

From Dr. Preston Maring's Farmers' Market Update & Recipe of the Week Newsletters Volume 7

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7/6/06

Literally hundreds of members have e-mailed me comments when signing up for the Farmers' Market Update and Recipe of the Week.

I've been a diabetic for 40 years and look for good recipes to try.

Especially squash.

I am convinced that food is our best pharmacy.

I am new to this area and truly would like to begin cooking with fresh ingredients ... well, at least a few meals a week

What are the best foods to eat to lower your cholesterol and triglycerides.

No beef, chicken, lamb or mutton.

We all have different dietary needs and wishes. Working with colleagues at the Oakland Medical Center and the Regional Offices, I eventually hope to use this weekly newsletter as a portal to a wide variety of online resources that may help answer some of the questions readers have. Meanwhile, many of the recipes I have distributed over the past three years, along with others, can be found at kp.org/recipes. They are sorted by course and alphabetized. There is also a nutritional analysis for each of the recipes. This link is but one example of many useful links available to you on the Kaiser Permanente website.

Avocados often get a bad rap from low-fat advocates. While about 90% of avocados' calories are from fat, it is almost all mono-unsaturated good fat. They also have many vitamins and minerals. Guacamole, eaten in moderation, contains much less saturated fat than mayo, butter, cheese or sour cream. Whole-grain pita chips make a good vehicle for this delicious summer appetizer. I made the basic recipe for the non-spicy aficionados and a spicy version for the rest. Ask your friends and family who wants what and apportion the guacamole accordingly. While avocados aren't grown locally, some of the ingredients for this recipe can come from your local farmers' market. There are countless versions. This is one of those "dip your finger and taste when no one is looking" kind of recipes that almost demands experimentation until it is right.

Guacamole Two Ways

4 ripe avocados, halved, scooped and mashed, leaving some chunks
1/2 medium tomato, seeded and diced
1/4 medium red onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced, then mashed with kosher salt
1 handful cilantro, chopped
Juice of 1/2 lime
Salt and pepper

Mix in a bowl and season to taste. Add more of anything until you like. I have been told that leaving one of the pits in the bowl prevents the whole bowl from discoloring. I don't have a clue why that would work.

If you like spice, try adding:

Fresh jalapeno, seeded and diced
1/2 tsp ground cumin per avocado used

Whole Wheat Pita Chips

Preheat oven to 350°. Cut pita into wedges. Separate the tops and bottoms. (I learned that the hollow inside of the pita is created by baking the whole-wheat yeast dough at 700°. It puffs up creating the pocket inside and then collapses when it cools.) Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray. Arrange the wedges like a jigsaw puzzle. Spray the top with the non-fat cooking spray. Sprinkle with a little kosher salt. Bake until crispy.

The long dark winter and wet spring was spent sometimes longing for locally grown tomatoes. The wait is over. The variety of fruits and vegetables available at your local farmers' market is expanding almost logarithmically week by week. Before you know it, there will be 10 or 15 different kinds of tomatoes. Start your summer with this quick and versatile cherry tomato dish. It's good with anything for breakfast, lunch or dinner.

Recently I learned the term used by real cooks "mise en place." It means, basically, getting all your ingredients, pots, pans and utensils ready before you actually start to cook saving yourself the misery of realizing halfway through your recipe that you don't have saffron threads. I have loosely translated this French term to mean "mess at my place" when I cook. For this week's recipe, encourage any available children to de-stem the tomatoes, tear the basil leaves and pick the thyme leaves off the stems. Reserve the mincing of the garlic and shallot with the very sharp 10½" chef's knife for an adult. This recipe can easily be doubled.

Sautéed Cherry Tomatoes with Garlic & Herbs

- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, de-stemmed
- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 shallot or 4 scallions, minced
- 1 handful basil leaves, torn into small pieces
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme leaves
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat the olive oil in a non-stick skillet over medium high heat. Sauté the garlic and shallot or scallions briefly. Add the tomatoes and herbs. Cook, stirring frequently for 3 to 5 minutes, until the tomatoes just begin to soften. Season with salt and pepper and serve with anything. So simple yet so elegant.

Farmers' markets can be a great focal point for education about healthy eating. Our Santa Teresa Kaiser Permanente facility in San Jose has expanded their "Cookin' the Market" program in conjunction with the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association. The mobile cooking demonstration van will be reaching people of all ages at dozens of events this year throughout the South Bay. The more people know about the joys of eating and cooking from farmers' markets, the better.

Sometimes the simplest of recipes make the tastiest dishes. This week's offering uses green and yellow baby zucchini that are finding their way onto farmers' markets display tables next to the cherry tomatoes. Combined with the unlikely herb, fresh mint, this dish will please family and friends.

Green & Yellow Zucchini with Cherry Tomatoes & Mint

2 each small green and yellow zucchini, julienned
1/2 pint cherry tomatoes, stemmed and halved
1 Tbsp olive oil
2 Tbsp chopped fresh mint
Salt and pepper to taste

Cut the zucchini in half crosswise. Making horizontal and vertical cuts with your chef's knife, julienne the zucchini into little strips about 1/8" wide. How perfectly you do this depends on your personality type. Using a non-stick skillet over medium high heat, warm the olive oil. Sauté the zucchini for about 2 minutes. Add the cherry tomatoes and sauté another two minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in the fresh mint and serve hot. You will be surprised by the combination of flavors.

This is the first installment of a two-part story about Northern California Kaiser Permanente's inpatient food system.

Seven thousand inpatient meals are served per day at 19 hospitals. A portion of 5,000 of those meals are fresh fruits and vegetables. The meals have been delivered daily, almost without fail, for the last 31 years by Food Service Partners (FSP), our food preparation and distribution commissary in South San Francisco. The single day they missed sourcing for just four facilities was on the day of the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989. Food Service Partners orders what our Kaiser Permanente dietitians and nutritionists request based on nutritional guidelines; dietary special needs; and physician, nurse and member feedback. FSP gets whatever fresh fruits and vegetables are ordered from Fresh Point produce distributors, also in South San Francisco. Because of Kaiser Permanente's historical ordering patterns, Fresh Point has to obtain 100 of the 250 tons of fruits and vegetables used annually from places outside of California, e.g. Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Hawaii and other states in the U.S. These products travel many miles to us by air, land and sea. Many of the farms from which we get our food are larger than 10,000 acres.

Stay tuned for part 2 of this story.

A colleague reminded me about the past recipe I shared for this salad, saying that her children like to eat it right out of the bowl. I decided to try it again since fresh corn has found its way into our markets. Freshly picked corn is incredibly sweet when cooked properly. I have a confession to make. I suggested cooking the corn too long in the recipe of the week in June 2004. This week's recipe is for the same salad, but updated for a gentler approach to the corn and less fat in the dressing. I served this recently on a bed of greens with warm, sliced, roasted chicken breast.

