



TRASH TALK

ANN MEHAFFY

Importance of locally grown food

Years ago when our Baker City Main Street Program was launched, we fostered this slogan: “Put Your Money Where Your House Is.” That was of course to say — invest in your community by buying locally, where your dollars support your neighbors and get circulated many times within the community. Both our slogan and the original “put your money where your mouth is” are important when our thoughts turn to investing in local farmers, ranchers, growers, producers, food crafters, and seed producers/savers. Perhaps now, more than ever, we can grasp the complexities of food security and the importance of supporting locally grown and produced food that is out of the reach of global markets and now broken supply chains.

Taking a step back during our forced isolation these days gives us an opportunity to reflect and reconsider what’s important to us and what keeps us and our communities physically and economically healthy. For most of us, much of the food we put on our table comes from large-scale corporate agri-businesses. The food is grown, harvested, processed, mixed, boxed, packaged, and shipped with one thing in mind: profit. Additionally, corporate agriculture and food producers go to great lengths to preserve food with preservatives, coatings, and additives to accommodate far-reaching markets, warehouse storage, and a long shelf life. This factory farming and high-volume food processing usually means our local connection to food production is forfeited for the sake of year-round availability, cheap production, convenience, and quantity over quality. It also means automation, monoculture crops, heavy use of pesticides and herbicides, and little or no support for the local communities near large-scale farming sites. In short, the factory farm or processing plant does not support healthy soil, sustainable agriculture or local communities.

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BETWEEN THE ROWS

WENDY SCHMIDT

Spring is finally here

Spring is finally happening. The weather is capricious, wreaking havoc with people’s joints. Plants are blooming everywhere, awakening dormant allergies. The joy of spring is in the air, for which we need a good rain and a few more bees. The dust and pollen can cause your eyes to sting.

The first bees to appear here were the mason bees. I have a mason bee block which a group of kids gave me at the farmers market. I really didn’t know where to place it permanently, so I sat it on the porch railing. The mason bees found it there, so now I don’t think I should move it. The block is a simple 4-by-4 or 6-by-6 with holes drilled in it, which become the nests for female mason bees to lay their eggs. Mason bees are more effective pollinators than honeybees. They are very gentle. They don’t make honey. They don’t sting.

One time in my life I kept honeybees. I loved it and I loved my bees. I didn’t mind being stung, and still enjoy watching honeybees pollinating flowers. Honeybees work in warm weather. Mason bees will work when it is cold.

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Homemade Ice Pops



Amy Drew Thompson/Orlando Sentinel-TNS

It’s a new version of that old orange juice-in-the-ice-tray recipe from Saturday morning television.

By **Amy Drew Thompson**

Orlando Sentinel

None of us is sure how long all these new rules are going to last, but in Florida, it’s pretty safe to say we’ll still be social distancing when ice cream truck season rolls around in earnest.

Solution? Make your own ice pops!

Perks include family togetherness and fun snacks on a stick that don’t involve a deep fryer. Also, there’s room for creativity. You’ll see that these “recipes” are barely even recipes. Just instructions to pulverize two or three ingredients in a food processor, pour said concoction into some sort of mold and shove ‘em in the freezer.

Any fruit you use could be sweet enough to avoid adding your own sweetener, so don’t feel compelled. But I used agave syrup in all of mine save the cucumber-melon (the honeydew I bought was exceptional). You could also opt for something calorie-free, like Stevia.

Simply sweeten your blend-ups to where you like them.

Traditional ice pop molds are fun — mine have “sipper” straws built in so you can get every last drop — but I supplemented with a giant ice-cube tray. The boxy shape makes them stocky and super-cute! Stretch plastic wrap tightly over the top, cut little slits at the center of each section and slide in your sticks before freezing.

Did you know that Michael’s sells stubby little sticks for just such a project? I didn’t, either! But I do now.

I’m learning so much during this whole lockdown thing. Blueberry mojito ice pops are just the tip of the educational-opportunity iceberg.

And speaking of ice, here goes...

Instructions

Simply blend each ingredient combo in your food processor or blender. Leaving the

fruit a little chunky in pops like Coco-Mango or Strawberries & Cream makes for exceptionally photogenic pops. It’s all up to you.

- **Strawberries & Cream:** Blend fresh strawberries and standard whipping cream.
- **Cucumber Melon:** Until we can get back to the spa, this one tastes like it. Blend up honeydew with peeled, seeded cukes. Save two slices for your eyes. Recline and enjoy.
- **Coco-Mango:** Mix fresh mango, coconut milk (I used the thick, full-fat canned variety) and coconut water with flakes.
- **Watermelon Kiwi:** Blend up watermelon, slice kiwi. Insert kiwi slices into molds, sticking them to the sides. Pour in watermelon. Makes for a pretty presentation.
- **Blueberry Mojito:** Add fresh blueberries, mint leaves, white rum, agave and club soda. Blend the first four to taste — don’t use too much rum or it won’t freeze well — add club soda at the end, stir before pouring into molds. Rum optional, of course.

