Grays Harbor Public Market News

Local News

Posted by: Anonymous

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I come from a family of readers. We would read anything, but of course each of us had particular specialities. To this day, I adore a good murder mystery. Done in the classic style, of course- I cut my teeth on Nancy Drew, but soon graduated to Agatha Christie. There is nothing in this world so comforting as curling up with a new who dunnit, except stepping into a steaming bathtub armed only with a old beloved who dunnit.

Being a mystery novel reader has armed me with many important life skills. I walk with a trifle more confidence, being armed with knowledge gleaned from years of intensive reading. With any luck, I will never have to call upon my reserves, but the oddest tidbits of information rattle around in my brain.

So it may come as no surprise to learn that I am a label reader. On those early winter mornings at the breakfast table, with school beckoning and my in-progress book under the covers in my bed, I would sink to reading the labels on the cereal boxes.

Nowadays (having achieved the venerable age of 57!) I find myself fumbling for my reading glasses in the grocery store as I try to solve the mystery of the labeling codes. Because my reading has been extraordinarily inclusive, I am armed with some secrets which may interest you.

Organic and healthful foods have always been the object of my grocery shopping, but figuring out the claims and truth of labeling is not always easy. Ah, but that’s where you have the edge over most shoppers- you have the super sleuth/ farmers market manager to delve into these mysteries on your behalf.

Most grocery stores now have PLU codes on each fruit or veggie item (did you know that PLU stands for price look-up code?) For instance- you are looking at a melon. A nice, firm, good looking melon. Somewhere on this melon there will be a sticker, and if it has 4 numbers on it, then you have a lovely melon, but it has been grown using synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. If it has 5 digits, and they begin with an 8, that melon has been genetically modified. But- if the numbers begin with 9- grab it and take it home to serve to your loved ones, because this is a melon that is organically grown!

So- you have meals to prepare. You want them to be nutritious, inexpensive, and it would be particularly gratifying if they were also fabulously delicious. On top of that, the growing season in Grays Harbor won’t be producing any fresh veggies for many months. Where does that leave you?

Think back to your childhood- way, way back. Every kindergarten class in the whole United States has always been subjected to the Bean Growing lesson. You were given a cup, some potting soil, and a bean seed. You watered the planted seed and soon the miracle of gardening appeared before your astonished eyes! Maybe you actually cultivated your precious bean plant and took it home to plant in the garden? Maybe you can’t quite remember what happened to that precious gift of nature, but I guarantee that you do remember the slow uncurling sprout that emerged from that cup.

Sprouts! Full of nutrition, easy to grow, and- so very, very cool. Even the most snobbish foodie friends you have will devour your avocado and sprout sandwich with gusto, secretly wishing that they had thought to grow their own sprouts. All it takes is a deli or take out container that you already felt guilty about tossing into the garbage; poke a few holes in the bottom, fill it with some potting soil, and plant with seeds. Leftover seeds from last years veggie patch are great. If you want to get fancy, beets and basil are favorites, but sunflowers, peas, and beans are everyday fantastic! They’ll be ready in a matter of days, and you can decide at what point they are ready to be the gourmet garnish on a chicken breast or salad. Heck, you can even plant your own dandelion fluff to harvest!

And where, you are wondering can I buy these yummy seeds here at home? Well, several places in town carry packets of seeds, but if are already a gardener you may have a particular company that you prefer. I know that I do. I want seeds that have been proven to grow well in our climate and conditions. In searching for the very best seeds to sell at the Hoquiam Farmers Market, I decided upon Ed Hume Seeds.

Interested in reading more about sprouts and micro-greens? Just Google Sprouts and you’ll be amazed at the abundance of recipes and information available. One of my favorites is http://www.cooks.com/rec/view/0,1626,133179-248193,00.html for Thai Chicken Wraps. But honestly, toss them into something as simple as your scrambled eggs and you’ll be amazed at the texture and flavor that they add!

I am sure that Martha Stewart could come up with ways to make the sprout tray fastidiously attractive and worthy of presenting as a gift. But if you are simply interested in growing delicious, organic, vitamin rich veggies during the non-growing season, you cannot beat basic sprout trays.

Since we are on the subject of early gardening, I will introduce another important part of your garden routine; Composting! Sometimes the old compost pile gets a bit neglected during the winter months. There are those days when you really don’t feel like putting on the rain suit and boots to take your bucket of kitchen scraps out to the compost heap. Maybe you’ve been sneaking some of those scraps into the garbage instead? It’s okay, the compost police haven’t been spotted in town yet- but it is time to get that routine back. Besides, your worms are out there working that stuff, and they need your help! With our warm weather, those worms are getting frisky again. A word to the wise; Be good to your worms, and they will reward you.

Barbara Bennett Parsons, friend to her worms. Also, manager of the Hoquiam Farmers Market, located at 1958 Riverside. That’s along the river. Open Wed. Thru Sunday.