Corn, Cherry Tomato & Cilantro Salad

4 ears fresh corn, husked
 2 pints cherry tomatoes, stemmed and halved
 1/2 red onion, diced
 1/3 cup chopped cilantro
 Juice of 1/2 lemon
 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar

2 Tbsp olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Salad greens (optional)

Bring a big pot of salted water to a boil. Add the corn and immediately turn off the heat. Cover for 3 to 5 minutes until the corn is crunchy tender. Drain and cool. Here's the tip of the week: unlike two years ago when I made this, resulting in kernels all over the kitchen, I suggest cutting the kernels off the cob in a large, deep bowl. Toss the corn with the remaining ingredients. Spoon over a bed of salad greens and top with sliced roasted chicken breast if you wish. This is a really good one-dish meal.

Part 2 of the inpatient food system story will wait for a week to make room for this late-breaking news about Kaiser Permanente's 31st market in a sixth state.

From Celeste James, a program leader in the East:

Hi everyone:

We had a great start for our mini-farmers' market at Kaiser/Camp Springs [Maryland] yesterday. The location - under the awning at the KP entrance - was perfect to capture the high traffic in and out of the building. AND, the awning provided great shade for the farmers. We had two farm stands - one with mostly eggplant, cucumbers, grape tomatoes, potatoes and zucchini and the other with peaches, nectarines, blackberries, tomatoes, zucchini, jams and berry syrups.

People were very receptive to the farm stands; they were impressed that Kaiser is presenting this and excited to know that it'll be available well into the fall (mid-November). I heard from our partner at FRESHFARM Markets that one of the farmers took in \$200 in the first hour (break-even is about \$100/hour, she said). There were actually lines at one point!

Congratulations, everyone, for a successful debut of a KP Farmers Market in the Mid-Atlantic States!!

We have the same selection of produce at our California markets as our Maryland counterpart this time of year. Cherry tomatoes jumped into my market basket again. Paired with a lean fish, olives, parsley, garlic and crushed red chilis, you get a spicy, tasty and healthy main course.

Sautéed Fish with Olives, Cherry Tomatoes & Chilis

4 servings rock fish or talapia (1-1/2 to 2 lbs)
 3 Tbsp olive oil
 Handful fresh parsley, chopped
 1/2 tsp crushed red chilis
 2 pints cherry tomatoes, stemmed and halved (Sweet 100s are amazing)
 1/2 cup kalamata olives, halved and pitted
 6 cloves garlic, minced

Heat the olive oil over medium high heat and sauté the fish on each side for about three minutes or until just done all the way through. You may have to do this in two

batches. Keep warm in a 250° oven. Briefly sauté the parsley and chilis. Add the garlic, tomatoes and olives. Sauté until the tomatoes begin to release some of their juice. Season with salt and pepper and serve over the fish. This goes really well with an arugula salad with a Meyer lemon vinaigrette (1 Tbsp Meyer lemon juice to 2 Tbsp olive oil, one minced garlic clove and a little salt and pepper).

This is Part 2 of the story about our inpatient food system. If you haven't read Part 1, please see the update and recipe from 7/27.

Almost all the fresh fruits and vegetables used in our patients' meals come through Fresh Point produce distributors on their way to Food Service Partners commissary where they are prepared for serving in our hospitals. Last year we began to explore how we could get some of our produce from small, local, family farms rather than sourcing so much from abroad. We felt that feeding our patients food that is fresh, seasonal, local and sustainably farmed would provide them tasty and healthy food that could aid in their recovery. Added benefits could include a reduction in the total *food miles** our food travels, with the resulting reduction in fossil fuel utilization, fewer pesticides used and economic benefits for small farms. It is very helpful for the farmers to know that they have a definite market for their crops.

In partnership with the Community Alliance for Family Farmers, Kaiser Permanente will enter into a six-month pilot sourcing a few fruits and vegetables from farmers in Fresno and the Salinas Valley who are farming with sustainable techniques on farms averaging less than 100 acres. Beginning mid-August, the tomatoes, strawberries and other fruits on the patients' trays will be coming from this diverse group of farmers who match the diversity of our staff and membership.

Critically important for the success and expansion of this program into the future are the Food and Nutrition Service managers from each of the 19 facilities. The managers write the menus. They have the authority to forego ordering asparagus in September when it is not in season in California. I had the opportunity to speak with them recently. Like the bumper sticker says: they can act locally and think globally as they influence Kaiser Permanente's food purchasing power. They are the stewards of this change.

Someday this can expand to include more of the 60 fruits and vegetables we use on the inpatient meal trays. There are additional opportunities and I will report more on this another time.

**Food miles: The distance food travels from where it is grown or raised to where it is ultimately purchased or consumed; from "plough to plate"*

I learned about this soup from a superb cook in the family. Part of the fun of making this soup was using different chilis for different batches. Try Anaheims, Pasillas, Poblanos or Chilacas. They all have different degrees of heat. Save this recipe for a weekend as it takes some time.

Fresh Corn Soup with Poblano Chilis

3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, minced
1 medium carrot, minced
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 tsp dried or 2 Tbsp fresh thyme
2 tsp dried basil or 2 Tbsp fresh basil, chopped
1/2 tsp crushed red chilis
5 cups corn kernels, approximately 10 ears
(cut these off the cob in a large bowl)
1 qt chicken stock
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 chili of choice, roasted, skinned and minced
2 Tbsp finely chopped cilantro
1 oz queso fresco or feta cheese
1 to 2 Tbsp milk, maybe more

Skewer the chili. Blacken it over the stovetop burner. Put it in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap to steam a little. When cool, rub off the skin with a paper towel or peel it off with your fingers. Mince the chili.

In a mini-processor, purée the cheese and add milk until a cream-like consistency is achieved.

Heat the oil in a large pot over low heat. Add the onion, season with a little salt, cover and "sweat" until soft, about 5 minutes. ("Sweating" the veggies means cooking them so they get soft, but not brown and crunchy. The latter wouldn't be good in a yellow soup.) Add the carrots, cover and sweat for another 5 minutes. Add garlic, herbs and crushed red chilis, then cover and sweat for 5 minutes. Add corn, season with salt, cover and sweat 5 minutes. Add chicken stock, bring to a boil, cover and simmer 5 minutes.

Purée in blender in batches for 3 minutes remembering the safety tip of covering the lid with a towel to let the steam escape and prevent hot soup from spraying all over the kitchen. Return soup to the pot and season with salt and pepper.

Ladle soup into bowls, stir in chilis and cilantro. Drizzle with the cheese "cream" and serve. This is absolutely worth the effort.

As a result of a recent Kaiser Permanente online newsletter, there were literally hundreds of new subscribers to this weekly farmers' market update and recipe. The timing was good as August 6 through 12 had been proclaimed National Farmers' Market Week by the Secretary of Agriculture for the United States. This week and every week is a good time to buy some of your food directly from the farmers who grew it. Check out the new link, kp.org/farmersmarket, which gives the day, time and location of all the Kaiser Permanente markets. You can also use any search engine to find other farmers' markets in your communities by typing in your city and "farmers' markets."

