

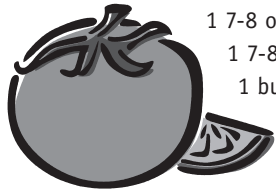
The Food You Eat

What's Cookin' at the Co-op Café Kitchen!

It's time to use the juicy, sweet tomatoes before they are gone for the season, and this recipe makes the most of their flavor and texture. Whether you are using a great red beefsteak tomato, or an unusual heirloom variety, the mozzarella cheese is a mellow companion that lets all of the flavor of the tomato shine.



Co-op Café Caprese



- 1 7-8 oz. ball of fresh mozzarella, preferably buffalo mozzarella
- 1 7-8 oz. ripe tomato
- 1 bunch fresh basil
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- pinch of salt
- pinch of pepper

Drain mozzarella and cut into thin slices. Cut tomato into thin slices. Fan ingredients out across a plate, alternating mozzarella and tomato. Tear the basil leaves and scatter on top. Whisk salt and pepper into the olive oil, then drizzle the mixture over the plate. Enjoy!

Serves 2.

Farm Feature: Mingling with the Bovine at Ron Gargas Organic Farms

By Jesse Sharrard

Ron Gargas has an impressive résumé: he served as Director of Planning & Research for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture from 1972-1976, and as Director of Energy Conservation for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania from 1976-1980 (under a federal program created by the Carter administration). What's more impressive is that Mr. Gargas puts his background to work every day as the owner, operator, and sole employee of Ron Gargas Organic Farms in Volant, PA.



Mr. Gargas's path from policy-maker to organic farmer wasn't as convoluted as it may seem; the farm he works was his parents' and he grew up working on it. "Even while I was working in Harrisburg," he says, "I was commuting back and forth, doing some farming—but I didn't have time to do the labor-intensive weed and pest control that farming organically requires. More along the lines of spray and walk away." When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, energy conservation programs were eliminated from the federal budget, terminating Gargas's job. Around the same time, Gargas's parents announced their desire to sell the farm. He decided to buy the farm and manage it full-time. He says, "As soon as I bought the farm, I began to transition over to organic."

Today, Ron Gargas raises about 100 grass-fed cattle, which eat a diet consisting mostly of orchard grass, alfalfa, clover hay, and timothy. Gargas is emphatic when he speaks of the importance of feeding cattle a diet of grass. "Cows are ruminants," he says.

"They evolved with four stomachs. What they do is gobble up a bunch of grass, then retreat back to the shade where they cough it up and chew on it; that's their cud. They're built to digest cellulose," the primary building block of grass, "not carbohydrate," which is what they get when they are fed a diet of corn. "The result of a cow trying to digest corn is all the problems with E. coli" because cattle are being fed something their bodies are not equipped to handle.

Because Gargas's cows eat a natural diet, they are healthy animals. Occasionally, one of them will have a digestive problem, but it's usually easily solved—with a magnet. "Occasionally," Gargas explains, "one of them will eat something it's not supposed to, like a stray piece of wire or a nail." Cows can't ruminate the metal, nor can they pass it—so without treatment, the likely result is a perforated stomach that will leak acid into the rest of the cow's system and result in a serious infection. But, a round-edged magnet specifically intended for being inserted into an affected cow's stomach will hold the piece of metal in place until the cow's stomach acids dissolve it, thereby preventing illness, antibiotics, and vet bills. Only rarely does one of Gargas's cows get sick and require antibiotics; in such a case, it no longer meets "organic" criteria and Gargas will sell it on the open market once the animal has been treated and cured.

For Ron Gargas, the importance of farming organically is multifold. Biologically speaking, the techniques he uses make sense because they take advantage of natural relationships between an organism and its environment. Economically speaking, it's the only way he can see to survive. "The cost of farming conventionally has skyrocketed in the past thirty years. Equipment costs have

Bramble On

By Erica De Angelis, Co-op Member and Volunteer

Every January, when asked what kind of cake I'd like for my birthday, I tell my mother to skip it; I'd rather have blackberry pie. No one makes pie crust like she does, and nothing lifts my mid-winter, another-year-old spirits than a fruity mouthful of summer's sweet and sour, seeded blackberries. How many times have I requested this pie? At least 15. And how many times have I had my birthday treat of choice? Only once.



