

HOME SENSE



LOIS THIELEKE

Protective steps for fresh produce

A headache is spending \$100 on fresh fruits and vegetables and then finding them rotting in the refrigerator or on the kitchen counter. Even under ideal storage conditions of the right temperature and humidity, some fresh vegetables retain top quality only a few days. Some fruits last longer, but consumers can take steps in storing fruits and vegetables to ensure all the nutrients and good flavor are retained.

Green leafy vegetables quickly wilt and change flavor as water evaporates from the tissues. Most fresh green vegetables keep well and stay crisp if put in covered containers or plastic bags then refrigerated. If you wash lettuce, celery and other leafy vegetables before storing, drain thoroughly, because too much moisture can hasten decay.

Store vegetables away from the fruits in the refrigerator. As some fruits ripen, they produce a gas they will make lettuce, spinach and other leafy greens turn brown.

Remove carrot tops

Remove the tops of carrots before refrigerating. The tops drain the carrots of moisture, making them limp and dry. Tops should also be removed from beets and radishes before refrigeration. The longer corn, beans, peas and other vegetables are stored, they lose sweetness as the sugar in their tissues turn to starch. Store them dry and unwashed in plastic bags in the refrigerator. Room temperature tomatoes are more flavorful than refrigerated ones.

Bruised produce loses more vitamin A and C than smooth unblemished specimens. To lessen the likelihood of bruising, use sharp knife or scissors when trimming, slicing or cutting vegetables. Always purchase unbruised, unblemished produce unless you are going to use it immediately.

Jerusalem artichokes, also known as sun chokes, accumulate calories during storage because of a chemical change that takes place in their carbohydrate content. When freshly dug, small tubers contain as few as seven calories. After storage, the calorie level can jump to 75.

Store fennel in the refrigerator because the stalks stay fresh only three to four days before drying out and losing their unique flavor. Fennel has 13 calories per one-half cup and a fair source of vitamin A, niacin, calcium and iron.

Cabbage contains a compound called calcium pectate which some studies have shown to lower blood cholesterol levels. Cabbage is a good source of dietary fiber and is low in calories. Don't overcook cabbage, it destroys the true taste and texture and bleeds out many valuable vitamins and minerals. Save the cabbage cooking water to add to soups and sauces for a vitamin boost. Cabbage can be stored one to two weeks in the refrigerator crisper.

Vegetables that are cooked in the microwave retain more vitamin C than those boiled. Microwave cooking not only exposes foods to heat for shorter time than boiling but also requires very little water. Cook vegetables only until they are tender-crisp. Overcooking may result in a rubbery texture. To prevent dark spots from forming, add salt only after microwaving vegetables.

Don't add salt to green salad until just before serving. Salt wilts and toughens salad greens. It is best to store most fruits in the refrigerator. Allow melons, avocados

Please see **PRODUCE, D2**

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Winners of soup contest
- Focus on Wine

grilling

It's never too cold!

By KEN ABRAMCZYK

STAFF WRITER
kabranczyk@homecomm.net

Driveways are coated with a smooth glaze of ice, as people dance their way to their vehicles. Walrus-tusk icicles hang overhead from gutters, eaves and troughs.

Yep, it's 20 degrees outside, work commutes take 15 minutes longer during the day, and you toss calcium chloride in the driveway to remove that awful ugly grime. You may have even saved some of the ice-melting substance for your yard, so you can get to, of all places, your grill. And there you are, in your sweats and gym shoes, grilling. You are among the few, the proud, the diehards.

You grill in the winter. You've got chicken on the grill with its skin crackling and popping and oozing with kosher salt, garlic and rosemary; or a salmon awakened after it's been marinated in lime juice, its flesh weakening by the flames licking its skin or skewered green and red peppers, mushrooms and onions basting in Italian dressing, then seared in a few minutes over a high flame.

You don't care what the neighbors say. You're grilling. And you're having a good time. Andrew Allen of Livonia grills all year long, just less frequently in the winter. "It's quick, it doesn't get the smell in the house and I like the taste of the food."

Allen has two-burner gas Broilmaster with a gas line, so he doesn't deal with the hassles or the expense of changing propane tanks. "It isn't that expensive to have someone hook that up, either," Allen said.

Grilling is fun and it adds to the flavor of the foods, Allen said. "You need a grill that is located conveniently to the door and has enough horsepower (read BTUs) to overcome the cold. It also helps to have some good outdoor lighting - like a flood aimed at the grill surface so you can see what you are doing



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRIAN MITCHELL

All fired up: Andrew Allen does some winter grilling outside his Livonia home. Allen fires up his grill to cook chicken, corn and garlic.

Miller of Plymouth likes to grill several days a week all year long. "When I clear snow, I always clear a path to my grill," she writes. "If the buttons freeze up when it's really cold, I tap them lightly with a small hammer."

Miller doesn't worry about the cold temperatures. "I just dash out the back door, open the grill, put the salmon on, and dash back in." You might see Dave Richards of Bloomfield Township standing leisurely about in his yard in the winter without a coat while he is grilling. Richards says he grills about four nights a week in any weather of what he describes as "nothing fancy."

"It makes things nice and simple," Richards said. "We don't like to mess things up."

A 1999 survey conducted by Weber of American grill owners reflected that:

- 32% grill several times a week
- 28% grill once or twice a week
- 50% continue to grill in the winter
- 69% grill in the spring
- 86% grill in the summer
- 62% grill in the autumn
- 68% grill for the taste
- 44% prefer an easy cleanup of a grill
- 43% enjoy the more intense heat
- 35% say it's fun
- 23% say it's relaxing
- 34% say it's good for entertaining

Richards likes foods on the grill because "it's quick preparation. The fat drips off the seafood and beef and just cooks off," Richards said.

