

Hoquiam Farmer's Market News - On The Road Edition

Local News

Posted by:

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On the Road with Barbara- this week I'm visiting my aunt in California, which means that I have been hitting a lot of Farmers Markets and roadside produce stands along the way. Professional curiosity compels me, besides which I know where the best food is going to be found. I'm feeling a bit smug after making my comparison shopping forays- sure, they may have more booths and a lavish display of product, but let me tell you, we compete on the quality and have them beat by a country mile on prices! Wednesday morning in Hoquiam you will see fresh picked local corn from Chapmans Farm in Elma, along with their stupendous pumpkins, gourds, and pie pumpkins! This is fabulous corn, only .40 per ear, and not baked on the stalk- tender, juicy and sweet. Thanks to our cooler weather, the local corn will be coming in for several more weeks! Thursday sees the first of the season Grayland cranberries arrival! I haven't seen a single solitary fresh cranberry anywhere on my trip, doubt if they ever get them. The price is excellent this year, only \$2.50 per lb. Think cranberry bread, cranberry/apple crisp, cranberry chutney- and of course, we'll have fresh cranberries for several months.

The one item that's left me pining with envy are the grapes. It has been years since I had enough Concord grapes to make my mother's home canned grape juice. I stood there trying to figure out how I could possibly pack my car with boxes of grapes and make it back to the market with them. Here's the best part of the story- I can get Organic Washington Concord grapes for our market! I guess I've been whining about wanting them for so long that someone paid attention. Finally! If all goes according to plan, they will begin arriving at the market tomorrow morning. Keep your fingers crossed. They are priced at \$2.50 a lb here in Saratoga, for non-organic, but in Hoquiam you can have certified Organic for the same price! I'm feeling pretty smug about it. Fall, the finest season of the year. Too often, flirtatious Summer leaves me wishing for more. Fall never lets me down. Fall is like true love- exquisite, tender, more precious than the easy promises of Summer, more true than the quixotic temperament of Spring. Fall has the promise of endurance. Our final burst of summer was glorious, but it was like an undependable lover. The temperature shifted from 80 degrees to 55 in the swift space of a few minutes. Who can live with that kind of unreliability, I ask you? Fall doesn't come with false expectations- a warm day is a gift, a foggy morning a capricious and mysterious mood, and the anticipation of the first frost- a heightened sensual awareness! Fall is completely and utterly fulfilling. I wonder if Fall has a particularly feminine appeal. Our womanly urge to feather the nest and make our home cozy and inviting for the cooler time of year is impossible to ignore. I find myself eyeing the woodpile, estimating the capacity of snug fires in the stack. The canning shelves can send me into a panic zone if not sufficiently full- as if Swanson's isn't going to have canned peaches or pears? I become obsessive about wool sweaters. Are there enough cami's to keep me comfy, socks to cuddle our feet, what about the flannel lined jeans? The first thing I do to make the switch to Fall living is to put flannel sheets on the bed. My half of the bed is also wonderfully swaddled with a down blanket. Joe continues to sleep with the sheet alone. I worry about this- how can that be enough to keep him warm? In the middle of the night, I secretly inch my down blanket across his peacefully sleeping form. Oddly, he awakes in the morning overheated and thrashing in the cocoon of down that I so lovingly tucked in around him. I don't get it-

there seems to be a 30 degree difference in our core body temperatures. Unless I leap directly from a hot shower into the flannel sheeted bed, the chill of my skin causes Joe to leap out of a profound sleep as if he's been given shock therapy. It's now a joke between us- the sexiest Fall nighty I can wear is anything that keeps my icy skin from coming in contact with his warmth . Sigh. My style of cooking makes a dramatic shift for Fall. During Summer my menus are geared toward anything fresh and fast, often using the BBQ so that we can snatch an after dinner bike ride or work in the garden. Ah, Fall foods! Here is Romance Cooking. Succulent slow cooked roasts, flavorful stews and soups, buttermilk rolls, and lots of gravy. My hubby likes gravy. Pies and cakes replace ice cream, and bread pudding is the nose tingling epitome of Fall comfort food. Instead of dreading the first of the rainy days, I embrace them. Suiting up for outdoor work is a fact of life in Grays Harbor- the satisfaction of a project completed and a steaming bowl of chowder as a reward cannot be beat. I feel more alive in the Fall- could it be because I am also in the Fall of my life? Foolish Spring has passed, Selfish Summer has flown- Fall is my time for reflection. I cherish these days and nights of Fall and await with satisfaction the next season of the year, and of my life. As the poet wrote 'the best is yet to come' !Barbara Bennett Parsons, manager of the Grays Harbor Farmers Market in Hoquiam. Home of Deidra's famous soups, and quilts, candles, hand-spun wools, knit hats- everything you need to stock up for Fall comfort. 532-9747