



BETWEEN THE ROWS
WENDY SCHMIDT

Repelling deer from your garden

In a recent article by Elena Victory of the Missouri Botanical Garden, she had some tips for making deer stay out of — and stop eating — your landscape.

Recognizing that deer have come to dine on the garden is easy. In spring and summer the damage is characterized by jagged, torn edges on leaves, twigs and stems.

If every stem or twig from ground level to 6 feet is gnawed, then the culprits are deer (if you know the neighbor's livestock has been staying home). You can catch them in the act at dawn or twilight.

The deer's daily agenda is:

1. Do not get eaten by predators.
2. Eat at least 7 pounds of browse.
3. Rest.

All repellents and tactics to deter deer rely on exploiting one or all of their agendas. There are 600-plus items on a deer's menu, BUT they have preferences.

In the wild, deer browse on wild grape, green briar, oak leaves and acorns, Virginia creeper, clover, and prickly lettuce. They will dine on crops like soybeans, corn, wheat, alfalfa and oats.

Suburban deer love azalea, rhododendrons, cherry and apple trees and fruit, yews, lilac, vegetables, berries, daylilies, hollyhocks, viburnum, arbor vitae, tulips, roses (deer candy), and the list goes on ...

The first rule to have surviving landscape is to avoid plants deer like and substitute plants that deer find disgusting. As a rule of thumb, choose to plant species with coarse, fuzzy, bristly, and spiny leaves. Like children with spinach, deer actively avoid any plant with a strong odor (it jams their sense of smell): artemisia, catmints, chives, garlic, onions, sage, lavender, tansy, mint, thyme, and yarrow as well as poisonous plants like foxglove and monkshood can be safe where deer browse.

Do you love roses? So do deer; so use rugosa roses instead.

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SIMPLICITY ITSELF: SOUP & SANDWICH

JeanMarie Brownson
Chicago Tribune

A quick look back at all the pandemic cooking I've done reveals a penchant for soup and sandwiches. Chiefly because it's easy and economical to keep ingredients for those dishes on hand. Good-quality rolls in the freezer, sliced cheese and deli meats in the fridge. For soups, I rely on a stock of vegetables that store well such as broccoli, parsnips and squash. Dry and tinned beans and tomatoes and some frozen vegetables, such as bell peppers, add variety to my soup-making endeavors.

Hot sandwiches prove magical. Think of the Italian beef, the French croque monsieur, a Reuben or patty melt, a shrimp poor boy. Heck, even a tuna sandwich can soar when served hot under a blanket of melted cheese.

A hot sandwich, individually wrapped and tucked into a 400 degree oven, makes it ideal fare to serve at our socially distanced get-togethers. This year, we move the cars out of the heated garage, open the big door and gather on folding chairs to visit with friends. Everyone brings their own cooler of beverages and I pass the sandwiches and mugs of steaming hot soup.

The hot and spicy submarine sandwich recipe that follows reminds us of the classic New Orleans-style muffuletta we first enjoyed there at Central Grocery. Layers of deli meats with a spicy olive relish on a crusty round loaf. Memorable, indeed.

At home, we layer nearly all combinations of thinly sliced cheese and fully cooked meats on crusty small sourdough rounds or square, chewy ciabatta buns. I usually include one layer of peppered salami or spicy capicola for texture and piquancy. A quick mix of chopped olives, celery, carrots and vinaigrette re-creates the marinated olive salad that makes the sandwich so distinctive. Use a refrigerated bottled olive spread to save time, if desired.

Grainy mustard and hot chile oil stirred into mayonnaise makes a zesty sandwich spread (or, try the combination on a fish fillet destined for the broiler!). Thinly sliced and rinsed red onion, along with a piece of a roasted, bottled red bell pepper, add flavor



Abel Uribe/ChicagoTribune-TNS

Spicy broccoli soup with a hot sandwich, prepared and styled by Shannon Kinsella.

and texture to the warmed sandwich.

Broccoli soup does not need gobs of cream or melting cheese to taste good. The recipe that follows simply tastes like highly seasoned broccoli. The broccoli stays bright green when cooked, uncovered, in water. That water, which tastes beautifully of broccoli, forms the base of the soup. For a richer soup, swap out the water with low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth. A puree of most of the cooked broccoli gives the soup body; pieces of cooked broccoli add texture.

To stick with the theme of the sandwiches, I add a small amount of Tony Chachere's Original Creole Seasoning to the boiling broccoli. A quick look online shows us that there are many choices for a Cajun or Creole seasoning blend. I also like Louisiana Fish Fry Cajun Seasoning and McCormick's Perfect Pinch Cajun Seasoning. Read the labels and purchase ones without artificial ingredients. Then taste a little on a spoon so you're heat-aware before you sprinkle with abandon.

