Food store owner has plans for elderberries | ALBUM

BY ANTHONY BRINO **BDN STAFF**

They don't know it now, but at least a few elderberry bushes in Wisconsin are destined to spend the rest of their lives in Aroostook County

When Cheryle Matowitz, owner of Presque Isle's Bread of Life Bulk Food and Specialty Store, visits her hometown of Pittsville, Wisconsin, this April, she'll be digging up elderberry bushes to plant when she returns to Maine.

Elderberries are tart, sweet and rich in vitamin C, vitamin A and antioxidants, and they "grow wild all over Wissaid Matowitz. 'They're like a weed."

Elderberries have long been used in cuisine and folk medicine in European, and families such as Matowitz's, from German-Norwegian heritage, brought the traditions to the U.S. more than a centu-

"We'd make jam with them. A lot of people make



The most commonly harvested species of elderberry, Sambucus canadensis, has berries that turn a deep, dark color as they ripen, hinting at their antioxidants.

wine with them. You can make syrup for coughs, because the elderberry helps loosen mucus and clean the bronchial system," Matowitz said. "My great-grandmother would harvest tons of elderberries, tie them on strings and hang them in the attic. When you were sick, she would go up and get a little."

There are about a dozen elderberry species native to North America, including the common Sambucus canadensis, or American black elderberry, which blossoms early in the summer with small white flowers that later yield clusters of dark purple berries. (Some species can be mildly toxic to

Cheryle Matowitz, owner of Bread of Life Bulk Food and Specialty Store, holds dried organic elderberries, which she adds to tea and honey. She plans to start cultivating the elderberries at her home in Wade this summer.

humans but are distin- kind of tiny, crunchy, bitterguished with their red berries when ripe.) Elderberries grow less commonly in the northeast, but others such as Matowitz are starting to change that.

Matowitz sells dried elderberries at her store, which can be reconstituted and added to teas or eaten as a

sweet raisin. The ripe elderberries are best cooked and mixed with other fruits, Matowitz said.

'We always took the elderberries with pear or maybe a crab apple and mixed it together for a jelly," she said. "The dried ones can be added to a tea or honey.'

formerly of Milford, N.H., are pleased to announce the engagement of daughter Hilary Scott to Adam LeBreton, son of Mr. Wayne LeBreton

Hilary Scott

Adam LeBreton

Mr. and Mrs. Timothy

Scott,

Deborah

Engagement

stepson of Mrs. Karen LeBreton of Hermon, and son of Mrs. Marie Baker and stepson of Mr. Thomas Baker of Holden.

September wedding is planned.

Nutrition program gives tykes food for thought

BY COURTLAND MILLOY THE WASHINGTON POST

There's a certain optimism that comes from watching prekindergarten students learn to cook. To hear 3- and 4-year-olds using words such as "ingredients" and "measurements" is a reminder that children often are smarter than their tender years might suggest.

"You are not babies. You are young chefs," Vera Oye' Yaa-Anna, a nutrition educator, told a pre-K class at Leckie Elementary School in Southwest Washington (District of Columbia) recently. Impressed by their new, grownup-sounding title, the kids actually began to take on a more mature personas, offering a glimpse of the adult under construction within them.

"What color is spinach?" Oye' asked.

the children "Green! screamed. delighted as much by their learning prowess as their chef's outfits, complete with toque.

Oye', a native of Liberia, works with Frann Robertson, an early-childhood-education specialist at Leckie. Together, they have built a virtual pre-K curriculum around preparing healthy meals. Food, as it turns out, can be a phenomenal teaching tool.

"Just mention food and you get their undivided attention," Oye' said. "Everybody likes to eat, and children at this age really enjoy learning how to make something good to eat.'

Preparing and serving food helps the students sharpen their social skills. And, of course, eating healthy can actually jumpstart a child's cognitive and physical development. At Leckie, improved nutrition, both on the cafeteria menu and in student's choices, is credited in part with recent gains in academic achieve-

"Everybody likes to eat, and children at this age really enjoy learning how to make something good to

> VERA OYE' YAA-ANNA, NUTRITION EDUCATOR

"When we talk about food preparation, we're using lots of new words and math skills," Roberston said. She calls the cooking class "freerange learning" because students get to move from one subject to another, depending on what catches their attention during the pro-

"If students come in feeling sluggish or tired, we talk about the role that food plays in boosting their energy or bringing it down," Robertson said. "If you don't feed your mind with knowledge, you will be lost. But if you don't feed your body mind won't be able to take in means.) And she uses guava the knowledge you need. They learn how everything works together."

The work of Oye' at Leckie is funded through the Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative. She began conducting healthy food workshops throughout the city in 1998 and operates through her nonprofit called Oye' Palaver Hut. (Palaver Hut means "cultural hub of the village" in West African villages.) She incorporates cooking lessons and storytelling designed for children age 2 to 5.

How it all began is pretty remarkable.

"I was telling some kids about the food and culture where I was born, in Africa, and a little boy asked where my food came from," Oye' recalled. "I told him that I lived on Capitol Hill and asked him, 'Where do you think I get my food?' He said

You hunt vour food in Rock Creek Park.' I said, 'Whoa, we've got some teaching to do."

So she took the children to Eastern Market, bought some fruit and vegetables and prepared a meal. Some of the kids had never seen an avocado and couldn't identify a tomato or broccoli. But they enjoyed the meal and asked her to show them how to make it.

