

POWER invites all to Future Forest Day

POWER (Protect Our Water and Environmental Resources), a local environmental organization, is holding its annual Community Day tomorrow (Saturday) at the Silver Creek area of the Niagara Escarpment (27 Sideroad between Eighth and Ninth Lines.)

POWER's Community Day will run from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will include the opportunity for participants to plant trees as part of the organization's ongoing reforestation of Halton Hills. In addition, residents can take the opportunity to hike along one of the most beautiful stretches of the Escarpment. Another Community Day will be held in the Hungry Hollow in June.

"We all remember the delightful childhood song that begins 'If you go down in the woods today?'" said Leslie Adams, POWER president. "Unfortunately, unless we are willing to work for our environment, that opportunity may one day be a distant memory. One and one-half acres of forest (mainly rainforest) are lost every second with tragic consequences for both developing and industrial countries. According to ABC's 20/20, forests the size of the state of Kansas are disappearing every year."

Ann Geh, chair of POWER's Projects Committee said, "POWER has been involved for the past seven years with the citizens to reforest key areas in our community. In this time we have worked with more than 12,000 students and residents to plant trees in Halton Hills."

Adams added, "Every thing we do has an impact on the earth and the systems that support our lives and livelihoods. Our Future Forest Project and our Community Days help make a positive difference locally and globally. By involving the community POWER works to provide part of the reforestation that acts as a carbon sink to reduce global warming. By deciding to join us on the Escarpment this Sunday you are taking actions that help combat climate change. Every bit helps."

POWER's Community Day is a free event thanks to the generous support of the Trillium Foundation. For more information, contact Adams, 905-877-4766.

Special scale used to gauge pepper heat

We wanted to finish up our trio of spring recipes this week with a tribute to fiddleheads. But alas, we were premature in our quest. They hadn't hit the stores in time to prepare the recipe and get it in the paper. So, hopefully next week we'll be able to finish that series off for you.

In the meantime, we'll switch to a whole other topic. I had the need to study up on hot peppers for work recently and I thought you might be interested in some of the things I learned. I like my food flavourful and I certainly enjoy a bit of heat—but I am not a manic. I find that after a certain point of heat, I can't taste the food anymore. Perhaps my taste buds have shut down by then in protest. But here is a little trivia for you:

- The Scoville scale is a scale developed by Wilbur Scoville in 1912 to measure the heat level in chilies. The test measures the pungency level of a given

Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner



pepper and then rates it on a scale with other peppers. So, the more Scoville units a pepper has, the hotter it is.

- A sweet bell pepper is a zero on the Scoville scale, while a fresh poblano pepper rates 1,000-1,500. A jalapeno or a chipotle pepper rate between 2500-10,000. A scotch bonnet rates at 300,000. The hottest pepper ever recorded scored a 577,000 on the scale.

- An ancho is a dried poblano
- Anchos, passila and guajillo chilies make up the 'holy trinity' of mole sauces
- A chipotle pepper is a smoked

jalapeno pepper

- The substance that makes a chili so hot is called capsaicin

- Capsaicin can be found in greater quantities in the white membrane and seeds inside the pepper, so you must be very careful when chopping chilies—protective gloves might be a good idea

- The membrane and seeds inside a fresh pepper can also be quite bitter, another good reason to remove them

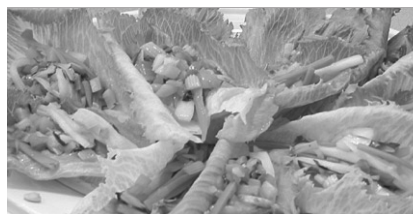
- When fresh peppers are laid in the sun to dry, they actually lose a lot of their heat. That is why many very flavourful dishes are made with dried chilies instead of fresh.

- Dried chilies must be rehydrated before using in your recipe, unless you are grinding them for a dry rub.

Have fun and keep cooking!

(Lori and Gerry can be reached at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com)

Chinese Lettuce Wraps



Ingredients

- 1 head iceberg lettuce
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 cup diced red onion
- 1 cup diced coloured pepper (red, green, yellow, etc)
- 1 cup julienne carrots
- 2 cup julienne bok choy
- 1 cup sliced shitake mushrooms
- 1 cup sliced green beans
- 1 tbsp slivered fresh ginger
- 1 large clove sliced garlic
- 3 tbsp oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp sesame oil

- 1-2 tbs soy sauce
- fresh ground pepper to taste

Method

1. In peanut oil, sauté garlic, ginger and onion for a few minutes.
2. Add all vegetables and stir fry till

vegetables are cooked but crisp—approximately 5-8 minutes.

3. Add remaining sauce ingredients and stir fry 2-3 minutes.

4. Serve in crisp lettuce cups.

Preparation of lettuce

1. Slice one-inch off stalk end of an iceberg lettuce.

2. Rinse under cold water and place in a bowl, covering lettuce with cold water and topping lettuce with a few ice cubes.

3. The lettuce needs to be refrigerated in the ice water for a few hours for maximum crispness.



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