During this time of year, the ingredients for this week's salad can be found at markets around the country. It is fresh, simple, light and tasty.

Cucumber Salad with Lemon Vinaigrette

The amounts of any of the ingredients are variable depending on taste and availability.

2 to 3 Japanese, Armenian, lemon or other cucumbers,
thinly sliced (I don't peel them)

A handful of radishes, thinly sliced

Part of a red onion, thinly sliced

1 to 2 stalks of celery, thinly sliced

1/2 handful fresh mint leaves, sliced

1 oz feta cheese, crumbled

For the vinaigrette:

2 Tbsp lemon juice

(use Meyer lemons if you can find them - it's great if you have a friend with a Meyer lemon tree)

4 to 6 Tbsp olive olive oil (you have to adjust the amount of oil and taste the dressing to see how "lemony" you like it)

Salt and freshly ground pepper

Toss all the vegetables with the mint. Dress it. Sprinkle the salad with the feta cheese, serve and enjoy.

On Tuesday August 8, some of the chicken salads on the dinner trays created for inpatients in Kaiser Permanente's 19 hospitals were graced with sustainably farmed (no pesticides) cherry tomatoes from Chuao Vang's 9 acre, leased farm outside of Fresno. According to Anya Fernald of the Community Alliance for Family Farmers, who has partnered with Kaiser Permanente to connect our food system with small family farmers, Mr. Vang is very happy to have Kaiser Permanente as a customer. He and other small farmers had been squeezed out of the market that services large, institutional purchasers. Organic strawberries for dessert came from Aurelia Martinez of the Santa Rosa Farm in Salinas.

Those of you who read Carol Ness' article in the San Francisco Chronicle (Sunday, August 6) learned that the number of small family farmers has been decreasing while there is a substantial increase in the number of bigger farms. Keeping our small family farms, particularly those farming without pesticides, is ultimately good for all of us. If you get a chance this week, shop at a farmers' market. We will continue to use food from the family farmers for five to six thousand meals per day in our Northern California hospitals.

I got so excited about this week's recipe that I used it under pan-roasted rockfish, under crab cakes and as a salad dressing. After I threatened to use it on chicken breasts and under scrambled Egg Beaters, I found that it had been surreptitiously labeled "All-Purpose" by a family member. Find big, fat and heavy heirloom tomatoes at your market.

"All-Purpose" Heirloom Tomato Vinaigrette

- 2 to 3 heirloom tomatoes of different colors
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 6 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Cut the tomatoes in half. Scoop out most of the seeds with your finger. Let them rest cut-side down on paper towel for about 5 minutes. Using the largest holes on a box grater in a big bowl, grate the cut-side of the tomatoes and discard the skin. This part is quite satisfying as the skin just sort of flattens out against the grater. You should have 2/3 to 1 cup of purée. Add the minced garlic, balsamic vinegar and olive oil. Whisk until blended. Season to taste. The sweetness of the tomatoes is a great balance for the acidity of the vinegar. Find new ways to use it.

There's a profusion of fruits and vegetables at our summer farmers' markets. It's a great time to explore and try new foods. Last week, I picked up Japanese eggplants and wasn't really sure what to do with them. Then an expert gardener/friend at work gave me medium-sized green zucchini. Combined with other farmers' market bounty and some ideas from cookbooks, this week's recipe was born. The result was a tasty, simple and healthy low fat dish with substance. All amounts are approximate.

Summer Vegetable Stew

1/2 onion, sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
3 cups chopped tomatoes (I used cherry tomatoes) with the juice on the cutting board
4 red potatoes, cut into 1/2" chunks
2 Japanese eggplants, cut into 1/2" chunks
2 medium zucchini, cut into 1/2" chunks ("medium" is highly subjective --- any zucchini looks medium next to the giant ones that can lurk under the big leaves in your garden)
1/4 tsp crushed red chili flakes
2 Tbsp olive oil
Handful of fresh basil, parsley, thyme, marjoram and oregano, minced ---- any combination along with the basil would work.

Heat the olive oil in a large stew/soup pot and cook the onions, garlic and chilies, covered, on low heat until soft and fragrant. Add the tomatoes, season a little and cook, covered, for about 5 minutes or until the tomatoes release some of their juice. Add the potatoes and 1/4 cup water. Season some more, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the eggplant, cover, and simmer another 10 minutes. Add the zucchini and herbs, cover, and simmer until the vegetables are tender. Adjust the seasoning. This is good the first night and as leftovers.

9/7/06

There are more new subscribers to this column each week. Many of the newcomers send me personal questions and comments. The most common questions involve requests for special dietary advice. Having diabetes, high blood pressure, or being overweight are the most frequent conditions described. Many want to know when a farmers' market is coming to their facility. Often, the facility already has a market, but the member may not know about it.

I am an older doctor who likes to cook and am not an expert nutritionist or chef. I have personally cooked each of the recipes I share with you to see how difficult or easy they are to prepare and how they taste. Nutritionally these recipes fit into the usual dietary guidelines I would use when counseling patients in the office. The recipes aren't intended to be part of any specific diet e.g. "no fat", "no carb", "vegan", "no wheat", etc. They are simply moderate in everything (usually -- the gingerbread recipe from a couple years ago had a lemon glaze with lots of confectioner's sugar). Nutritionally balanced recipes eaten in an appropriate portion size can be part of almost any diet.

Those who need very specific diets and help for their particular condition can get help elsewhere in KP online and at their facility's health education library. A directory of Kaiser Permanente farmer's markets can found at <http://www.kp.org/farmersmarket>.

At the bottom of each recipe of the week is a link to over three years worth of my recipes. It's an old school .PDF file that isn't fancy and searchable. But, if you scroll through the seven volumes, I guarantee that there is something really good for everyone. If you have friends that may want to sign up, you can refer them to <http://www.kp.org/farmersmarketrecipes>.

This week's salad could probably be made with a leafy salad vegetable other than radicchio, if you can't find it. I was amazed at the fresh flavor of this dish and the toasted seeds added a nice touch.

Carrot and Radicchio Salad with Toasted Sunflower Seeds

- 4-5 carrots, grated
- 3-4 big radishes, grated
- 1/2 head radicchio, thinly sliced

1 bunch green onions, white and light green parts chopped
2-3 Tbsp raw unsalted sunflower seeds, toasted in a skillet
2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 tsp sugar
1 Tbsp olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Toss the veggies in a large salad bowl. Whisk the dressing ingredients together, season, and toss with the veggies (Note the reverse ratio of vinegar to oil --- most vinaigrettes have anywhere from twice to four times more oil than vinegar, thus the light dressing). Mix in the toasted seeds which add some of the fat back you avoided by using less olive oil. Chill until serving.