A revolution: pan-roasted honey brioche

By **Genevieve Ko**

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Pastry chef Dyan Ng’s pan-roasted honey brioche isn’t just new; it’s revolutionary. She created it for the brunch menu at Auburn “to give people something different that they’ve never tried before.”

“As a cook, I don’t want to be showy, but I always want to do something different,” Ng says.

Ng first developed a formula for a milkless brioche extra rich in butter and eggs so it wouldn’t taste like pain au lait. And though the brioche was delicious, she said, “It was just a delicious French bread.” She then caramelized the top of the loaf with honey butter while it baked but wanted the bread to be more tender all the way through. So she decided to cook the dough completely on the stove while basting it with honey butter.

It’s all very confusing until you take a bite. It has the yeasty depth of sourdough without the self-righteous austerity, the buttery richness of brioche with an almost custardy egginess, the welcome bitter edge of dark caramel seeping into the bread and running all over the plate.

Ng’s years of mastering French pastry are clear in this brilliant technique that’s actually easy to execute even if it takes days. The genius is in its simplicity. Her technical skills translate into just-right proportions of five ingredients that yield foolproof dough, and the two-night proofing ensures the bread stays tender on the stovetop while holding its shape and caramelizing to a dark brown.

Testing this recipe at home over the weeks that the coronavirus changed this city and country, I found that it not only worked perfectly every time in every variation but also provided a welcome peace.

PAN-ROASTED HONEY BUTTER BRIOCHE

2 hours, plus 3 days proofing. Makes 1 dozen.

This technique, which is revolutionary and satisfying to execute, requires serving the brioche right away and works best if you’re making just one to four at a time. I found the ideal balance to be doing a few on the stovetop to eat right away, then baking the remaining dough balls for the most delicious rolls to enjoy anytime with or without the honey butter. Or you can skip the honey butter and simply tuck all the dough into a pan for a brioche-meets-sourdough loaf.

BRIOCHE

1 cup plus 1½ tablespoons salted butter (250 grams), preferably cultured high-fat
2½ cups all-purpose flour (333 grams)
¼ cup granulated sugar (50 grams)
1 envelope active dry yeast (7 grams) or 20 grams fresh cake yeast
5 large eggs (250 grams), room temperature

HONEY BUTTER

2¼ pounds unsalted butter (1,026 grams)
2 cups honey (680 grams), preferably light amber

1. Make the brioche: Take the butter out of the refrigerator and cut into tablespoons. Place on a plate in a single layer to soften. When you press into a piece, it should yield to pressure like Play-Doh. Use more butter to lightly butter a large container or bowl.
2. While the butter softens, combine the flour and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. Sprinkle the dried yeast or crumble the fresh yeast on top, then add 2 eggs. Beat on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened, scraping the bowl if needed. Continue mixing while adding the remaining 3 eggs one at a time. Scrape the bowl and raise the speed to medium-high. Continue beating until the wet dough flaps against the side of the bowl, about 5 minutes. The dough will still look broken and cling to the sides of the bowl at this point.
3. Pick up a piece of butter, smash it a little

between your fingers, then toss it into the mixer while the hook beats on medium-high speed. When it completely disappears into the dough, add another piece in the same way. Keep going until all the butter is incorporated. This will take about 10 minutes. (The mixer may jump on your counter, so hold the machine steady with one hand while adding the butter with the other.) The machine’s beating will heat up the dough, but the butter will help cool it down to prevent it from breaking. The dough is done when it’s smooth, shiny and stretchy. If you hook a finger into the dough and pull, it should hang like Silly Putty. Don’t overbeat or the dough may break.

4. Remove the hook and use your hands to scoop the dough out of the bowl. Holding it over your work surface, pass it back and forth between your hands, gathering the sides under until the dough is very smooth on top. Lay it in the buttered container and gently press a piece of plastic wrap directly on the dough so it doesn’t form a skin, then cover the container with a lid or another sheet of plastic wrap stretched taut. Let proof at room temperature for one hour, then transfer to the refrigerator for 12 hours.

5. Cut 12 pieces of wax or parchment paper into 5-inch squares. Generously butter one side of each square. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, uncover and, pressing a bench scraper or sharp knife straight down into the dough, cut into 12 even pieces (about 74 grams each if you’ve got a scale).

6. Holding a piece of dough with both hands, flatten it slightly, then pull the edges under to form a tight ball. Put the ball in one palm, then cup your other hand around the ball and rotate that hand to tighten the ball further while giving it a perfectly round shape. The dough will be sticky, but don’t flour your hands or the dough. Transfer the ball to a buttered paper square, top side up. Repeat with the remaining dough. Arrange the balls on a sheet pan, spacing an inch apart.

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