Hoquiam Farmer's Market News - Peggy's Stew Recipe Edition

Local News

Posted by: Anonymous

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Brrrrrrr. When I see the weather that all points east of Washington State are getting, I instinctively reach for a down vest. Our normal winter weather looks like mid-summer in stark contrast! It reminds me of my favorite line from the PBS documentary ‘Alone in the Wilderness’ , when Mr. Proenneke brags about his Alaskan cabin being ‘a toasty forty degrees’. Ouch!

Here we have the very first early Rhododendrons in bloom, tiny Jonquils and Snowdrops uncurling their petals, and Pussy Willows ready to pop into a vase. My idea of the perfect Valentine’s Day bouquet!

The promise of Spring has me envisioning balmy days, when the reality is that I still have to bundle up in all of my cold weather gear in order to be comfortable spending several hours outside. Once again I must remind myself to embrace the moment and not to wish away the chilly weather. So last week I made Stew.

I love this basic old-fashioned meal. Served with home-baked rolls, winter food doesn’t get any better than Stew.

Naturally, I happen to have a heart-warming true story about Stew which is particularly apt for Valentine’s Day!

Many years ago, my dear friends John and Peggy were dating. The romance had progressed to the point where Peggy invited John to her home for dinner. She didn’t have much money to spend and fussed over what to cook. She finally settled on Stew. It was superb! Not fancy, not elegant- but indescribably delicious. John knew that this was the best food he had ever eaten.

Driving home later that evening he decided to ask Peggy to marry him. Don’t get me wrong, he adored Peggy- but knowing that his future with her included meals like he had just eaten was the clincher.

Stews’ marvelous flavors are due to slow, moist cooking and the use of root vegetables.

Turnips, Rutabaga, Potatoes, Carrots, and Parsnips are easy to grow crops that store well. Back when everyone had a root cellar, these veggies were the key to getting nutritious meals through a long, harsh winter. My Grandma Bennett used to keep her root vegetables in baskets on the back porch, since our weather is mild enough to forego the underground root cellar. Grandma Broadie lived in Kansas- she needed the root cellar!

Once you try my Stew recipe, you may want to include these vitamin rich crops in your garden this summer. Harvesting your own food is rewarding in every possible way, and the bonus of root vegetables is that they don’t require canning, freezing, or any processing. Just dig ‘em up, shake off the dirt and store them in a dark, cool place. All winter long you’ll experience a burst of pride as you pop a parsnip in the pot!

One requirement for making stew is a heavy duty Dutch Oven style pot with a tight fitting lid. Cast iron is a good choice, but I’m fortunate in having my mothers Magnalite cast aluminum roaster. I love this pot. I remember when my mother bought it, at Brennan’s in Aberdeen. I

miss that store.

In making this recipe, I always use deer meat. The sinewy parts that can’t be used in other cooking come out meltingly tender in the stew. If you’re shopping for beef, buy the leanest and most inexpensive cut you can find. Be sure to cut off any fat!

Peggy’s Stew

two pounds of lean beef, cut into bite size chunks. Dredge the meat in flour. Have your roaster heating with a thin coating of good quality oil. When sizzling hot, add the meat, in two batches if necessary. Don’t crowd the meat in the pan. Brown it on all sides. The browned drippings are an important part of the flavor, plus they provide a thickener to bind the liquids into a gravy.

Then chop into pieces and add to the roaster;

one large turnip
one large rutabaga
two med. parsnips
four carrots
one large onion
two or more potatoes
two minced cloves of garlic
one large can (29 ounce) diced tomatoes. Swish half a can of water around to get the tomato sauce out and add that also.
one teaspoon salt
one teaspoon pepper
Optional other ingredients are celery and chucks of cabbage.

Mix everything together to blend well, put the lid on, and roast in a 300 degree oven for several hours. Three or four hours will do the trick.

This makes enough for a large crowd or several meals. Serve with bread or rolls.

Barbara Bennett Parsons, manager of the Hoquiam Farmers Market.

The Ed Hume seed rack is in now! Ph. 538-9747