9/14/06

Many of you know of or have read Michael Pollan's books (Botany of Desire, The Omnivore's Dilemma). He writes about lettuce in a chapter on industrial organic. One pound of pre-washed lettuce in a bag provides about 80 calories of food energy. To grow, wash, package, chill and ship the lettuce across the country requires 4600 calories of fossil fuel energy --- about 57 times the caloric value of the food. On average, the foods we eat take 7 to 10 calories of fossil fuel energy for every calorie we consume. Fortunately, we have options that can make some difference. We can choose to go to a local farmers' market to buy our lettuces and, in a small way, save a little energy.

I haven't thought about lettuce and other salad greens very much before. Before moving to California many years ago, I never had things hanging out of the sides of my sandwiches and salads only consisted of iceberg lettuce. Then came mung bean sprouts and many new kinds of leafy greens to sample. More and more, salad ingredients got complicated. This week's spectacularly tasty and easy to make offering uses an old standby, arugula, but also frisee. I didn't expect the almost vehement opposition to frisee from a family member and other guests. To quote: "Incredibly irritating" and "There's no there there" and "an aggressive lettuce". Personally, I think it adds character to the fresh figs (Most figs grown in the United States are grown in California --- we are lucky to get them fresh), tomatoes, and other ingredients.

Tomato, Fig, and Goat Cheese Salad

Serves 8

2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
4 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
4-6 heirloom tomatoes of different color, cut into wedges
6-8 figs, cut into quarters
3 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
12 Kalamata olives, sliced
Small handful fresh basil, torn or cut into strips
4 cups frisee, torn into pieces
2 cups arugula, torn into pieces
Salt and freshly ground pepper

Whisk the vinegar and olive oil together in a large salad bowl. Toss the dressing gently with the rest of the ingredients. I'm sure this salad would also be good with normal, more boring greens.

As the distribution list for these recipes grows to almost 10,000 people each week, to people around the country, I get questions, comments, and special requests with many of the subscriptions. A very common theme is a request for a special diet of one kind or another; vegan, ovo-lacto, low carb, high carb, low fat, high fat, low salt, various ethnic cuisines, for diabetes, kidney disease, thyroid disease, weight loss, etc. The recipes I share, all of which I have personally tried at home, only meet the criteria of being tasty and made using at least some farmers' market ingredients. They will contain carbs, fat, and other nutrients, but usually in moderation. You can modify any recipe to suit your particular needs. Many of these recipes eventually make it to kp.org/recipes where they are accompanied by a nutritional analysis.

There are also many comments extolling the virtues of farmers' markets, questions as to where markets are located in various home towns, and queries wondering when markets are going to start at local Kaiser Permanente facilities.

Our markets are likely to only be at the larger facilities where significant numbers of people work, members and patients visit, and surrounding neighborhoods have access. A market only thrives if it has enough customers. A challenge for any market, particularly smaller markets, is to make sure it is worthwhile for the farmers. Still, once people taste locally grown, seasonal food, they usually become farmers' market converts.

In response to a number of requests for Asian recipes, I tried this spicy chicken soup and, boy, was it good. It's quick and easy if you get everything organized first.

Asian Chicken Soup

Serves 4

- 1 1/2 quarts chicken broth (low sodium is available)
- 8 slices of fresh ginger, each about 1/8" thick (remember the trick of scraping the peel off the ginger with the bowl of a spoon)
- 3 Tbsp low sodium soy sauce (regular soy sauce has about 1000mg sodium per Tbsp and low sodium about half that)
- 1 Tbsp brown sugar
- Rounded 1/4 tsp crushed red chili flakes
- Juice of one lime

12 oz boneless, skinless chicken breast, sliced thinly
3 Tbsp corn starch
1 cup mushrooms sliced (I used white mushrooms)
About one cup snow peas, trimmed
One red pepper, seeded, and julienned or chopped in bite size pieces
2 tsp lime zest
1/4 cup chopped cilantro

Add the broth, sugar, ginger, chili flakes, lime juice, and soy sauce to a soup pot. Boil for five minutes. Toss the chicken with the corn starch and shake off the excess. Add the chicken and mushrooms. Simmer for 15 minutes. Stir in the snow peas, red pepper, lime zest, and cilantro. Let sit for a couple minutes then serve. One could add rice noodles, etc., but I kept it simple for the first try.

9/28/2006

Amazing fall colors have arrived in the farmers' markets. Catching my attention recently were the many different kinds, colors, and shapes of peppers and chilies. Knowing basically nothing about cooking Mexican food, it felt almost adventuresome to contemplate what to buy not having any idea what I would eventually cook with what I bought. That's part of the fun when you shop at a farmers' market. I came home with red and green pasilla chilies, also known as poblanos, chilacas (long, skinny, and deep green), and jalapeños. Charring them so they could be skinned and seeded takes a little time, but it was ultimately very satisfying to successfully skin the chilies. What was brand new to me is part of daily life for millions of people.

Combined with more familiar ingredients, this four chili brown rice is spectacular. White rice can also be used but there's a little extra fiber and more vitamins in the brown rice. I added a can of black beans, more oregano, and cumin to the leftovers the next day and had it with a scrambled version of huevos rancheros using egg substitute.

Four Chili Brown Rice

Serves 8-10

- 3 Tbsp canola oil
- 4-6 chilies, combination of pasilla and chilaca, charred, skinned, and diced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ large onion, about 1 cup chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 jalapeño, about two plus Tbsp seeded and minced ("Seeding" is easy if you just cut the sides off leaving the core and the seeds all attached. I used to split the jalapeño and then flick the seeds out)
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp chili powder
- 2 cups brown rice
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 big tomato or the equivalent amount of cherry tomatoes, diced
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 bunch scallions, light green and white parts chopped

There are several options to prepare the peppers. I tried broiling them whole the first time, but you had to turn them occasionally to blacken them on all sides. Their irregular contours made that a challenge. The next time, I cut them open, seeded them, and laid them flat on a broiler pan skin side up and they blackened evenly in a few minutes. I put them into a bowl straight from the oven and covered them with plastic wrap for about 10 minutes. It was then reasonably easy to peel the skin off. I didn't worry about getting every little bit of skin off the chilies.

In a large skillet heat the oil, then sauté the chilies and next six ingredients covered until the onions soften, about 10 minutes. Stir in the rice and cook, stirring for about 2 minutes. Add the broth, tomatoes, and salt. Bring to a boil, then cover and simmer about 35 minutes or until the rice is tender. (Brown rice takes longer than white rice) Stir in the scallions. Remove from heat, cover, and let stand about 10 minutes. Cook a protein source, make a salad, and enjoy dinner.

