



‘We think it might be our liquid gold’

Maine orchard upping production of apple cider syrup

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

HIRAM — Three hundred thirty gallons of cider pressed from Macouns, Cortlands and Macintosh sit in Bill Johnson’s pickup truck. It’s Monday afternoon, and clusters of families stop at his pick-your-own orchard, Apple Acres Farm, for shiny, crisp fruit. In the store, apple cider doughnuts and chocolate-covered apples satisfy hungry leaf peepers. The shelves are loaded with apple wine, and

a refrigerator is filled with hard cider. But his batch is on its way to an alchemist who will turn it into a thick, golden syrup — a value-added potion that just might rock apple lovers to the core. “We think it might be our liquid gold,” Johnson, who released a limited amount of apple cider syrup six months ago, said. Mixologists in Portland went gaga,

and it sold out fast. This fall, he’s upping production from 500 bottles to 8,000. Just as blueberry growers in Maine are creating new products such as tea to stretch the short season and gain extra income, inventive orchardists such as Johnson are looking for ways to keep the fruits of his labor flush. “It’s an old product. They were doing it back in the 1800s and called it boiled cider syrup,” said Johnson, whose sister Johanna Cor-

man uses this secret weapon at Vena’s Fizz House, a cocktail bar and boutique in Portland, where the syrup is sold and laced with alcohol in popular drinks, such as the Lumber Sexual. Thick like honey and more tart than maple syrup, it’s neither nor. “It’s more puckery than maple syrup,” said Apple Acres farm manager Molly McKenna, who is sworn to secrecy on its origins. Yes, other orchards make and bottle apple cider syrup, but



KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN
Apple Acres Farm in Hiram is about to release its second batch of apple cider syrup, a honey-like product for marinades, drinks and baking.

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Marinated chicken for busy nights

When I was a little girl, my family would spell names and critical words when talking about sensitive subjects at the dinner table. And that was all fine and dandy for keeping me in the dark — until I learned to spell.

But, being a curious child, I kept quiet about knowing what they were spelling for a while. I loved having a secret inside look at adult conversations. But finally, one day, I couldn’t take it anymore.

“You know I can spell, right? So, there’s really no need to keep spelling H-U-G-O. Just say Hugo, it’s easier!”

Ironically, years later my kids had a near similar conversation with me.

Who taught those kids to spell anyway? Oh. Right.

But family dinners are more than just a time to share family gossip and discuss things impacting us. It’s also more than a place to talk about our days. It’s where we bond as a family, where I learn about what’s happening on the playground and the interests my kids are developing. It’s where I can offer advice but also just listen — and, moreover, teach them to just listen to each other. It’s where the magic happens.

And sometimes that magic includes uncontrollable laughter, which is good for all of us.

No, really, it’s good for us. According to the Mayo Clinic, laughter has actual health benefits, from stimulating your heart, lungs and muscles to relieving stress and soothing tension. Laughing more is a good thing.

Sometimes that laughter has to do with funny things that happened during the day. Sometimes it has to do with things happening right at that second. Whatever causes it, it’s good.

After long days filled with work, school, homework, practices and more, it’s good to just laugh a little. And it’s also good to not get stressed out by making dinner.



SARAH WALKER CARON



CHICKEN MARINADE

YIELDS ENOUGH FOR 1 LB CHICKEN

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tsp honey
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp dried rosemary

DIRECTIONS

1. Whisk together all ingredients in a bowl. Add to a resealable plastic bag with boneless chicken. Marinate for at least 1 hour in the refrigerator. Longer is better though.
2. For boneless chicken breasts: Once chicken is done marinating, bake breasts at 375 degrees on a baking sheet or cast iron skillet for 20-25 minutes, flipping once.



RECIPE: SARAH WALKER CARON
ART: ERIC ZELZ

Cue the idea for easy dinners that take minutes to toss on the table. This recipe for an easy chicken marinade can be a part of that. This takes a minute to whisk together in the morning and toss in a resealable bag with chicken.

If you’re using boneless chicken breasts, you’ll need 20 to 25 minutes to cook ‘em before serving. Or you can make them ahead of time and slice them up to enjoy in dinner.

