

The Estherville Daily News is proud to bring you the Food page every Tuesday. If you know anyone who should be featured on this page, please send their names and why you think they should be featured to: Managing editor, 10 N. Seventh St., Estherville, 51334 or editor@esthervilledailynews.com

FOOD

'N' is for nuts, noodles, nectarines

By MARY ANN MENENDEZ
STAFF WRITER

From noodles to nuts, the letter "N" does wonders for our daily diets with nutrition of course, but more importantly taste and texture. In between, there are nectarines, a sweet and juicy fruit that is related to the peach. In addition, we must not forget the most famous cream cheese dessert ever - New York Cheesecake.

Noodles go back 5,000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ as farmers in the Middle East cultivated wheat turned into flour. As men became braver and sailed around, the Japanese incorporated the noodle into their tea ceremony. In the meantime, Chinese cooks were doing their own cooking experiments with the noodle. Marco Polo gets the credit for introducing the noodle to Italy. It was not until the 18th century that spaghetti debuted in Naples, Italy.

While the Italians and Americans love their pasta dishes, the noodle also is a popular choice of food in Asian countries.

Are you someone who goes nuts for nuts? Nuts have been part of the food chains for as long as trees and plants have covered the Earth. Walnut, pecan, almond, cashew, macadamia, Brazil nut and hazelnut have found their neat niche in every continent.

Besides a sensational tasting fruit, what are nectarines? A nectarine is a peach variety minus the fuzz. The fruit was most likely cultivated China over 2,000 years ago and transported to ancient Persia, Greece and Rome. They were growing in Great Britain in the late 16th or early 17th centuries, and were introduced to America by the Spanish.

As the name implies, the word means sweet nectar. California produces over 95 percent of the sweet summer fruit in our country.

Think of the Big Apple and New York Cheesecake should pop into your thoughts. Creamery workers in upstate New York developed the unique American variety of cream cheese. The New York Style Cheesecake became famous in the 1920s by Jewish delicatessens in the city. One of the more famous is Lindy's and I fondly recall sitting in that establishment and enjoying that scrumptious (and over-priced) piece of New York cheesecake in 1985. As New Yorkers say, "Cheesecake wasn't really cheesecake until it was cheesecake in New York."

Noodle Casserole with Chicken

2 cups cooked chicken, diced
One-half pound egg noodles
2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 and one-half cups milk or light

cream
1 and one-half cups chicken broth

2 egg yolks, slightly beaten
1 cup sliced mushrooms
One-fourth cup onion, chopped
2 tablespoons sherry

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook egg noodles in boiling water according to package directions. Drain, rinse in cold water and drain again. In a skillet, melt butter in olive oil. Sauté onion, garlic and mushrooms until lightly golden. Stir in flour until absorbed. Gradually pour in chicken broth and milk or cream, while stirring constantly to avoid lumps. Remove from heat and allow to cool for 5 minutes. In a small bowl, beat egg yolks lightly. Stir in a few tablespoons of the mixture from the skillet to temper the eggs so they won't scramble, then add the egg and broth mixture to the skillet along with remaining ingredients. Mix well.

Noodles Romanoff

8 ounces uncooked noodles
1 to 2 cups low-fat sour cream
One-half cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 tablespoon chives or parsley
1 teaspoon salt
One-fourth teaspoon black pepper

2 cloves crushed garlic
2 tablespoons butter
One-fourth cup grated Parmesan cheese to sprinkle on top

Cook noodles according to package directions. Drain well. Stir in 2 tablespoons butter. In separate bowl, combine remaining ingredients (except one-fourth cup grated Parmesan for topping). Add mixture to buttered noodles. Put in serving dish and sprinkle with remaining Parmesan. Serve immediately.