Not all kids like the taste of healthy foods. At least, not at first.

"It may take them five times of sampling a certain vegetable and experimenting with herbs and spices before they develop a taste for it," Oye' said. "That's because their taste buds have been affected by all of this junk food."

The most popular food for kids seems to be fried chicken and macaroni and cheese. So Oye' teaches them how to broil chicken and make macaroni from scratch. (She with healthy foods, your had to explain what scratch fruit juice as a sweetener instead of sugar.

On the day I visited the school, the students had prepared a special luncheon for Oye' as a way of showing their appreciation. The meal included jambalaya, a green salad and chips and a spinach dip.

"What's in this salad that tastes so good?" Oye' asked. "Avocado," the children

Oye' was clearly pleased. But what she finds most satisfying usually happens when the children are at home, showing off what they've learned.

'They'll tell the parents, 'No, that came from a box. Let me show you how to make it from scratch; let me show you how to make it real," Oye' said.

Not babies, not even at 3, but young chefs working on recipes for life.

March Cooperative **Extension events**

SKOWHEGAN — Somerset County Cooperative Extension Homemakers, partners with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, offers adult education in the areas of food safety, nutrition and health, gardening, cultural and creative arts, financial planning and going green.

Individual groups have community service projects for veterans, families in need, food cupboards, shelters and charities. This year Somerset County, will collect teddy bears for police troopers to give to deserving children.

The following Somerset County Extension Homemakers will have fundraising and activities to benefit the theme "Teddies for Troopers."

Somerset County Cooperative Extension Homemakers March programs open to the public are:

Herbs and spices, 6:30

p.m. Wednesday, March 16, at Methodist Church Fellowship Hall, Clinton.

Craft, 9:30 a.m. Thursday, March 17, in a private home in Madison.

For information, call the Somerset County Extension office at 474-9622 or 800-287-1495, TDD 800-287-8957, or visit extension. umaine.edu.

Hampden Club hosts horticulturist

HAMPDEN — The Hampden Garden Club will present a talk by Kate Garland, horticulturist at University of Maine Cooperative Extension, on this year's All America flower selections at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 22, at the Hampden town office meeting room.

information, For 862-3909.

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Meat

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Senator King would eliminate state regulations created when the current meat inspection program was established during the Governor King administration," John Bott, spokesman for the Maine agriculture department, said.

the Maine State Meat Inspection Program was signed into law by King, who was governor in 2003, as a cooperative agreement between the USDA and the state that allows Maine to have stateemployed inspectors on site during processing rather than USDA inspectors.

barriers that aren't always slaughterhouses to thrive."

According to King's office, necessary for small farmers who may raise a few cows to feed their families or neighbors," Pingree, who raises grass-fed beef on her Maine farm, said. "Small farmers sometimes just don't have access to USDA-inspected processors without driving hours each way [and] the act would expand the current The PRIME ACT would custom exemption and allow help lift some of the federal small farms, ranches and

Cabbage

their hand at growing a colossal cabbage, including Tanner's class. The company is seeking out more participants for the free pro-

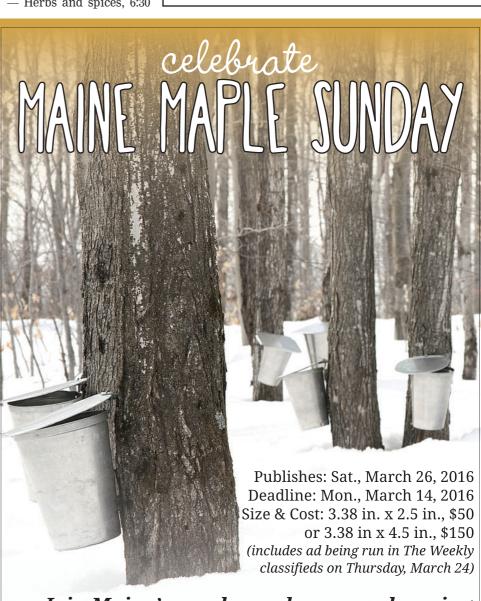
"The Bonnie Plants Cabbage Program is a wonderful way to engage children's interest in agriculture," Stan Cope, president of Bonnie Plants, said in a media release issued by the company. "We're pleased and proud of our Maine state winner, Tanner Carson!"

Tanner, who would like to assure folks that he did not add anything special to the water he gave to his cabbage, said that at times last summer he wondered when the growth would stop.

"It was just really weird, how it grew so big," he said, and remembers thinking "if it keeps growing at this rate, it will get bigger than the house.'

This summer, he intends to continue working in the garden. He loves eating fresh-picked peas, he said, and likes the other vegetables the family grows.

"I think gardening is really, really fun," he said.



Join Maine's maple producers each spring as they celebrate Maine Maple Sunday.

It's the day when sugar makers around the state open their doors of their sugarhouses for the public to join them in their rites of spring-making maple syrup.



Sheep

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wayside," said Woolley. "They are retiring and giving it up. It's just too much for them."

A blade shearing school takes place April 15-16 at Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, 707 Shaker Road, in New Gloucester. The \$120 per person fee includes a shearing manual and lunch. To register, visit umaine.edu/livestock/ sheep/sheep-shearingschools. For more information, call 581-2788.

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