellent feedback about recently published recipes. Try roasting the asparagus you use in the Asparagus and Leek Soup (4/6/06 recipe) at 450° for 10 minutes after tossing with a little olive oil. It brings a whole new dimension to the flavors. Add more herbs to taste as you simmer the Cioppino (4/13/06 recipe.) Feel free to experiment with the amount of any ingredient I use in the published recipes.

By popular demand — well, at least five people wrote me — this week's recipe features blue cheese turkey burgers. I use half ground turkey breast, which is a little leaner than ground dark meat. If you can find it, I suggest Point Reyes blue cheese. Their cows live in a beautiful place. The saltiness of the cheese allows you to add just pepper for seasoning. Pick up scallions and lettuces from your local farmers' market and enjoy these burgers the first time you fire up the grill this spring.

Blue Cheese Turkey Burgers

1 lb ground turkey, mixture of breast and dark meat
2 oz blue cheese, crumbled
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
1 bunch scallions (about 1 cup), chopped
1/4 cup dried breadcrumbs
1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
Whole grain buns or pita, slit and toasted
Lettuce leaves

Mix the first six ingredients in a bowl. Make into four patties. Grill, broil or pan fry. Serve on buns or pita with lettuce and whatever else you want. These are really good.

The hospital based farmers' markets at more than 25 Kaiser Permanente facilities have shown that a market can be successful in a setting where a few thousand people gather on a daily basis. We have learned that the markets have to be the right size for the number of people on site and that the market is best located next to the normal foot traffic pathways. It's hard to walk by a fresh peach in August or a bunch of asparagus in March without stopping to shop. What would happen if we tried this at a non-hospital worksite?

Kaiser Permanente has partnered with the Fremont Farmers' Market Association to bring a farmers' market to New United Motors in Fremont, California. On the third birthday of the first hospital based market, May 12th, the first auto factory farmers' market will spring to life. NUMMI makes Toyota Tacoma pickup trucks and there are 4,300 employees on the day and swing shift, mostly a diverse group of men. I don't know what percentage of the workers already shop at other farmers' markets or like to cook, but we hope that having the market next to the main entrance to their worksite will entice them. They, too, will be able to meet the people who grow their food.

Every season yields fresh vegetables that can be dipped, raw or cooked. This week's recipe is big on flavor and can be reasonably low in fat at X grams of fat per Tbsp. I first made this to use with roasted asparagus. My family members and I ended up using it on almost everything in the kitchen until it was gone.

Toasted Sesame Seed Dip

- 1/4 cup sesame seeds, toasted
- 5 Tbsp low or nonfat mayonnaise
(there are some canola oil based mayos out there
that are substantially lower in fat content than regular mayo)
- 2 tsp unseasoned rice vinegar
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- Pinch of cayenne pepper

Toast the sesame seeds in a small skillet over medium heat until golden brown, stirring often. It's important to pay attention to this step as the seeds can go from golden to black very quickly. As soon as they are done, empty them out of the hot skillet unto a plate.

While I am reticent to recommend gadgets, I have found the mini-food processor I got as a gift to be very useful for this recipe, and for grinding cumin seeds and making small amounts of breadcrumbs, etc. If you have a mini-processor, grind the seeds, add the rest of the ingredients, and blend until smooth. You could also use a mortar and pestle or the back of a spoon to crush the seeds in a small bowl. Another method to try might be smashing the seeds in a small plastic bag with the cooled skillet or a meat mallet. It doesn't matter how fine the seeds are ground. I put seeds in last instead of first once and it still tasted great.

Supporting and promoting farmers' markets over the last three years has been a gift. I have met and talked to the people who grow some of the food my family eats. There have been opportunities to meet others from around the country who support small and medium size farms in a myriad of creative ways. Soon I hope to see the expansion of workplace markets to other organizations, starting here in the Bay Area. I believe eating sustainably farmed fruits and vegetables grown by family farmers is good for all of us now and particularly important for our children and their children.