Gordon and Linda Johnson of Canton also enjoy their grill because it is easier for them and quicker. They cook over a lower flame than usual so it doesn't require the same attention of a more intense heat. At one time Gordon enjoyed preparing and eating ribs, but now, the couple enjoys fish and chicken on the grill, after Gordon suffered a heart attack last year. When they eat fish, they usually prepare a dish like hot dogs for their children.

"It's a challenge," Gordon said. "The kids being as young as they are would eat chicken nuggets every day if they could, so it's fairly easy to get them to eat chicken. They both like it and they like pasta with it, too."

Of course, their love for the grill doesn't go unnoticed. "My neighbors think I'm a little bit nuts," Gordon Johnson said. "They harass me a little bit."

See recipes inside

Readers grill the chill away

By KEN ABRAMCZYK

STAFF WRITER
kabranczyk@homecomm.net

So what do you like to grill during the cold weather?

We found our readers prefer the quick and easy approach to grilling. Some buy food ready to grill at the store; others prefer their own marinades.

Readers responded with some of their preferences:

Andrew Allen of Livonia likes to broil salmon fillets with a mixture of white wine, soy sauce, oil sesame, ginger, garlic and honey. He doesn't worry about keeping warm at this time of year, because the grill is conveniently near his kitchen. "I don't cook food on the grill at this time of year that you have to keep an eye on. I usually put fish on, leave it on for five minutes or so, flip it and it's done."

The Allen family also prepares marinated Tandoori-style chicken breasts, marinated beef and pork ribs.

Marilyn Miller of Plymouth likes an easy preparation.

"It's just easier to use the grill," Miller said. "I can steam vegetables in the microwave with a piece of foil on the grill, spray 'I Can't Believe It's Not Butter' on it and cook the salmon."

Miller buys a large fresh Atlantic salmon at Busch's Market and cuts it into serving sizes to keep one or two servings to grill later in the week, and freezes the rest. "Occasionally, I might have a piece of beef or have a steak."

Dave Richards of Bloomfield Township buys turkey sausage and turkey burger from Western Market in Ferndale, lowfat crab and salmon patties made fresh daily from Pomeroy's in West Bloomfield at Maple and Orchard Lake roads, turkey and chicken

Please see **READERS, D2**

You don't have to be Polish to polish off a paczki

By KEN ABRAMCZYK

STAFF WRITER
kabranczyk@homecomm.net

Carl Richardson calls it the "Cadillac" of pastries. Thousands and thousands of paczki will be prepared in just a few days for Fat Tuesday, which this year falls on March 7, the day before Ash Wednesday.

For Catholics, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a 40-day period of penance including abstinence and fasting, suggested by Christ's 40 days in the desert.

But for Catholics and everyone else, Fat Tuesday is the day to indulge in that sweet, gloppy treat called paczki (pronounced Poonch-key). It's more than a jelly doughnut, and it is not a bismarck, according to Richardson, a Rochester resident and the chairman of the paczki board of the Retailer's Bakery Association.

Richardson, who also goes by "Mr. Paczki," compares a paczki to a doughnut using an analogy of cars. "You might have similar design or package on different models of cars, but the paczki is the Cadillac, not the Ford," Richardson said.

Paczki is the name used by Poles to describe a pastry made from the flour, sugar and shortening cleared from pantries before the Lenten fast. Paczki are round, sugar-coated and fruit-filled pastries.

"A lot of people refer to these as a doughnut, but it's a paczki," Richardson said. "You don't have to be Polish to polish off a paczki."

The design, taste and color are different from a doughnut, Richardson said. "They're round like a

baseball and they are manufactured with a high gluten flour," Richardson said. "They're larger, more filling and have more calories. They taste great, when they are properly made."

Nearly all paczki are fried, Richardson said. Paczki can be baked, but Richardson adds, "Shortening is part of the process that gives it flavor."

Now, the bad news. A 5-ounce fried paczki has about 420-440 calories, depending on the filling.

Gary Beaubien, owner of Beaubien's Pastries in Livonia, offers the baked paczki. Beaubien admits he isn't the only one who does this, as many bakers also will create the baked healthier alternative, nor is it a big part of his business. Beaubien specializes in breakfast pastries, torres and Australian lace wedding cakes.

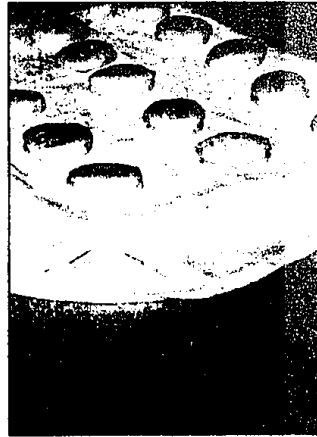
Beaubien's baked paczki have 25 percent fewer calories.

When deep-fried paczki are mass-produced, it is difficult for fryers to keep up with the demand. The temperature of the grease is maintained, and the fat soaks into the fried paczki, Beaubien said. "So those (paczki) are loaded with fat," Beaubien said.

The one day he creates the baked paczki, the customers, well, they eat them up, Beaubien said.

"People seem to like the baked variety," Beaubien said.

Ridley's Bakery Cafe in Troy also offers baked paczki with apple raspberry, custard, tart cherry, chocolate bavarian cream, lemon, apricot, strawberry, prune or Granny Smith apple fillings. Ridley's fruit-filled baked paczki total about 8 grams of fat versus the 25 grams of the fried variety.



Fat Tuesday Is March 7