Tame the heat in the finished soup with a drizzle of olive oil or cream and some

crumbled cheese. Or, swirl in some toasted pistachio or walnut oil for a restaurant-quality flourish. Perfect, even if you are dining in the garage!

HOT AND SPICY SUB SANDWICHES WITH OLIVE RELISH

Prep: 30 minutes
Cook: 15-20 minutes

Makes: 4 hearty sandwiches
These sandwiches taste great on sourdough rolls, pretzel rolls or everything bagels.

- 1/4 cup simple red wine vinaigrette, see recipe (or best-quality bottled)
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced assorted pitted black and green olives
- 2 to 3 tablespoons minced celery
- 2 to 3 tablespoons minced carrots

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Tired of typical tacos? Try some tasty tostadas

Gretchen McKay
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When it comes to getting a dinner everyone can agree on to the table, and quickly, you simply can't go wrong with tacos. They're crunchy, kid-friendly and can hold just about anything you can think of, which means you probably have all the goods in your fridge and pantry.

But lately, I've been getting bored with the same old, same old. So this week, I decided to shake things up and make tostadas instead.

"Tostada" is Spanish for "toasted," and that's exactly what they are — corn tortillas that are toasted in the oven or fried in oil until they're brown and crispy and then used as a base for any flavor combination you can think of.

I decided to go vegetarian, starting with a layer of seasoned and smashed pinto beans followed by roasted sweet potato, red bell pepper and red onion. I also threw on some shredded iceberg lettuce for extra crunch and fresh-made pico de gallo for color. Crumbled queso fresco and a tangy lime crema add the crowning touch.

The joy of this recipe is that you can pick and choose whatever ingredients make you happy. Feel free to also play around with seasoned ground beef or chicken, chorizo, scrambled eggs, shredded cheese, jarred salsa and pickled jalapenos.

I stacked the tostadas in two layers for a heartier meal, but it can be

made with just one layer.

Premade tostada shells can be found in the international aisle of most larger grocery stores. They also can be made pretty easily from scratch.

Drizzle corn tortillas with a little oil, spread it on with your fingers and then place on a cookie sheet. Bake in a 350-degree oven until crispy and golden brown, about 4 minutes per side. Or fry corn tortillas in a skillet with about 1/4 inch of oil until they sizzle and turn golden brown, about 45 seconds per side, then drain on paper towels. They should be super crispy.

To make lime crema, add the juice and zest of 1 lime and a generous pinch of salt to 1 cup of sour cream and whisk until well combined and creamy.

ROASTED VEGETABLES TOSTADAS

For roasted veggies

- 3 sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 2 red bell peppers, seeded and sliced
- 1 red onion, sliced thin
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon oil

For bean layer

- 1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin, or more to taste

- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/4 cup minced white onion
- Generous pinch of salt

For pico de gallo

- 1 cup diced fresh tomato
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and finely diced
- 1/4 small red onion, diced
- 1 garlic clove, finely diced
- Juice of 1/2 lime
- Chopped cilantro, to taste
- Salt, to taste

For tostadas

- 8 packaged tostadas
- Shredded iceberg lettuce
- 1/2 cup crumbled queso fresco, or finely shredded Monterey jack cheese
- Diced avocado, optional
- Chopped cilantro, optional
- Lime crema, optional

Prepare vegetables: Place sweet potatoes, peppers and red onion in a large bowl. Season with chili powder and a generous pinch of salt. Then toss with oil.

Transfer to a rimmed baking sheet and roast veggies in a preheated 450-degree oven until tender, tossing halfway through, about 25 to 30 minutes.

While veggies are roasting, prepare beans. Combine drained pinto beans, cumin, chili powder and onion in a small saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat for about 10 minutes, until beans and onions soften. Mash with a fork and keep warm.



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

These vegetarian tostadas are stacked with two layers of smashed pinto beans, lettuce, pico and roasted sweet potatoes and bell peppers. Crumbled queso fresco and lime crema add the crowning touch.

Prepare pico de gallo: In a medium bowl, combine the diced tomato, jalapeño, onion, garlic, lime juice, cilantro and a generous pinch of salt. Stir to combine, adding more salt if necessary.

Let rest for 15 minutes before serving so flavors can mingle.

Assemble tostadas: Spread a tosta-

da shell with mashed beans. Top with shredded lettuce, roasted vegetables, pico de gallo, crumbled or shredded cheese, diced avocado, and chopped cilantro if using. Drizzle lime crema on top, and then repeat with a second layer. Serve immediately.

Serves 4.

— Gretchen McKay