

*Nourish Ourselves Nourish Our Community*

## Evening Meals at School

No. 31

March 28, 2013

Spring is coming slowly this year. The cold weather persists, but there is a slight softening beneath its edge. Our gardens tell us clearly that a change is on the way.

Our menu tonight straddles the end of winter and the early signs of spring and we've managed to draw heavily on the leftover bounty of our island. We've brought back the ever-popular Farmstand Shepherd's Pie – a dish that makes very good use of what is left of our sometimes unattractive winter vegetables. We were fortunate to be offered *Horsedrawn's* last carrots and celeriac of the season along with Brussels sprouts, brassica tops, and beef, potatoes from Kim & Todd at *Windy Bottom*, and winter squash from Jim & Margaret Burkemeier. Our melt-in-your-mouth Oven-Roasted Crispy Cabbage was provided by Tamara & Doug at *Sweetbriar Farm* (purple) and *Horsedrawn* (green). As well as provisioning us with the onions, shallots, and garlic she planted and harvested, Board Member Christine from *Lopez Harvest* delivered, washed, and tore the greens for our seasonal salad. The Hellers also provided local greens as well as a cornucopia of whatever flowers happen to be blooming in their amazing garden. Nettles, one of spring's first wild crops, were bravely gathered by Locavores Nancy Wallace and Marney Reynolds (now also co-chef with Jean Perry) and even more bravely processed by intern, Andy Walton, Jeanna Carter, and the Lopez HS Culinary Class to make the Nettle Pesto. And last, but not least, the hazelnuts for our delectable Chocolate Hazelnut Shortbread came from the Oregon orchard of the Burkemeiers.

Vortex and Blossom Natural Foods helped with supplies not available locally. And to correct an unintentional omission from our last meal, we'd like to thank the Jones Family Farm for their generous donation of beef for the white bean and pumpkin chili in January.

Meaningful dialogue is occurring these days all over the island as people discuss the merits of the school bond coming up for a vote in the next few weeks. From the Locavores standpoint, the school kitchen is in serious need of renovation. The planned remodel would allow for food produced by the Farm to School program to be better utilized, processed, and stored to feed the students and to be used as a culinary teaching space. And this would also open up the possibility of its use as a community kitchen, available for rental to cook and process locally grown food which in turn, would enrich our local economy. Locavores urge Lopezians to think long-range and support this much-needed whole-school renovation and upgrade.

And **mark your calendars now** for our final Summer meal on May 30th!

Thanks as always to all of our generous and committed volunteers and purveyors!

## **Farmstand Shepherd's Pie**

Serves 6-8

*This recipe is easily adapted to use any fresh vegetables available. The pie can be embellished with meat stock and dairy in the mashed potatoes. We kept it simple.*

2 lbs potatoes or combo of potatoes & roasted winter squash 2-3 Tbs olive oil 1 large onion, diced 4 plump garlic cloves 2 carrots, diced 4 cloves garlic, finely diced	1 small head cabbage, thinly chopped 1 small head celeriac, peeled and diced 2 Tbs chopped assorted fresh herbs (thyme, oregano, fennel, etc.) Optional: 1 lb. ground meat Salt and pepper to taste
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1. Cube potatoes, cover with salted water, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Cook until tender. Set aside.
2. If using ground meat, brown in a sauté pan and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.
3. In a soup pot over medium heat, sauté onions in olive oil for 3 minutes. Add carrot, garlic, and celeriac and sauté until vegetables begin to soften, stirring often. Add cabbage and a little water or broth if needed to prevent the stew from sticking. Season with chopped herbs and add optional browned meat and pan juices, simmering gently until vegetables are just tender. Stew should not be too wet – use extra liquid in the mashed potatoes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. While stew simmers, mash potatoes and roasted squash using some potato cooking liquid or liquid from the stew to produce a smooth mash. Season well with salt and pepper.
5. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Butter or oil a large casserole dish. If a bottom layer of potatoes is desired, use a spatula to smear a ½ inch thick layer on the bottom of the dish. Spoon stew on top of potatoes and top it with remaining mash. May be finished under the broiler for nicely browned potatoes. Cool for 15 minutes before serving.

## **Nettle Pesto**

Makes about 3 cups

*Wear gloves and sleeves to prevent the temporary stinging from the nettles (uncomfortable, but not poisonous). Or chop the leaves from the stems after cooking which deactivates the chemicals which cause the stinging sensation.*

9-10 cups young nettles, washed 1 ½ cup (or less) olive oil 10 cloves or 3 Tbs pureed garlic	Salt and pepper to taste Optional: pine nuts, walnuts, or sunflower seeds Lemon juice to taste
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1. Blanch nettles in a pot of boiling, salted water (should taste like the ocean) for one minute. Immersing using a deep colander works well.
2. Remove from water and rinse quickly with cold water to stop the cooking process. Drain and/or squeeze to remove the excess liquid (which makes a healthful drink).
3. Process all ingredients in a food processor or blender. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freeze.

## **Chocolate Hazelnut Shortbread**

Makes a 9 x 9-inch pan, 12 squares

1 cup butter 2 ¼ cups flour ½ cup sugar ¼ tsp salt ½ cup ground hazelnuts	<u>Chocolate Glaze</u> 1/4 cup butter ½ cup chocolate chips or good quality chocolate bar, broken into pieces
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1. Toast nuts on a baking pan at 325 degrees for 5-10 minutes until fragrant. Chop, blend, or process until fine.
2. Mix all ingredients in a food processor or mixer. Press into pan.
3. Bake for 15 minutes or until top is golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool completely.
4. Spread chocolate glaze over shortbread. Cool before cutting.