

Nourish Ourselves

January 31, 2008

Nourish Our Community

Serving Community Evening Meals at the Lopez School is a very simple idea that can generate deeply sustaining ideals. There is the immediate benefit of a robust and delicious meal at a modest price. We also hope to support a number of diverse and interlocking interests that enhance the health and well being of Lopez Island.

Providing a satisfying meal using as much locally grown food as possible allows us to appreciate the bounty of this season, in this place, and to appreciate and connect with the farmers who have produced it for us. By gathering at the school we bring community into the educational institution and promote congenial interaction. In return for allowing us into their domain, Dana, Sam and the rest of the kitchen staff will receive an improvement to their kitchen for each meal we prepare there. The first contribution is two 40-quart stainless steel soup pots.

We will share recipes and practical preparation techniques (on the back side of this sheet) that encourage our use and enjoyment of local produce. We hope to showcase and reinforce the work of the Lopez Island Farm Education (LIFE) Program in the school and encourage community members to appreciate and become involved in this work. A community meal offers us the simple luxury of a respite from our own cooking and an opportunity for congregation, fellowship, or reflection at the quiet table.

Inspiration for our White Bean and Pumpkin Chili came from the large crop of pumpkins produced this year at T & D Farms. We thank them. The red onions, carrots, turnips, and rutabagas come from Horse Drawn Farm. Todd Kegerreis donated the garlic. Our slaw is made primarily of cabbage from Horse Drawn Farm with darker greens supplied by a number of small local gardens. Northfield Farm generously contributed the lamb sausage. Ivan Brown supplied the beets for the chocolate cake and the eggs are from the hens of Shannon Sternberg. Nancy and Blake Rankin contributed Choice Organic Peppermint Tea that was harvested within the state of Washington. We thank them and with this meal offer humble evidence of our appreciation.

Tonight's dinner was made possible through generous sponsorship along with the good will and efforts of many volunteers. Our hope is that in the future Community Evening Meals will be financially self-sustaining through continued sponsorships and donations that allow the meal price to remain affordable to all. At our next meal we will share the actual cost of producing this first meal.

Help with any aspect of ongoing Community Evening Meals is welcome. If you are interested in anything from sharing your seeds to wielding a mop, we encourage you to get involved. Lend a hand tonight or sign to help with future Community Evening Meals at the information table or at the website www.lopezlocavores.org. We hope to include as many island producers as possible in the evening meals, so please contact us with ideas, offerings, or thoughts for the future.

Thank you for being a part of our first Community Evening Meal at the Lopez School. Future Evening Meals are tentatively scheduled for the last Wednesday of each month. Please leave your contact information so that we can notify you of the exact date. We look forward to dining with you again.

"If every US citizen ate just one meal a week (any meal) composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce, we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels of oil every week."

-Barbara Kingsolver

White Bean and Pumpkin Chili

Serves 8 to 10 generously

8 lb pumpkin, seeds removed, peeled, and coarsely chopped
(If pumpkin is too hard or dangerous to peel and chop, roast it whole and scoop out pumpkin meat when cool enough to touch)

2 cups dried white beans

¼ cup olive oil

2 large red onions, diced

2 Tbsp finely chopped garlic

¾ lb combination of carrots, parsnips, rutabagas, diced

3 Tbsp ground chili powder

3 Tbsp ground cumin

3 quarts or more vegetable or chicken stock or water

Salt and Pepper to taste

Cooking Beans

The night before cooking the chili, sort through dried beans and pick out any rocks and discolored beans. Put beans in a heavy bottomed pot, cover with 4 inches of water, and bring to a boil.

Remove the bean pot from the stove, cover, and let stand overnight.

Before adding to the chili, drain, rinse, and cook beans in enough water to cover until almost tender.

In a large, heavy bottomed soup pot, heat olive oil over medium high heat. Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown, about 3 to 5 minutes. Add chopped garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 2 minutes. Toss in the chili powder and ground cumin and stir to coat. Add carrots, parsnips, and rutabagas, and sauté for 5 more minutes. Toss in the chopped (or roasted and scooped) pumpkin and the cooked white beans.

Pour stock or water over vegetables to cover by 2 inches. Bring pot to a gentle simmer and cook until pumpkin and beans are soft, adding more liquid as necessary, approximately 1 to 1½ hours. Using a potato masher or immersion blender, gently mash about ¼ of the soup and return to soup pot. Taste for spices and salt and pepper.

Note:

Soup is best made a day or so before serving to let flavors blend. Optional garnishes to serve with chili:

Sour cream, sliced green onions, hot sauce, lime wedges, grated cheese, tamari sauce, and nutritional yeast.

Cabbage Slaw with Winter Greens

Serves 4 to 6

1½ lb green cabbage, very thinly sliced

1 bunch winter greens-kale, mustard greens, etc., thinly sliced

1 bunch green onions, thinly sliced

1 clove garlic

2 Tbsp finely chopped shallot

Grated zest of 2 limes

2 to 3 Tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice

½ tsp ground coriander

¼ tsp cayenne pepper

1/3 cup olive oil

Salt to taste

In a large bowl toss together the cabbage, winter greens, and green onion.

Crush garlic and combine with lime zest, lime juice, shallot, and spices. Whisk in olive oil and taste for salt. Toss dressing with greens about 20 minutes before serving to combine flavors.

Chocolate Blackberry Beet Brownies

Makes 1-9" by 13" pan

12 Tbsp unsweetened cocoa

1 stick (4 oz) unsalted butter

¾ lb red beets, cooked, peeled, and puréed

¾ cup blackberry jam

2 large eggs

½ tsp salt

1½ cups sugar

1 tsp vanilla

1 cup all purpose flour or 1¼ spelt flour

Preheat oven to 350°. Melt butter and ¼ cup jam. Mix in cocoa and puréed beets. In another bowl beat together eggs, salt, sugar, and vanilla then add chocolate beet mixture. Add flour and mix until just blended-over mixing will produce tough brownies. Spread thick batter into a greased 9" by 13" pan. Melt the remaining ½ cup of jam and drizzle over the top. Bake brownies until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the pan comes out with a few moist crumbs attached-approximately 20 minutes. Better to under bake than over bake. Cool on a rack for 15 minutes before cutting and serving.