The recent outbreak of E.Coli contamination of spinach grown in three counties in California's Salinas Valley has focused the nation's attention on its food supply as have earlier occurrences of a similar problem. As of this writing, the FDA has cleared the consumption of spinach grown anywhere but the three specific counties. Despite these assurances, it may be years before many people eat spinach; fresh, frozen, cooked or otherwise, depriving them of its benefits. Some may eschew fresh leafy greens altogether. This will have untold impact on them and also on those who have been growing our food for years.

I have no personal medical expertise on this topic, but I view it as a matter of risk vs. benefit. I believe we are better off making fresh fruits and vegetables part of our daily diet. Clearly, most of the food purchased in America will still come from grocery stores. They are now being admonished to figure out how to tell consumers the "provenance" of the products, provenance being the term for the location at which the food is grown. If you have the option in your community, it may be best to buy your fresh food directly from the farmers who grow it. At your local farmers' market, the "provenance" is clearer. The name of the farm is on the market stall and you can ask where the farm is located and learn about the farmer on the web. The farmers are likely to eat their own food as part of their own families' sustenance. That's one method of quality control. And you still get the benefits of foods that are not only good for you but taste good.

With all that being said, I decided it was too soon to do a salad recipe. Buy some green beans, the ripest "sauce" tomatoes, like Romas, you can find, and some parsley. Combined with a few other ingredients, they make an incredibly good side dish low in fat and high in the satisfaction that you made something really good yourself.

Green Beans and Tomatoes, Etc.

Serves 4-6

- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of the skinniest green beans you can find, ends trimmed
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 yellow onion, thinly sliced (a large shallot works well also)
- 6 Roma tomatoes, diced (I don't worry about the seeds)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped parsley

4 Tbsp red wine vinegar
1½ tsp dried oregano
½ tsp salt
½ tsp freshly ground pepper

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté the green beans for about 2 minutes or until they are just turning bright green. Add the garlic, onion, and cook for about 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, parsley, red wine vinegar, oregano, salt and pepper (I had these all together in a bowl as part of the preparation and just tossed them in). Cooking on medium-low heat, juices are released from the tomatoes which serve to help steam the green beans. In 5 minutes or less the sauce will reduce and thicken a little. Adjust seasonings and serve with a protein source of some type depending on your proclivities. The humble green bean shines here.

10/12/2006

A multi-talented 92 year old Berkeley patient of mine, (and a very good cook), asked that I do something soft and smooth for a recipe of the week. She's not real big on some of the fancier recipes that require roasting and skinning things. To practice for Thanksgiving and in recognition of the fact we each eat 135 pounds of potatoes per year, this week's recipe is an attempt to perfect mashed potatoes. The recipe calls for buttermilk which my patient doesn't like. I suggested she substitute non-fat sour cream.

Sustainably farmed russets have a rich deep color and taste good. I have referred before to foodnews.org which provides a ranking of 43 commonly eaten fruits and vegetables based on the number and levels of pesticides found during testing by the FDA over a period of time. Potatoes are #12 on the list. Check it out before Thanksgiving and talk to the farmers at your local farmers market about how they grow the potatoes.

This recipe for mashed potatoes uses a ricer or a simple potato masher. For almost all of my 61 years, mashed potatoes have involved my parents' electric mixer or my KitchenAid on high. Only now have I learned that the electric mixers make the potatoes too gluey. Try to make them this way instead.

Work in Progress Mashed Potatoes

4-6 big russets, about 3 pounds, peeled
and cut into 1 1/2" to 2" chunks
1 1/2 tsp Kosher salt
1 cup low fat buttermilk at room temperature
6 Tbsp Earth Balance or other lower fat butter
substitute
Freshly ground pepper
1 bunch or handful fresh chives, minced

In a large saucepan, add cold water an inch deeper than needed to cover the potatoes. Add the salt. Bring to a boil, then simmer partially covered until the potatoes are tender, 20 minutes or less. Starting with the cold water helps the potatoes cook evenly. Drain them in a colander then return them to the pan. I tried to just drain the pan with the potatoes in it and too much water remained. Shake the pan over low heat to dry out the potatoes a bit. This is the crucial part if you want fluffy potatoes. Add the Earth Balance a tablespoon at a time, mashing with a

masher or wooden spoon. Add the buttermilk a little at a time until the desired consistency is reached. Season with salt and pepper to taste and stir in the chives. Envision friends and family enjoying them around your table in a few weeks.

10/19/2006

This month in Michigan, the deciduous trees are flaming with an array of fall colors that get more vibrant as you travel north through the state. Honey Crisp apples abound. Local farmers are being featured in the cafeteria at the Munson Medical Center in Traverse City. I had the privilege to spend some time with an inspired and committed dietician/chef of theirs, who is creating ways to share the bounty of the local, small family farmers with the staff and visitors at her hospital.

Several times a month, Laura McCain invites a farmer to talk to people at the front of the cafeteria line about the ingredients he or she contributed to the special of the day. Bags of the farmer's fruits or vegetables are also available for purchase. Featured the day I visited were Asian pears composed in a salad with gorgonzola and walnuts. Laura really understands the vital connection between good food, good health, and the role of a major health care facility in the overall health of a community, whether patients or not.

Further south, the busy Ann Arbor Farmers' Market has more organic vendors than in the past. I was lucky to find one selling baking pumpkins. The only time I had ever taken a knife to a pumpkin was to carve a smile with poor dentition, scary eyes, and a triangular nose. This time I wanted to make a pumpkin and apple soup based on a recipe from Laura McCain's hospital cafeteria. A four and a half pound pumpkin is somewhere between a softball and a soccer ball in diameter. It provides about 5 cups of roasted pumpkin used in this week's recipe. Roasting the pumpkin one day in advance made life easier on "Thanksgiving practice day".

Pumpkin and Apple Soup

Serves a whole bunch of people

- 3 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 4 1/2 pound pumpkin, roasted to provide about 5 cups of pumpkin
"meat"(see below)
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 apple, diced
- 3 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 3/4 tsp freshly ground pepper
- 1 1/2 tsp ground cumin

2 tsp ground coriander
5 cups chicken broth
Fresh parsley, chopped for garnish

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Cut the pumpkin in half. Scoop out the seeds and stringy stuff. Using your fingers, coat the cut sides with a little olive oil. Roast the pumpkins in a baking pan about 70 minutes. They will release about 1/2 cup of clear liquid, probably water, by the time they are done. Let them cool, then scrape the pumpkin off the skin. Never having done this before, I found this step very satisfying as the meat scraped easily off the skins. Refrigerate it overnight or use it.

Dice the onion, peel and chop the carrots, peel, seed, and dice the apple, dice the tomatoes, then heat 2 Tbsp olive oil in a large soup pot. Sauté the onion, carrots, apple, pumpkin for about 10 minutes adding the cumin, coriander, salt, and pepper. Add the tomatoes at the end. Add the chicken broth. Bring to a boil and simmer for 15 minutes. Puree using a hand held blender or in a countertop blender in batches. Remember to leave the top off of a countertop blender when processing hot liquids as the steam can make the top explode. Instead, cover your blender with a kitchen towel.

