



DOROTHY FLESHMAN
DORY'S DIARY

'Tis the season for spring fever

We in the lowlands are getting eager for signs of spring. Let the snow remain in the mountains for outdoor sports and to melt slowly to share its water supply and to lead in the fight against wildfires, but we yearn for the sight of flowering blooms, warm air to caress bare arms coming out from under heavy winter wraps. We are tired of being cooped up and are also anxious to be able to see friends, dine out, and all the goodies that go with nice weather.

It will come in time, we know, but at the same time thinking that it is long overdue, for it has been tough on everyone these last two years going on three with the pandemic of COVID, omicron and all. We seek release.

To brighten this day as I write, I must say that the sun is shining brightly in spite of the 8 degrees of the night; the morning has already reached the 20-degree mark by 10 a.m. Who knows how warm it may be by the coming Tuesday when you read this. It makes us even more eager to preview a good spring and summer, worth previewing for everyone's sake.

But, before actually doing so, we really should take a quick backward view to what our winter was really like and what we oldsters see in our rear-view mirror to the past in order to compare our reactions to the cold season of the year.

With heat from my furnace and food readily available from refrigerator and shelf, I feel so deeply grateful to have been so blessed in the later years of my life.

I forget not those who suffer in all respects and especially so in this very cold winter that may have taken so many by surprise after the gentle winters we have had prior.

My memory accepts this winter as it slowly works its way toward spring as just part of the norm when most Januarys to March in my youth brought just such weather and temperatures to this corner of the world regularly.

We prepared for it as best we could with wood-burning stoves for heat and ricks of wood summer-gathered, chopped, and piled in the backyard.

Also, the shelves, bins, and pantries were filled with eatables dug from the garden or tree-picked fruit and canned into jars to get us through the long spell; candles or lanterns to burn when the electricity went out, and heat from our stoves that needed neither electricity nor blowers.

Were we as comfortable then as we are now with all the advancements?

I remember cold bedrooms and hovering by the heating and/or cooking stoves, the heavy wool clothing, and the trials of those having to tend to the stock, dig paths through heavy deep snow with handheld shovels, the emergency crews, and/or business folk needing to keep wheels of safety or business turning. We walked to school and home again. No buses so we didn't know the difference.

In spite of the advances of modern living, we knew nothing of what the future comfort would provide, so we adjusted to make the most of what we had and went on with living knowing that spring and the heat of summer would come in time.

Today is a beautiful day as I look out the window where snow piles still resist the sun-melt that still teases, and folks drive in their warm cars to and fro to do business or pleasure on machinery-plowed dry streets.

I'm too old or unnecessary to join in and wonder if I'm glad or sorry.

The daffodils by my house are already up through the soil by several inches and are never worried by snow or cold temperatures.

They know what I can only hope for — that my impatience to see their yellow bloom is just the usual thing and comes ever year about this time — I think is called SPRING FEVER.

Dorothy Swart Fleshman is the author of Dory's Diary occasionally published in The Observer and Baker City Herald. She is a resident of La Grande.



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

This quick and easy tofu stir-fry features colorful vegetables and a spicy chili garlic sauce.

A stir-fry that brings the heat

By **GRETCHEN MCKAY**
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Stir-fries can be a boon in a busy cook's kitchen — quick to prepare and incredibly versatile, they dish up a whole lot of flavor without a whole lot of fuss (though you may have to do some chopping).

Meats can generally be swapped out for vegan proteins like tofu or tempeh, and likewise with any vegetables you might include. If you don't like beans or carrots, for instance, peppers or broccoli are an easy substitute; the only rule is to make sure you add hard vegetables to the pan before quick-cooking ones so they're crisp and tender at the same time.

This recipe pairs tofu with crispy, pan-fried mushrooms, celery and paper-thin slices of ginger in a sauce infused with chili pepper — a welcome punch of gentle heat on a chilly winter day.

Extra-firm tofu (or firm, if you can't find that) works best in this dish, because it will keep its shape during frying; soft or silken tofu will fall apart. Also be sure to press as much water as you can out of the block before cooking it by pressing it between two layers of folded paper towels or a clean kitchen cloth.

I like the spicy, garlicky kick of chili oil with crunchy garlic, but it's completely optional if you're not a fan — if you omit, simply add a little more soy sauce to get a good glaze on the tofu. If you use gluten-free soy sauce, the dish will appeal to those with gluten sensitivities or allergies as well.

Serve with white or brown rice. For lunch the next day, I reheated the leftovers in a cast-iron skillet in a 350-degree oven until the tofu and veggies crisped up, about 10 minutes.

STIR-FRIED TOFU WITH CRISPY GARLIC CHILI

- 1 14-ounce block extra-firm tofu, drained and pressed
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 12 ounces baby bella or button white mushrooms, stems trimmed, cut into thick slices
- 3 celery stalks, thinly sliced on a diagonal
- 2-inch piece ginger, peeled, thinly sliced
- 1 jalapeño chile, thinly sliced
- 2 green onions, sliced on the diagonal
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon crunchy garlic with chili oil, or more to taste
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- Juice of 1 lime
- Handful coarsely

chopped cilantro
4 cups cooked short-grain or brown rice, for serving

Cut block of tofu into thirds crosswise, then cut each piece crosswise again, and then into 1/2-inch pieces. Pat dry with paper towels.

Heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high. When oil is shimmering and easily slides across surface of pan, carefully add tofu in a single layer and cook, undisturbed, until golden brown underneath, about 4-5 minutes. Flip each piece over and continue to cook until browned on second side, another 4 minutes. Transfer tofu to a plate, leaving oil in pan.

Pour remaining 1 tablespoon vegetable oil into skillet and heat over medium-high until shimmering. Add mushrooms to pan and cook, undisturbed, until crisp around the edges and browned underneath, about 5 minutes. Give mushrooms a toss and continue to cook, tossing often, until browned and crispy in most spots, about 4 minutes longer.

Add fried tofu, celery, ginger, chile, green onion, soy sauce, crunchy garlic and sesame oil to pan. Cook, tossing often, until celery is crisp-tender, about 3 minutes.

Remove from heat and add lime juice. Scatter cilantro over and toss once more.

Serve over or alongside cooked brown or white rice. Serves 4.

— Adapted from bonappetit.com

Arctic explorer Will Steger shares recipes and reflections from his Minnesota homestead

Simplicity and sustainability are the main themes running through a new cookbook, written with his niece Rita Mae

By **SHARYN JACKSON**
Minneapolis Star Tribune

What do you eat when you're a larger-than-life polar explorer, kayaker, dog-sledder, educator, homesteader and climate advocate? Like many people, Will Steger enjoys a good apple pie, meatloaf and ice-cold watermelon.

It's where he ate those favorite foods that sets the Minnesota-born explorer apart.

He devoured the melon on the banks of the Mississippi River after a motorboat adventure from Minnesota to New Orleans at age 15. The meatloaf was stuffed into sandwiches that would last him through three days of hitchhiking and hopping freight trains, his preferred way to get around as soon as school let out for the summer.

And his beloved apple pie, a gift from his mother Margaret, dropped from a resupply plane delivering provisions to the North Pole. The frozen pie sprung out of the box and rolled down the runway. Steger chased it until it landed in a snowbank.

"That thing was destined to make it," said Steger. "It was thoughtful, as she always was."

Stories about the sustenance that powered Steger through his awe-inspiring achievements in exploration accompany recipes for these dishes and more in "The Steger Homestead Kitchen: Simple Recipes for an Abundant Life."

There are the homemade granola bars he'd pack for students on his Outward Bound expeditions. The warming stew he would serve his friends who come up once a year to help him cut ice from nearby Picketts Lake and haul it to the icehouse at his Ely homestead as an alternative to refrigeration. The gingersnaps — one of many recipes from his mother's spiral notebook — that he puts out for guests on retreat at his isolated conference center, the Steger Wilderness Center.

This transporting collection, which Steger wrote with his niece Rita Mae Steger and local cookbook author Beth Dooley, is as much a cookbook as it is an argument for eating whole, clean and local during a time of environmental strife.

"I think one of the solutions of climate change is to be sustainable as a life, as a person," Steger said. "You don't have to look at coal or whatever the pollutants are. It's a matter of living sustainably. That's a joy, and that's the life we need to survive what's ahead of us."

The recipes are rooted in simplicity. Most dishes ask for few ingredients and fewer steps. Because when delivery doesn't reach your address, be it Ely or Antarctica, working with what you have is the only way to survive.

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How to lower your grocery costs when prices are soaring

By **NICOLE NORFLEET**
Minneapolis Star Tribune

Even with high inflation, there are plenty of ways to save money on your next trip to the grocer.

Grocery runs have gotten more expensive.

Anyone who has taken a look at their receipts in the last few months can tell that prices have gone up on nearly everything from chicken wings to milk as inflation levels reached heights we haven't seen in decades.

The cost of food that people eat at home rose 6.5% in December compared to the same month the year before. That's well above what people were used to. Over the last 20 years, the cost of supermarket purchases rose about 2% a

year on average.

"If you are not careful, you are going to have a full cart and be shocked at how much you spent," said Haley Nelson of St. Paul, Minnesota, who has shared low-cost recipes on her blog Cheap Recipe Blog for more than a decade.

Inflation may slow this spring and summer from last year, but price increases may still be higher than normal.

Here are some ways you can plan and shop to better stretch your grocery budget:

Plan your trip and don't get distracted

When is the last time you really looked in your pantry? The first step is to taking stock of what's in your fridge and cupboards. That will prevent you from buying items

you already have.

Do you plan your meals? Or do you pick up whatever strikes you in the store?

"Impulse is the grocer's best friend and temptations are everywhere," said Steven Plant, a financial planner at Raymond James in Wayzata, Minnesota, who owned a local grocery store for 15 years.

Go to the grocery store with a list

"This is really not the time to wing it," Nelson said. Having a list helps you stay focused on what you need so you don't overspend on extra items.

Don't shop while hungry and avoid picking up unplanned processed foods such as frozen dinners.

Learn your store

Discover your grocery store's hidden finds such as discount sections. Many grocery stores have sections or bins with soon-to-expire food or bruised fruits that are still good to eat, said Jamie Pfuhl, president of the Minnesota Grocers Association.

Two of the best places to get deals is the bulk section of spices and the salad bar at grocery stores where you can get a small scoop of ingredients like bacon bits, Nelson said.

Having a better grasp on prices of your everyday items and the pricing of an array of stores instead of relying on just one can also be helpful.

"Broadening your horizons

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