

Michael Pollan described this time of year best when he said, “Nature abhors a garden.” The weeds threaten to overwhelm our carefully planned and planted vegetable beds and everywhere we look the wild lushness of spring is evident.

Trying to promote local and seasonal, the menu for our Summer meal is always the most difficult to plan. We are usually caught between the last of our preserved food from previous year’s gardens and the not-quite-readiness of the new crops. But in our season finale tonight, we were able to locally source a significant portion of the meal. Corn, tomatoes, herbs, salad greens, and early strawberries were contributed by island purveyors and even the corn meal for the polenta hails from the Fairhaven Mill in Burlington. And nothing sings “Lopez Spring” better than rhubarb for our buttery mazurkas.

Many thanks for all the help we received this year from the School Culinary Class – the baked apples to kick off the meals in October, the Nettle Pesto in March, and tonight’s gluten-free version of our rhubarb strawberry mazurka, along with harvesting and prepping spinach and greens from their own school garden. The L.I.F.E. Garden and Farm Program, now in its eighth year, has expanded from the original Rishi Garden to include 12,000 square feet of vegetable beds, three high tower hoop houses, an orchard, and two dedicated school farmers – Suzanne Berry and Valerie Yukluk. In one recent season, Suzanne reported a harvest of 300 pounds of organic tomatoes and green beans, 60 pounds of tomatillos and 30 pounds of carrots and beets. All this fresh produce has transformed food culture in the cafeteria and had a profound effect on the eating habits of students.

Thanks to all of you for joining us at this ongoing community event in support of local food and farmers! The Locavores look forward to seeing you when Evening Meals at School resume in the Fall. Wishing everyone a bountiful summer!

And a huge thank you, as always, to all of our **generous and committed volunteers and purveyors!**

**Provisioning**

L.I.F.E./School Garden	spinach, greens
Horse Drawn Farm	rhubarb, arugula, mizuna, pea tendrils
Lopez Harvest	spinach, lettuce, fresh & dried herbs, dried sweet corn, and frozen tomato sauce, pesto, and garlic scapes
Jones Family Farm	pork
Michele & Steve Heller	spinach, flowers
Michael & Anne Karp	strawberries
Stephanie & Tom Froning	strawberries
Charles Mish	rhubarb
Marney Reynolds	garlic, herbs, & frozen tomatoes
Jean Perry	herbs for tea

## **POLENTA LASAGNA (Serves 8-10)**

**1 Polenta recipe - Cut into 3 pieces to fit your baking dish.**  
**1 cup Quick Tomato Sauce**  
**1 Spinach Layer recipe**  
**1 Italian Sausage Layer (optional)**  
**2 c. fresh mozzarella cheese, cut into small pieces**

**1 c. ricotta, drained**  
**1 c. Parmesan cheese, grated**

Gently mix the 3 cheeses together adding a few grinds of black pepper and nutmeg. Lightly oil a 16" x 16" baking dish and put down one layer of polenta followed by the spinach. Top spinach layer with 1/3 of the cheese mixture. Follow with another polenta layer - this time adding the sausage and another 1/3 of the cheese mixture. Top with final piece of polenta and spoon the tomato sauce, sprinkling the remaining cheese over all.

### **Oven-Roasted Polenta**

**2 cups medium-coarse or coarse cornmeal, preferably organic stone-ground**  
**6 cups water (or half water/ half milk)**  
**1/2 c. sweet corn**  
**4 Tbs. butter or olive oil**  
**2 T. mixed dried herbs (oregano, basil, thyme, parsley)**  
**1/2 c. grated parmesan cheese**  
**1 T. salt; more to taste**

Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease a 3-qt. nonstick ovenproof skillet; pour in the cornmeal, water, milk (if using), butter, and salt and stir with a fork until blended. The mixture will separate and take more than half the cooking time to come together. Bake uncovered for 40 minutes. Stir the polenta, taste, add salt if needed, and bake for another 10 minutes. Remove from the oven and stir in the parmesan cheese. Let the polenta rest in the pan for 5 minutes before pouring it into a buttered cookie sheet or onto a wooden board to cool. The polenta should be no more than 3/8 inch thick.

### **Quick Tomato Sauce**

**3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1/2 medium yellow onion, finely chopped**  
**1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**  
**Salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 16-oz. can plum tomatoes with juice, coarsely chopped**

In a saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, parsley, a generous pinch of salt, and a couple grinds of pepper. Cook until the onion is pale gold, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juices, stir well, and simmer gently to blend the flavors and reduce the sauce to about 2 cups, 20 minutes (adjust the heat as necessary to maintain a gentle simmer). Season to taste with salt and pepper. If you want a smoother texture, pass the sauce through a food mill or purée in a food processor. This sauce will keep in an airtight container in the refrigerator for about 5 days. You can freeze it for up to 3 months.

### **Spinach Layer**

**2 lb. fresh spinach, or 2 10-oz. packages frozen chopped spinach, thawed**  
**2 T. unsalted butter or 2 T. olive oil**  
**1/2 medium yellow onion, finely chopped (about 1/2 cup)**  
**3 medium cloves garlic, minced**  
**1/2 t. salt**

If using fresh spinach, stem and rinse it well; don't dry the leaves. In a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat, cook the spinach until wilted, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain well, squeeze out the excess moisture, and chop finely. If using thawed frozen spinach, squeeze it dry. Melt the butter in a 10- or 12-inch skillet over medium-low heat and add the onion. Cook until the onion is soft and translucent, 5 to 8 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for about 1 minute. Add the spinach and toss it for 1 or 2 minutes to coat it with the butter. Transfer the spinach mixture to a bowl and let it cool to room temperature.

### **Italian Sausage Layer**

**1 lb. Italian bulk sausage**  
**1 T. olive oil for pan**

In a 12-inch skillet over medium heat, add olive oil. Add the sausage to the pan by breaking it up into small pieces. Cook about 5 minutes or until no longer pink. Set aside to cool.