This soup is thick and really good.

10/26/06

Fall is showing up at the Lone Oak Ranch table at the Friday Farmers' Market here at the Oakland Kaiser Permanente Medical Center. There were some of the first persimmons of the season and a recipe for Persimmon Salsa, which I modified a little and share this week. The flavors are fresh, bright, and go well with chicken, fish or pork.

I also considered sharing a fantastic spicy three grain soup recipe (with minced jalapeño and ancho chili powder, pearl barley, short grain brown rice, and bulgur), including veggies (garlic, onion, carrot, zucchini, parsnips and tomatoes), beans (black beans), herbs (cilantro), spices (ground allspice), chicken stock, and seeds (pan toasted pumpkin seeds). However, it seemed like there were too many ingredients and a few too many steps for a viable recipe of the week. Thus, this internet marketing research: the weekly Farmers' Market Update and Recipe now go to over 10,000 people weekly from around the country. Statistics show that between 40% and 50% open the e-mail within three days of it being sent. There is no way to know how many of you actually read the e-mails, much less cook any of the recipes, particularly those that take more time. If you want the spicy three grain soup recipe, reply to this e-mail and I will send it to you. If I only hear from 8 or 10 people, I'll reply by personal e-mail. If there is more interest, I will share it as a regular recipe of the week.

Persimmon Salsa

3-4 ripe Fuyu persimmons, peeled, and diced
2 Tbsp minced yellow onion, cipollini onion, or shallot
Juice of one lime
1 Tbsp minced fresh basil
1 Tbsp minced jalapeno
1 Tbsp minced fresh mint
1 tsp minced fresh ginger
Salt and pepper

Mix in a bowl. Season. Serve at room temperature over a grilled, broiled, baked, poached, or pan-roasted protein source.

It's possible to eat dessert and still Thrive. You just don't eat a lot of dessert every day. Dessert recipes are shared only occasionally in my weekly e-mails, however I just received a wonderful cookbook for a gift. While grazing through the book, I learned for the first time that a "betty" is similar to a "crisp" which is not to be confused with a "grunt" or a "slump". As I had a fresh loaf of 3-Grain Bread from Vital Vittles of Berkeley, I decided to make up my own version of a "betty" which uses bread crumbs instead of flour and oats. Fresh from my local farmers' market were Pippin apples and Warren pears. I also had some dried sweet cherries from Lone Oak Ranch. While it's probably not a first, there may have only been a few "betties" made with organic whole grain bread.

When reading the ingredients of any recipe not accompanied by a nutritional analysis, it's important to have some idea how many servings will emanate from the finished product. In this case, there are 12 generous servings which results in total fat per serving of 6 gms (9 gms per Tbsp of Smart Balance X 8 Tbsp/12 servings) and about 1.7gms saturated fat (2.5 gms per Tbsp X 8 Tbsp/12 servings). Many crisps have almonds or walnuts in the topping which can add flavor but also fat and even more calories. The version below is so good it doesn't need to be accompanied by ice cream or topped with whipped cream.

Apple, Pear, and Dried Sweet Cherry Brown Betty

Serves 12

The Bottom, Middle, and Topping

6 slices multi-whole grain bread, dried a little and processed into crumbs,
about 4 cups
8 Tbsp Smart Balance butter substitute
1/3 cup crystallized ginger, coarsely minced

The Filling

2 1/2 pounds cooking apples and pears (ask the farmer), peeled, cored, and
sliced about 1/4" thick.
1 cup dried sweet cherries (optional)
Juice of one lemon
3/4 cup brown sugar
3/4 tsp cinnamon

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Melt the Smart Balance in a large skillet. Add the bread crumbs and stir until well mixed. Stir in the ginger.

Mix all the filling ingredients in a bowl. Cover the bottom of a 13" by 9" baking dish with 1/3 of the bread crumbs. Add a layer of fruit using 1/2 the apple and pear mixture. Top with another 1/3 of the crumbs. Add another layer of fruit. Top with remaining crumbs. Pour 1 cup hot water over the crumbs. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 25 minutes. Uncover and continue baking for another 20 minutes or until browned and juicy. If you have the willpower to wait, let it cool a little before serving.

11/9/2006

While we here in California can still enjoy the remaining vestiges of summer at our farmers' markets, it's different at Motown's (aka the Motor City) first hospital-based farmers' market. Diana Ross, Marvin Gaye, and Aretha Franklin were all born within a square mile of this market. How could good things not happen there?

Kimberly Harrison and Kathleen Moloney of St. John's Health System sent a note recently about their new market. They made this happen in only a few months from the time of their first conversation with us at Kaiser Permanente.

"I wanted to report to you that this week marks the fifth and final week of our first farmers' market at one of our hospitals, Riverview on E. Jefferson. It has been really well received. (In week four, however, the farmers did not come because of snow storms. I bet you don't miss that about Michigan.)"

The pictures showed some tables stocked with bounty from rural Michigan in the big city. We can help this to happen in many big cities.

Further west, pick up some tomatoes, basil, and brown rice for this very simple side dish. It uses the champagne vinegar you made the effort to find for earlier recipes I have shared.

Warm Brown Rice, Tomatoes and Basil

Serves 4

1 cup brown rice
2 1/4 cup water
1 pint cherry tomatoes or 2 heirlooms, quartered or diced
Small handful fresh basil, slivered
4 Tbsp champagne vinegar
2 tsp sugar
1 Tbsp olive oil
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Bring the water to a boil in a medium saucepan with a tight-fitting lid. Stir in the rice, reduce heat, and simmer for 45 minutes. Remove from heat and leave covered for 5-10 minutes (the rice you buy may have different instructions)

— you know: short grain, long grain, etc.). Whisk the sugar, olive oil, salt, and pepper into the champagne vinegar. Stir the tomatoes, basil, and the vinaigrette into the warm brown rice. Enjoy the complex carbohydrates, but most of all, enjoy some of the last local tomatoes and basil until next Spring.

It's likely that this weekly offering will be coming to you in a new format within a few months. Little did I know when I started doing this update to celebrate our Oakland Kaiser Permanente farmers' market in 2003 that I would be entering the blogosphere a few years later. From what I am told, one of the useful features of a blog is that it will be possible to search for "spring garlic" or "poblanos" to find recipes that feature what you find at your local farmers' markets. The current recipe archive is old school. What won't change is the fact that I will still try out various recipes at home and share those that taste good.

Parsley as the main ingredient was new to me. Flat leaf Italian parsley is more for garnish and used in cooking, but this curly parsley salad is distinctive and worth trying. The texture of curly parsley may annoy the same people that eschew frisée. I also tried this week's salad with flat leaf, but the parsley flavor was too green and strong. With sun-dried tomatoes that are oil-packed, cheese and olive oil, there are about 5 gms of saturated fat per serving. Remember that 20 gms per day saturated fat provides about the recommended 10% of total calories from saturated fat.

