

Naturalists club combines joy of the outdoors with interest in natural life

If you like to get outdoors and meet people with an interest in studying and exploring the natural world, come join the Halton/North Peel Natural Club.

The group gets together on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at St. Andrew's United Church, 89 Mountainview Rd. S., Georgetown.

The meetings include expert speakers giving presentations on a wide variety of topics, including natural areas inventory study, insects, trees, birds, crustaceans, to name just a few.

Outdoor events include local field trips and to other areas of interest in southern Ontario and the GTA, to watch birds, study frogs and salamanders and enjoy whatever nature has to offer. There is at least one outdoor event each month. These hikes are led by one of the club's naturalists. Christmas Bird counts are done locally—an event always enjoyed by many.

Come and enjoy nature.

Spice up your life

It is so cold outside, let's spice it up a bit inside! Here is a few tips for your spice rack and herb collection:

1. Spices are ideally stored in dark, cool places. Although it is very convenient to keep them beside the stove, this is not a good storing space. The heat, humidity and light cause the spices to lose their aroma, colour and flavour.

2. Even if you store your spices well, check them from time to time to see if they are still vibrant in colour and aroma—this indicates that the flavour has remained in tact as well.

3. When it comes to garlic, there is no beating fresh garlic that you chop yourself. However, if you absolutely need a substitute, the frozen cubes of garlic seem to have the next best flavour. Chopped garlic in oil loses a lot of its flavour to the oil and does not taste as fresh. Powdered garlic has its uses, mostly in rubs—do not substitute it when fresh garlic is called for in a recipe.

4. When buying garlic, look for heads that are plump and heavy. There should be no green sprouts visible and there should be several layers of the "paper" covering the head.

5. When cooking with most fresh herbs, you will get more 'bang for your buck', if you use the stem as well as the leaves.

In the case of many herbs such as thyme, rosemary, tarragon and oregano, you can add the entire stem to your dish and then remove just before serving. Or, if you wish, remove the leaves, chop and add to the dish, but add the stems too (there is lots of flavour to be had there) and then just remove the stems before serving. It helps if you count how many stems you put in, so you can get them all out!

6. If you are cooking with dried herbs, crush them slightly in your hand before adding to your dish. You will get more flavour from them.

7. If you like to cook with fresh chilies, but they are a bit too hot for your liking, put on a pair of gloves, cut them open and remove the seeds. It is the seeds and the membrane on the inside that are the main culprits when it comes to the heat.

8. Salt has become of great importance to the 'foodies' of the world. Salt is now available not only in many different grinds, but also in many different flavours and origins too. Salt was very precious for a long time and was used by the Romans as a form of currency. The term 'salary' is derived from the Latin 'salarium' because Roman legionaries used to collect their salary in the form of salt.

9. Fresh coriander and cilantro are the same thing. If you have a recipe calling for coriander—it is generally assumed that is the dried, ground seed of the plant. However, if it calls for fresh coriander, it is the same as cilantro and this is the name that you will most likely see when you go shopping for it in the grocery store!

Have fun and keep cooking!

Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner



The Honda

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Baked Beans

Step 1

- 16 oz white pea beans
 - water to cover
- Cover beans with cold water and allow to soak overnight.



Step 2

- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp parsley, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tbsp salt
- pinch of oregano
- pinch of thyme
- pinch of chili powder
- pinch of cloves

Next morning, put beans and water on the stove. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and allow to simmer. Add the garlic, parsley, oregano, thyme, chili powder, cloves, bay leaf and salt. Simmer gently for half an hour to 1 hour. Drain and save the beans and the liquid.

Step 3

- 1/2 lb salt pork or side bacon
- 1 1/2 cups bean liquid
- 1/2 cup chili sauce or ketchup
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1/2 tsp each: dry mustard, salt, and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp worchestshire sauce
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1/2 tsp celery seed
- few drops Tabasco sauce
- 2 tsp cider vinegar
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 1 tbsp brown sugar

Cut pork into large cubes or chunks. Pour drained beans into a large earthenware casserole dish and throw in the pork cubes. Make a sauce by combining the bean liquid, chili sauce or ketchup and onion over low heat. Add seasonings, tasting carefully as you go along. When it tastes pungent and hot, stir in the molasses. (Remember that the pungency will be cut by the beans.)