Researching, cooking and sharing the recipes of the week have also been a gift. I never would have tried as many tasty and healthy dishes had there not been the Tuesday noon deadline to submit the recipe. I have "cooked ahead" and have some great new recipes to share but for our market's third birthday tomorrow, I offer my top 12 favorites, all of which can be found at <http://www.permanente.net/kaiser/pages/f23597.html>.

I admit it's difficult re-reading the recipes that use fresh tomatoes when edible local tomatoes are still weeks away. It will be worth the wait.

Top Twelve Favorite Recipes

In no particular order of preference:

Marinated Salmon with Watermelon-Sesame Salsa	Vol 1, pg 5, Sep 5, 2003
Grilled Portobello Mushrooms with Vegetables	Vol 1, pg 11, Oct 24, 2003
Gingerbread with a Meyer Lemon Glaze	Vol 1, pg 18, Dec 19, 2003
Spinach and Persimmon Salad	Vol 1, pg 17, Dec 12, 2003
Green Salad with Oil and Vinegar.....	Vol 2, pg14, Apr 2, 2004
Prawns, Leeks, and Feta Cheese Pizza.....	Vol 2, pg 10, Mar 5, 2004
Roasted Asparagus with Feta.....	Vol 2, pg 19, Apr 30, 2004
Farmers' Market Greek Salad	Vol 3, pg 11, Aug 27, 2004
Spice-Rubbed Chicken with Mustard-Chive Sauce.....	Vol 3, pg 15, Sep 24, 2004
Basil and Mint Pesto	Vol 3, pg 13, Sep 10, 2004
Toasted Pita and Tomato Salad	Vol 5, pg 10, Aug 19, 2005
Farro with Tuna, Arugula, and Cherry Tomatoes.....	Vol 5, pg 11, Aug 26, 2005

And to fill out the baker's dozen:

Blue Cheese Turkey Burgers.....	Vol 6, pg 28, Apr 27, 2006
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5/18/06

Here's the invitation Kaiser Permanente employees at 1800 Harrison got by email on Monday, May 8. This program has the potential to introduce even more people to seasonal, local, sustainably farmed foods while helping support the farmers who come to our Kaiser Permanente markets.

ProducePaks Are Here!

Pick up a box of **fresh, seasonal, locally grown organic** fruits and vegetables every Friday, starting May 19th, in the lobby of 1800 Harrison. This pilot **ProducePak** program was created to give you **easy access** to tasty, healthy food and to support the farmers who make Kaiser Permanente markets possible. You can read about the program and **sign up today** at www.pcfma.com/producepak/

The farmers thank you for your support.

In the markets now, and probably in the ProducePaks soon, are the green, spring treat, sugar snap peas. They are very easy to prepare, cook and mix with sesame seeds in this delicious side dish.

Sugar Snap Peas with Toasted Sesame Seeds

Enough sugar snap peas to serve your family, "de-strung"
1 to 2 tsp sesame seeds, toasted in a skillet until golden brown
1 to 2 tsp toasted sesame oil
Salt to taste

"De-string" by pulling the remaining stem away from the pea. Once you figure out whether the "string" comes off the convex or the concave side of the pea, it goes faster with the rest of the peas. There's often that little thin brown remnant of a flower at the end of the pea. You can pull that off too but it doesn't matter.

Cook the peas in boiling water for no more than three minutes. Drain and plunge them into a big bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. You really don't want them to get mushy. When cool, drain them and mix with the sesame seeds and sesame oil in a bowl. Season with salt to taste and enjoy.

Dr. Kerry Litman sharing great news from the Fontana Kaiser Permanente facility writes "Just wanted to give you a progress report from Fontana: Our FM is going strong, beginning its second year with a move from every 2 weeks to every week, which should make it even more successful. We are also tying it in with other healthy activities, such as a booth by Prev Med every week, a walk around the medical center that passes the market, gift certificates to the market as prizes in recipe contests, etc. We will start sending recipes with available produce to our docs and staff."

As some of our markets get established, others are being created. On June 2nd the Roseville Kaiser Permanente Medical center will open with six vendors. I am told that the farmers in that area really appreciate the opportunity to come to our medical center. June 16th will bring the opening of the Sacramento Kaiser Permanente market.