Parsley Salad

Serves 6

The Salad:

2 bunches curly parsley leaves, washed, spun dry or dried in a towel
1 oz parmesan, grated (not the "shake it from a can" type)
3/4 cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, julienned (cut into thin strips)
1 clove garlic, minced

The Dressing:

1/3 cup basil leaves, chopped finely
8 Tsp extra virgin olive oil
3 Tbsp rice vinegar
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 shallot, minced
1 clove garlic, minced

Toss the salad ingredients in a bowl. Dissolve the salt in the vinegar. Whisk in the olive oil. Mix in the basil, shallot, and garlic. Add pepper to taste. You may only need part of the dressing to moisten the salad. Use the leftover dressing another day.

I consider myself very lucky. Not only can I graze weekly at the Friday Fresh Farmers' Market at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Oakland, but I can also walk to a Thursday evening market in North Berkeley, a Saturday market in downtown Berkeley, BART to a Saturday market at the Ferry Building in San Francisco, or visit the small Kensington market or the Jack London Square market on Sundays. With all these options, there's always the distinct possibility of coming home with some kind of fruit or vegetable about which I know essentially nothing.

This week I will try to demystify bok choy. Bok choy, aka Chinese cabbage, is available as baby bok choy or adult bok choy. The lower half is bulbous and white with segments like the broad bottoms of celery stalks. The leaves are a rich green and fan out a bit. Really fresh bok choy simply looks fresh. I brought three heads home not knowing what would happen next.

I decided that a simple stir-fry would be a good way to learn how to use this vegetable. The first recipe I read said to cut the leaves into strips and save the "stems" for another time. Not being able to easily envision "another time", another book said to stir-fry the stems until they were green. But the stems were white. I thought maybe they meant the leaves which were already green. At this point, totally confused, I consulted the internet which said to use all of the bok choy — just that the leaves cooked in 2 minutes and the stems in 5 minutes. Now it was starting to make sense. It finally made sense when I stir-fried the white stems and they, magically, turned light green. Try this very simple and tasty stir fry as a side dish with fish.

Stir-fried Bok Choy

- 3 heads bok choy, washed, stems and leaves cut into strips
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp minced garlic
- 1 Tbsp minced fresh ginger
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp toasted sesame oil
- Pepper to taste

In a wok or a skillet, heat the oil until shimmering. Stir-fry the stems for about three minutes. They will start to turn green (making sense out of the various

recipes). Add the leaves, garlic, and ginger. Stir-fry another 2 minutes. Toss with soy sauce and sesame oil. Season to taste. Remove with a slotted spoon. Serve immediately.

Happy Thanksgiving.

I learned that only 56% of people report having frequent family meals together. The children in the families that eat together frequently are half as likely to use alcohol or drugs and do better in school. Of all the factors considered about what to eat, convenience was most important to half of Americans surveyed.

This week's classic recipe can be considered convenient if you make enough chicken one night to have lots of leftovers, find red seedless grapes, walnuts, and mixed greens at your local farmers' market, and pick up a few other things from the grocery store, which you were going to anyway. The flavors will please all ages. I reduced the amount of mayo used and used the lower fat version to make this edible in moderate amounts for most diets.

Chicken Salad with Grapes and Walnuts

Serves 6

- 1 3/4 pound cooked chicken, cut into chunks (leftovers are good or buy a roasted chicken)
- 2 cups red seedless grapes, halved
- 3/4 cup walnuts, toasted and coarsely chopped
- 1 shallot, finely diced
- 1 celery stalk, cut into 1/4" crosswise slices
- 1/2 cup reduced or non-fat mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp tarragon vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh tarragon
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- Mixed salad greens

Toast the walnuts at 350 degrees for 5-6 minutes. Cool and chop. Toss the chicken, grapes, walnuts, celery, and shallots in a large bowl. In another bowl, mix the mayonnaise, vinegar, and tarragon. Toss this with the chicken mixture. Season to taste. Serve mounded artfully over a bed of mixed salad greens. It takes about 30 minutes to prepare.

When your friends find out you like to cook using fresh ingredients from your local farmers' market, you may be really lucky and have one of them subscribe to a food magazine for you as a gift. A colleague of mine at the hospital gave me the great gift of a two year subscription to Fine Cooking magazine. The magazine is loaded with great tips and encourages experimentation. Cooking Light and Cook's Illustrated are two others I like also. Of course, the internet is an endless source of recipes and ideas. Epicurious.com has all the recipes from Gourmet and Bon Appetit. FoodTV.com has searchable recipes as does Chef2chef.com. Of course, you can always just Google an ingredient and find many ideas.

This week's recipe is my own version of a salad I had at a restaurant. The fresh dates and honey mustard vinaigrette make it stand out from other similar salads I have tried. Any time walnuts or pecans are used in a salad, I am tempted to "candy" them. The honey in the dressing and the natural sweetness of the dates allows the nuts to be used simply toasted.

Mixed Green Salad with Dates, Pecans, and Blue Cheese

Mixed salad greens for four, washed and dried
 6 Medjool dates, pitted and quartered lengthwise
 1/3 cup pecans, toasted at 350 degrees for 5-6 minutes
 2 oz Point Reyes blue cheese (it's the blue cheese I know best living close to Point Reyes)
 2 Tbsp sherry vinegar
 1 tsp honey
 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
 1 small garlic clove, minced
 2 Tbsp light olive oil
 Salt and pepper — start with 1/8 tsp salt

Divide the dates and pecans unto four salad plates. Top with mixed salad greens. Add the sherry vinegar, honey, mustard, garlic, and olive oil to a small jar and shake vigorously or just whisk everything together. Season the dressing. Drizzle a little over each salad. Top with a crumbled blue cheese of your choice. (I will note here that I am starting to experiment with different olive oils — some for cooking and

some for dressings. There actually may be a discernible difference. I will keep you informed.) I love this salad. It is light and exceptionally flavorful.

The Veteran's Administration hospital system has the most medical care facilities in the country. In St. Paul, Minnesota there is a large tertiary care VA hospital that provides the entire array of health care services. I learned recently that the hospital also hosted a farmers' market during Minnesota's growing season last summer, which they modeled after Kaiser Permanente's markets. Hopefully, the markets can eventually spread throughout the VA system as they have throughout Kaiser Permanente. As you shop at the Kaiser Permanente markets, helping them Thrive, they have a better chance of continuing to be the model for other health care systems.

There comes a point in cooking where one feels a certain thrill of discovery. I finally understood the basic steps in making soup. There are probably billions of people world wide who already know this, but I am just getting it. You can experiment a bit and not be tied to a recipe. You sauté chopped veggies, add seasonings and spices, add stock, beans, lentils, etc, simmer until done, then add things at the end. For instance, try this curried lentil soup. It's easy and excellent on a cold night. The only other lentil soup I shared in the Recipes of the Week was lentil soup with chard and lemon (and meatballs) in Volume 6 page 6 of the recipe archives just a click away. When these weekly updates switch to a blog format with a searchable database, you can just type in "lentils." You may find brown or green lentils. The internet said green lentils take a little longer to cook and hold their shape better so I added them while the stock was coming to a boil and added the brown lentils just before turning the soup down to a simmer.

