



Mary Jane's Cooking School, Inc.

# Wooden Spoons

Volume II, Issue 2

Spring/Summer 2005

Mary Jane's Cooking School, Inc. provides education in nutritional home cooking and home-making in harmony with individual, community and cultural traditions, with respect and care for the environment. *Mission Statement*

## A KITCHEN BOUQUET WITH A DIFFERENCE

*The abundance of this place, the songs of its people and its birds, will be health and wisdom and indwelling light.*

*From "Work Song" by Wendell Berry*

In our house, the arrival of spring always brings the need to buckle down and get serious about housecleaning, the *real* cleaning that goes beyond the mere housekeeping and tidying we do every day. This cleaning digs down deep (or at least deeper than usual) with a genuine passion for banishing dust and dirt. This year is no different. Chores beckon at every turn, reminding me that though winter may have been well spent at study, the walls call out for elbow grease at every turn. But even in the midst of this most serious business there's fun and excitement to look forward to once again, because beyond the thoughts of all the scrubbing and sweeping, I can once again indulge in my annual rite of spring, that little ceremony that I call my "kitchen catch-all drawer treasure hunt".

Usually launched early in the morning, say about 4 a.m., this mini festival brings me once again in contact with semi forgotten tokens of the mundane; those little things that

might just "come in handy some day" (how many years is it now that I've been saying this?) along with others cherished for their beauty or for the irreplaceable memories they hold in my life. There are the hand-printed ads for small local businesses, places like the Handy Monkey Mortar Repair service, whose owner Azel is from Nicaragua and is away right now but promises to 'keep a little problem small' by addressing such household problems as 'old chimney hood' and 'worn-out joints'.

Then there are the fridge magnets I've saved over the years, the one proclaiming proudly in bright red lettering that 'I Get Up for the Weekend Morning Show' (doesn't everybody, I ask myself with a satisfied sip of coffee).

There, in that drawer, I also find the several baggies of rubber bands and twist ties, the needles and spools of thread, and the big ball of string, all dedicated to the premise of keeping things together, in tact and tidy, in this house of mine. The Handy Helper fuses speak of other eventualities experienced too often

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### A Kitchen Bouquet...

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in an old house like ours, where the wiring never dreamed of the range of appliances tempting us today. As if to make up for these energy excesses, the drawer also holds the most low tech of tools, (the several sets of chopsticks are a case in point here) whose 'worth's unknown' as Shakespeare said, because tragically I have never really learned how to use them.

But then, digging deeper, I find at the back of this drawer the prizes that my heart has been secretly longing for. Carefully preserved in their original colourful envelopes, I find the seeds. Two little packets reminding me of the blessings of growth, and patience, and the warmth of a summer not far away.

World Vision sent me the carrot seeds some years ago, in return for a small donation I'd made to their cause. The envelope shows a dozen or so bright carrots scrubbed clean and laid side by side, their green tops pulled neatly back as if combed and made ready for Sunday services. On the back of the packet, in the country's two official languages, World Vision offers a prayer for an 'abundant harvest' (une recolte abondante) together with a word of thanks and an invitation to donate again to support the organization's charitable work. It is a worthy agency and a worthwhile cause, which may be the reason that I've kept this packet unopened rather than offering the seeds to the garden plot at Mary Jane's Cooking School or to the little space I've devoted to vegetable gardening in my yard. My reasoning: there are many opportunities to grow carrots, to offer them to others and to eat them myself. But this brightly coloured packet, the prayers it offers and the seeds it protects, are my contact with the world of the garden month in and month out, year after year.

But it's the other seed packet that cheers me up most of all, especially on those winter mornings

that a button falls off my jacket and I have to go looking for thread and needle before I face the day. That little packet, of Cosmos Bright Lights seeds promises bright yellow and orange blossoms of this "attractive, easily grown annual that displays outstanding heat tolerance". It has indeed, as well as dealing with the chill of winter and the dampness of spring and fall, from year to year, in my kitchen catchall drawer.

My treasure hunt complete, I can turn again to the cleaning that awaits me. I am grateful to World Vision, to McKenzie Seeds and most of all to Mother Earth for these seeds, the carrots that nourish body, mind and soul, and the cosmos whose name evokes the mysteries of the universe and whose colours the butterflies love. There, in my kitchen drawer these seed packets make up a mini bouquet of colours that bring cheer to my heart and dreams of the summer, season after season, year after year.

Happy summer and good gardening to you all.

Submitted by Laura Steiman, President

### FARMING AND GARDENING: TRADITIONS TO CHERISH

As thoughts turn to spring and summer days ahead, many of us find ourselves thinking about garden plants and buying seeds. In the country, one of the pleasant aspects of the uneventful days of winter was looking through seed catalogues and planning the garden. If you were lucky enough to have sprouting potatoes left over from the fall crop you needn't worry about buying seed potatoes.

Growing things has always been a wholesome connection with the earth as we somehow share in the magic of plants and creation. Urban gardeners are no less interested than country folk

## Farming and Gardening ...

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and perhaps even more so as a growing number of people take respite from their hectic schedules in the quiet of their gardens. Some claim to cope with illness through their garden activities. In the garden you can meet other creatures of the earth too, the endless varieties of insects and perhaps small animals. They can be a source of great joy and observation especially if one remembers that these creatures also have needs and interests in their complex micro world just as we have in ours.

The rewards of gardening are many and varied. The sight of a garden well tended is one of beauty and harmony. It is indeed healing for the eyes to look upon nature and garden plants, far better than looking at a television or computer screen. Walking barefoot on the dew in the morning is reputedly good for the eyes too. Eating vegetables straight from the garden with particles of soil clinging to them may be a source of vitamin B12 made by the invisible bacteria in their invisible world. Hopefully the joys and rewards of gardening will never become extinct unless we allow it to happen.