Nutty Noodle Hot Dish

One-half pound thin noodles
4 tablespoons butter
1 cup chopped onions
2 pounds ground beef
1 4-ounce can mushrooms
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 and one-half cups milk
1 teaspoon salt
One-fourth teaspoon pepper
One-fourth cup soy sauce
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

One-half pound cheddar cheese, grated
One-third pound mixed nuts
1 can Chinese chow mein noodles (crisp)

Cook and drain noodles. Sauté onion in large skillet in the butter until golden. Add meat and cook until browned. Combine mushrooms, soup, and the milk and add to meat mixture. Blend in spices, soy and Worcestershire sauce. Mix well and heat thoroughly. Butter a 9-x-13 inch dish and spread the cooked noodles over the bottom. Cover with meat mixture. Top with cheese. Heat well in a 350-degree oven for 15 minutes until the cheese bubbles. Remove and top with crisp Chinese noodles. Then top with the mixed nuts. Return to oven for 10 more minutes of cooking time.

Nut Bread with Banana and Blueberries

2 cups sifted flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
One-half cup quick-cooking oats

Three-fourths cup chopped walnuts
One-half cup milk
1 cup mashed ripe banana (about 3 medium)

Three-fourths cup sugar
One-half teaspoon salt
One-third cup butter or shortening

One teaspoon vanilla
1 egg
1 cup fresh blueberries

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease and flour two loaf pans. Cream together butter and sugar. Beat in egg. Add mashed bananas. Measure flour, reserving 2 tablespoons of flour to coat blueberries. Stir baking powder and salt into flour, mixing well. Stir in oats. Fold into banana mixture. Stir in vanilla. Sprinkle the 2 tablespoons flour over blueberries, and then fold into batter. Stir in chopped nuts. Transfer batter to loaf pans. Bake about 50 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool in pan for 10 minutes, then remove to a wire rack, and cool completely.

Nut Ring with Apples

2 (8 ounces) refrigerator biscuits

Three-fourths cup sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon
One-third stick butter, melted
2 to 3 medium apples, peeled, cored and sliced

One-third cup favorite nuts, chopped
One-fourth cup raisins

Separate biscuits into 20 pieces. Combine sugar and cinnamon. Dip biscuits in melted butter and arrange in pan. Arrange apples around outer edge of pan and between each biscuit. Sprinkle the cinnamon-sugar mixture over the top. Top with nuts and raisins. Bake at 400 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes. Turn out onto serving dish. Serve warm.

Nectarine Salsa

2 nectarines, pitted and chopped
One-fourth medium red onion, finely chopped
One-fourth cup balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon white sugar
One-half teaspoon dried cilantro
One-half teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

In a bowl, mix the nectarines, onion, vinegar, sugar, cilantro, salt, and pepper. Allow to sit 5 minutes. In a skillet over medium heat, cook and stir the nectarine mixture 10 minutes, until onion and nectarines are tender and lightly browned. Spoon over your favorite grilled fish.



New York Cheesecake

One-fourth cup butter
1 cup graham cracker crumbs
One-fourth cup sugar
4 (8 oz. packages) cream cheese

One-half cup flour
4 eggs
1 14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk
1 tablespoon vanilla
1 teaspoon grated lemon rind

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Melt butter. Stir in crumbs and sugar. Pat firmly on bottom of buttered 9-inch spring form pan. In large bowl, beat cheese until fluffy. Beat in flour and eggs; mix well. Add sweetened condensed milk, vanilla and lemon rind. Pour into pan over crumbs. Bake 50 to 55 minutes or until cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool to room temperature. Garnish as desired. Refrigerate leftovers. Serve

with a dollop of whipped cream, if desired.

Nectarine Pie

Two-thirds cup sugar
4 tablespoons flour
One-third teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup heavy whipping cream
One-half teaspoon almond extract

5 nectarines
1 9-inch unbaked pie shell

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Place a big pot of water on high heat and bring to a boil. Mix the sugar, flour, cinnamon, heavy cream and almond extract. Set aside. Place the nectarines in boiling water for 30 to 45 seconds. Immediately place nectarines under cold running water and remove skins. Cut nectarines in half and remove pits. Place halves in the pie shell with the cut side down. Pour cream mixture around the cut fruit. Bake at 400 degrees for 35-40 minutes. Serve warm or cold.