Curried Lentil Soup

Serves 4

2 cloves garlic, minced
1/3" fresh ginger, minced
1 small fennel bulb, diced or 1 large celery stalk, diced
1 carrot, diced
1 large shallot, diced
2 Tbsp olive oil
2 tsp curry powder
1 cup lentils (brown, green, or mixed)
4 cups chicken broth or stock
Salt and pepper

1/4 bunch cilantro, coarsely chopped

Warm the olive oil in a soup pot. Sauté the garlic, ginger, fennel, carrot, and shallot for 4-5 minutes. Stir in the curry powder and cook for about 30 seconds. Add the stock and bring to a boil. Add green lentils before boiling and brown lentils after. Cover and simmer for about 25 minutes or until the lentils are just tender. Use a handheld wand blender or puree about 1/3 of the soup in a blender, being careful to cover the open hole in the blender lid with a kitchen towel to allow the steam to escape, preventing an explosion of hot lentils on you and your kitchen. Return the pureed soup to the pot. Season the soup with salt and pepper. Sweep in chopped cilantro. Top each serving with a dollop (a large lump or portion of a solid matter) of yogurt if you wish.

Since I have been cooking and sharing recipes in the Farmers' Market Update and Recipe of the Week for over 3 1/2 years, the distribution list has grown to over 10,000 people including subscribers from across the country and in Canada. As you can imagine, many write notes with feedback or ask questions about special dietary needs. One of the more common requests is for me to include the nutritional contents of the recipes. As much of what I cook is modified from ideas I get from magazines, cookbooks, the internet, friends and family, I don't know the exact nutritional content. It's reasonably simple to figure out fat content, but beyond that I don't have the expertise. Recently, a reader from Southern California pointed out that about 90% of the recipes on Kaiser Permanente's website are ascribed to me (since I've been doing this weekly for so long). Not only has the nutritional content for those recipes been calculated by an expert Kaiser Permanente Registered Dietitian, Sue Heikkinen, but they are organized by course and alphabetized. It is also a lot easier to use than the PDF archive available as a link on these recipes.

Go to kp.org or members.kp.org. Use the pull down menu titled "Get Health Advice". Click on "Featured Health Topics". Be sure to note for future reference all the cool links on this site as you scroll down to "Nutrition". Click this and note more cool links before you click "Recipes". Graze through them and find something seasonal to cook using at least some ingredients from your local farmers' market.

This week's incredibly fresh and tasty offering is coming to you at the tail end of the local season for one of the main ingredients, avocados, which I bought from an organic grower who came to our market from the Salinas Valley. While I used this salsa with oven roasted salmon, it would be great with other, mild, white fish or chicken breasts.

Salmon with Pomegranate and Avocado Salsa

Serves 4

4 pieces salmon (check out seafoodwatch.org before shopping)

2 tsp ground coriander

2 tsp sugar

1/2 tsp salt

1 pomegranate, seeded (cut it in half, turn the halves inside out in a big bowl of water, extract the seeds with your fingers which sink and most of the

white pith floats to the top. Scoop out the white stuff and drain the seeds. This is actually kind of fun. I think kids would like to do this)

- 1/2 cup thinly sliced green onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 Tbsp lime juice
- 1/2 to 2 tsp finely minced jalapeño
- 2 avocados, cut into 1/2 inch chunks (slice them all the way around lengthwise then twist to separate the halves. Rather than digging out the pit with a knife risking puncturing through to your hand, bring the knife blade, held as usual, down firmly unto the pit then give it a twist. The pit will literally jump out of the avocado)
- 1/3 cup coarsely chopped cilantro
- Lettuces of choice
- Lime, cut in eighths for garnish

Preheat the oven to 500 degrees. Mix the coriander, sugar, and salt. Rub the mixture on the tops of the salmon fillets. Mix the pomegranate seeds, green onions, lime juice, garlic, and jalapeño in a bowl. Taste for "heat" and salt. Gently fold in the avocados and cilantro. If you aren't going to use it within thirty minutes, put plastic wrap against the surface then tightly cover. Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray. Place the salmon fillets skin side down. Roast them for 13 - 15 minutes. The thickness of the fillets will determine the cooking time. Meanwhile, thinly slice lettuce leaves and arrange artfully on each plate. Top with salsa, then salmon and garnish with more salsa, a lettuce leaf, and lime wedges. This is a great way to celebrate the late Fall markets.

11/28/06

The colors at the farmers' market have changed to greens, orange, and pale yellow. It will be months before we are graced again with the fiery reds and purples of heirloom tomatoes. On display at Happy Boy Farm were cippoline onions. A hearty French onion soup seemed like a good idea. I got it really right the second time after combining ideas gleaned from reading about 10 different recipes. My first attempt resulted in an anemic tan soup with chunks in it. You will like version two.

French Onion Soup

Serves 4

- 2 pounds onions, cut in half lengthwise, peeled, and sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp olive oil (every recipe I read used butter — I tried olive oil and it worked just fine with less saturated fat)
- 1 tsp dried thyme or 4 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves stripped (this is hard to do without getting little stems in the soup, but I couldn't tell by the time the soup was done)
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp flour
- 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup red wine (I used a zinfandel which was a blend from the Dry Creek region, the Alexander Valley, and the Sonoma Valley — use whatever you want or use a dry white wine)
- 6 cups broth, more beef broth (gasp — I rarely use beef anything but it matters in this soup) than chicken broth
- Salt and pepper
- Optional sliced baguette, Dijon and gruyere or some other cheese

The most time consuming part is caramelizing the onions, a crucial step. Use the deepest, largest diameter pan you have in the house. I used a large paella pan, which gives the most surface area to cook this huge mound of onions. Heat the olive oil over medium high heat. Sauté the onions, garlic and thyme, stirring frequently, for about 20 minutes. Magically, the onions will start turning brown. Add the sugar and cook about another 10 minutes until the onions are nicely caramelized. This is important as it gives the soup its flavor. Add the flour and the Dijon mustard. Cook and stir a couple minutes. Add the wine and cook until it is almost all evaporated. Add the broth. Bring to a simmer and cook for about 30

minutes. Season the soup with salt and pepper. Preheat the broiler. Toast some whole grain baguette slices. Spread them with Dijon mustard and top with some grated gruyere or cheese of choice. In heat proof serving bowls, ladle a serving of soup, top with the toasts, and broil until the cheese is melted. If you aren't sure about your bowls, simply serve the cheese toasts on the side. This could be perfect for a light New Year's Eve dinner. I wish you peace in 2007.