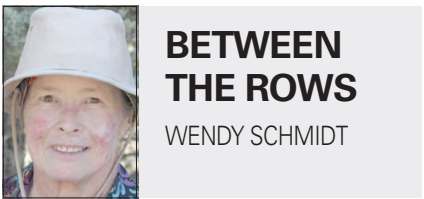




Tom Uhlenbrock/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS
A pomegranate



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Pomegranate has powerful properties

Pomegranates (*Punica granatum*) are one of the main symbols of Hanukkah and also Rosh Hashanah. One reason is that they ripen in September and October. Another reason is that they are said to have 613 seeds, the same number as there are laws in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible's Old Testament).

Pomegranate is a symbol of righteousness.

Pomegranates originated in the Himalayas of Northern India, and also known to grow in Iran since at least 4,000 B.C. In fact, it's believed to be the forbidden fruit from the Garden of Eden (the seeded apple).

The benefits of pomegranate fruit and juice are mainly tied to their antioxidant properties. They are loaded with phytochemicals (polyphenols, flavonoids and vitamins). These chemicals have anti-inflammatory, antiviral and anticancer effects.

Phytochemicals can help prevent Alzheimer's and heart disease, and they can reduce gut inflammation, protect the elasticity of arteries (preventing atherosclerosis) and can lower systolic blood pressure.

It really isn't the cure for everything, but it has some power to add to our preventive health care and to keep us well.

Consider adding pomegranate to your diet. It's important to eat a wide variety of foods, especially those with intense color.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

A Favorite Snack From Southern Italy



Zbigniew Bzdak/Chicago Tribune-TNS

Taralli, a southern Italian crunchy snack, goes beautifully with a glass of dry white wine.

By Joe Gray
Chicago Tribune

Thousands and thousands (tens of thousands? millions?) of nonnas can't be wrong. They're the ones rolling and shaping taralli, in their cute little kitchens in Puglia (or Sicily or Napoli or ...). With quick, deft movements they work, talking about how easy they are to make. How good they taste. How they're the perfect bite with a cold glass of white wine. How they're so traditional. How their grandmothers used to make them too. Just look for the nonnas on YouTube. You'll see.

OK, so, not only nonnas make taralli. (That's Italian grandmothers. And, yes, I know the proper plural would be nonne, but who says it that way over here?) Of course not. But they're the ones, usually, who pass the traditions to the rest of us. And they're right.

Taralli are a crispy ring-shaped Italian snack, made of flour, olive oil, salt, water and not much else. (But fennel or anise seed and black pepper are often used, to very good effect.) You've maybe seen them bundled up in cellophane bags and tucked in among other snacks at an Italian grocery. They're akin to a crisp breadstick in texture, but not quite that. They're hard to describe to the uninitiated. They're not a cracker. Not a biscuit, using the British meaning, though they're sometimes called that, because they're usually twice cooked (the root meaning of that word).

I see them in non-Italian groceries more

often these days, but not so much that people really know them. When you put them out at a party, they'll exclaim with curiosity, then, after tasting them, with joy. Which is why you should make them, whether you have a nonna or not. The store-bought, usually imported, versions are quite good. But they're so much better freshly made.

And, again, the nonna contingent is right. They are easy. About as hard as making cookies, once you get going. Yet I shrank from trying my mom's recipe for years. I was afraid of it. Afraid they wouldn't turn out. Afraid her cryptic recipe, very short on details, would hide its secrets. And she's 10 years gone, so she couldn't help. But after consulting with my sister, who had made them often, I made it a project.

And they turned out beautifully the first try. After tinkering with them and remaking them several times to get the instructions right, I have the recipe here. Bake up a batch yourself, for a snack with a glass of wine, perfect for holiday parties coming up.

Your nonna (or momma) would be proud.

Though many recipes boil the taralli before

baking them, my mom's does not. (Her recipe comes from her aunt; they were all from Campania, in southern Italy.) And it uses yeast. The dough is pretty oily, which makes for crisp taralli. It also means you won't need to flour the board for rolling the taralli. The taralli take on other flavors with aplomb. Mix in a tablespoon or two of anise or fennel seed, if you like.

1 package (¼ ounce) yeast
½ cup plus 2 tablespoons warm water (105 to 110 degrees F)
1 pound flour (3 1/3 cups)
2½ teaspoons coarse salt, plus more for sprinkling
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup olive oil

1. Stir the yeast into ½ cup warm water in a small bowl until dissolved; allow to proof until foamy on top, 10 minutes.
2. Mix the flour, salt and pepper to taste in a stand mixer with the hook attachment on low speed just to combine. Add water and yeast mixture and the oil. Mix to combine, scraping down the side of the bowl as needed. Turn mixer to medium; mix until dough comes together into a ball. If the dough is not coming together, you may need to add up to 2 more tablespoons warm water. (Alternatively, mix in a large bowl with a wooden spoon.)

See **Crunchy**/Page 3B

Soup and a salad: A healthy and hearty winter meal

By Linda Gassenheimer
Tribune News Service

Thick, hearty soup and a salad make a warm and welcoming vegetarian dinner. This soup freezes well. If you have time, make double and you will have another meal ready.

Jicama is a root vegetable with a thin brown skin and crunchy white flesh. It can be eaten raw or cooked. The nutty flavor and crisp texture are refreshing with the thick soup.

Helpful Hints

- If jicama is unavailable, any crunchy vegetable such as broccoli can be used.
- Diced onion is used in both recipes. Dice it all at one time and divide accordingly.
- Any type of oil and vinegar dressing can be used for the salad.

Countdown

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees to warm bread.



Linda Gassenheimer/TNS

Three bean soup with cucumber and jicama salad.

• Make soup.
• While soup cooks, make salad.

Shopping List

To buy: 1 small parsnip, 1 can reduced-sodium red kidney beans, 1 can reduced-sodium chick peas, 1 small package frozen baby lima

beans, 1 large can (32 ounces needed) reduced-sodium peeled tomatoes, 1 jalapeno pepper, 1 medium cucumber, ¼ pound jicama, 1 red onion, 1 container no-salt-added vegetable broth, 1 bottle ground cumin, 1 bottle chili powder, and 1 small whole wheat baguette.

Staples: reduced-fat oil and vinegar dressing, carrots, salt and black peppercorns.

THREE BEAN SOUP

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

1 cup diced red onion

½ cup diced carrot
½ cup diced parsnips
1¼-cups water, divided use
¾ cup rinsed and drained reduced-sodium red kidney beans
¾ cup rinsed and drained reduced-sodium chick peas
1 cup frozen baby lima beans
4 cups reduced-sodium canned peeled tomatoes
1 cup no-salt-added vegetable broth
2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons chili powder
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 slices whole wheat baguette

Place onion, carrot, parsnips and ¼ cup water in a large saucepan. Sauté 5 minutes. Add kidney beans, chick peas, lima beans, tomatoes, vegetable broth, remaining 1 cup water, cumin and chili powder. Break up tomatoes with a spoon or knife and bring to a simmer. Simmer 20 minutes. Add salt and pepper

to taste. Place bread in oven to warm for 5 minutes.
Yield 2 servings.

CUCUMBER AND JICAMA SALAD

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

2 tablespoons reduced-fat oil and vinegar dressing
1 tablespoon diced red onion
2 teaspoons seeded, chopped jalapeno pepper
1 cup peeled, sliced cucumber (cut large slices in half)
1 cup peeled and sliced jicama, (about same size as cucumber)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Pour dressing into a salad bowl. Stir in onion and jalapeno pepper. Add the cucumber and jicama and toss well. Add salt and pepper to taste.
Yield 2 servings.