

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

As I write this at the end of the week, I can be excused for double-checking the calendar to verify that it is, indeed, May. Technically, I know that it's May because the Farmers' Market is going into its fourth week, but it's really cold and blustery outside and I heard someone on the radio talking about the possibility of freezing temperatures overnight in the outlying areas. What is going on with the weather?

Notwithstanding the cooler temperatures this week, you can still expect to find many of your spring favourites at the Market now. This will include spring onions, chives and garlic chives, asparagus and rhubarb.

Asparagus is very versatile and can be prepared in many different ways. You can use asparagus in soups and soufflés, stirred into scrambled eggs and grilled with lemon juice. I have even seen asparagus used cold in wraps with chopped eggs or tuna. For some people, the season is never long enough.

Rhubarb is another perennial favourite and also versatile. You can stew rhubarb, use it in pies, jams, jellies or in coffee cakes. The English like to pair rhubarb with ginger and I like to combine it with orange juice and zest. Of course it is delicious in combination with strawberries too. That mixture is one of my most requested jams.

Now, I'd like you to meet one of our most delightful and popular vendors, Sasha Haughian, of Sasha's Sweets. Sasha grew up in a small farming and fishing community in B.C. called Ladner. She is from a large family and has warm memories of making old fashioned fudge with her late Grandmother from the time she could manoeuvre a wooden spoon.

They always made traditional chocolate and maple fudge and, on special occasions, added nuts to the batch. They had a wonderful time cooking for the whole family during the holidays and those memories are treasured by Sasha today. From those early years she developed a love of cooking for the family, and a love of making fudge in particular.

As her passion for making fudge grew, Sasha began to develop recipes for different flavours. Although raising two young children is certainly time consuming and work, Sasha wanted a creative experience too. So, in addition to making her ever expanding range of fudge flavours, now over 30, she began to experiment with jelly making.

She was inspired to do this as a result of trying a variety of wines with her husband, and wanting interesting jellies to complement the cheese and crackers being served with the wines. Sasha has created some unique and amazing flavour combinations. Some of them are in combination with herbs and some even have tea in them. Most of the combinations are unique to Sasha's Sweets and thus, you cannot find them anywhere else.

Many of her regular customers use the jellies in marinades or as bastes. They can also be used in salad dressings in combination with oil and vinegar. These wonderfully creative and delicious jellies are packaged in small, decorated jars and would make a lovely hostess or teacher's gift. I like to think of them as little individual works of culinary art in a jar. You must try them!

As a Mom of two small children and a creative cook, Sasha was inspired to create some fun treats for children. This took the form of lollipops and hard candies for birthday parties and loot bags. Sasha's Sweets now has lollipops in fun flavours, colours and characters. There are even lollipops for special events such as weddings, showers, graduations, sporting events and birthdays.

She doesn't mind giving her children an occasional treat as long as it's made from ingredients that she would have found in her Grandmother's kitchen. Sasha's Sweets relies on the old fashioned way of making sweets using traditional ingredients and love.

That's why everything tastes so good.

As a result of her family's annual participation in the Vancouver Walk for Autism Speaks, Sasha will be donating the profits of her sales to Autism Speaks on July 6th, which is Kerry's Place Day at the Aurora Farmers' Market.

In keeping with our emphasis on old family recipes handed down through the generations, Sasha is contributing her Grandmother's recipe for Old Fashioned Chocolate Fudge:

3 cups sugar
1-1/4 cups milk or cream
¼ cup white corn syrup
½ cup pure cocoa powder
3 TBSP. butter
1 tsp. pure vanilla

Combine sugar, milk, corn syrup, and cocoa powder in a large copper saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Heat until softball stage or 237 F degrees. Remove from heat. Add butter. Do not stir. Cool until 120 F degrees. Add vanilla. Stir with a wooden spoon until mixture loses its gloss. Pour into an 8x8 inch pan. Allow to cool, cut into pieces and serve. Yummy.

As mentioned last time, our next ?Special Event? is Strawberry Fest on June 22nd. We will have entertainment from the bandshell and lots of strawberry treats for you to enjoy Now we need Mother Nature to co-operate to ensure a good strawberry season! See you at the Market!