For reasons I'll never understand, she turns me down repeatedly. Supposedly it has something to do with berries being out of season, but I know she usually has a stash hidden in the depths of the freezer, forgotten by everyone but me since stripped from their vines and bagged one humid, buggy day the previous August. I also know that frozen blackberries will retain their original vitamin C content (which, for one cup, is about 350 mg; that's three times the amount found in an orange) for six months, so cooking them half a year after they're harvested is no problem. Still, she refuses my request.

I don't love them just because they're delicious or tasty, either. My beloved blackberries, a member of the bramble family, are found all over the world, and touted for their high folate and fiber content, the latter of which explains their ability to inhibit colon cancer. They are also steeped in superstition. Supposedly, crawling under a blackberry bush cures everything from blackheads to rheumatism, and they're also thought to cure gout, hemorrhoids and warts. With no fat, lots of fiber and only 24 calories in a handful, they are an excellent choice for a not-necessarily-sweet treat with little guilt and lots of pleasure. Even the leaves have medicinal value, healing everything from burns to venomous bites, as well as diarrhea and your basic sore throat. Don't these reasons alone support my argument for pie instead of cake?

Apparently not. Anyway, part of being an adult requires taking responsibility for one's own happiness rather than blaming (m)others for our disappointments. This year, before they're out of season, I'm buying and freezing my own blackberries. I've never made pie crust, but who needs to when a crisp, a cobbler or a grumble recipe will do just fine. In this month's recipe, blackberries team up with another member of

Blackberry and Plum Crisp

Vegetarian or vegan, depending on ingredients*

Serves 8

Filling

- 4 large plums, skinned, pitted and sliced
- 2 cups blackberries
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar

Topping

- ¾ cup almonds, sliced or chopped
- 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter*

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a large bowl, toss the plums and blackberries gently with the lemon juice, cornstarch, and granulated sugar until the mixture is combined well, and set aside.
3. In another bowl, stir together the almonds, flour, brown sugar, oats, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, then add the butter and blend the mixture until it resembles coarse meal.
4. Spread the plum and blackberry mixture in a baking dish, sprinkle the topping mixture evenly over it, and bake until the top is golden, approximately 35 to 40 minutes.

the rose family, the sweet and juicy plum. They're a great combo, with just enough sweetness, tartness, crunch and squish to balance each other perfectly.

What's the difference?

BUCKLE is a single-layer type of cake with berries (most often blueberries) in the batter and a streusel-like topping.

COBBLER is an American deep-dish fruit dessert or pie with a thick, biscuity crust either enclosing or resting atop fruit. In New England, cobbler is called grunt or sometimes slump, and it is cooked on the stovetop.

CRISP contains fruit on the bottom and a baked crumb topping.

CRUMBLE is the British version of the American crisp.

SONKER, also sometimes called **zonker**, is a deep-dish pie or cobbler eaten in the Southeast.

Another risk reducer in the colon cancer fight, plums probably earned this reputation because their skin stimulates bowel function. High in carbs but low in calories and fat, and free of sodium and cholesterol, plums have a significant amount of vitamins A and C. Until recently, I didn't realize that like human fingerprints, plum stones are unique to each variety. The sweetest plums are cultivated for prunes.

Before they're gone, chow down, stock up, freeze what you can't eat now, and remember where you put these last fruits of summer. You never know what you might crave once the dark days of winter return, or when someone might hit you up for a birthday pie. 🍷

quadrupled, but prices farmers are paid for their crops haven't gone up at all. The small farmer is being sandwiched out of the indus-

try and one of the few ways he can earn a price that will allow him to survive is by farming organically." 🍷

Ron Gargas Organic Farms
129 Old Ash Road
Volant, PA
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Crops for humans:
Barley, buckwheat, blue corn, red corn, spelt,
various beans

Forage for cattle:
Alfalfa, clover hay, orchard grass, timothy

Beef available:
Directly from farm (by appointment), or from
the Co-op freezer.