



August 9, 2012

P.O. Box 1146  
Marblehead, Mass. 01945  
877-FDC-FARM  
[www.farmdirectcoop.org](http://www.farmdirectcoop.org)  
[newsletter@farmdirectcoop.org](mailto:newsletter@farmdirectcoop.org)

Supplying local produce and supporting local farmers for 20 years.

## Food for Thought

### Volunteer Needed Saturday 8-11

The West River Creamery sent the cheese in actual coolers and if they are not returned it will cost us \$59. We need a volunteer to return them on Sat 8/11 to the Wakefield Farmers Market between 9 and 2pm. Contact Julie at [Julie@farmdirectcoop.org](mailto:Julie@farmdirectcoop.org).

### Sugar Free At What Cost?

"The FDA has approved five artificial sweeteners: saccharin, acesulfame, aspartame, neotame, and sucralose." and one natural sweetener, stevia. "How the human body and brain respond to these sweeteners is very complex." writes Holly Strawbridge the Executive Editor of the *Harvard Heart Letter*. It's possible these products change the way we taste food. "Overstimulation of sugar receptors from frequent use of these hyper-intense sweeteners may limit tolerance for more complex tastes," explains Dr. David Ludwig, an obesity and weight-loss specialist at Boston Children's Hospital. "That means people who routinely use artificial sweeteners may start to find less intensely sweet foods, such as fruit, less appealing and unsweet foods, such as vegetables, downright unpalatable....Sugar-containing foods in their natural form, whole fruit, for example, tend to be highly nutritious – nutrient-dense, high in fiber, and low in glycemic load. On the other hand, refined, concentrated sugar consumed in large amounts rapidly increases blood glucose and insulin levels, increases triglycerides, inflammatory mediators and oxygen radicals, and with them, the risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease and other chronic illnesses." says Dr. Ludwig. For more information visit Harvard Health Blog <http://hvrld.me/NyBEli>

### Vacation Swaps

Erika, a Melrose member, wants to swap, Tuesday August 14th. She has a Large Veggie, Large Fruit and Cheese share. Email [enauda@yahoo.com](mailto:enauda@yahoo.com).

### Place Bulk Orders NOW!

Blackberries are available for bulk order at \$37.50 per flat. Pickup dates are Tuesday, August 14 and Thursday, August 16. The order form is available online at <http://bit.ly/MffNpV>

Seeking peaches for canning or cucumbers for pickling? Send Julie an email and if they're available she will be happy to order some for you. Email Julie at [julie@farmdirectcoop.org](mailto:julie@farmdirectcoop.org).

## FDC Fresh Ideas

By Julie Pottier-Brown, Operations Manager

Blackberries are the new item of the week. This is the "big" week for them, with individuals picking up bulk ordered flats purchased through the online order form. We will likely get these just once, but if you want to get a bulk order for next week, they may still be in production. The order form has been updated to reflect the ability to get berries next week. You can find it online at <http://bit.ly/MffNpV>.



Blackberries on the vine by  
Freedigitalphotos.net

Do you have a pear, plum or apple tree? A huge mountain of mint or something else that is organically grown in your yard? Would you like to share it with your fellow FDC members? Simply bring it along to the depot when you pick up your share and leave it for other members to relish. I'm sure they will appreciate it. I hope you are enjoying the bounty of the summer and all the beautiful hot days.

*Julie*

## How to Make Kombucha By Anita Deeley, Salem Depot



Mature Kombucha  
by Wikipedia

I was first introduced to Kombucha by a friend who offered me a scoby. Having no idea what I was getting into at the time, and wondering what this slimy, white, alien looking, disk I was holding in my hand actually was, my eyes were soon opened up to the world of home fermentation. Since then I have been actively brewing kombucha tea every other week. Despite it's scary appearance, it is easy to make, tastes wonderful, is simple to flavor and is very healthy for you. Kombucha is merely a fermented tea full of beneficial probiotic bacteria. A kombucha mother or scoby is a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast that is used to start the fermentation process. To make kombucha, I use a one gallon jar and this recipe adapted from *Wild Fermentation*.

