



BETWEEN THE ROWS

WENDY SCHMIDT



Wendy Schmidt/Contributed Photo

Aphids have infested the author's rose bush.

Aphids invade my rose bush: now what?

Holy cow! There's a crop of aphids on my favorite rose bush. Now comes the decision dilemma. Soapy water? A hard spray of water from the hose? Harvest them and hope there's enough for a meal (everything goes with rice)? Certainly no poison will be used in this yard. Yikes!

If nothing is done, the aphids will feed on the rose and make more aphids! This year the plans are to dry most of the rose blossoms. Will the sticky aphid residue mess up those plans? (It may make them sweeter?)

It looks like the persimmon tree has tiny blossoms. Perhaps that means fruit this year for the first time. The quince and the peach are both forming fruit. The grapes are ready to bloom.

All these joyous happenings fill me with anticipation and a fidgety feeling. Spring fever has taken over. Disney defined it as being "Twitter-pated." We all know what that feeling of anxiety and butterflies is like.

Garden Chores

- Begin "hardening off" peppers to prepare for transplant outdoors.
- Continue to plant seeds of bush, lima and pole beans.
- Also plant seeds of cucumber and okra.
- Make the last sowings of leaf lettuce and radish.
- Pinch back mums to promote bushy growth.
- Take houseplants outdoors when night temperatures will remain above 50 degrees.

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



Hillary Levin/St. Louis Post-Dispatch-TNS

Warm strawberries with baked meringues and vanilla ice cream, made with fresh strawberries.

THE SWEETEST OF THE SEASONS

■ Fresh strawberries make everything better — especially desserts

By Daniel Neman
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

It's impossible to be sad when strawberries are in season.

Everything looks better when there can be fresh strawberries in your future. The air smells sweeter. Dogs are friendlier. The sounds of traffic are more melodious.

Strawberries make a bad day better and a good day great.

Strawberry season happens to be raging at the moment, and I am in bliss. The stores are full of them, the pick-your-own places are going gangbusters and if you are lucky enough to have your own strawberry patch, then you know that paradise is the taste of a sun-warmed strawberry right off the vine.

I don't have my own strawberry patch, so I backed a box truck up to my neighborhood grocery store and filled it completely with strawberries. Or so it seemed.

Strawberries have their savory uses, but let's face it, desserts are better. I had a lot, so I used mine to make five desserts.

The easiest was Strawberries Dusted

with Cardamom Sugar, which is only a little more complicated than the name suggests. But the complication makes a wonderfully subtle difference. Before the strawberries are rolled in a mixture of sugar and cardamom, they are first splashed with an orange liqueur, such as Grand Marnier or Cointreau.

You don't quite taste it, but your taste buds know it's there.

The cardamom is also somewhat understated. Cardamom is just about the only spice that is equally at home in savory dishes as it is in sweet. When used to flavor strawberries, it presents an alluring, perfumed earthiness that brings the high-flying strawberries and sugar back down to earth.

The most difficult strawberry dessert I made, in contrast, was a stunningly superb strawberry tart. This is the kind of dish you could easily see at a bakery. A good bakery.

It would be easier if you just used a premade tart crust, but where is the fun in that, or the flavor? I used a leftover pie

crust dough that I had frozen, and it was just as flaky and delicious as it was when I first made it.

Inside the crust goes a crème pâtissière, also known as pastry cream, which is just a vanilla custard that has been thickened with cornstarch. It is the classic filling for an éclair and is frequently used in tarts such as this because it is such a rich and creamy foil for the fruit.

Whole strawberries fill the tart, and they are then coated with a lightly thinned marmalade glaze. Then all that is left is a sprinkling of toasted almond slices.

It is a lot of work, but most of the steps can be made in advance, except maybe the easy glazing of the strawberries. And the result is fairly stupendous.

Almost as impressive is my next dessert, a frozen strawberry soufflé. It's like a more sophisticated version of strawberry ice cream, as elegant a repast as you would want to serve.

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Getting to the rub: making the most of grilling season

JeanMarie Brownson
The Daily Meal

True confession: I grill outside all year long. Memorial Day weekend just made it official!

This year, I won't stand for anything bland to come off my grill — and, if I can help it, yours. An herby marinade sparked with a little crushed red pepper can add flavor to lean meats and vegetables. A dry seasoning blend that combines smoke, spice and garlic will feature in nearly all my steak and rib grill sessions. And after grilling, I propose the liberal use of rich, slightly sweet, bronzed butter to add a chef's touch of flavor and luxury.

Let's talk about marinades. I recommend using acidic, deeply-seasoned wet marinades to infuse flavor into simple poultry pieces, lean pork and bland vegetables such as zucchini and eggplant. Marinades high in acid will do a bit of tenderizing,



Eberly Film Labs/The Daily Meal-TNS

Turkey and Vegetable Kebabs and Smoky Beef and Mushroom Kebabs. Styled by Shannon Kinsella.

too, although most don't penetrate more than ¼-inch into the foods.

Dry marinades, like grill seasoning rubs, add flavor as well as salt

— and sometimes sugar — to the surface of tender meats, such as beef steaks, chicken breasts and fish fillets. Dry rubs should be applied well

in advance of grilling for the biggest impact. A simple blend that contains smoked paprika helps underscore the smoke of a charcoal grill and proves a great boon when cooking on gas grills.

It might not be a well-kept secret, but steakhouse chefs almost always boost flavor with butter. I propose you follow suit with a highly-seasoned butter full of caramelized onions, fresh garlic, spices and a splash of sweet-tart pomegranate molasses. You can keep small parcels of the butter in the freezer for easy retrieval on grilling day.

To take advantage of these flavor-boosting creations, I'll be grilling kebabs for our small Memorial Day gathering. Kebabs please everyone. We can make meatless kebabs, lean turkey kebabs and, for a treat, beef sirloin kebabs. Scale the recipes up or down based on the number of people to serve.

For easiest grilling, use metal skewers that are flat so the meat doesn't move when you turn it on the grill. Another option is a two-pronged skewer which holds everything in place. Wooden skewers work too; just pick out a length that fits on the grill and soak the skewers in cool water before adding the ingredients to them. Using a second wooden skewer will help secure the food.

Serve the kebabs over a bed of greens, which will get the flavor from the juices dripping off the hot kebabs. Steamed, small new potatoes sprinkled with the season's first chives and tender dill fronds make a perfect side — ditto for grilled or steamed asparagus.

Gather around the grill with cold rose wine or a variety of non-alcoholic beers and enjoy!

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