How?
Easy Chicken Sandwich Bar: Marinate and cook boneless

chicken breasts and slice into quarter-inch slices. Serve with hoagie rolls, sliced tomatoes, thinly sliced red onions, sliced cucumbers, julienne cut carrots and lettuce. You can also include spreads such as pesto, mayonnaise and hummus. Let everyone design his or her own sandwich creation.

Chicken Rice Bowls: Layer hot cooked rice with sliced chicken and veggies in individual bowls. Top, if desired, with a fried egg. These can be seasoned simply with salt and pepper or spiced up with barbecue sauce or hot sauce.

Quick Chicken Tomato Broccoli Pasta Toss: Toss together diced cooked chicken with halved cherry tomatoes, steamed broccoli, grated parmesan cheese and hot cooked pasta. Season as desired with salt and pepper and dig in.

Sarah Walker Caron is the senior features editor for the Bangor Daily News and author of “Grains as Mains: Modern Recipes Using Ancient Grains.” For more delicious recipes, check out Maine Course at mainecourse.bangordailynews.com.

One more late-season zucchini recipe

It won’t be much longer that we can enjoy fresh-from-the-garden zucchini. Maybe that is a good thing, depending on how much of it you have eaten already or how much you like the stuff. I can eat squash roasted in a 400 degree oven with garlic or stir fried with onions until the cows come home, but



SANDY OLIVER

TASTE BUDS

Toby gets a haunted look when summer squash appears on the table for the third or fourth time in a week.

As it happens, Barbara Benz, who hails from Ellicott City, Maryland, is visiting here with her daughter, Bailey, this week as a World Wide Opportunities in Organic Farming volunteer, and she whipped out a tasty little wrinkle in the zucchini department: crusty zucchini chips.

Thinly sliced zucchini, dipped in breadcrumbs and Parmesan or Romano cheese and baked in a hot oven on parchment paper until they are golden make a dandy appetizer or even vegetable side dish. Or, I suppose, if you made enough of them, your whole dinner. You can dunk them in sauce if you want, but we just cleaned the plateful straight up with a little salt and pepper sprinkled on them.

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Rosemary: This is no delicate herb

BY DANIEL NEMAN
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Any English major will tell you that rosemary is for remembrance.

In “Hamlet,” poor Ophelia in her madness hands out herbs and flowers just before she drowns herself. The first one she gives is rosemary, saying “that’s for remembrance.”

Rosemary is easy to remember because it is so strong and powerful. It is not a delicate herb; it is forceful with a taste that is unforgettable and instantly recognizable.

Think pine trees. Rosemary has that same smell and taste (but in a good way). Though it is an evergreen, it is not actually related to pine trees, however.

Rosemary is a shrub, a bush that originated around the Mediterranean Sea. Most of the foods it goes with, not surprisingly, are also popular in that region.

Lamb, for one. Rosemary is a natural accompaniment to lamb, its bracing flavor a perfect match for the inherent gaminess of lamb. There are those who would argue, and I would be among them, that rosemary pairs with lamb even better than mint does.

So that is why, when looking at

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Harvest on the Harbor returns to celebrate food

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

Now in its eighth year, the autumnal food and wine celebration Harvest on the Harbor returns in October with more events, new locations and a touch of Food Network glam.

Run by the Greater Portland Convention and Visitors Bureau, the five-day event is stuffed like a holiday goose. From a stage dinner at the Merrill Auditorium, to a moonlight gala in Scarborough, to a barbecue competition judged by Food Network “Cutthroat Kitchen” star chef Elliot Farmer, there is enough to appease foodies of all stripes.

The favorite event, Maine Lobster Chef of the Year, scheduled for Oct. 23, is already sold out.

Returning champion Stephen Richards of Boothbay Harbor’s Mine Oyster will attempt to hold onto his title, which he nabbed with the longest name in event history: Pumpkin powdered, mascarpone and chestnut crispy polenta bar with roasted fig gastrique, brown butter froth, peppered pancetta chip and 24-hour cold-smoked lobster claw.

Will he tone it down this year? Go simple? Crank it up a few notches?

He’ll have some tough competitors. Matt Ginn of Portland’s

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BDN FILE

The stage was set for a seven-course harvest dinner last October to kick off Harvest on the Harbor in Portland.