



Good Food News

Vol.10 No. 10
For the weeks of
May 9 and 16, 2006

Of Birds, but mostly Bees



This spring seems to be an extraordinary one for flowering of all kinds. Everywhere you look there's something in bloom—maple trees, willows, forsythia, crab apple, pear, cherries, lilacs, serviceberry, not to mention all of the spring bulbs—tulips, daffodils, hyacinths. That's all quite normal, I know, but what's so extraordinary this year is the quantity of flowers, their staying power and that there are so many of them in bloom at the same time. The bees must be working non-stop.

Lucky us. It reminds me of the Iris Murdoch quote: “People from a planet without flowers would think we must be mad with joy the whole time to have such things about us.”

This overabundance of flowers has also reminded me of the importance of pollinators in our lives. I was at the wonderful organic farmers' market at Dufferin Grove Park last Thursday and noticed their young cherry tree, absolutely awash in white blooms. Jutta Mason, the park's doyen, said that she hoped it would yield more cherries than it did last year, when it was also abundantly blessed with blooms. I speculated that a lack of pollinators might have had something to do with it.

Pollinators, especially bees who account for over half of the pollination work, are so vital to our food system. But their role is so often overlooked. I'm not talking about making honey but about their role in making our food. Without them, we wouldn't have tomatoes, beans, peas, peppers, eggplants, squash, strawberries ... all of those delicious vegetables and fruits as well as wheat, corn, and all the other grain crops that we depend upon for our very existence. In fact, just about all of our food is dependent upon pollination, either directly or indirectly.



Food Share

Think for a moment what would happen if bees of all sorts suddenly ceased to exist. We wouldn't eat very well, if at all. It's true that there are many other pollinators such as wasps, butterflies, birds, bats and even humans, but bees, especially native bees do the lion's share of the work. There are over 3500 species of native bees in North America and yet little is really known about them.

What is known is that without help, bee populations may decline to the point where it will seriously effect agricultural yields. Pesticides, predation by disease, and loss of habitat are taking their toll on bees, both domesticated and feral. Managed honey bee populations are showing a 25% decline in some areas, over the past decade. Speculation is that the native bees are similarly affected.

What can you do to encourage native pollinators? Number one is to stop using harmful pesticides and encourage others to do the same. Buy organic food if you can. Another way to help is to appreciate the important role bees and other pollinators play and educate yourself about them. There are many excellent websites and other resources available. One the best is <http://attra.ncat.org/> (the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service.) Don't have web access at home? Visit your library and ask the librarian for help in finding this.

So next time you see any kind of bee, don't think of squashing it. Instead, thank her for making it possible to have food to eat.

LB

This Saturday:
FoodShare's Plant sale & AGM
May 13, 2006

Plant sale: 10am to 1 pm
AGM: noon to 1pm
Lunch 1-2pm

Field to Table Centre
200 Eastern Avenue
Toronto, ON M5A 1J1

t. 416. 363. 6441 xt 221
f. 416. 363. 0474
e. gfb@foodshare.net
www.foodshare.net

working with communities to improve access to affordable healthy food - from field to table





recipes

CURRIED APPLE & LEEK SOUP

- 1 tablespoon light cooking oil
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 3 leeks, cleaned well and chopped
- 3/4 cup diced potatoes
- 2 Granny Smith apples- peeled, cored, chopped
- 3 cups vegetable broth
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup plain yogurt

DIRECTIONS:

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Stir in curry powder and cook 1 minute. Stir in leeks, potato and apples and cook 5 minutes.

Pour in broth and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes.

Puree in a blender or food processor, or using an immersion blender. Season with salt and pepper and serve

with a swirl of yogurt.

Yields: 4 servings

POTATO-LEEK PANCAKE

- 2 lb White potatoes
- 6 tb Unsalted butter, clarified
- 2 lg Leeks white & green parts, finely chopped
- 1 T Salt
- 1/2 ts Finely ground pepper

DIRECTIONS:

Peel potatoes and soak in cold water for 30 minutes.

Grate and squeeze out every bit of moisture by wringing the potatoes in dry dish towels.

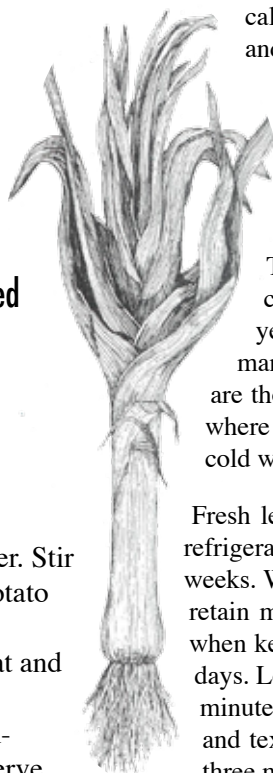
Heat 2 tablespoons butter in heavy frying pan; add leeks and saute until wilted. Season with salt and pepper, then add to potatoes and mix well. Heat remaining butter in a heavy skillet, preferably a nonstick one, and add potato-leek mixture. Flatten to make a pancake, then cover and cook about 5 minutes over medium-high heat.

Turn pancake and cook until brown and crisp. Invert onto a serving platter and slice into wedges with serrated knife or pizza cutter.

Yields: 6 servings

featured this week: LEEKS

Leeks, like garlic and onions, belong to a vegetable family called the Allium vegetables. Since leek is related to garlic and onions, it contains many of the same beneficial compounds found in these well-researched, health-promoting vegetables. A high intake of Allium vegetables has been shown to reduce total cholesterol and LDL, or “bad” cholesterol levels, and raise HDL, or “good” cholesterol levels.



Thought to be native to Central Asia, they have been cultivated in this region and in Europe for thousands of years. Leeks were prized by the ancient Greeks and Romans for their beneficial effect upon the throat. The Romans are thought to have introduced leeks to the United Kingdom, where they were able to flourish because they could withstand cold weather. Leeks are now the Welsh national emblem.

Fresh leeks should be stored unwashed and untrimmed in the refrigerator, where they will keep fresh for between one and two weeks. Wrapping them loosely in a plastic bag will help them to retain moisture. Cooked leeks are highly perishable, and even when kept in the refrigerator, will only stay fresh for about two days. Leeks may be frozen after being blanched for two to three minutes, although they will lose some of their desirable taste and texture qualities. Leeks will keep in the freezer for about three months.

Clean leeks thoroughly to remove any soil that may have gotten caught within the overlapping layers of this root vegetable. First, trim the rootlets and a portion of the green tops and remove the outer layer. Make a lengthwise incision to the centerline, fold it open, and run the leek under cool water.

Leeks by any other name...

- Jiu tsung, tai chung - China
- Preien - Netherlands
- Poireaux - France
- Lauch - Germany
- Kucaï - Indonesia
- Porri - Italy
- Tareh Faranghi - Iran
- Poro negi - Japan
- Kucaï - Malaysia
- Kutsay - Philippines
- Krathiam tom - Thailand

DELIVERIES

for the week of: **May 16th**
orders are due 5 pm Tues. **May 9th**

for the week of **May 23rd**
orders are due 5pm Tues. **May 16th**



gfb@foodshare.net

t. 416. 363. 6441 xt 221 - f. 416. 363. 0474