

Hoquiam Farmer's Market News - Mushroom Pickin Edition

Local News

Posted by: Anonymous

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Incredible as it seems, we have fresh Strawberries at the market today! Thanks to a good friend of the market, these late season home grown strawberries arrived unexpectedly- we're delighted! The berries are small and packed with a flavor intensity that reminds me of the tiny wild beach berries, which are the best in the world. A new supply of Blueberries from Spooner Farms arrives this afternoon, these will be the last of the season. We have a new variety of apple, the Ginger Gold. Very crisp, a great eating and cooking apple. The first Yellow Delicious of this year arrived also, along with Gala Apples. The harvest will continue to bring new top of the crop picks each week, I can hardly wait to see what comes next!

Roger emailed asking if we had Zucchini available. Evidently his friends and neighbors, the usual suppliers, haven't had a good crop this year. Luckily for Roger, both Ruth and Judy are up to their elbows in Zucchini. We have every size you could want! These two ladies also supply us with the finest Tomatoes imaginable. The tiny cherry tomatoes are bite size and burst with flavor- bet you can't eat just one! Organic green peppers in several sizes, cucumbers, nectarines, peaches- don't forget to look in the cooler for just picked Lettuce and other greens.

Exquisite! Chanterelles are fantastic right now, a gourmet delight at a fabulous price. Now's the time to saute a few for the summer dinner side dish. In case you haven't ever gone on a mushroom hunt before, here are my suggestions; For me, the seasons of the year are defined by which foods are ripe for picking. Autumn begins whenever the Chanterelle mushrooms start appearing in the woods. Whatever the calendar says is brushed away like a pesky spider web.

Normally that happens in mid-September, but we're already knee deep in Chanterelles. I've never seen such a prolific beginning! You have two choices of how to harvest your mushrooms; either hike yourself over to the Hoquiam Farmers Market to buy them, or pack a picnic lunch and go on an adventure. Like any other wild harvest, there is no guarantee that the spot you think looks good will actually have mushrooms growing. We've come to the conclusion that Chanterelles are similar to a vein of gold, following some mysterious path that boggles reason. In other words, you find them where you find them. Sometimes they are scattered beneath a canopy of fir trees, other times sprouting in a maple glade. Hiding under sword ferns is one way they like to escape detection too. So there you are, eyes on the ground, pushing aside tree branches, clambering over fallen logs, experiencing intimate encounters with spiders, when it happens. You have somehow stumbled upon a sea of Chanterelles. A golden glow of goodness is right in front of your eyes. Did you remember to bring your favorite mushroom knife? Oddly enough, one of the best knives for this purpose is a cheap plastic picnic knife. No kidding! Chanterelles are among the most easily recognized mushroom species, but be sure that you study up or have an experienced picker teach you how to identify them. These early season mushrooms are easily the finest we can expect because they haven't had any rain to plump them. They also harvest very clean, since no rain means no mud clinging to the stems. Once the rains come the Chanterelles often require 24 hours of drying before we use them. When picking wet mushrooms they need to be spread out in a single layer on newspapers. The paper will wick away the water. If they are really soaked you may need to change the newspaper. The Daily World is the best choice, of

course. Once they have reached the perfect balance they are ready to be cleaned. Do not rinse them in water! Use a dry cloth or paper towel to gently whisk away whatever forest duff still adheres to them. Trim the stem if it is less than prime. Do not store them in a plastic bag- use a cloth bag. I've sewn up several of my old linen tea towels into bags- you know, the towels mom had with a map of Arkansas on it? Linen is the very best choice. For a huge harvest, a cotton pillowcase is good. Then store them in a drawer in the refrigerator and you'll have a ready supply which will hold for at least a week. You want them to hold a bit of moisture. These early Chanterelles are so dry that I moisten the flap of my bag before putting it in the frig. I am at my happiest when picking mushrooms. There have been times (in the distant past, thank goodness) when life wasn't as sweet as it is right now. My husband would assess my mood and then announce that it was a good time to go mushrooming. Worrysome thoughts dropped away and soon I'd be humming happily, intent upon the hunt. Occasionally we've happened upon a nest of grouse eggs, getting a good chuckle out of the way the mother grouse will try to lead us away from her nest. Little frogs hopping along always delight me, especially the bright green ones. The deer share their home with us and sometimes a herd of elk silently appear from the shroud of trees. I've discovered something pleasant about myself in these outings. Wealth has absolutely nothing to do with a bank account. I feel rich when I come home with a bountiful harvest, whether it is mushrooms, razor clams, blackberries, apples, or shellfish. The kind of richness that satisfies the soul, which is the only sort of wealth that has any meaning to me. Barbara Bennett Parsons, manager of the Hoquiam Farmers Market on Riverside call us at 538-9747, Deidra's Deli is 538-5880 we're only closed on Tuesdays!