**Ingredients:** 3 quarts filtered water, 3/4 cup organic sugar, 3 tsp loose black tea or 6 teabags, 1/2 cup mature acidic kombucha, one scoby

**Directions:** Add water and sugar to a pot and bring to a boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Add tea. Turn off heat and cover. Let steep for 15 minutes or until tea reaches body temperature. Strain tea into a glass container. Next, add the mature acidic kombucha (the liquid with the scoby). Save a portion of your mature kombucha for subsequent batches. Put the scoby in the liquid, with the firm opaque side facing up. I cover my jar with a coffee filter and secure it with a rubber band but you can also use a cloth cover. Store the container in a warm spot, ideally 75-85F. A skin will form on the surface of the kombucha after a few days to a week or more, depending on room temperature. Taste the liquid. It may taste sweet. The longer it ferments the more acidic it will become. Once it reaches a taste and acidity you like, it's time to start a new batch. Store your mature kombucha in the refrigerator. You should now have two mothers, the original one you and the new one. You can use either one in your new batch, pass one to a friend, or compost it. Each generation will give birth to a new mother, and the old mother will thicken. Once a mother has been used a dozen times and it starts to discolor, it's time to get rid of it. A properly fermented kombucha will be slightly bubbly. I like to strain my finished kombucha into bail top bottles, add 3-4 blueberries to the bottom, then let it sit for a week. This make a delicious blueberry flavored kombucha. Another favorite flavoring is made by adding a few drops ginger syrup or raspberry infusion sweet vinegar from Silberleaf Farm. You can also use juice, a few pieces of frozen fruit, syrup and whatever else you can dream up to add additional flavors. Scobys can be purchased or gifted from a kombucha making friend. So dip your toes into the world of home fermentation, get a scoby and give kombucha a try.

# Cinnamon Cardamom Blueberry Muffins

by Sharyn Routh, Melrose Depot

For me, the smell of cardamom evokes memories of my mother-in-law's cooking. When I first moved in with my husband, I found a whole shelf of spices that his mom kept in his kitchen to cook with when she was visiting. Three years later, we still have a box of spices in a cabinet that are "hers." Most of them stay in the box for 10 months out of the year, as I have no idea how to use them. Maybe someday I'll take the time to learn more about cooking with dry mango powder or kewda water, though I'm scared to even open the asafoetida bottle due to its pungent smell. Cardamom, however, is something I have begun to use more often, especially now that I have an abundance of fresh fruit on hand due to my fruit share. I have started to add cardamom to most of the desserts I make, with delicious results. From strawberry rhubarb cobbler, to chocolate currant truffle cake, to blueberry muffins, I've found that adding freshly ground cardamom seeds to recipes provides just enough pizzazz to turn a good dessert into a delicious and unique treat.

Besides being a delicious, fragrant spice, cardamom purportedly has health benefits such as acting as a digestive aid and a detoxifier as well as providing congestion relief. As with many spices, freshly ground cardamom seeds provide the best flavor and aroma.

Below is a recipe I adapted from the *Back in the Day Bakery Cookbook*. It makes 12 muffins.

## **Ingredients:**

2 cups white whole-wheat flour or whole wheat pastry flour, 1 cup sugar, 1 tablespoon baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, 1/4 cup canola oil, 4  
tablespoons (1/2 stick) melted butter, 1 teaspoon  
vanilla extract, 2 large eggs, 3/4 cup milk, 1 cup  
blueberries

## **For the topping:**

2 tablespoons sugar, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, 1 teaspoon  
ground cardamom, pinch salt

## **Directions:**

Heat the oven to 350 F. Coat a 12-cup muffin pan with cooking spray or line with paper muffin cups. In a large bowl, mix together the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, cardamom and cinnamon. In another bowl, whisk together the oil, butter, vanilla, eggs and milk. Add the liquid ingredients to the dry and stir until just mixed. Add the blueberries and mix in until just incorporated. Divide the batter between the prepared muffin cups. To make the topping, in a small bowl stir together the sugar, cinnamon, cardamom and salt. Sprinkle a bit of the mixture over each muffin. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted at the center of the muffins comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes.

