

Taste

WINE • RECIPES • SPECIALTIES

Buy, Borrow & Deal

Former Michigan residents
produce reality game show
on ESPN.

THE FARMINGTON COMMUNITY LIBRARY
FARMINGTON HILLS BRANCH
32737 West Twelve Mile Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3302
www.observerandeccentric.com

BEYOND BASICS



Recipe ideas for squash are more than butter and sugar

BY LANA MINI
STAFF WRITER

There's more to squash than butter and brown sugar. Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Most squash is typically cooked the same. However, the varieties available are vast and so are the recipes offered locally.

At the eclectic Traffic Jam & Snug restaurant in Detroit (511 W. Canfield at Second Street), acorn squash is wonderfully stuffed with dried berries and wild rice. At local farms, like Wasem Fruit Farms in Milan, different squashes are starting to come and the Wasem family staff has ideas for many.

Loola Wasem likes to experiment with squash. However when she's at work, she likes to put water on the bottom of a glass dish, cut a butternut or acorn in half and face it down in the dish. Then she'll microwave it for anywhere between 10 and 20 minutes for an easy, Vitamin A-enriched lunch.

Peak season at most local markets for squash is in just a few weeks, Wasem said.

"Often I'll just put spaghetti sauce on baked spaghetti squash," Wasem said. "And add a little butter and cheese."

Or to give the stringy spaghetti squash some variety, she'll add shrimp and lemon or sour cream, parmesan and ginger.

This year acorn is abundant locally, butternut is a little slower to ripen.

Sweet Dumplings are nicely abundant too

WHAT'S YOUR RECIPE?

Do you have a favorite or unusual squash recipe?

It can be simple or intricate.

How about a squash recipe?

If so, please share it with us. We'll print your information in an upcoming issue.

Please include the recipe or preparation advice along with your name, city where you reside and a telephone call in case we need to contact you.

Email: mini@homecomm.net

Or send regular mail to:

Lana Mini
The Eccentric
805 E. Maple
Birmingham, MI 48009

— they're the size of an acorn with cream skin with green stripes, she said.

PREP WORK

It's not easy to cut common squash. Use a strong knife to cut the skin, which is easier than peeling. If the squash is too hard to get the knife through, try tapping the blade with a small mallet. Or slice the squash partially while it's raw and then place it in the microwave for several minutes just to soften



PHOTOS BY TONY HOFFMEYER

HOW TO CHOOSE A SQUASH

It can be tough picking out a ripe squash at the grocery store or market because of thick and tough skins.

Executive Chef William Hall of Papa Joe's Gourmet Market in Birmingham says to examine the stem of the squash and make sure that it's dry. If it is, chances are the squash will be just ripe enough.

On harder skins like acorn squash, Hall says make certain the skin isn't rock hard to the touch.

PLEASE SEE SQUASH, B3

New in North Coast wine country

Each time we return from a trip to California's Napa Valley and Sonoma County, people ask "what's new?" There's always something new. The following are highlights to help you plan a trip.

RED CARPET TASTINGS

To learn more about wine or taste top-of-the-line wines, we recommend the "Taste Exploration Series," interactive tastings (\$10-\$20 depending on the topic) in private small-group settings at Franciscan Oakville Estate in St. Helena. Advance reservations are required. Phone (800) 529-WINE.

The Cardinale Estate boasts a picturesque stone winery in the heart of the Oakville District in Napa Valley. The spectacular hilltop visitor's center offers 360-degree views of Napa Valley. Advance reservations are needed for a



Focus on Wine

Eleanor & Ray Heald

Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot; Alton Mountain Estate Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot; Cardinale Red Wine and limited production wines, including Lokoya, upon release. Reserve at (800) 588-0275.

For \$20 per person, you can taste four wines with four appropriate food pairings in the new private tasting room at St. Francis Winery, 500 Pythian Road (at Highway 12), Santa Rosa (800) 545-7713. Tastings don't get much better than St. Francis Reserve Bohler Vineyard Chardonnay with smoked salmon soufflé

or Reserve Nuns Canyon Vineyard Merlot with chicken, sausage and shrimp gumbo with rice. There are two more wines and two more great pairings from winery Chef Todd Muir but we'll let you discover them.

NEW RESTAURANTS

After a day of wine tasting, your palate is up for some great eats. Opened late last year, the California craftsman bungalow-style Martini House, 1245 Spring Street, St. Helena (707) 963-2233, teamed restaurateur Pat Kuleto (Boulevard, Farnham and Jardiniere in San Francisco) with talented Executive Chef Todd Humphries, late of San Francisco's Campton Place and the Wine Spectator's Greystone at the Napa Valley Culinary Institute of America.

PLEASE SEE HEALDS, B2

WINE PICKS

There's a broad range of prices for Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Blends. In this category, touted Napa Valley bottlings are often the priciest.

■ Awesome: 1999 Justin Isoceles, Paso Robles \$48.

■ Delicious: 1999 Geyser Peak Cabernet Sauvignon Block Collection Kuitmels Vineyard \$26 and 1999 St. Supery Dollard Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley \$70.

■ Best Buys: 1999 Rothbury Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Australia \$7; 2000 Buena Vista Cabernet Sauvignon \$9; Rosemount Estate Cabernet Merlot \$9; and 2001 Penfold Koonunga Hill Cabernet Merlot \$11.

■ Got steak? Buy 1997 Michele Chiarolo Barolo \$45 and treat yourself.

Side dish

Ready-to-serve

Southfield-based Win Schuler Foods has introduced new packaging — a ready-to-serve black tub that can go from refrigerator to table whenever company is over.



The package re-design includes a removable cardboard sleeve with new graphics, food photography and easy-to-prepare recipes.

The company also just introduced a Sharp Cheddar cheese spread.

More is better

Five servings of fruits and veggies a day to ensure short-term nutritional needs isn't enough to guard against health problems that develop over time, the American Institute for Cancer Research.

"When it comes to preventing cancer, eating more vegetables is second only to quitting smoking in its importance," says Melanie Polk, AICR's director of nutrition education.

Fruits and vegetables help reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease and other chronic diseases like diabetes. They've increased the recommendations from five servings to nine.

"Some people might think eating five daily servings of fruits and veggies is a big challenge," says Polk. "But it's fairly easy to accomplish once you get a goal and realize a standard serving is just one-half cup for most types of fruits and vegetables."

A study by the USDA found that the potato is America's most widely consumed vegetable — iceberg lettuce followed second. Those veggies just aren't good enough, the AICR says. One serving of raspberries is better, for example. Other specifically good foods are sweet potatoes, watermelon and tomatoes.

Begin dinner with a vegetable or fruit course. Take advantage of the rule "if you see it, you'll eat it." Keep fruits that are easily eaten near the television or computer.

New in Detroit

A new restaurant that is labeled as upscale yet casual is opening soon in the the stadium district of downtown Detroit.

Small Plates is the name of the eatery located in the Eureka Building at 1521 Broadway — The Opera House is directly across the Street. Cornelia Park, Fox Town and Ford Field are two blocks away. Valet service is offered and parking is available in three lots nearby. Shuttles will be available during Red Wing games.

Small Plates is an appetizer restaurant. The open kitchen design has brick oven for quests to view. The menu has items like garlic shrimp and crunchy bread; portabella mushrooms with zip sauce; barbecue ribs with french fries and gourmet-style pizza. Small Plates will feature fresh desserts and full bar.

Are there cobwebs on your cultural calendar?

Turn to today's ARTS section. Get inspired with ideas for some worthwhile things to do.