I have heard from a number of people that they think my recipes are way too fancy and that they never cook at home. If you are in the category of "never cook at home," at least it's possible to make healthy choices, even at many "fast" food restaurants. Paying attention to basics like whole grains, no trans fat, limited overall fat and reasonable portion size can make a difference. Maybe even the "never cook" group of diners will grill something to put on a bun at least once this year. This week's recipe is just the ticket as an accompaniment for a grilled meal. I got a simple tip from a great cook in the family that has changed my life. Using a toothpick in red onions prevents them from falling apart on the grill.

Grilled Red Onions

Red onions, peeled and sliced 1/2" thick
Salt and pepper
Balsamic vinegar

It's harder to describe than to slice the onion. Maybe it's "crosswise" or like the latitude lines on a globe, but it's not lengthwise from stem to root. (Hint: you want to end up with thick rounds of onion that look like those redwood tree cross-sections in Muir Woods.) Insert a toothpick all the way to the center, parallel to the cut surfaces of each onion slice. Drizzle them with a little balsamic vinegar either before or after grilling. Season with salt and pepper. Grill until you see those grill marks and the onions are crisp tender. This may be the simplest recipe of the week so far. These are great on any version of "burger," be it chicken, turkey or salmon etc.

May brings new beginnings at markets: a farmers' market is adding new vendors at the New United Motors auto factory in Fremont; ProducePaks, containing a colorful array of fruits and vegetables, were delivered to the first 54 customers at 1800 Harrison; and the Martinez Kaiser Permanente market opened in sunny weather. As these direct farmer-to-eater models expand, it's good for the growers and us eaters.

May also brings English peas and spring garlic. While familiar with peas, I had never used spring garlic, which is simply the youthful precursor of the heads of garlic. Spring garlic is much milder and hasn't yet differentiated into distinct segments. Along with a few other ingredients, the peas and spring garlic make a great soup.

English Pea & Spring Garlic Soup

- 3 lbs spring garlic, white and light green parts thinly sliced
- 3 lbs English peas, shelled (about 3 cups of peas)
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 2 shallots, diced
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- Salt and pepper
- Fresh mint, chopped finely for garnish

Heat the olive oil and "sweat" the spring garlic in a large soup pot for a few minutes over low heat. Add the carrots and shallots and "sweat" them as well until they begin to soften. I've learned that cooking vegetables like this over low heat allows them to release their juices and to meld flavors without browning. Add the peas and about 3 cups of stock. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for about 15 minutes or until the peas are tender.

Purée the soup in batches in your blender. Remember the safety tip of keeping at least part of the lid open or taking the lid off and covering the blender with a kitchen towel before starting it in order to let the steam escape and prevent soup explosions. Return the soup to the pot (or a different pot if you purée it in batches). Add some or all of the remaining stock to achieve desired soup consistency. Season the soup with salt and pepper. Ladle into bowls and garnish, if desired, with fresh mint.

6/8/06

Stone fruits are fruits with a single seed. Cherries are technically stone fruits, but the name is usually associated with peaches, nectarines, apricots, pluots (75% plum and 25% apricot) and apriums (no surprise here - 75% apricot and 25% plum.) Locally grown organic white peaches play the leading role in this week's recipe.

Many of you may have seen the article in Consumer's Report earlier this spring rating the pesticide levels of 46 commonly eaten fruits and vegetables. The foodnews.org website has the complete listing based on a USDA study. Conventionally grown peaches and strawberries are at the top of the list for the amounts and numbers of detectable pesticides. The information may influence where you buy various foods. The organic peaches available direct from the farmer at your local market or in your delivered food box are a pristine treat.

I used crostini rather than bruschetta in this recipe for two reasons. First, unlike bruschetta, there's agreement on how it's pronounced. Second, I found out that crostini are made with slices of bread 1/2" or thinner and bruschetta is usually 1/2" to 3/4" thick. Using a thinner slice of a whole grain baguette rather than a thick slice of a white flour baguette is better for your health long-term.