Fareway Fare

Tis the season for peaches, nectarines and plums

By MARY ANN MENENDEZ
STAFF WRITER

A bevy of beauties will greet shoppers at the Estherville Fareway Grocery Store this week.

In shades ranging from the faintest reds and yellowish oranges to the deepest purples, California peaches, nectarines and plums will fill the bins to the brim, according to Mark Almquist, Fareway store manager.

All three fruits first burst onto the scene in China centuries ago. Beginning in the 1700s, Spanish missionaries were the first to cultivate the peach on Californian soil. It was in the 1800s when immigrants from Russia brought their peach seeds to the Pacific coast. Settlers heading west for a change of scenery or in search of gold also brought peach seeds to plant.

The peach and nectarine are quite similar except the nectarine is missing the gene that produces the fuzz.

The Japanese first brought the plum to California in the late 1800s. While the plum is a popular fruit for many, it gave way to another industry that is popular with the masses - the dried plum or prune industry.

Sensational Fruit Salad

1 bunch fresh spinach, trimmed, washed, dried
3 cups sliced fresh peaches, plums



and nectarines
1 cup shredded Swiss or cheddar cheese
One-third cup walnuts

Peaches in Cream Dressing (recipe below)

Arrange spinach, fruits, cheese and nuts in salad bowl. Just before servings, pour dressing over. Toss thoroughly.

Peaches in Cream Dressing

1 and one-half cups fresh peaches, sliced

One-fourth cup vanilla yogurt
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon honey
One-fourth teaspoon ginger
One-fourth teaspoon cinnamon

Measure all ingredients into blender. Blend smooth. Place in covered container and refrigerate. Refrigerated dressing will keep up to three days.

Corn on the cob — it's not just for cooking

MICHELE KAYAL

FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Husk that corn! And leave it at that.

We love our summer corn grilled, boiled, steamed and slathered, but raw corn — that's right, no cooking — is nature's candy.

We think of corn as a vegetable, but it's also a grain or a seed that's picked before maturity, says University of Florida horticulture professor Stephen Olson. And like other seeds that we eat raw — think sugar snap peas with their crunchy pods and delicate fleshy globes — raw corn bursts with succulence.

Most vegetables are cooked to make them tender. But since raw corn is an immature seed, the kernels' outer covering is still baby soft. Cooking will actually solidify the starches and make the kernels firm. "It's more tender raw than cooked," Olson says.

Chomping into a fresh ear of corn will reward you with a mouthful of sugary bursts. But dressier presentations may be better suited

for guests and can highlight the corn's sweetness.

Nick Ritchie, chef de cuisine at Napa Valley's trendy Bottega restaurant, strips the kernels and tosses them into a salad with peppery arugula. But to extract their maximum essence, Ritchie juices the raw kernels and creates a chilled soup to accompany crispy fried soft-shell crabs.

"If you've ever taken a bite off a cob that's raw, it's like biting into a peach," Ritchie says. "You get juice running down your arms and dripping off your chin. That's why I like raw corn so much in the hot weather. It's very refreshing. It's almost like fruit."

To store fresh corn for four or five days, strip the husks, wrap the ears in moist paper towels, place them in a zip-close plastic bag and refrigerate.

Try raw corn kernels sprinkled over salads, as a garnish on a chilled soup or mixed into a soft cheese to create a mild sweet-and-savory spread for toasted slices of baguette.

Raw corn and tomato salad

3 tablespoons walnut oil
1 1/2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

3 ears corn, husks and silk removed
1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
1 small red onion, diced
15-ounce can chickpeas, drained

4 cups baby salad greens
4 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
4-ounce log goat cheese, crumbled

Chive blossoms

In a medium bowl, whisk together the walnut oil, vinegar and thyme. Set aside. Use a serrated knife to carefully cut the kernels from the ears of corn. To do this, one at a time stand each ear on its wide end, then saw the knife down the length of the cob. Discard the cobs.

To the bowl with the dressing, add the corn kernels, tomatoes, onion and chickpeas. Toss well. Divide the greens, then top with the corn mixture. Garnish with crumbled bacon, goat cheese and chive blossoms.