The garden highly dependent upon chemicals (chemical fertilizers, weed and insect killers) is hardly a garden at all. The plants growing under these conditions will be stressed and weakened and more vulnerable to disease and pests. The soil of such a garden has a fractured ecosystem. If we consider the soil to be a living thing, we cannot use pesticides on it and not expect it to be harmed.

Today there are serious issues facing farmers and gardeners. We are living on the edge of a chasm as large corporate forces are tightening their hold on the lives of food producers everywhere. Changes to the Plant Breeders Rights Act have ominous implications. The proposed changes to the act will impose many more restrictions on farmers who save seeds (an ancient time honored

practice). It will extend protection periods on varieties of seeds and plants protected by intellectual property rights legislation, and increase farmers operating costs through the expansion of royalty fees. It will lead to cutbacks in public plant breeding programs. Multi-national corporations are bullying their way to consolidate their power over our food supply through the legal system. Along with getting the patent laws in place, they are promoting terminator technology, which is a process of genetic manipulation by which crops can be altered to produce sterile seed. If these companies had their way, the terminator gene would make it impossible for farmers to save their seed since they would be sterile. With disregard for patent rights, the forces of nature through wind and insects will surely cross contaminate other crops with the very real and dire possibility of the destruction of many crops and world starvation. That was why terminator technology was banned. While Canada supported the ban on this technology it has apparently contradicted its official decision by trying to undermine an international movement to prohibit these terminator genes. Canadian officials were in Bangkok in February 2005 promoting this technology but also in Bangkok was Greenpeace in support of the farmers and their rights. Since disturbingly the U. S. government partly owns the patent on terminator technology, critics wonder if Canadian officials are being agents for the U. S. and the seed corporations. Aside from the use of terminator technology in the control of food, there is the parallel attempt on the part of these corporations to limit the farmer's rights to save their seed and at the same time strengthen their control through patent laws. But as farmer activist Percy Schmeiser has pointed out, plants have thousands of genes and just because one or two genes are manipulated doesn't give anyone the right to obtain a patent on that organism.

Farmers throughout the world have expertise in plants. In the third world farmers have shown

**Farming and Gardening ...**

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extraordinary sophistication in their knowledge of plants and the saving of seeds. In fact indigenous African farmers have seeds that can withstand a variety of conditions. Some seeds will do well in dry periods and some will flourish only with abundant rainfall. Other seeds are saved to suit the climatic conditions of different altitudes along the mountainsides. Indeed the diversity of seeds in their stores has been shown to match the diversity of natural conditions. That diversity is what protects crops from the devastation caused by climatic factors. Such is the wisdom of the indigenous farmers, unlike the monoculture of large corporations, exposing the world through terminator technology to starvation.

When we return to our gardens and farms let us make a commitment to preserve the rights of farmers and gardeners to save and grow their own seeds and to set limits on a technology in the service of multi-national corporations rather

than the public good. We must become informed and rise to the defense of public plant breeding research as opposed to the corporate research with an agenda of domination through control of our very food supply, placing food producers and all of us in servitude. The Canadian people rose to the defense of public health care. We can do it for the basic right of control over our own food too.

Submitted by Mary Jane Eason, Community Nutritionist and Program Coordinator

**RADIO PROGRAM**

*We invite you to tune into to our radio program at CKUW, Community Radio – 95.9 FM, every Monday at 2 pm and Friday at 10:30 am. Along with nutritional information and recipe ideas, Wooden Spoons brings you a variety of perspectives from guests in the community.*

**PEANUT SAUCE OR DIP**

This peanut sauce recipe can be used as a sauce to pour over rice noodles or cooked vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, green beans or carrots. If using as a dip, add water to desired thickness. Use the natural *non-hydrogenated* peanut butter with no added sugar or salt. The oil will be on the surface.

- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 heaping tablespoon grated ginger
- 1 heaping tablespoon minced garlic
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 ½ cups hot water (or less for dip)
- 4 tablespoons cider vinegar or lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt or to taste
- crushed red pepper or cayenne pepper to taste (optional)

Put everything in a blender and puree until smooth. If it is too thick add more water. Alternatively mix by hand, beating quickly to incorporate the liquid. It may become a bit curdled or lumpy at first but will smooth out as it is beaten.

Pour over your steamed vegetables or noodles and garnish with crushed peanuts, brown sesame seeds or fresh basil.

## SPRING AND SUMMER CLASS SCHEDULE 2005

**THE ASIAN TABLE**

Tuesday afternoons 1 – 3:30 p.m.

April 5, 12, 19 & 26

or

Thursday evenings 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

April 7, 14, 21 & 28

**ALL-RISE BREADMAKING  
WORKSHOPS**

Saturdays 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

May 7 & 14

**FLATBREAD WORKSHOPS**

Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons

1:00 – 3:30 p.m.

May 17 & 18

**COOKING WITH HERBS**

Tuesday afternoons 1- 3:30 p.m.

June 7, 14, 21 & 28

or

Thursday evenings, 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.

June 9, 16, 23 & 30

**TO REGISTER:** Call Mary Jane’s Cooking School, (252 Arlington Street) at **775-2522**

***I want to support the work of Mary Jane’s Cooking School Inc.***

With donations of \$10.00 or more you become a member of Mary Jane’s Cooking School Inc. Your contribution will promote nurturing today for a healthier tomorrow.

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Bronze Spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Silver Spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Gold Spoon   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____           |

Cheque or money order enclosed payable to Mary Jane’s Cooking School Inc.  
(Please print)

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