Buying white peaches from a friendly farmer was easy. He told me which ones to eat the day of purchase and which ones to buy to share with friends two days later. Buying the blue cheese was intimidating. When asked at the cheese store how I liked my blue cheese, I didn't know what to say. A colleague at work suggested, "mellow with an aggressive aftertaste that lingers on your palate." I just got Point Reyes blue cheese again.

Crostini with Blue Cheese & White Peaches

1 whole grain baguette (I used rye bread), sliced thinly on the diagonal
Blue cheese of choice
White peaches

Grill or toast the crostini in a 350° oven until slightly crispy. Spread them with a thin layer of blue cheese. Thinly slice the white peaches and arrange them artfully on the crostini. These are great for an appetizer, a dessert, or both.

6/15/06

Linda Coker works in the payroll and staffing office at Sacramento Kaiser Permanente. She is a great example of what's possible as an employee of Kaiser Permanente. With the strong support of her Physician-in-Chief and other colleagues, she created the first North Valley farmers' market at the Roseville facility in partnership with the Foothills Farmers' Market Association. By all reports, the market's opening day last Friday was a big success. Employees and patients got their pick of pistachios, olive oils, fruits, vegetables and herbs in a beautiful courtyard setting. The next step, as she makes her vision into reality, is to open the Sacramento Medical Center farmers' market on June 16th. She's got other plans too. Soon, you will be hearing more about what else she's created.

At your local farmers' market, you can find the ingredients to make a spectacular fruit salad a reality. At the Oakland Medical Center market, stone fruit and almonds from the Lone Oak Ranch, salad greens from Happy Boy Farm and honey from Small Bees Farm all contribute to this taste treat.

Stone Fruit Salad

Serves 4

A combination of 4 to 6 yellow peaches, white peaches, nectarines, plums, pluots or apriums

Salad greens (baby gem lettuces, arugula or mixed greens)

1/4 cup almonds, slivered

1/4 cup feta cheese, crumbled

Dressing

1 Tbsp champagne vinegar (it's worth the trouble to find this)

1 Tbsp honey

4 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Make a vertical incision all the way around the peaches and nectarines. Often, if they are ripe, the two halves come apart with a slight twist. Remove the pit. Depending on your personality type and that of your guests, cut all the fruit into irregular shapes and sizes or perfectly symmetrical cubes. Whisk the dressing ingredients together in a bowl. Toss the dressing with the fruit, almonds and feta and serve on a bed of greens. This salad received rave reviews in my home and I'm sure it will in yours.

I am happy to share with you part of a recent article from the Sacramento Business Journal.

Kaiser adds healthy dose of fresh-food commerce

by Kathy Robertson
Staff Writer

Anthony Cantelmi, an internal medicine doctor at Kaiser's Roseville Medical Center, picked up onions, garlic, cherries and tomatoes during his lunch break.

Linda White, a volunteer in the outpatient surgery center, bought a bag of cherries while she waited for a prescription. And Bonnie Woolf, a cancer patient who comes to the medical center for chemotherapy on Fridays, looked over the produce and dubbed the notion of an on-site farmers' market "cool."

Kaiser Permanente launched its first Fresh Friday Market in the region June 2 in the courtyard of its growing Roseville Medical Center. Another market starts June 16 at the Sacramento Medical Center on Morse Avenue. Both are part of the company's popular employee-wellness program.

The idea is to make it easy for Kaiser employees to pick up a weekly supply of fresh fruit and vegetables at work, but the markets also are open to patients and the community.

Kaiser hosts more than 30 farmers' markets at medical centers in California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii and parts of the Northwest. The first market opened at Kaiser's Oakland Medical Center in May 2003.

Michael Pollan (author of "The Botany of Desire" and "The Omnivore's Dilemma") quotes a local California farmer who supplied all the food for one of the meals described in Pollan's latest book. The farmer pointed out that we would never be as careless about choosing the person who repairs our car as we are about choosing the people who grow our food. We entrust our food to a very opaque and complex system. Farmers' markets are part of an alternative to this, and if you buy fruits and vegetables in season, they are often less costly.