# Fennel Cabbage Slaw

By Susan Nadworny, Melrose Depot

This slaw makes a nice cool crunchy side for anything on the grill. Use 1/2 of a large cabbage sliced thin; 1 whole fennel bulb sliced thin; 1 large scallion or 2 small scallions chopped; 1 large green apple, cored and chopped; 2 tablespoons bacon bits; 1 cup mayo; 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar; 1 tsp sugar and salt and pepper to taste. Slice all the veggies and place them in a bowl. Mix dressing together, pour over veggies and mix well.

# The Way I Cook (And, The "Worst" Recipe Ever)

The author wishes to remain anonymous

I'm sorry for those of you out there who subscribe to the idea that cooking is chemistry. On some level, yes. But I am not one of those people who follow a recipe to the "T", and have everything come out tasting the same way it did "the last time," or necessarily even how it was meant to. If you're one of those people, I understand the appeal, but you may want to stop reading now.

On some level, I cook the way my mother cooks, and how my grandmother cooked. I have a general idea of flavor combinations that work well together. I have a general grasp of how much of certain types of ingredients are needed to make specific consistencies. I almost never measure with standard spoons and cups. I'm a "handful of this" and a "pinch of that" gal. In fact, you'll probably hear me explain how I made my latest creation in general and ambiguous terms. "Well, I used this, but if you don't like it, you could use that instead." Or, "Add it until it seems thick enough...how much? Oh, I dunno. Depends on how thick you like it," or "Depends on how muggy it is."

These days, Google has become quite handy in my kitchen. I will type in the ingredients or recipe that I am looking for. Then I will read several different recipes on how other people make the dish. Once I have a general feel for it, I will just head into the kitchen and throw things together. It might taste GREAT! Or...it might taste just okay. In that case, I make a mental note on what to do next time or I repurpose it. Here's a prime example:

I decided to make currant-raspberry jelly from my share one week. Having never made such a thing before, I broke out my Google-Fu and learned that raspberries and currants are naturally high in pectin, and thus ideal for jellies and jams. I researched several recipes (both for small and large batches, with sugar, without sugar, with pectin, using gelatin, and without a binding agent all together). Let me tell you, the options were many. I settled on a recipe that used low sugar and no pectin. This time, I did actually use measuring cups, because jelly seems like one of those things that requires a bit more finesse than I usually use. The problem? Three-quarters of the way through the cooking process, my then 10-month old decided he was ready for a nap, like, NOW. I had to turn off the burner and walk away from my jelly. It came out with a really good flavor profile, but the set was loose. It doesn't work well on toast, but let me tell you, the pork roast that I glazed it with was FANTASTIC!

So, when I get a "handful of this", and a "few of those", and "some of that" in my CSA delivery (every week is like Christmas Morning!), I don't find it so daunting to throw things together for a meal, even if I don't have enough to make a *whole* dish of anything.

I'll leave you with a "recipe" that I created one week in order to use my veggie share. I call it "Mexican Vegetable Casserole". That week, I had *some* tomatoes, *lots of* zucchini, and *a few* onions from the share, *some* peppers my mom brought me, *some* corn left over from a friend's picnic, black beans (never, ever let your bean store run empty!), and *a bit of* polenta. I cooked down the tomatoes with garlic, some of the onions, Mexican chili powder, and cumin until they were thickened and a rich brown (I leave the skins on my tomatoes because I don't mind the texture, but if you do, peel them first). Then I added the rest of the onions, the zucchini, and the peppers (all diced). Once those cooked down a bit, I added everything else, and poured it into a 9 x 13 dish. I topped it with the polenta and baked it in the oven until it was bubbly and cooked through. A handful of dairy-free vegan cheese substitute (because, believe it or not, not ALL vegan cheeses are completely dairy free-some use casein or whey), and some dairy-free sour cream, and this was heavenly! Feel free to swap any veggies in or out, add more or less of whatever, and of course, substitute fake dairy with real dairy.