This week's soup uses many fresh ingredients from the market. Be sure to buy carrots with the green tops still attached. Bagged carrots may have been in the bags for months. Unlike some carrot soups, this version has very bold flavors and can be a main course for dinner. While chopping all the ingredients makes it seem like "it takes a village to" make a soup, the village will like it.

Carrot Soup with Cumin, Cilantro & Red Onion Salsa

Serves 6 for appetizer
or 4 for main course

Soup:

3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion or 4 medium leeks, thinly sliced
2 bunches carrots (about 2 lbs), chopped
1 medium potato, peeled and chopped
2 Tbsp cumin seed, toasted in a skillet and ground
1/2 tsp ground ginger
1-1/2 quarts chicken stock, plus additional if needed
1/2 bunch cilantro, coarsely chopped
1 lime, juiced
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Salsa:

1/2 small red onion, peeled and minced
1 tsp seeded and minced jalapeño
1 Tbsp cilantro, minced
1/2 lime, juiced
Kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper

Heat oil in a large soup pot over low heat. Add onion or leeks, season with a little salt and pepper. Cover and sweat until soft, about 10 minutes. Add carrots, potato, ground cumin, ginger, salt and pepper. Cover the pot and stew for another 10 minutes. By now, your kitchen will smell wonderful. Add chicken stock, bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat and simmer until the carrots are tender. Turn off the heat, add cilantro, cover and let sit for 5 minutes.

Purée in blender in batches, adding more stock if necessary to reach desired soup consistency. As you do this in batches, you need to transfer the puréed soup to another pot, otherwise you'll keep adding all the nicely blenderized soup back with the chunks. Adjust the seasoning and stir in lime juice just before serving.

Combine the red onion, jalapeño, cilantro, lime juice, salt and pepper for the salsa. Garnish the top of each bowl of soup with a little bit, artfully distributed. This is really good.

6/29/06

In partnership with Marin Organics, Kaiser Permanente recently sponsored a one-day farmers' market and health fair at the Fireman's Fund office complex in Novato. On a spectacular California day, nine farmers served many appreciative shoppers, some of whom may have been coaxed to the market by having their BMI, body fat and cholesterol analyzed earlier that day. Shopping at farmers' markets can be good for all of these health parameters.

This week's recipe is a great example of cooking something healthy using market ingredients. After months of waiting, I scored the season's first organically grown farmers' market tomatoes from a Santa Rosa farmer and just had to use them in something. Early-season tomatoes aren't yet the luscious, juicy, drip-out-of-your-mouth tomatoes you can look forward to eating sliced and served simply with basil and mozzarella, but they sure taste good in this dish. The halibut can be baked or grilled, however, I like pan roasting it because you get crunchy brown parts.

Pan Roasted Halibut with Brown Rice, Spinach & Tomatoes

Serves 4

4 portions halibut, about 6 oz each (other mild, white fish would also work)
4 cups baby spinach, tightly packed
2 to 3 tomatoes, seeded and coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 cup brown rice, cooked
3 Tbsp Meyer lemon juice
8 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Cook the brown rice per instructions (usually it's 1-1/2 cup water per 1 cup rice simmered covered for 45 minutes.)

Preheat oven to 425°. Whisk lemon juice into 5 Tbsp of the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. Coat the halibut with a little of the dressing. About 15 minutes before the rice is done, in a sauté pan with an ovenproof handle, heat 2 Tbsp olive oil over medium high heat. Cook the halibut for about 4 minutes on the first side

and 2 minutes on the other side. Finish cooking it for about 5 minutes in the oven.
SAFETY TIP: Be sure to cover the handle with oven mitts as a reminder to others.

While the halibut is resting, use a saucepan to sauté the garlic briefly in the remaining olive oil. Stir in the cooked rice. Stir in the spinach leaves and tomatoes. Cover and cook briefly until the spinach wilts. Divide the rice and vegetables onto serving plates. Top with the halibut. Drizzle each serving with the remaining dressing. This is really good.